THE SQUARE AND COMPASSES
IN SEARCH OF FREEMASONRY
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CHAPTER TEN – THE PERFECT POINTS OF ENTRANCE

The proof of being a Freemason is demonstrated in the Perfect Points of his Entrance.

Origin Of The Expression

The expression “perfect points of entrance” appears in several forms and is derived directly from the usages of operative freemasons, especially in Scotland, where it was included in the Catechisms or Test Questions regularly used to examine apprentices and unidentified freemasons seeking work. The first known reference is in a catechism that is part of the Edinburgh Register House MS of 1696, under the heading “Some questions that masons use to put to those who have ye word before they will acknowledge them”. In that catechism “ye word” was the Mason Word that is discussed in the two chapters of this book entitled The Legacy of Operative Freemasonry and History – A Key Element in Freemasonry. The expression was carried forward into Scottish speculative freemasonry during the direct transition of many of the old Scottish operative lodges into speculative lodges. Evidence of the use of the expression and its interpretation, before the establishment of the original Grand Lodge of England in 1717, can also be found in the Chetwode Crawley MS of about 1700 and in the Kevan MS of about 1714, both of which are of Scottish origin.

The first known text that reveals a specifically English usage is the Sloane MS, also of about 1700. The text in the Sloane MS differs significantly from its Scottish counterparts, but as the answers given to the questions are almost the same they confirm that the purpose of the questions and their interpretations were similar wherever used. In this context other references of particular interest are the Dumfries No 4 MS of about 1710 and the Trinity College, Dublin MS of 1711, which indicate how widespread the usage of the expression was geographically. The Wilkinson MS of about 1727 and Samuel Prichard’s Masonry Dissected of 1730 provide evidence of the continued use of the expression long after the original Grand Lodge of England was established. They also attest to the consistent form of the catechisms over a long period and confirm their operative origins. The catechisms in these two documents refer to one of the several operative signs no longer used in speculative freemasonry, that are still included in the rituals of the Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviors, Plaisterers and Bricklayers, commonly referred to as “The Operatives”. The consistent and long term usage of the expression is further confirmed in an early French exposure that dates from about 1745, in which the “perfect points of my entrance” are described as “the circumstances of my reception”, although the interpretations of the questions and their answers are substantially the same.
During the period from 1751 to 1813 many of the English lodges that had refused to join the original Grand Lodge of England formed a Grand Lodge of their own known. They were known as the Antients and referred to the original Grand Lodge of England as the Moderns. The rituals of the Antients were based on the rituals of the English operative freemasons, which were similar to those of the operative freemasons in Scotland and Ireland who used the expression “perfect points of entrance” as a matter course. The expression was already in use among the Antients when the Earl of Blessington, who had ruled over the Grand Lodge of Ireland as Viscount Mountjoy in 1738 and 1739, was installed in proxy as Grand Master of the Antients in 1756. His appointment might have been expected to provide added impetus for “the perfect points of entrance” to be used in England, but for some reason those catechisms seem to have fallen into disuse by about 1760, possibly because the Grand Master was heavily engaged in the affairs of Ireland. The catechisms did not reappear in England until near the end of the eighteenth century, when William Preston explained them in his First Lecture of Freemasonry in about 1790. The third Duke of Atholl was installed as Grand Master of the Antients in 1771 and he also became the Grand Master Mason elect of Scotland in 1773, which may have had some influence on the reappearance of the “the perfect points of entrance” in English freemasonry. When the third Duke of Atholl died in 1774 he was succeeded by his son as Duke and also as Grand Master of the Antients, from which time the Antients were commonly referred to as Atholl Masons.

In 1798 the Atholl Masons appointed a committee to consider if reconciliation could be achieved with the Moderns, but nothing eventuated until 1810 when the Atholl Masons resolved that it would be expedient and advantageous to seek a Masonic Union on principles equal and honourable to both Grand Lodges. In 1813 reconciliation was achieved when the United Grand Lodge of England was established. Although the rituals then agreed reputedly were based on the rituals of the Antients, various aspects of an operative origin, such as explanations of “the perfect points of entrance” and the tassels in the four corners of the lodge, were either omitted or so reduced in scope that their true symbolic importance was virtually lost. In his enlightening book of questions and answers, entitled The Freemason at Work, Harry Carr gives an interesting review of the subject and questions whether “entrance” signifies the precise moment of entry into the lodge, or if it relates to the whole ceremony of admission, which is implied by the answers given by William Preston in his First Lecture of Freemasonry. Harry Carr also asks “Have we lost something en route?”

Of, At and On

The ceremonial practices of operative freemasons have a direct bearing on the subject matter of all three of the foregoing questions posed by Harry Carr. As these three aspects are interrelated and the answers are all in the affirmative, they will be addressed before discussing “the perfect points of entrance” in any detail. Moreover the answers provide a useful introduction to a consideration of the purpose and interpretation of “the perfect points of entrance”. An aspect that often seems to have been overlooked in relation to the catechisms is that they were intended not only to establish a basis for examination in
respect of the modes of recognition, but also to provide a foundation to help freemasons understand the ceremonies through which they had been conducted. In this respect it is important to realise that in almost every degree in freemasonry there is more than one point of entry, each of which introduces a new aspect of the work. In the ceremonies through which an apprentice is conducted there are, in fact, three separate points of entry. Each of these is identifiable in the complete catechism, but two of them might not be evident in the brief series of questions and answers put to candidates nowadays. Each of those points of entry relates to a distinct phase in the candidate’s progress. The first is preparation, the second is obligation and the third is recognition. In the older catechisms the initial questions were introduced by “Of, At and On” and received answers that led to other related questions, which together suggested a continuing process and hence could more readily be identified as embracing the whole ceremony.

The modern questions usually do not include the specific “Of, At and On” introductions, so that they may seem only to relate to the precise moment of entry into the lodge. In the first degree the first point of entry is when the candidate approaches the door of the lodge. This is the preparatory entrance that is complete when the candidate has been received upon the point of a sharp implement and admonished appropriately. The second point of entry is when the candidate is called upon to kneel while the blessing of heaven is invoked, after which the core element of the initiation ceremony is carried out. It consists of the perambulation, preliminary interrogation, presentation and advancement towards the east, followed by the obligation. This entrance is complete when the candidate has been brought to light in the usual regular manner and has received an explanation of the three great lights in freemasonry. The third point of entrance is on the squared pavement when the Master instructs the candidate to advance towards him with the first regular step in freemasonry, instructs him in the sign, communicates the grip or token to him and entrusts him with the word. This entrance is complete after the Wardens have examined the candidate to prove his proficiency in the modes of recognition and he has been invested with the distinguishing badge of a mason. All of these aspects are included in the catechism of “the perfect points of entrance” and are covered in the following address to the candidate describing his entrance into the lodge as an apprentice freemason and describing the mode of his preparation.

**Entrance As An Apprentice Freemason**

The Points necessary to make a freemason are five. They are called the Perfect Points of your Entrance and are Preparation, Obligation, Sign, Grip or Token and Word. Before you entered the lodge you were prepared in accordance with ancient custom, so that you could be received at the door of the lodge, admitted into the presence of the brethren, interrogated, obligated, brought to light, instructed, entrusted, proved and invested as freemasons have been from time immemorial. Your conductor knocked on the door of the lodge, where you were received in darkness on the point of a sharp implement and exhorted always to behave with the utmost fidelity. When admitted into the presence of the brethren you were required to kneel while the blessing of heaven was invoked. You were then conducted around the lodge and interrogated to ensure that your application for
admission was just and that it had been based upon worthy motives alone, as well as to prove to the brethren that you had been properly prepared to be made a freemason. You were then presented to the Master, who gave instructions for you to advance towards the east with the proper steps, then kneel with your left knee bare, which symbolically was on the rough ashlar stone. The master placed your hand on the Volume of the Sacred Law, in which position you took the great and solemn obligation of an apprentice freemason. When you had completed your obligation you saluted the Volume of the Sacred Law and were brought to light in the usual regular manner. The symbol of bondage was then removed and the three great lights in freemasonry were explained.

At the beginning of the final stage of your admission you were placed in front of the Master on the squared pavement, when he told you how to advance towards him with the first regular step in freemasonry. The Master then instructed you in the method of giving the sign, showed you how to communicate the grip or token and entrusted you with the word. He also cautioned you that the word must never be given without the grip, but even then only in the same strict manner as you had received it. The derivation and import of the sign and the word were also explained. You were then conducted to the wardens for examination to prove your ability to communicate the modes of recognition in the prescribed manner. You were invested with the distinguishing badge of a mason and warned that you must never disgrace it, because it will never disgrace you. In future times you probably will visit lodges where you are not known to any of the members present, when you will be required to undergo examination. To the question “How were you made a freemason?” you should reply “By the perfect points of my entrance.” To the question “What were the perfect points of your entrance?” you should reply “Preparation, obligation, sign, grip or token and word.” When asked to give proof of your proficiency you must only communicate the modes of recognition in the same manner and with the same strict caution as you have received them. As during the course of your examination you might also be asked specific questions concerning the mode of your preparation, I will now explain it in more detail.

**Preparation As An Apprentice Freemason**

Preparation is of two kinds, internal and external. Internally you were prepared in your heart by a favourable opinion preconceived of the institution, an earnest desire for knowledge and a sincere wish, based upon worthy motives and we trust upon worthy motives only to be ranked among its members. Externally you were prepared in a convenient room adjacent to the lodge, by having certain items of your attire arranged in a peculiar manner to prepare you for your entrance into the lodge. At first sight your preparation may have appeared to your untaught mind as somewhat strange, even ludicrous, but let me assure you that it was not intended to ridicule you nor to upset your sensibilities, because every part of it has a deep symbolical meaning and is intended to convey an important and instructive lesson.

You were deprived of all ornaments, jewels, moneys and metallic substances in your possession. This was to remind you that, no matter how great a freemason’s worldly
possessions might be, all brethren in the lodge are on terms of strictest equality, meeting on the level, acting on the plumb and parting on the square. This part of your preparation also was intended to remind you of the fact that, at the erection of King Solomon’s temple on which our ceremonies are chiefly based, there was not heard the sound of any axe, hammer or other tools of metal that might be considered to debase the sanctity of the building. The stones were prepared in the quarries and the timbers in the forests, all being properly fitted, marked and numbered before they were brought to the temple, where they were assembled in their proper places with the aid of wooden mauls.

You were hoodwinked or blindfolded, which was symbolical of your being in a state of darkness regarding our inner mysteries. The blindfold was intended to impress upon your mind that the heart must be made to perceive before the eye may be permitted to discover, as well as reminding you that the members of the outside or profane world must be kept in a similar state of darkness until brought to light in the same regular manner as you yourself have been. A cable tow was placed around your neck as a symbol of the state of bondage that you were then in, the bondage of ignorance concerning our hidden mysteries. It also provided a means of restraint if such restraint should have been necessary. When you had taken the great and solemn obligation of an apprentice freemason the blindfold was removed, enabling you to receive the light in the same regular manner as all apprentices had before you. The cable tow also was removed, signifying that the bondage of ignorance had been dispelled.

Your right arm was bared as a token of your sincerity, symbolically showing that you had no weapon of offence or defence upon you. As the rules of our order forbid the use of offensive weapons in our lodges, there is no need to carry defensive weapons at our meetings. Your right breast was bared as a token of your fidelity and so that you could be received symbolically on the point of a sharp implement presented thereto, the recollection of which should ever after be a prick to your conscience should you ever contemplate the unlawful revelation of our inner secrets. Furthermore, your bare left breast was to prove that you were not an impostor or woman in disguise, because the rules of our order prohibit the participation of females in our ceremonies.

Your left knee was bare as a token of your humility. On it you knelt when you entered into the great and solemn obligation of an apprentice freemason. Finally, your right heel was slipshod in allusion to an ancient custom when a bargain or contract was entered into, as we read in Ruth 4:7 –

“Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing; for to confirm all things a man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbour: and this was a testimony in Israel.”
Presenting And Greeting The Candidate

In many lodges it customary for a newly made apprentice freemason to be presented and greeted at an appropriate time during the ceremony, when the following address is an appropriate one:

“Worshipful Master, Wardens and brethren, I present to you our apprenticed brother who has been prepared, received into our lodge, obligated, brought to light, instructed, entrusted, proved and invested with the distinguishing badge of a freemason. I call upon you ever to acknowledge and honour him as such and now to greet him with a running fire of the knocks of the degree three times, taking the time from me.”

Concluding Remarks

As the appropriate examination of strangers is a vital safeguard of a freemason’s privileges, every freemason should be prepared to demonstrate his qualifications in the correct manner when visiting a lodge where he is not known. Irrespective of the degree or rank held by a freemason who cannot be personally vouched for by a member of a lodge that he is visiting, his examination to determine his qualifications should always begin as outlined in the foregoing explanation. When appropriate the examination would be extended to include any additional qualifications the visitor may have.
CHAPTER ELEVEN – CEREMONIAL PREPARATION

Ceremonial preparation is an ancient rite that has its origins shrouded in the mists of time.

Origins Of The Rite

Ceremonial preparation is an ancient rite that has its origins shrouded in the mists of time. In every period, from the primeval ages of the most primitive races to this modern era of diverse and sophisticated peoples, some form of preparation has been required and continues to be required of candidates for acceptance into many of the broad spectrum of our religious organisations, sects and societies. Lengthy and arduous preparation, which usually involved fasting and frequently involved danger, was a prerequisite for admission into the ancient Mysteries. Severe personal trials also must be completed for initiation into many African, Australian, South American and other aboriginal tribes. Ceremonial preparation frequently includes washing, or an equivalent symbolic purification, followed by the wearing of a special garment such as a white robe to signify that the candidate has completed the purification process. Ceremonial preparation is an integral part of many religious ceremonies as diverse as the Jewish bar mitzvah, Christian baptism and the Islamic hadj.

In the Mysteries of Osiris in Egypt, Mithras in Persia, Eleusis in Greece, the Druids of Britain and Gaul and many others, as much care was taken with the preparation of the candidate as with the initiation ceremonies that followed. It is recorded in the Scriptures that great care also was taken in respect of the personal condition of every Israelite who entered the tabernacle or temple for Divine worship. In a similar manner, Muslims are required to wash their hands and remove their shoes before entering the mosque for prayers. The traditional preparation of a candidate for initiation into speculative craft freemasonry obviously has been influenced by these ancient practices, although it was derived more directly from the usages and customs in operative lodges, which have been modified and extended. The mode of preparation is entirely symbolic, with every part conveying an important message. It is an essential part of a candidate's initiation and is one of the most delicate duties to be performed, because of the lasting impression it will create in the candidate's mind.

Operative Background

The rituals in lodges of operative freemasons were based on Biblical events. Nimrod, the renowned hunter who also was the first great builder mentioned in the Scriptures, plays an
important role in the ancient traditions. The floor work in the several operative degrees is based symbolically on the procedures used during the erection of the temple at Jerusalem for King Solomon. In each degree the candidate personifies a particular stone used in the construction of the temple, on the basis of which he receives moral instruction, is gauged and must pass the test. Whilst being conducted around the candidate's track, from which the perambulations in speculative lodges were derived, the candidate is required to take steps that symbolise either the placement of the stones in a particular course or the measurement of the relevant dimensions. The steps used in a speculative lodge to approach the altar for obligation were not used in operative lodges.

In operative lodges the initiate was "neither naked nor clad" and wore a special white garment or toga candida to give effect to that description. Candidate derives from the Latin and originally meant clothed in white, from the Roman custom of requiring candidates for office to wear a toga candida in the form of a white robe. In the old operative lodges, the lodge's physician examined the candidates to ensure that they were "perfect in all their parts". If found to be whole and physically fit and they were accepted by the brethren and fellows of the lodge, the candidate was required to bathe symbolically seven times and to be clothed in the toga candida. He was then conducted around the lodge to prove to the brethren and fellows that he had been "properly prepared" and that he was "fit and proper" to be admitted to the Fraternity. In operative lodges candidates were specially prepared for their initiation, but wore their working clothes and the apron of their degree for later advancements.

**Divestiture Of Metals**

In operative lodges the candidate for initiation usually was a young teenager seeking his first employment, who therefore was poor and penniless. Towards the end of the initiation ceremony the new apprentice would be asked how he would subsist until he drew his first wages. On receiving the inevitable response, the master would have a collection taken on behalf of the new apprentice, relieving him of his embarrassment and illustrating the generosity of the Fraternity. The apprentice then received a brief homily on the importance of service and charity in the Fraternity. As candidates for initiation in speculative lodges cannot be in a similar situation to those initiated into operative lodges, they are divested of all metals so that a similar moral can be imparted. The fundamental lesson is that a man should not be esteemed on account of his worldly possessions, but that when he is in need he should be assisted to the extent that prudence and the capacity of the person assisting will allow.

**The Blindfold**

In all of the ancient Mysteries the aspirant was shrouded in darkness for long periods, most commonly deep within a cave, when he was required to fast and undergo a series of trials and afflictions. In the rites of Mithras around 5000 BCE the aspirants had to endure fifty
days in darkness and in the Eleusinian rites around 1800 BCE they had to endure twenty-
seven days. These long periods in darkness were to remind them of their inherently wicked
nature and to prepare them by solitary contemplation for the full light of knowledge. The
blindfold is applied to represent the darkness of wickedness and ignorance. It is a mystical
reminder to the candidate that he is lost without the light that comes from above. We are
told in the New English Bible in John 1, verse 5, that: "The light shines on in the dark and
the darkness has never mastered it". This is symbolised by the removal of the blindfold,
signifying that the candidate has acquired the right attitude of mind and soul to lead him fr
om darkness to everlasting light. The blindfold also is a symbol of silence and secrecy.

The Cable Tow

In operative lodges the candidate was fully restrained and guided by pairs of ropes held by
four of the members, who thus conducted him into and around the lodge. One of the ropes
was a cable tow, which seems to have been used the same way in the ancient Mysteries.
This symbolism is very old and has been found around the world. In some temples in
Egypt, the bas-reliefs show candidates being led into the Mysteries by a cable tow. A vase
found in Mexico depicts several candidates going through a similar ceremony, each having
a cable tow with a running noose round his neck. A cable tow was also used by the ancient
Israelites when leading their victims for the burnt sacrifice to and around the altar, whence
it became known as an emblem of death. The cable tow obviously provides a means of
restraint until the candidate has taken his obligation. As an emblem of death the cable tow
also signifies that the candidate is prepared to sacrifice his old life to gain a new and higher
one, which is the spiritual rebirth achieved in his search for Light and symbolised by his
initiation.

After admission into the Fraternity, the cable tow should be a continuing reminder to every
freemason that he is bound to serve his Lodge and to attend its meetings, if it is "within the
length of his cable tow", a requirement that is derived from operative freemasonry. In
operative practice the cable tow was removed and replaced by a blue cord after the
candidate had been obligated and had signed his indenture. An indentured apprentice was
required to wear the blue cord for the full seven years of his apprenticeship, as a constant
reminder of his bond to the Fraternity. The blue colour of the cord was a token of the
universal friendship an apprentice would always find within the Fraternity. In Irish lodges
of speculative craft freemasonry the candidate wears the cable tow as an emblem of
servitude until he is about to take his obligation. It is then removed by the conductor and
thrown contemptuously onto the floor behind the candidate, who is then told that none but
a free man may be made a freemason. In some old Scottish rituals and others deriving
from them, the cable tow is wound three times round the neck in the first degree, twice in
the second degree and once in the third degree, symbolising a progressive increase in Light
and hence a reduction in the "bondage of ignorance".

The Bare Right Arm
The use of the right hand as a token of sincerity and as a pledge of fidelity is ancient and universal. For example, in Central and North America the members of many Indian tribes when preparing for their sacred dances will apply the mark of the right hand to their naked bodies by smearing them with white or coloured clay, to demonstrate their sincerity and allegiance to their Deity. We also know from the Scriptures that the Israelites, from the time of Abraham to the days of Saint Paul, considered the right hand to be an emblem of truth and fidelity. Among the Hebrews iamin signified the right hand, which was derived from aman meaning to be faithful. Among the Romans jungere dextras signified the joining of the right hands to ratify a mutual pledge. Among the Persians and the Parthians also, those entering into a pact joined their right hands, which signified that they had taken an inviolable obligation of fidelity. In ancient days, before printed books were available, operative freemasons took their obligations with their right hands placed on a cubic stone on the altar. This was the custom in Biblical days, when it was deemed essential that nothing should be interposed between the flesh and the stone. When printed books became available, an operative freemason who was being obligated was required to support a copy of the Scriptures on the left hand and to place his right hand upon it, which is the basis of this practice in Scottish speculative craft lodges.

When preparing a candidate for initiation in freemasonry, the right arm is made bare as a token of sincerity and also to remind the candidate that an obligation of fidelity is being taken. The right arm is used for the reasons already mentioned and also because, from time immemorial, the right side has been regarded as the stronger or masculine side. The Greek philosopher Plato (c 428-348 BCE) was the first who rationalised this belief, when he expressed his opinion that the right side is the stronger because it is used more than the left. In fact this opinion is supported by statistics, which indicate that at least ninety percent of the members of the human race use their right hand when working, so that it naturally becomes the stronger hand. The bare right arm also is a symbolic demonstration that the person is not carrying any weapon of offence or defence, because an offensive weapon must not be used inside a lodge, so that a defensive weapon is not required. When a sword is carried, the usual convention is for it to be worn on the left side so that it is readily available for use in the stronger right hand, which is in contrast with the traditional belief that small weapons are usually concealed in the right sleeve.

**The Bare Left Knee**

The ancient belief that the right side is the stronger has a natural corollary, which is the belief that the left side is the weaker. In the symbolism of freemasonry, the candidate is taking his first or weakest step when he is being initiated, for which reason he steps off with his left foot. It logically follows that the left side is considered to typify an apprentice. This also is the reason why the initiate kneels on his bare left knee when taking his obligation in a speculative lodge. The progressive kneeling postures adopted in speculative lodges were not derived from operative practice, but they probably are intended to reflect the symmetry of nature and also to symbolise the progressive character of freemasonry. The bare left knee should also remind the candidate of the posture of his daily
supplications that are due to the Creator. In operative lodges the candidate was required to kneel with both knees bare on the rough ashlar stone, so that nothing was interposed between his flesh and the stone. This perpetuated the ancient concept that the strength and stability of the stone would thereby be transmitted to the candidate, so that an oath taken on a stone would be inviolable.

**The Slipshod Heel**

From the most ancient times it has been customary, as a token of respect, to remove the shoes before stepping onto holy ground. The practice is mentioned many times in the Bible, on the first occasion in Exodus 3:5, when Moses saw the angel of the Lord in the burning bush. When Moses noticed that the bush was not burning away he went closer to see the wonderful sight, but it is recorded in the New English Bible that the Lord then said to him:

"Come no nearer; take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground."

This token of respect for holy ground is observed in most Eastern countries, where it is customary to remove the shoes before entering a temple, as Muslims do before they enter a mosque. The Druids also practiced the same custom when celebrating their sacred rites. The ancient Peruvians are said always to have removed their shoes before they entered their magnificent temple consecrated to the worship of the sun. In lodges of operative freemasons, after a candidate for indentureship was conducted into the assemblage he was required to kneel in prayer prior to his obligation and to "slip his shoes from off his feet", symbolically acknowledging that he was on holy ground.

It was a custom among the Hebrews in ancient times, when sealing a contract or bargain, to hand over a shoe as a pledge of good faith. We read about a pledge being given in this fashion in Ruth 4:7 of the New English Bible. That was when, in the presence of ten elders of the town, the next-of-kin of the Moabitess widow Naomi said that he could not carry out his duty as next-of-kin and therefore that Boaz must do it for him, on which account Boaz acquired from Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech, to Mahlon and to Chilion. It also was the occasion when Boaz acquired Ruth to be his wife. We are told:

"Now in those old days, when property was redeemed or exchanged, it was the custom for a man to pull off his sandal and give it to the other party. This was the form of attestation in Israel."

These events were the culmination of Boaz's kindness to Ruth, he previously having allowed her to glean barley from the sheaves prepared by the reapers in his fields. Concerning Boaz's kindness to Ruth we also read in Ruth 4:19-20 that Ruth's mother-in-law had asked Ruth "Where did you glean today?" to which Ruth had replied "The man with whom I worked today is called Boaz."
In lodges of operative freemasons, at an appropriate time in the ceremony, the newly indentured apprentice was required to remove and hand over his left shoe to confirm his obligation. A question concerning the handing over of the shoe was also used as a test question to a stranger, as it still is often used in Scottish speculative craft freemasonry. In modern freemasonry, the candidate's slipshod heel is also regarded symbolically as equivalent to removing the shoes on holy ground and by association as a ratification of a solemn obligation being taken. The removal of the shoes before entering a holy place or standing on holy ground is a requirement common to many religions from ancient times until the present day. For example, while the Israelites were still in slavery long after the Egyptian had died, we are told that the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the flame of a burning bush. In Exodus 3:4-6 of the New English Bible we are told that when Moses approached to see the wonderful sight, the Lord called out to him "Come no nearer; take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground." The Lord then said he would send Moses to the Pharaoh and that Moses would lead the Israelites out of Egypt. That was when the Lord gave Moses several signs by which he could convince the Israelites that he was indeed their leader sent by God.
CHAPTER TWELVE – THE RITE OF CIRCUMAMBULATION

The rite is a symbol of the passage of the spiritual self through the cycle of life.

Outline

To *circumambulate* means to walk round about, which is derived from the Latin words *circum* meaning *around* and *ambulare/ambulatum* meaning *to walk*. In its original sense it referred to that portion of the religious rites in the ancient ceremonies of initiation, wherein the candidate was conducted in a formal procession around the altar or some other holy and consecrated object. To *perambulate*, in which the Latin word *circum* is replaced by the Latin word *per* which means *through*, originally meant to walk through, up and down or over for the purpose of surveying the land or patrolling a beat. Nowadays *perambulate* is often used in a general sense, meaning to walk about or around. In lodges of operative freemasonry and also in the formative period of modern speculative freemasonry, the clear distinction between *circumambulation* and *perambulation* was always maintained in the ceremonials.

The *rite of circumambulation* obviously relates to the circle, which is a symbol of the all-embracing principle of Divine manifestation that is without beginning or ending, being complete and absolute. Attributes of the Divine manifestation are illustrated in the *Wisdom of Solomon*, which is an important part of that compendium of moral and spiritual instruction known as the *Book of Proverbs*, much of which repeats earlier Egyptian exhortations almost word for word. In Proverbs 8:27-29 we read:

“When he set the heavens in their place I was there, when he girdled the ocean with the horizon, when he fixed the canopy of the clouds overhead and set the springs of ocean firm in their place, when he prescribed its limits for the sea and knit together earth’s foundations.”

The *rite of circumambulation* is also related to the *circle of existence*, which is a symbol of the passage of the spiritual self through the cycle of life, whence darkness is dispelled and the long upward course of purification is begun, leading towards that perfection which can only be achieved in the life hereafter. This circle is symbolical of and can only be completed by a rebirth, as described in the words of Jesus when he cleansed the temple, which is recorded in the following words of John 3:7-8:

“You ought not to be astonished, then, when I tell you that you must be born over again. The wind blows where it wills; you hear the sound of it, but you do not
know where it comes from, or where it is going. So with everyone who is born from spirit.”

Originally, *circumambulation* was only performed in the lodge in relation to the specific preparation and examination of the candidate prior to his obligation, to ensure that he was properly prepared and a fit and proper person to participate in the ensuing ceremony. This procedure reflected the combined symbolisms of the circle and the circle of existence, which was intended to remind the candidate that his upward course of purification was beginning. All other movements in the lodge were made by the most direct and convenient route, which clearly distinguished the *rite of circumambulation* from routine movements and emphasised the importance of the rite. This visible distinction is still maintained in lodges of operative freemasons and also in those lodges of speculative freemasons that follow either the Emulation working or some of the old Scottish workings. Nowadays the word *circumambulation* has almost disappeared from use in speculative craft freemasonry and *perambulation* is usually used to describe all movements on the floor of the lodge.

In the eighteenth century the development of the rituals of speculative craft freemasonry was at its peak. At that time the masonic scholars who prepared the rituals gave clear and conventional explanations of the ceremonials, which left no doubt of their intention that the *rite of circumambulation* should represent the “toilsome progress of humanity”, advancing from barbarism to civilisation and from ignorance to enlightenment. This advancement will ultimately lead us from this profane earthly existence to a state of perfection in that grand lodge above, eternal in the heavens. Although they are not identical with the rituals now worked, some of the very old catechisms and lectures clearly indicate that the early ritualists visualised the progression of candidates through the three degrees of speculative craft freemasonry as a symbolic journey from the profane world to a spiritual paradise, typified by the progress of the priests through the several compartments of King Solomon’s temple.

This progression still has a place in speculative craft freemasonry. The first degree symbolises rebirth, which is emblemsically represented by the priest stepping between the two great pillars and passing through the *ulam*, the porch or entrance at the eastern end of the temple. The second degree symbolises life, education and work, which is represented emblemsically by the priest entering the temple proper and making ritual offerings in the *hekhal*, the holy place set aside for the celebration of divine service by the priests. The third degree symbolises a victorious completion of this earthly existence, culminating in the perfection that can only be achieved by passing through that mystic veil which cannot be penetrated by human eyes, which is emblemsically represented by the High Priest entering the *debir* or *holy of holies* at the western end of the temple. The *debir* was in the form of a perfect cube and was considered to be the seat of the *Shekinah*, the dwelling place of God in the midst of his people.

By the second half of the nineteenth century *circumambulation* was no longer regarded as a purely religious or mystical practice, having acquired a new and more general usage, simply meaning to walk around or about. During the same period *perambulation* had also lost its specific meaning, because it was being used more and more frequently when
circumambulation previously would have been used to describe the movement more accurately. Over-enthusiastic ritualists then introduced the squaring of the lodge room for all movements on the floor, so that the original purpose of circumambulation ceased to be understood, or at the very least it was subjugated to the extent of becoming a mere routine, seriously detracting from the symbolism of the ceremonials.

The Influence Of Egypt

The explanation of the first tracing board states that the usages and customs among freemasons have ever born an affinity to those of the ancient Egyptians, while other statements in the rituals suggest a direct and continuous link between speculative craft freemasonry and the workforce that constructed King Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem. When the early speculative ritualists wrote the explanation of the first tracing board, the word affinity had a more specific meaning than it has today, indicating a direct descent from one to another. In fact, modern usage of the word reflects the relationship more correctly. The ritual and ceremonials that constitute speculative craft freemasonry were not derived as a unique system from remote antiquity, whether Egyptian, Hebrew or otherwise. In fact, speculative freemasonry developed progressively through the ages, as a natural consequence of the ecclesiastical environment in which succeeding generations of freemasons worked. The fundamentals of modern speculative freemasonry evolved directly and indirectly from the practices and symbolism that had been used in the earlier lodges of operative freemasons, although the speculative aspects were expanded. Thus the spiritual doctrines embodied within the masonic ritual are extremely ancient, having been influenced by the teachings of many religions from time immemorial. Foremost among those influences is the ancient religion of Egypt.

The oldest written records that we have of any of the ancient religions are those from Egypt that are known as the Pyramid Texts. These texts are the hieroglyphic inscriptions in the pyramids of Unas, of Teti and of Pepi I in particular, all of which are located in the vicinity of Saqqara and date from about 2300 BCE to about 2100 BCE, which was during the Vth and VIth Dynasties of Egypt. However, philological studies show that the original composition of these texts may be conservatively dated at least to the predynastic period from about 3200 BCE, but probably even earlier, more than two thousand years before the reign of King Solomon. These earlier texts include material very similar to that in the Book of the Dead, which was assembled from later sources, but the older references are especially significant as they have not been edited or modified by a series of successive scribes. Even so, there is a remarkable consistency in all of the known texts until the XXnd Dynasty, which flourished in about 1100 BCE, more than a century before King Solomon.

All of these texts show that the ancient Egyptian religion was founded on a belief in a circle of existence that commenced with birth in the spirit and then progressed through a life on earth. It was believed that the divine spirit Ka accompanied the earthly body, which also had a soul Ba. Earthly life was terminated with a physical death, followed by a descent into the afterworld of the terrestrial kingdom, where the heart was weighed and the soul was judged. If the soul was not found wanting, the culminating events in the circle of
existence were resurrection and ascent into the heavenly Duat, which are referred to in the following words of the Pyramid Texts of Teti:

“Rise up thou Teti. Stand up thou mighty one being strong. Sit thou with the gods, do thou that which Osiris did in the great house of Annu. Thou has received thy Sahu and thy foot shall not be fettered in heaven, nor shalt thou be turned back upon earth.”

The Sahu that must be received before resurrection and ascent into the heavenly Duat is the spiritual body that has obtained a sufficient level of knowledge, power and glory to become everlasting and incorruptible, transcending the divine spirit Ka and the soul Ba that had accompanied the body during its earthly life.

This circle of existence was central to the religion of ancient Egypt. The final stages of the circle of existence are represented ritually by progress through the various chambers in the Great Pyramid of Khufu. The entry of the soul into the afterworld begins in the Chamber of Ordeal, a subterranean chamber excavated deep into the bedrock below the pyramid, where a period of trial and probation must be completed. If the soul is judged to be acceptable as determined symbolically by weighing the heart against the feather of justice, it then ascends to the grotto known as the Well of Life, just under the base of the pyramid. There the soul must reflect upon its passage through life on earth, before being allowed to ascend into the Chamber of Regeneration and Rebirth, which is called the Queen’s Chamber in the Great Pyramid. After regeneration and rebirth, the soul must undergo a final period of purification in the Hall of Truth in Darkness, which is the Grand Gallery in the Great Pyramid. After purification the soul enters the Chamber of Resurrection, which is the King’s Chamber in the Great Pyramid, whence the Sahu or enlightened soul returns to God in the heavenly Duat, thus completing the circle of existence. The ceremonials in modern speculative freemasonry include the symbolic elements of the circle of existence.

The Influence Of The Ancient Mysteries

Ancient secret systems of teaching are generally called Mysteries, from the compound Greek word misthrion, which has a range of associated meanings including a mystery, a secret and also an initiate. The Mysteries have existed in all parts of the world and in all periods of its history. They taught suitably receptive individuals about human nature and human destiny, by imparting to their prepared minds what was then known about human life and divine things, but they were withheld from the multitude whose lack of education and understanding might profane those teachings or who might use the esoteric knowledge for perverse purposes. Such systems existed in Egypt, Assyria, Chaldea, India and China from the most ancient times. They were also used among the Hebrews, the Greeks, the Druids and the Romans in later times, for many centuries before the advent of Christianity. Even in more recent times the Mysteries were practiced, even among the early Christians and the Muslims.
The oldest *Mysteries* of which we have a detailed account are those of Isis and Osiris in Egypt, which were derived directly from Egypt’s ancient religion and therefore need no further comment. The *Eleusinian Mysteries* of Greece are possibly the best known, traditionally having been brought into Greece directly from Egypt, although historically that almost certainly is not true. In any event they were preceded in Greece by earlier *Mysteries*. Saint Epiphanius (c.315-403) was born in Palestine and became a Christian bishop of Constantia in Cyprus. He wrote extensively on various cults and heresies, which he had traced back for about eighteen hundred years before Christ. Saint Epiphanius found that those earlier Greek *Mysteries* were essentially the same as the *Mysteries* of the Persian religious leader and prophet, Zarathustra (c.630-530 BCE), who reformed the ancient Parsee religion, which was of Egyptian origin. The Muslims persecuted the Parsees in the eighth century CE, when the Parsees carried the *Mysteries* of Zarathustra into India, where they became known as Zoroastrianism. Although the form of communication has varied from age to age, the central theme of an initiation in all of the *Mysteries* has always been the *Rite of Circumambulation*.

Initiation in the ancient *Mysteries* represented a spiritual rebirth, for which the candidate was required to undergo appropriate preparation and purification. In ancient times preparation of the candidate for initiation could take many days, even weeks. It involved fasting, contemplation, stringent trials and many ablutions. During the ceremony of initiation the candidate was usually cloaked in white and conducted three times in a clockwise direction around the altar or other consecrated object. Great care was taken to follow the apparent clockwise course of the sun, which in the northern hemisphere was “*by the right*”, because the sun was a symbol of the commencement of a new life. The circuits were always commenced in the east which was regarded as the source of light, thence passing through the south to the west and returning through the north to the east, which also was esteemed as the birthplace of God and hence the logical place to seek a spiritual rebirth. Many famous persons were initiates of the ancient *Mysteries*, including Aristotle the philosopher and scientist, Euclid the mathematician, Plato the philosopher, Pythagoras the philosopher and mathematician, Socrates the philosopher, Saint John, Saint Paul and many other well known teachers.

The *Druidical Mysteries* of the ancient Celts were similar to the other ancient *Mysteries*, except that the initiate’s robe incorporated three colours that they considered to be sacred. The three colours were white which was the symbol of light, blue which was the symbol of truth and green which was the symbol of hope. The tri-coloured robe was changed to green robe towards the completion of the initiation ceremony, which was emblematical of the candidate’s expectation of further enlightenment. In the next stage, which was equivalent to the second degree in speculative craft freemasonry, the candidate wore a blue robe emblematical of his search for the truths of life. In the final stage, which was equivalent to the third degree in speculative craft freemasonry, the candidate wore a white robe emblematical of the light of knowledge that was the ultimate object of his quest. When the candidate had successfully completed the stringent trials associated with the final stage he was crowned with a red tiara, which symbolised the purification and regeneration of his soul. At the beginning of each session of worship the Druids rededicated themselves, when
the priests made three clockwise circuits around the sacred central cairn, followed by all of the worshippers and commencing from the east.

**Ancient Mysteries And Modern Religions**

Most modern religions incorporate features of the ancient *Mysteries* in their attendant ceremonial. The *Rite of Circumambulation* probably is the one most readily identifiable of those ancient usages and customs because it is the one most frequently seen. Its use is always associated with the basic religious element of consecration, as illustrated in the following examples from several different religions. The universality of the practice is reflected in the symbolic ceremonials used by operative freemasons in their lodges and still used by their successors in lodges of speculative craft freemasons, which incorporate this outward expression of purification and consecration derived from the *Mysteries* and the religious practices of their day. This highlights the fact that the squaring of the lodge in modern speculative freemasonry usually is not associated with the ceremony of purification and consecration, which therefore conceals and detracts from the symbolism of the *Rite of Circumambulation* that is an important part of the ceremonial, especially during initiation.

Brahmanism is the comparatively modern religious system practised by the Hindus. It springs from an ancient and primitive Aryan religion nearly as old as the ancient religion of Egypt. It did not have any one founder, but developed gradually over a period of almost five thousand years, during which time it absorbed and assimilated all the religious and cultural movements of India. Superficially, the Hindu religion appears to embrace a variety of gods, which undoubtedly is the way it is understood by the uneducated people of India. Nevertheless its philosophy actually encompasses a belief in one all-embracing, all-pervading and omnipresent God, with the subsidiary pantheon representing nothing more than imaginative pictures of the infinite aspects of God for the enlightenment of the uneducated masses. These aspects are revealed to the learned Hindus in the hidden or esoteric faith of their *Mysteries*. Priests and other devout Brahmans, on first rising each morning, rededicate themselves by facing the east and adoring the sun, then walking to the west by way of the south and back to the east by way of the north. During this *circumambulation* they recited, among other things:

> “I follow the course of the sun, to obtain the benefit arising from a journey round the earth by way of the south.”

This appears to be the origin of the rededication ceremony conducted by the Druids among the Indo-European Celts, who first appeared in Europe in about 1200 BCE.

Muslims who undertake the *Hadj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, are required to participate in the *Tawuf*, which is considered to be a very sacred part of the ceremonies. The *Tawuf*, or *circumambulation* of the *Kaaba*, must be carried out seven times. *Kaaba* is an Arabic word signifying a *cube*, which is a symbol of completion or perfection. The *Kaaba* is the holy building in Mecca into which the black stone is built. The black stone is reputed to
possess many virtues. The founder of Islam, the Prophet Mohammed (c 570-632), who was born in Mecca, declared that the black stone was given to Abraham by the archangel Gabriel. The circumambulation of sacred places and consecrated objects was a common practice among the animistic Semites long before the introduction of Islam. The Rite of Circumambulation was retained by the Prophet, but given a new significance, possibly as an act of reconciliation with the people of Mecca.

The reason given for the circumambulation of the Kaaba is that the Kaaba represents the celestial throne of Allah that is constantly being circumambulated by angels. This part of the pilgrimage relates to the consecration of the mind, body and soul to Allah, the one God. The belief in the one God is professed in the religion of Islam by the pronouncement “la ilaha ill’ Allah” which literally translates as “there is no God but God” and means “there is only one God”. The origin of this pronouncement is ascribed to the Prophet Mohammed himself who said that, during his journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, he had ascended through the seven heavens. Mohammed said that it was then that he beheld the mystic inscription in Arabic, “la ilaha ill’ Allah”, above the throne of God. Thenceforth the green standard of the prophet was adorned with this sentence and Muslims turned in prayer towards the Kaaba in Mecca, instead of turning towards Jerusalem. Mohammed’s vision of ascending through seven heavens is an allusion to purification and perfection, which is the symbolic reason why Muslims make seven circumambulations around the Kaaba in Mecca during their pilgrimage.

The early Christians readily adapted aspects of the ancient Mysteries to their own requirements, including the adoption of pagan festival days as their own festival days and also the ceremony of baptism. Probably the most obvious adaptation is the use of the Rite of Circumambulation in association with dedication and consecration. Two very old ceremonies, those known as “beating the bounds” in England and “riding the marches” in Scotland, both derive from the Roman practice of dedicating the boundary stones of the fields, which originated in about 700 BCE. There are existing documents, from as early as 550, recording that bishops and their clergy accompanied parishioners circumambulating the boundaries of the fields for this purpose. Gulielmus Durandus (1237-1296), the French jurist who had studied canon law and became the Bishop of Mende, describes the ceremony of consecrating a church in the thirteenth century in one of his books entitled the Speculum Judicale. He says that the bishop’s procession made three circuits clockwise around the church, during which the bishop knocked on the door after each circuit, but was admitted only on the third occasion. Bishop Durandus said:

“Rightly . . . doth the bishop strike three times, because that number is the most known and sacred; . . . without the invocation of the Trinity there can be no sacrament in the church.”

This form of ceremonial exists to the present day and is even reflected in the opening of parliaments, when the Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod knocks three times on the door of the House of Commons or House of Representatives to gain entrance for the opening of Parliament. In consecration ceremonies the chaplain circumambulates with a censer to
disperse incense, which is an ancient symbol of purification. This practice perpetuates the usage of the ancient Israelites and also is a regular practice in Christian churches.
CHAPTER THIRTEEN – THE SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT

The influence of light and darkness on the daily lives of the people was reflected in all of the ancient religions, whence light and darkness acquired a profound symbolism.

Light And Darkness

Light and darkness were phenomena of great importance to mankind in ancient times, when people revered the regular succession of day and night as tangible proof of the power of the spirits they believed were in control of their lives and actions. The influence of light and darkness on the daily lives of the people was reflected in all of the ancient religions, whence light and darkness acquired a profound symbolism from time immemorial. Contests between the good and evil principles, symbolised by light and darkness, played an important role in the mythologies of ancient cultures in all ages. As in the ancient mysteries, light and darkness also have an important place in the ceremonials of freemasonry. When appropriate to the ceremonies, candidates in freemasonry are suitably prepared so that the symbolism of light and darkness will have a lasting impression on his mind. For example, a candidate is told during his initiation that he seeks not only material light to remove his physical darkness, but also intellectual illumination that to dispel the darkness his mental and moral ignorance and to implant in his mind the sublime truths of morality and virtue.

Material light is a tangible phenomenon that occupies a unique position in the natural universe, exerting a profound influence upon its evolution and the way in which it functions. We can measure the intensity of light and the speed at which it travels and also can utilise its power. Light is comprised of electromagnetic waves in the visible spectrum, but it also exhibits the properties of the particles that make up the atoms. The fundamental particle, or quantum of light, is called a photon. The speed of light and of all other electromagnetic radiation in a vacuum is about 300,000 kilometres per second. This is the universal constant, called $c$, used in the equation $E = mc^2$ developed by the renowned physicist Albert Einstein (1879-1955) in his theory of relativity, expressing the equivalence of mass and energy. The speed of light is of special significance, because it cannot be exceeded in the natural universe. Light also is a vital element in the development and sustenance of physical life as we know it. Although intellectual illumination cannot be seen in the same way as material light, nevertheless its influence is real and can be measured in various ways. Moreover, as material light is essential to physical life, so also is intellectual illumination essential to our moral and spiritual welfare.

In contrast to material light, darkness is neither tangible nor measurable. It is merely a condition, which is the absence of light. In this respect darkness is synonymous with the absence of knowledge and truth, symbolising ignorance and falsehood. In another sense,
darkness represents the mysterious veil that surrounds death, which the eye of human reason cannot penetrate unless assisted by that spiritual light from above. A parallel in the natural universe is the black hole in space, where the force of gravity is so great that nothing can escape from it, not even light. Matter that has been drawn into a black hole behaves as if it is squeezed to infinite intensity, which is the condition that the proponents of the Big Bang say would have prevailed immediately before the creation of the universe of which our solar system is a part. Because no light can escape from black holes they cannot be seen, but they can be detected because the gases being drawn towards them become so hot that they emit X-rays. Likewise human reason and logic cannot penetrate the black curtain of death, except with the assistance of the spiritual light of pure faith. Only the strength which comes to us through pure faith enables us to approach that mysterious veil, secure in the knowledge that the spirit which inhabits our frail and transient frame will be raised to a spiritual life hereafter, when our body returns to the dust as it was.

The symbolism and rituals used in modern speculative freemasonry had crystallised before the first Grand Lodge was formed in 1717, but they were not the product of that era. Moreover, symbolism and ritual continued to be a subject of considerable argument between the “Antients” and the “Moderns” until those two persuasions were consolidated under the United Grand Lodge of England established in 1813. In reality the symbolism and rituals of speculative freemasonry evolved naturally and in many ways inevitably development of the way of life of the operative masons. For millennia the operative masons had worked closely with the priesthood of successive religions, in association with whom they were engaged in the design and construction of ecclesiastical buildings. The symbolism of freemasonry has an interesting heritage that can be traced back through the classical period of Greece and Rome to the Phoenicians, the Hebrews, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Aryan (the Sanskrit ārya, meaning noble) and many other ancient cultures. Before considering relevant aspects of the religions associated with those cultures, it would be appropriate to consider the story of the creation recorded in the Book of Genesis, because it is a synthesis of many beliefs that were widely held in the ancient world.

Light In The Creation

Light is a symbol of truth, wisdom and knowledge that plays an important role in the teachings of all ancient religions. Primordial light is a symbol of the truth emanating from the awareness generated by the union of spirit and matter in the creation, which was the beginning of the manifestation of the two great principles of light and darkness representing good and evil. The descriptions of the creation in all versions of the Bible are very similar, although the words of the Revised Standard Version probably are those with which most people are familiar. In Genesis 1:1-4 it is said that:

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said “Let there be light”; and
there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness”.

It is of interest that “a mighty wind” is substituted for “the Spirit of God” in the New English Bible, with a footnote adding that it could be read as “the spirit”. This is because the root word in Hebrew is ruha, which is formed by the characters Resh Waw Heth, signifying spirit, breath and wind, whence the well known expression “the breath has passed away” has been derived, in the context that “the spirit has left the body”. It also is interesting to note that the Biblical description of the first phase of creation could be applied with equal validity in the Big Bang theory. The initial stage of the Big Bang is considered to have taken place about 15 billion years ago, when all matter that had been compressed infinitely in a total void exploded spontaneously, producing light and energy where previously there had only been utter darkness. Moreover, if the “days” appearing in the Biblical description were used in the indefinite Hebrew context of the root word, as they appear to have been used, they could signify any of the periods of the various stages of creation instead of discrete periods of twenty-four hours. Thus “days” could be eons and the sequence given in the Bible would aptly describe the known evolution of the universe that has taken place since the Big Bang. This transposition in time would not be the negation of a belief in a Creator, but a transcendence of long held religious beliefs taking into account the continuing discoveries of modern science.

The Ancient Religion In Egypt

Most people are aware that the ancient Egyptians had a profound religion, though many probably do not have any great knowledge of it. Archaeological studies, especially those carried out since J-F. Champollion deciphered the inscription on the Rosetta stone in 1822, which enabled the Book of the Dead or Papyrus of Ani to be translated by E.A. Wallis Budge in 1895, have ensured that the hieroglyphs and iconography in Egyptian temples have become well known. A superficial acquaintance with the sacred writings and icons of Egypt gives the impression that the Egyptians had always worshipped a multitude of gods who had human bodies and the heads of animals, but in fact these icons originally were intended to illustrate the multitudinous attributes of the one god. However the pyramid texts indicate that by the Vth Dynasty, in about 2400 BCE, monotheism and polytheism were both flourishing. When the power of the pharaohs collapsed at the end of the Old Kingdom in about 2100 BCE, the priesthood progressively acquired supreme power, the substance of the true religion was lost and the grotesque and often demoniacal representations were worshipped as individual gods. Notwithstanding the inroads of polytheism, the texts show that a similar doctrine of eternal life prevailed in all periods. When the devout pharaoh Akhenaten was in power from about 1372 BCE to 1354 BCE, he declared void the supposed functions of the multitude of gods. He also removed the power of the priests and their intermediaries with the people, so that everyone could participate freely in the religion of the one absolute god and believe in the mystery of the resurrection. Unfortunately, when Akhenaten died, the priesthood regained power and religion in Egypt degenerated again.
The true religion of ancient Egypt is typified by the cosmogeny of Annu, which in the Bible was called On, the “city of the pillar”; where the benben stone was kept in the Temple of the Phoenix dedicated to Aten, called the Complete One and later identified with Ra. Annu was renamed Heliopolis during the rule of the Greek pharaohs. This cosmogeny was founded on a belief in one absolute God, who was the beginning and end of all things visible and invisible. It was believed that Ra, the Absolute Spirit or Light and Conscience of the Universe, was diffused in primordial Chaos or darkness before the creation. When Ra became aware of himself in the Great Silence, he called up his own image, Amon the Spirit of the Universe Itself. This call was the Word that was the Creative Power that caused the kingdoms of space-air or Shu and movement-fire or Tefnut to materialise. They in turn generated and separated the earth Geb from the sky Nut, to receive the creative forces of terrestrial and celestial life. They were Osiris the fertilising force and Isis the generating force, which ended the primordial Chaos and brought the universe into equilibrium. In the beginning Ra watched over humanity in the paradise of the kingdoms of Shu and Geb. Later however, like the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the forces of evil appeared as the destroying couple known as Seth and Nephthys. Ultimately Osiris and Isis overcame the repeated assaults of the forces of evil and they became the life-bearing couple that established resurrection and eternal life as it is described in the myth of Osiris.

The ancient system of religious thought and moral rectitude of the Egyptians is based on the myth of Osiris, which reflects historical events and also has a highly spiritual content. Briefly, we are told that after the fall of man Ra, who was the Absolute Spirit, became man in the form of Osiris so that he could reach mankind, which had become lost outside paradise. This event is said to have taken place at the First Sunrise of the Zep Tepi, called the First Time of Osiris, which some investigators have dated to be about 10450 BCE. In his capacity as a man Osiris lived, suffered and died like other men, leading them to an awareness of themselves and a belief in a resurrection and eternal life, which was brought about by the boundless love of the creator for the created. This belief arose because, when Osiris was slain by his brother Seth and his dismembered body was strewn all over Egypt, he was brought back to life by his sister-wife Isis. In her great love Isis searched for and ultimately found all of Osiris’ pieces, which she reunited so that he lived again. Seth was then defeated and captured by their son Horus, who was described as the first man-god to rule Egypt as a pharaoh.

The ancient Egyptian concept of death and resurrection is interesting. It was believed that when the Ka or divine spirit left Khet the body, it released the soul Ba to begin its life in the afterworld of the terrestrial kingdom. The rebirth rites began with repeated washings followed by mumification of the body. The intestines, lungs, liver and brain of those who could afford the expense were removed surgically and mumified separately in their individual canopic jars. The mumified body was then bound in intricately plaited linen wrappings into which amulets were inserted with the accompaniment of special prayers. The body, with a painted or sculptured representation of its Ba was then placed inside one or more coffins, often in the shape of the mummy itself. The coffin was decorated with a representation of the deceased person’s Ka, usually the human figure with its upper arms horizontal, forearms vertical and palms of the hands to the front. Sometimes the arms and
hands in that attitude were shown placed on top of the head. The *Book of the Dead* and various other funerary texts describe in detail how the soul was believed to pass from its earthly abode through the underworld to the heavenly Duat, to become an Osiris or star soul. Briefly, Horus performed the ceremony of “opening the mouth” to give a new breath of stellar life to the deceased. This was followed by Anubis supervising the “weighing of the heart” in comparison with a feather, the symbol of truth, to determine if the life of the deceased had made him worthy of resurrection. It was believed that if the deceased’s life was found worthy, he would become a star soul and that Anubis would guide him through the underworld and that finally, after passing through the underworld, the star soul would be conducted to the astral plane of the heavenly Duat by Upuaut, the “opener of the ways”.

The Egyptian doctrine of eternal life involved more than the simplified explanation of the relationship between the body Khet, the divine spirit Ka and the soul Ba outlined above. A theme repeated down through the ages is recorded in texts from the Vth Dynasty as “My soul is God, my soul is eternity”, which confirms the Egyptian belief that the soul of man preceded the creation and would enjoy an eternal existence in heaven in a state of glory. Texts from the Vth Dynasty onwards also say “Heaven hath thy soul, earth hath thy body”, which indicates that the body was not expected to rise again, notwithstanding the superficial evidence of the Egyptian funeral rites. The texts also indicate that the Egyptians believed that the Ka and Ba of each person had an accompanying Khaibit or shadow, more or less analogous to the Umbra that was an element of the beliefs held by the ancient Greeks and Romans. The Khaibit was believed to have an existence independent from the body and that it was free to move wherever it pleased. However it was also believed that the Khaibit was intimately associated with the soul and therefore always stayed near it. This belief is a recurring theme in the *Book of the Dead*, in relation to which the following texts are typical examples:

“Let not my soul be shut in, let not my shadow be fettered, let the way be opened for my soul and for my shadow, may it see the great God”.

“May I look upon my soul and my shadow”.

The ancient Egyptians also believed that there was another important element of the body within their concept of eternity. This was the Khu, which they visualised as a translucent and intangible casing, frequently depicted in the form of a mummy and often translated as “the shining one” or “intelligence”. In the usual context of its usage, Khu could often be translated to mean “spirit”. The following is a typical text relating to the imperishable Khu or spirit:

“Horus hath plucked his eye from himself, he hath given it unto thee to strengthen thee therewith, that thou mayest prevail with it among the spirits”.

**Other Ancient Doctrines**
Hinduism is the ancient religion of northern India that evolved and grew gradually over a period of nearly five thousand years. Its adherents refer to Hinduism as the sanatana dharma, which literally means the eternal tradition or universal truth. Superficially and in some of its forms Hinduism appears to be polytheistic, but it has a central concept of a supreme spirit, which is the essential reality or “Absolute Being” called Brahman who is represented by many divine manifestations. Chief among these manifestations is the Trimurti or divine triad comprising Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Siva the destroyer. In Hinduism Menu is depicted as the son of Brahma and the founder of the Hindu religion. In the Brahminical doctrine light and darkness are considered to be the eternal ways of life. Someone who walks in the way of light is said never to return, going on to eternal bliss. By contrast, someone who walks in the way of darkness is said to return to earth, destined to pass through further transmigrations of the soul until it has been perfectly purified by light. In his treatise entitled The Institutes of Menu, Sir William Jones describes the Brahminical code of ethics and explains that the teachings of Brahminism say:

“The world was all darkness, undiscernable, indistinguishable altogether, as in a profound sleep until the self-existent, invisible God, making it manifest with five elements and other glorious forms, perfectly dispelled the gloom”.

Contrary to the impression created by the Hebrew prophets in their fulminations against “the abominations of the Canaanites”, there are texts found since 1929 from Egypt in the nineteenth century BCE and from Ras Sharma in the fourteenth century BCE, which indicate that the elaborate pantheon and cosmogeny of the Mesopotamians were not then a feature in the Canaanite religion. The Canaanites did not attempt to explain the forces of nature and their effect on society, but declared their dependence on the gods and set out to please them. They believed there was a heavenly court ruled by a paramount king El, or simply God, who sanctioned all decisions affecting nature and society. In the myths El is described as the “Creator of Created Things” and is referred to as the “Father of Men”, and the “Kindly One” or the “Compassionate”, whence was derived the Islamic appellation “Allah the Compassionate”. In the heavenly court of the Canaanites El was assisted by Baal, who was the divine executive of his will. The Phoenicians who were living in Canaan from about 1200 BCE assimilated the local religion. They believed that the beginning of all things was a wind of black air and chaos as dark as Erebus, that dark and gloomy cavern of the lower world between earth and Hades, from which light sprang forth at the Divine command “Let there be Light”.

Many of the ancient beliefs that originated in the Near East have been absorbed into Judaism and Christianity. The stories of Cain and Abel, of the expulsion Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and of the flood described in Genesis all have counterparts in earlier Sumerian myths. In Genesis 14:18-19, God is called El Elyon when Melchizedek, as the priest of the God Most High, blessed Abram saying: “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth”. In I Kings 22:19 the prophet Micaiah says, in respect of the heavenly court: “I saw the Lord sitting on his throne and all the host of heaven standing beside him”. Again in Psalm 82:1, we read that: “God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment”. The myths of
Canaan also describe Baal’s death and descent to the darkness of the underworld, from which the concept of Satan was derived to explain the sinister reality of sin and suffering. For example, it is recorded in I Chronicles 21:1 that “Satan stood up against Israel and incited David to number Israel”, which the people believed to be the reason for the subsequent plague. A wonderful example of the symbolism of light and darkness, which originated in the Near East, is the record in Revelation 21:13-24 that “the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light . . . and there shall be no night there”.

Mithraism is an ancient religion of Persia that probably was being practised before 3000 BCE. Mithra was the Persian god of light, who represented the power of goodness and promised that his followers would be compensated after death for their sufferings on earth. Mithra is identified with the Aryan God Mitra and their characteristics are similar. The oldest available texts are from India and refer to Mitra as “a friend” who has connections with the sun and ratifies contracts. A tablet in cuneiform script from Boghas Koi in Turkey, dating from about 1400 BCE, confirms a contract between the Hittites and the Mittani, a Persian speaking tribe in Mesopotamia, in which Mithra is invoked as a god before whom an oath may be sworn. Zoroastrianism was the religion founded in the sixth century BCE by Zarathustra, a prophet and religious teacher of Persia. Zoroastrianism is still practised by the Parsees who fled from Persia after its conquest by the Arabs, when they settled in northern India. Zarathustra’s teachings reflect some aspects of Mithraism and his doctrines are also similar in many respects to those of the ancient religions of the Egyptians, the Hindus and the Canaanites. In Zoroastrianism the principle of light or goodness was called Ahura Mazda, or Ormuzd, who was the spirit of supreme good born of the purest light. The principle of darkness or evil was called Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman, who was the supreme spirit of evil called the lord of darkness and death, who sprang from utter darkness. In a story that is very similar to the Ramayana of Indian mythology, Ormuzd wages war with Ahriman until such time as all humans choose to lead good lives, when Ormuzd destroys Ahriman.

The renowned Greek philosopher, Pythagoras (580-500 BCE), travelled widely in Egypt and the Near East to acquire knowledge. He is reputed to have undergone many initiations in those countries and appears to have been influenced by Zarathustra, whom he probably met. On his return to Europe, in about 529 BCE, he established his celebrated school at Cromona in southern Italy and taught the doctrine of two antagonistic principles. The first he called unity or light, represented by the right hand and symbolising equality, stability and a straight line. The second he called binary or darkness, represented by the left hand and symbolising inequality, instability and a curved line. Pythagoras attributed the colour white to the good principle and black to the evil principle. He taught the mystical power of numbers and the principal dogma of his philosophy was the system of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls.

The mystical philosophy or theosophy of the Jews is called the Cabala, or Kabbala, derived from Kaph Beth Lamed in Hebrew, which is Kabal that means to receive. It signifies the doctrine received from the elders and is referred to as “the tradition”. The origin of the Cabala is uncertain, but there is evidence suggesting that it may have been
derived from the system of *Zarathustra*. There are traces of *Cabalistic* doctrine in the Book of Daniel, which researchers believe was compiled by an unknown author in about 165 BCE. Daniel was a Hebrew prophet and a contemporary of Ezekiel who was deported to Babylon, probably in the company of Jehoiachim in 597 BCE. Daniel was renowned for his skill in the interpretation of dreams, which may well have been derived from his knowledge of the mystical philosophy. In its modern form the doctrines of the *Cabala* are set out in writings dating from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The *Cabalists* regard the *Supreme Being* as *En Soph*, meaning the *Infinite One*, who is an absolute and inscrutable unity, having nothing without him and everything within him. In their system of cosmogeny the *Cabalists* place great emphasis on light in the creation. They teach that before the creation all space was filled with *Aur en Soph* or *Eternal Light*. They also teach that when the *Divine Mind* willed the creation, the *Eternal Light* withdrew to a central point, leaving around it an empty space in which the process of creation proceeded by means of emanations from the central mass of light. Nowadays it is mainly the Hasid sect of Orthodox Jews who base their teachings on the *Cabala*.

The Rosicrucians of the seventeenth century claimed occult powers and used the terminology of alchemy to expound their mystical doctrines, reputedly derived from Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), who adopted the name of Paracelsus. He was the famous Swiss physician, alchemist and scientist who developed the use of minerals and chemicals in medicine and introduced the use of laudanum as a pain-killer. The word *alchemy* is derived from the Arabic *al-Kimya*, which was the supposed technique for the transmutation of base metals into the noble metals of silver and gold using the “*Philosopher’s Stone*”, a hypothetical substance to which the Rosicrucians attributed the power to give eternal life. Among the Rosicrucians the Latin word *Lux*, meaning *light*, was used to signify knowledge of the object of their desire, which was a universal medium or *elixir* by means of which all truth would be revealed. This *elixir* was their “*Truth*”, which they commonly referred to as the “*Philosopher’s Stone*”. There have been claims that freemasonry was derived directly from Rosicrucianism, which has not been substantiated. Nevertheless there were several eminent Rosicrucians, including Richard Fludd and Elias Ashmole, who were prominent Rosicrucians.

*Initiation Among The Ancients*

In all of the ancient *Mysteries* the aspirant was shrouded in darkness in preparation for his reception into the full light of knowledge. The duration of the dark period varied widely between the different rites, being progressively longer as one goes further back in history. Likewise the trials and tribulations that the candidate was required to survive during his preparation were much more severe in earlier times. The candidate usually underwent purification by water, by fire and by fasting as a preliminary to the trials of his preparation, which commonly were conducted in the darkness of underground caverns. Thus it is that from the earliest times darkness became synonymous with preparation for initiation, reminding the candidate of his ignorance, of his inherently wicked nature and of the obscurity of the world in which he had been wandering aimlessly.
The initiation rites of *Mithras* were the most stringent of all. Fifty days of darkness, solitude and fasting were imposed upon the aspirant, who was subjected to fearful trials before he became entitled to admission into the light. Because the serpent shed its skin annually, it was a symbol of regeneration in those rites. Although the harshness of the trials diminished over the centuries, the rites of *Mithras* continued in one form or another until introduced into the Roman Empire as the rites of *Mithras* in the time of the Emperor Pompey, in about 68 BCE. The rites of *Mithras* overshadowed Christianity in Rome until Constantine the Great formally recognised Christianity by the Edict of Milan in 313, but their practise continued to flourish until proscribed by a decree of the Senate in 378, when the sacred cave in which they had been celebrated was destroyed by the Pretorian Prefect. It is interesting to note that in 1954 the remains of a Roman temple dedicated to *Mithras* were discovered in London.

The *Eleusinian Mysteries*, celebrated from 1800 BCE or earlier in the ancient Greek village of Eleusis near Athens, were very popular and among the most splendid. They were dedicated to the corn-goddess *Demeter*, worshipped by the Greeks as the symbol of a prolific earth. They portrayed the loss and recovery of Demeter’s beautiful daughter Persephone, esoterically teaching the unity of God and the immortality of the soul. The *Eleusinian Mysteries* comprised two stages celebrated annually, the lesser or first stage at the vernal equinox and the greater or second stage at the autumnal equinox. The aspirant was required to wait at least a year after the first stage before he could undergo the second stage. The *Lesser Mysteries* were celebrated on the banks of the river whose waters were used for the aspirant’s purification. The *Greater Mysteries* were celebrated in secret and originally required the aspirant to spend twenty-seven days in complete darkness. Later they lasted for nine days and were concluded in the magnificent temple destroyed by the Persians under Xerxes in about 480 BCE. The temple was rebuilt, but it was utterly destroyed again by Attila the Hun, the “*Scourge of God*”, in about 450 CE. The temple had three elements: a subterranean vault representing the infernal regions, a sanctuary and a holy of holies. Although the ceremonial is not known in detail, it is known that the symbolism represented a restoration from death to eternal life, in which the funereal part of the initiation referred to the loss of a life and the subsequent exaltation ceremony referred to its recovery and resurrection.

The *Druidism* of the Celts probably was first practised in about 1000 BCE and was divided into three ascending orders or grades, *Bards, Prophets* and *Druids*. The Celt’s places of worship were of various shapes including circular, oval, serpentine, winged and cruciform, respectively emblematic of the universe, of procreation, of salvation, of the movement of the Divine Spirit and of regeneration. They were constructed of earth and unhewn stones to avoid pollution from any metal tool. As *Druidism* considered it improper to attempt to confine the Omnipotent, the only roof to their temples was the *cloudy canopy*. None was permitted to enter their sacred retreats unless wearing a chain that signified their bonding within the sacred rites. The ceremonies of *Druidism* were in three distinct stages. They included physical purification by ablution, painful physical tests and stringent mental trials. The ceremonies commenced with the aspirant being confined to darkness for nine days and nights, including symbolic death within a coffin, through symbolic regeneration and concluding with his confinement in a small boat emblematic of the ark on troubled waters.
The candidate initially was clothed in a tricoloured robe of green, blue and white, colours that were considered to be sacred. When the candidate had successfully completed the first stage of the trials his tricoloured robe was changed to green, signifying hope. In the second stage he was clothed in blue, signifying truth. When he had overcome all the dangers of the third stage, the candidate had reached the summit of his perfection and was clothed in a mantle of pure white, the symbol of light. Finally he was crowned with a red tiara, symbolising the purification and regeneration of the soul.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN – THE NAMES OF GOD

God the creator is the ultimate reality beyond human comprehension, the absolute.

The Human Concept Of God

The modern English word God is identical to the Old English word signifying good, whence it is believed that the name God refers to the divine goodness. The Old English word is akin to the Old Frisian, Old Saxon and Medieval Dutch word god, the Old and Medieval German got, the German Gott, the Gothic guth and the Old Norman goth, all of which in their original usage appear to have signified “the One (the Being, hence the Deity) invoked”. Human beings have been developing their concept of God ever since the tribal religions of primitive pre-literary societies began to evolve, when the earth came to be regarded as the great sustaining mother, as expressed by Homer in Hymn 30, 17: “Earth – Mother of the Gods, the wife of the starry Heaven”. Primitive religions did not relate solely to the relationship between the visible world and the spiritual world, but constituted a way of life in which every activity of an individual and of the community had a religious significance. In many primitive societies the sun was regarded as the central source of light and life, as reflected in Rig-veda I.115-1, the hymn in which the Hindu pundits interpret the sun as representing the Supreme Being whom they called the Soul of the Universe, that is Brahman. Hindus believe that Brahman is the power from which all worlds proceed, in which all worlds subsist and into which they will finally return.

Inevitably, the human concept of God has been influenced both by the environment and by the circumstances that prevailed during the development of civilisation, but even among primitive societies some profoundly meaningful beliefs were held. The limited ability of humans to comprehend the essence or Being of God is reflected by the fact that even the scriptures of the enduring religions that are of global appeal seldom discuss the essence or Being of God, but refer almost entirely to the Attributes of God that inevitably are expressed in relation to human attributes and human knowledge. Thus the Character of God as the creator and as a moral agent is described in terms that would be applied to human beings, often with qualifications that attempt to illustrate the immanence and transcendence of God. Likewise the Will of God is expressed not only in relation to the self-determination, eternal power and universal purpose of God, but also in relation to the perceptive aspect of God by setting out those rules of moral conduct by which human beings should be governed. In this process many Names of God have been developed in an attempt to convey the omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of God. The Westminster Shorter Catechism gives this definition: “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth”.
Monotheistic Beliefs

All of the world’s great contemporary religions are fundamentally monotheistic, although many of them have beliefs concerning the deity that seem otherwise. Most of the primitive religions that preceded the contemporary religions also seem originally to have been founded on what essentially were monotheistic beliefs, even though many of them incorporated polytheistic characteristics at various stages of their development. At first sight this statement probably does not seem to reflect the codes of belief that have been defined by influential members of the various faiths, whether past or present, even when considering religions of significance in modern times. For example, the important concepts embracing the Trimurti of the ancient Hindu religion and the Trinity of the comparatively modern Christian religion, both seriously challenge what are usually put forward as the essence of monotheism. The apparent conflict undoubtedly is due in part to an inability to express esoteric concepts using mundane speech, but the underlying problem goes much deeper than that, reflecting the present inability of the human mind to grasp what it is that could constitute God. Before considering the Names of God any further it would be helpful to examine briefly some of the ancient and fundamental beliefs from which our modern religions have developed. They will be reviewed without reference to any specific religions, aspects of which are discussed later.

In the earliest records that we have of human religious thought, it is evident that even then God was conceived of as a creator. Quite naturally when regard is had to the human experience and hence concept of procreation, God was perceived to be a mother goddess who gave birth, directly or indirectly, to all things that were created. By a similar process of reasoning the earth was seen to be the sustaining medium on which human existence depended, whence it could readily be perceived as the womb of the mother goddess. Likewise, as the primitive mind could not comprehend how the mother goddess could produce offspring without first having been impregnated with life giving seed, it quite naturally followed that the life-giving warmth of the sun was perceived to be that seed and hence that the sun was the paternal counterpart of mother earth. In essence these were the fundamental aspects of all ancient religions. Hence, from the earliest time, monotheism has always embraced the concept of a bisexual deity, which usually has been envisaged as a heavenly couple rather than as a hermaphroditic entity. Many aspects of polytheism are a direct result of the concept that the deity is a heavenly couple. In a comparable sense, the rejection of creation as the result of a “big bang” event and of the processes of evolution, on the basis that they are not compatible with a concept of God as the creator, could be the direct result of a misconception of those aspects of God that spiritually, even though not physically, are fundamental to the process of creation.
The Square and Compasses Volume 2 – By Donald H. B. Falconer

The Threefold Essence Of God

Except in Islam, nearly all of the world’s great religions express a fundamental belief that the deity is a multipartite being having at least two aspects, but most commonly that God exists as a triune essence. This belief was implicit in the ancient Egyptian religion, is exemplified by the diverse aspects of the Trimurti in the Hindu religion and is the basis of the Trinity in the Christian religion. Some of these aspects will be discussed to illustrate what is meant by the triune essence of the deity. Although the Hebrew Scriptures do not develop a Trinitarian doctrine specifically, the doctrine is implicit in the revelations that are given. For example, we are told in Genesis 1:26-27 that

“God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness . . . so God created man in his own image . . . male and female created he them”.

In Job 28:23-28 the creative and controlling power of God is personified as wisdom by the statement “to depart from evil is understanding”. The scriptures repeatedly emphasise the importance of wisdom, as typified in Proverbs 12:8 which asserts that “a man shall be commended according to his wisdom”. It is interesting to note that many of the exhortations in the Book of Proverbs are almost identical with those of an Egyptian text that is at least two thousand years older, called The Wisdom of Ptah-hotep. In Exodus 31:3, Numbers 9:15-22 and Judges 3:10 the spirit of God is revealed as the source of physical strength and knowledge and as the dispenser of all blessings. This aspect of the triune essence of the deity is illustrated in the threefold blessing that Aaron gave to the children of Israel, which is the Old Testament prototype of the apostolic blessing used in the New Testament. Aaron’s blessing is recorded in Numbers 6:24-26 in the following familiar words:

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee:
The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee:
The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.”

Ancient Egyptian Concepts

The ancestors of pharaonic Egypt followed a basically monotheistic cult of the Mother Earth Goddess until about 10450 BCE, when “Planet Egypt” came into being in the ancient city of ‘Iwmw that was on Tell Hisn some 15 kilometres north-east of Cairo. ‘Iwmw was “the city of the pillar” called On in the Bible. This event was the First Sunrise, or Zep Tepi, when the ancient Egyptian religion of a one and only absolute God was born. It was believed that the Absolute Spirit, called Ra, had been diffused in primordial Chaos before the creation and until the beginning of time, when Ra became aware of himself by seeing his own image, Amon, in the Great Silence. Traditionally Ra became the Light and Conscience of the Universe at that instant, when he called his double Amon, the Spirit of the Universe, to himself with the Word or Creative Power. Then Shu or space-air and Tefnut or movement-fire became manifest and they in turn
generated and separated Geb the earth and Nut the sky, thus ending Chaos and establishing equilibrium and the environment for the creation of life.

The ancient Egyptians believed that when equilibrium had been established, terrestrial and extra-terrestrial life were created by the fertilizing force of Osiris, the seed and tree of life, in conjunction with the generating force of Isis, the fecund power, reflecting the primitive concept of the Mother Earth Goddess. Monotheistic beliefs of the Egyptian religion were explained to the illiterate peasantry through mythological gods illustrating a multitude of divine attributes. By the second half of the third millennium BCE the mythological gods had become an instrument of power for the priesthood in Egypt, which they used to exercise their control over the peasantry. During that period such a relapse from monotheism to polytheism was common in the religions of most people inhabiting the countries in the Mediterranean region, including the Canaanites, the Greeks, the Romans and even the Israelites.

According to the most recent chronologies, Akhenaten assumed the throne as Amenhotep IV and ruled as pharaoh from 1350-1332 BCE, abolishing the mythological gods and restoring the religion of one absolute God, Aten, of whom the pharaoh was a prophet. He was greatly influenced by his wife, a Mitannian princess named Nefertiti, which means “the lovely one who comes”. Akhenaten “created every man equal to his brother” and completed the pylons his father started at Karnak. He also built four temples to Aten at Thebes and then constructed his new capital city at Tell el-Amarna about 450 kilometres north of Thebes, which he called Akhetaten, meaning “the horizon of Aten”. Akhetaten became the new seat of religious power, with a peak population of about 20,000. When Akhenaten died his son assumed power as Tutankhaten, but after the priesthood had regained power they persuaded him to return to Thebes and change his name to Tutankhamen to honour Amon, the Spirit of the Universe. The city of Akhetaten was completely destroyed, a long period of anarchy and misery ensued and the deceased Akhenaten was called the “heretic pharaoh”.

There is an interesting sidelight to the relationship between the Egyptians and the Israelites and the influence that the Egyptian religion had on Judaism. In the eighteenth century it was suggested that Akhenaten was Moses who led the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, but archaeological investigations have not supported this theory. Another suggestion is that Moses was a high official in the court of Akhenaten’s father, Amenhotep III, but this also seems unlikely. The date of the Exodus cannot be determined with certainty, but the suggested periods range from as early as the Hyksos expulsion from Egypt in about 1570 BCE to as late as about 1220 BCE at the end of the Merneptah’s reign, neither of which is considered likely. As there are insufficient historical records in the Hebrew scriptures, attempts to determine the date must be made by correlating the Exodus with other events. The earliest possible date seems to be about 1440 BCE, during the reign of Amenhotep II, which is not absolutely precluded by contemporary Egyptian history.

Nevertheless, all of the available evidence suggests that a date not later than about 1300 BCE is more likely, soon after Tutankhamen’s death and possibly at the beginning of the reign of Seti I. On this basis Moses could have been born during the reign of Akhenaten,
when one of Nefertiti’s six daughters might have found Moses in the basket among the bulrushes and taken him into the royal household. Notwithstanding these possibilities, Moses almost certainly was born during the reign of the Pharaoh Seti I, during the period of the Pharaoh’s edict that every Hebrew son should be drowned in the River Nile at birth. There is considerable evidence that Moses received the classical schooling then provided in the Egyptian courts and he certainly would have been influenced by the powerful monotheistic beliefs of Akhenaten, which even then would still have been quite strong. The best evidence available indicates that the Exodus commenced during the reign of the Pharaoh Ramses II, probably in about 1280 BCE. In this context we should not forget that, even while Moses was on Mount Sinai in communion with the Lord, the Israelites made a golden calf to go ahead of them on their journey. At that time calf cults were prevalent in the delta area of Egypt where the Israelites were enslaved immediately before the Exodus.

**Hindu Concepts**

The Hindu Trimurti, from the Sanskrit meaning “of three forms”, is an expression of the interrelationship between three essential manifestations or characteristics of the Being of God. They are Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, which embody the three Gunas, from the Sanskrit meaning strand or cord. The Gunas are the three components, qualities or attributes of material nature called sattva, tamas and rajas, of which everything mental and physical consists in varying degrees. Only pure consciousness has none of these attributes. Brahma embodies rajas, the passion that creates; Vishnu embodies sattva, the goodness that maintains balance; and Siva embodies tamas, the fire that destroys. Thus the Trimurti is an expression of the creative, preservative and destructive powers that are three of the fundamental attributes of the Being of God.

Symbolically, the Trimurti is represented by three concentric equilateral triangles, in the centre of which is the sacred trilateral name Aum. This trilateral Name of God, which is Nam in Hindi and Punjabi, is a formula that Hindus and Sikhs use in an endeavour to encapsulate divine reality. The formula is repetitively chanted in the three distinct syllables of Aum that respectively point to Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, which are followed by a silence to express the attainment of Brahman, a Sanskrit word literally meaning growth or expansion. This mystical name is represented by a symbol of three concentric triangles, of which the innermost triangle represents Brahma, Vishnu and Siva; the middle represents Creation, Preservation and Destruction; and the outermost represents the three fundamental elements Earth, Water and Air. In the Adi Granth, the first volume of the Sikh scriptures, we are told that salvation does not depend upon caste, ritual or asceticism, but upon the constant meditation of God’s name and the immersion of oneself in God’s being:

*Lord, mighty River, all knowing, all seeing,  
And I like a little fish in your great waters,  
How shall I sound your depths?  
How shall I reach your shores?*
Wherever I go, I see you only,
And snatched out of your waters I die of separation.

**Taoist Beliefs**

To conclude our discussion on ancient concepts of the threefold essence of God, it would be appropriate to mention briefly the San-I in Taoism and the Trikaya in Buddhism. San-I is Chinese for “the three ones” and refers to the threefold action of the one Tao or Way. This is the central concept of Taoism, the philosophical and religious system of Lao-tzu, the old master and founding figure of Taoism who said: “Tao gave birth to one, one gave birth to two, two gave birth to three, three gave birth to all the myriad things.” The creative three may be regarded as the guardians of life and energy and may be personified as T’ai-I who is the Supreme One, Ti-I who is the Heavenly One and as T’ien-I who is the Earthly One. Alternatively they may be regarded as representing shen as the mind, ch’I as vitality and ching as the essence. The Trikaya, from the Sanskrit meaning “three bodies”, is a doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism. The doctrine says that the Buddha manifests himself in three bodies, modes or dimensions and that in their essential nature, or “first body”, all Buddhas are identical with the ultimate truth or absolute reality. The doctrine also says that Buddhas have the power to manifest themselves in celestial form, which is their “second body”. It is further held that Buddhas can project themselves into the world of suffering beings and by their boundless compassion provide what is most useful and necessary to relieve suffering.

**Christian Concepts**

The background to the development of the Christian Trinity has already been mentioned in relation to the Hebrew Scriptures, but some further explanation would be appropriate. The Christian Trinity is an attempt to understand and explain the relationship between God and the created or manifest world, more or less in the fashion of the Hindu Trimurti, the San-I in Taoism and the Trikaya in Buddhism, though perhaps with more complexity. The Trinity affirms the belief that there is only the one God, but that God actually exists in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The origins of this belief can be found in various passages from the Hebrew Scriptures, especially Isaiah 6:3 that refers to the Lord sitting upon a throne:

“And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

This belief is founded on the Hebrew Scriptures in the Old Testament and confirmed in New Testament passages such as Matthew 28:19-20, when Jesus spoke to his disciples in the mountains after the crucifixion:
"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you . . ."

The doctrine of the Christian **Trinity** has not always been the same. During the first three centuries of Christian thought only the **Father** and the **Son** were defined as being coequal and coeternal. After the Council of Nicaea in 325 the Cappodacian Fathers opposed Arianism, which held that the Son of God was a creature and not truly God. The Cappodacian Fathers were three Christian theologians all born in Cappodacia, now in modern Turkey, who were influential in the defeat of Arianism at the Council of Constantinople in 381, when they proposed the doctrine of one **Being** in three **Persons**. This doctrine of the **Trinity** was canonised by the Council of Constantinople and has remained the orthodox formulation ever since. A well-known monogram associated with the **Trinity** is **IHS**, originally an abbreviation for Jesus and comprising the first three letters of the name in Greek, *Iota eta sigma omicron epsilon sigma*, in which the *H* is the uncial or rounded form of *eta*. Later **IHS** was said to represent the initial letters of the Latin words *Iesus Hominum Salvator*, signifying *Jesus, saviour of men*. Another Christian monogram is **IHSV**, often confused with the former. This monogram comprises the initial letters of the Latin words *In Hoc Signo Vinces*, meaning “**In this sign thou shalt conquer**”, which refers to the vision the emperor Constantine had of a cross in the sky. Finally we should mention **INRI**, which in some respects may be regarded as a parallel of the Hebrew **Tetragrammaton** that will be discussed later. The monogram **INRI** comprises the initial letters of the Latin words *Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*, the inscription on the cross of Jesus meaning *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*. This inscription on the cross was also written in Greek and Hebrew.

**Islamic Beliefs**

With regard to Islamic beliefs it is important to understand that, although Islam is founded on the same traditions and truths as Judaism and Christianity, the Islamic faith maintains that there can be no subdivision of God into separate or competing aspects or beings. This is a conviction that derives from the overwhelming belief acquired by Muhammad during his long periods of isolation and prayer in a cave on Mount Hira near Mecca, which led Muhammad to postulate that if God is indeed God, then there can only be what God is, that is the **One** who is the source of all creation and the disposer of all events and lives within it. This absolute unity of God is called the **tawhid**, which is derived from the Arabic **at-tawhid** meaning “**the Unity**”, through the verbal noun **wahhada** meaning “to make one”. This explains why the unitarian beliefs of Islam are in conflict with the beliefs of the Hindu **Trimiriti** and the Christian **Trinity**. The Islamic belief in **tawhid**, not only implies that God is required to be believed to be **One**, but also implies that God’s unity must be affirmed in strenuous negation of all other beliefs. This emphasis on the **Oneness of God**, from whom all creation and life is derived, was the core element of Muhammad’s mission.

The Muslim rosary, or **subha**, consists of a **yad** or **pointer** symbolizing the “**unity of God**”, together with either ninety-nine beads or thirty-three beads to be repeated three times,
representing the “ninety-nine beautiful names of God”. These are the names of Allah in Islam, which are mostly derived from passages in the Koran. The lists vary and are divided into two categories, those of al-dhat or essence and those of al-sifat or quality. The names are further categorized as those of mercy and those of majesty or judgment. According to Muslim tradition, that is the hadith from the Arabic meaning narrative, anyone who repeats all the names of God will be assured of paradise. Typical names of God in Islam include Allah the Absolute, Allah the Knower of All Things, Allah the Light of Heaven and Earth, Allah the Mighty, Allah the Most Conclusive of all Judges. Finally, the two probably most frequently used are Allah the Beneficent and Allah the Merciful, because they introduce the Sûrahs in the Koran.

The Names Of God In Hebrew

Many of the Hebrew names of God, of which there are twenty-six or more, have a prominent place in the teachings of freemasonry. The Hebrew names of God comprise two broad groups. One group includes the basic or personal names of God and the other includes names intended to define some of God’s attributes and characteristics. El is the primitive generic word for God in the Semitic languages, from which the Aramaic Elah was derived. The Arabic Ilah usually written as Allah in English, as well as the Akkadian Ilu, also were direct derivatives. El was the personal name of the supreme God of the Canaanite pantheon, the “high God” whose son was Baal. Both El and Baal are referred to in the earliest Ugaritic texts of Ras Shamra, an ancient city of the Middle East. The Elohim, the plural noun for El or Eloah the “Lofty One”, were the early Gods of Canaan brought in from Mesopotamia, “the land between the rivers”. El, which means mighty, strong and prominent, became a Canaanite proper noun as well as signifying a god in the widest possible sense. In Hebrew the title El or Yod Ayin Lamedh is used to signify a god in the widest sense, while the title Baal or He Beth Ayin Lamedh means master, possessor or husband.

El was worshipped by the descendents of Jacob in the early years of their settlement in Canaan and it became one of the most prominent names for the God of Israel. As well as being a personal name of God, El was also revered by the Israelites for his conceived relationship to places and for the many powers he was perceived to possess. In this context el elohe Israel was the altar that Jacob erected when he first settled near Shechem, in Canaan. That title, which signified “God, the God of Israel,” became one of the important names of God to the Israelites. There are many other associated names of God, but one of the best known probably is El Shaddai, which means God almighty. Others important names include El Elyon, meaning God most high; El ‘Olam meaning the enduring God; and El Berit meaning the God of the covenant. The name El also appears as Elohim, often being used as an emphatic plural to reinforce the creative and governing power of God and to emphasise the omnipotence and sovereignty of God. The name Elohim is frequently translated as Almighty God, the name given to the Son and Messiah promised in Isaiah 9:6-7. Wider aspects concerning the adoption of El as the name of God by the Israelites, as well as its relationship with what probably has become the most widely known Hebrew name of God, are discussed in some detail in relation to the Ineffable Name.
The Ineffable Name, also called the Tetragrammaton, was a name of God that developed as one of the utmost importance to the Israelites in later times. The Tetragrammaton, from the Greek words tetra meaning four and gramma meaning letter, was a mystic symbol or holy monogram that Abraham, the ancestor of the Hebrew nation and its first patriarch, introduced from Mesopotamia. Among the people in the lands of the Fertile Crescent, the four characters of their mystic symbol represented the tetrad or Heavenly Family comprising the Father, Mother, Son and Daughter, respectively El, Ashtoreth, Ba'al and Anath. In his book entitled The Hebrew Goddess Raphael Patai, an eminent Semitic scholar, says the four consonants Yod He Waw He that form the Ineffable Name represent the four members of that Heavenly Family in the order set out above. The four consonants comprising the Tetragrammaton eventually became an acronym that formed the Hebrew stem of the title that the Talmudists assigned to the One God, which they called the Shem Hamphorasch or Separated Name. Because the Israelites were not permitted to pronounce the Ineffable Name aloud, Adonai or Yod Yod or some other name was substituted. The name Jehovah is not only regarded as having predominantly male characteristics, but also represents a vengeful god typified by the exhortation in Exodus 21:23-25, which says:

“And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

Before considering the derivation and structure of the Ineffable Name and some of the characteristics attributed to it, a review of events concerning the female components of the heavenly tetrads would be appropriate. By the time the Exodus from Egypt had begun under the leadership of Moses the female duo in the heavenly tetrads, Ashtoreth and Anath respectively the wife and daughter of Jehovah, was called the Shekinah. The title is a derivative of Shin Kaph Nun, which is a Hebrew word of Chaldean origin meaning to rest, to abide or to dwell. The Shekinah was the glory or presence of God “dwelling” in the midst of the Israelites. The Shekinah originally was said to dwell in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle that Moses erected after he had received the Lord’s command on Mount Sinai. We are told in Exodus 40:34-35 that when Moses had finished and furnished the tabernacle:

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

Later the Shekinah was said to dwell in the Holy of Holies of the temple that king Solomon built in Jerusalem, which is described as a temple of Ashoreth. The Shekinah was regarded as the feminine portrayal of the Holy Spirit and the personification of Wisdom, compensating for all vengeful actions of Jehovah. This aspect of the Shekinah is extolled in Proverbs 8, which says:
“Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice? . . . Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. . . . The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride and arrogancy and the evil way . . . I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. . . . When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass on the face of the depth: . . . When he established the clouds above: . . . Hear my instruction and be wise and refuse it not. . . . Blessed is the man that heareth me, . . . For those who findeth me findeth life and obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul; all they that hate me love death.”

With regard to the Tetragrammaton, the unpointed Hebrew characters usually are written in English as JHVH, which is transcribed as Jehovah. However, the more correct transliteration is YHWH, which is transcribed as Yahweh. The name is derived from the Hebrew verb havah meaning to be or being, which is very similar to the verb chavah meaning to live or life, in which a heth replaces the first he in havah. In the Bible Jehovah is usually translated as LORD, to distinguish it from the substitute word Adonia, which is also used quite frequently. The name Jehovah first appears in Genesis 2:4 as Jehovah-Elohim and it is used in that form to the end of the third chapter, except in the story of the temptation where only Elohim is used. The reason for this differentiation appears to be of a spiritual nature. Thereafter either or both names are used, sometimes alone and sometimes together in a sentence.

The first syllable of the Ineffable Name is Jah, which is a name of God often found in poetry, as in Psalm 68:4 where we read “extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH”. The substitute name Adonai also is used as a common name, variously translated as master, sir and lord, frequently used in the Bible to signify one or another of these titles, though most commonly meaning master. Nor should we overlook the passage in Exodus 3:13, when God revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush saying ‘ehyeh ‘aser ‘ehyeh, which signifies “I AM THAT I AM”. There also is Jehovah-tsidkenu, another descriptive Hebrew name of God meaning “Jehovah our righteousness”, which is the name used in Jeremiah 23:5-6 to foretell the coming of the Messiah. All of these and several other names used in the Hebrew Scriptures are explained in great detail in a book entitled Names of God by Nathan J. Stone.

The Cabalists revere the Ineffable Name and have analysed its meanings in several ways. Cabala or Qoph Beth Lamedh, from the Chaldaic root meaning to receive and Kabala or Kaph Beth Lamedh, from the Arabic Qabala, meaning to twist, are alternative names used in reference to an esoteric Jewish traditional history of light and knowledge that sets out to explain the ancient Sumerian “Table of Destiny”, also called “The Book of Raziel”. The Cabala or Kabala must not be confused with the Kabbalah, a comparatively modern interpretation of the Hebrew texts that is based almost entirely on material values instead of setting out philosophical and mystical explanations of the texts in the manner adopted in the original treatises. The Cabala examines many complex subjects, including a detailed consideration of various esoteric interpretations of the Tetragrammaton. The English transliteration of the Tetragrammaton is equivalent to IHOH which, when read backwards
and subdivided, forms the words \textit{Ho} and \textit{Hi}. This is considered by the Cabalists to be a very important transposition. The Hebrew words \textit{Ho} and \textit{Hi} respectively signify \textit{He} and \textit{She}, therefore mystically denoting both the male and the female aspects of the Creator, elsewhere represented in freemasonry by the \textit{point within a circle}. The dual gender of the Creator has permeated all major religious systems since ancient times. All Hebrew names of God have one or more meanings and \textit{Ho-Hi} is no exception, because as well as denoting the \textit{Male and Female Principle} it also signifies an important attribute and another vital principle:

\textit{The Author of Time and the Arbiter of the Tide of Events; and The Eternal and Absolute Principle of Creation and Destruction.}

It is important to realise that the \textit{Names of God} in Hebrew were almost entirely derived from the names of deities used by the various tribes and nationalities that lived in the \textit{Golden Crescent} to the east of the Mediterranean Sea before the Israelites lived in Egypt. It also is important not to overlook the significant influence that the Egyptian culture had on the Hebrew culture during their sojourn of more than 400 years in Egypt prior to the Exodus. All of these aspects are examined in great detail by Laurence Gardner in his informative book \textit{Genesis of the Grail Kings}, subtitled \textit{The Pendragon Legacy of Adam and Eve}, which throws a great deal of light on many of the interpretations that have been discussed in this chapter.

\section*{Comparisons}

It is interesting to compare the similarity in concept between the Mesopotamian tetrad or \textit{Heavenly Family} of \textit{Father}, \textit{Mother}, \textit{Son} and \textit{Daughter}, respectively \textit{El}, \textit{Ashtoreth}, \textit{Ba’al} and \textit{Anath}, with the triad of the Egyptians comprising \textit{Osiris} the \textit{Father}, \textit{Isis} the \textit{Mother} and \textit{Horus} the \textit{Son}. However, the Hindu \textit{Trimurti} of \textit{Brahma}, \textit{Vishnu} and \textit{Siva} is quite different, because it projects three essential manifestations of the \textit{Being of God} that are all male. In that regard the Hindu \textit{Trimurti} is more akin to the comparatively recent Christian \textit{Trinity} of \textit{Father}, \textit{Son} and \textit{Holy Ghost}, which was only established as a doctrine by the Council of Nicea in 325 CE. Likewise the \textit{San-I} or \textit{the three ones} in Taoism and the \textit{Trikaya} or \textit{three bodies} in Buddhism are very similar in concept to the three-fold aspects of the deity that are embodied in the Hindu \textit{Trimurti} and the Christian \textit{Trinity}. All of those concepts, however, are significantly different from the perception of God as an absolute and indivisible unity, which is stressed in the Islamic belief in \textit{tawhid} that emphasis the \textit{“Oneness of God”}, as repeatedly proclaimed by the muezzin when calling Moslems to prayer.

\section*{The Names Of God In Freemasonry}

In the foregoing discussions all of the attributes and names of God are relevant in one or more branches of freemasonry. As in all religions and religiously oriented societies,
Freemasonry uses many different appellations when referring to God, some clearly referring to the craft as it was practised by operative free masons and others that are of a purely religious character. The similarity of the names used in the various religions and those used in freemasonry will be immediately evident. As every freemason must profess a belief in God, it logically follows that the blessing of God is invoked for the candidate at the beginning of each ceremony in which he is about to participate. The blessing of God is also invoked at the opening and closing of every meeting in a lodge, chapter, council or other masonic body. The name of God is also used when appropriate to the instructions being imparted in the ceremonies being worked. The appellation for God most frequently used in speculative craft freemasonry is the Great Architect of the Universe. Other appellations frequently used in various other branches of freemasonry include the Great Architect of Heaven and Earth, the Grand Geometrician of the Universe, the Grand Superintendent of the Universe, the Great Disposer of All, the Supreme High Priest of Heaven and Earth and the Sovereign of the Universe. The connotations of these descriptive titles and of the many others used are self-evident.
CHAPTER FIFTEEN – THE SYMBOLISM OF COLOURS

Colours can possess deep significance, transcending their purely decorative values. Mythology and ancient records are replete with examples of colours used as symbols.

Light and colour

Light is part of the electromagnetic spectrum, which includes radio waves, infrared radiation, visible light, ultraviolet radiation, X-rays and gamma rays. The range of possible wavelengths or frequencies in the electromagnetic spectrum is limitless. The electromagnetic waves are oscillating electric and magnetic fields that travel through space at the speed of light, which is almost 300,000 kilometres per second. Light is considered to exhibit wave and particle properties, in which the fundamental particle or quantum of light is called a photon. White light contains the complete range of the wavelengths comprising visible light, all at the same intensity.

When refracted through a prism, white light is diffused into a spectrum of colours having wavelengths ranging from about 400 nanometres at the beginning of the violet band and increasing to about 770 nanometres at the end of the red band, where a nanometre is one thousand millionth or 10^-9 of a metre. The seven colours of the spectrum in sequence from the shorter to the longer wavelengths are violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. Within this spectrum an infinite range of shades and densities is possible. Colour is determined by the wavelength of the visible light emitted or reflected from an object. When a surface is illuminated some parts of the white light are absorbed and other parts are reflected, depending upon the molecular structure of the material and the dyes present in it.

An object that appears to be white is one that absorbs the minimum and reflects the maximum of light rays, therefore remaining relatively cool. An object that appears to be black is one that absorbs the maximum and reflects the minimum of light rays, therefore becoming relatively warm. An object that appears to be red absorbs light from the violet end of the spectrum and reflects light from the red end. Colour is a significant feature of the universe that has many practical applications, as well as being important aesthetically. It can have a profound influence on the human temperament, from cooling to warming, from soothing to stimulating and from calming to exciting.

In a practical sense colour enhances perspective and definition, probably best illustrated by comparing a photograph in black and white with one of the same subject in full colour, which adds depth of field and brings the scene to life. Colour also is valuable in wild life, serving to attract or repel with important consequences. Even in plant life and in the inanimate world colours have their uses, which range from the production of chlorophyll by leaves under the influence of sunlight, to the differential breakdown of rocks by
weathering. Colour also is invaluable in the exploration of outer space, when interpreting information obtained by photographs, by laser ranging, by optical telescope and by radio telescope. Indeed, every aspect of man and his environment is influenced by colour.

Language is often enhanced by references to colour. For example, the use of the expression "colourful language" to describe a particular passage of the spoken or written word implies that it is neither ordinary nor monotonous, but that it stirs the imagination by incorporating interesting and picturesque phrases. When a proposal for consideration is "set out in black and white", this means that all of the factors for and against the proposal are clearly defined without ambiguity, thus avoiding "grey" or uncertain areas that could be misunderstood. When people are said to view the world through "rose tinted spectacles", it means that their outlook is optimistic even though the circumstances may be discouraging. By way of contrast, when people are said to believe that "the grass on the other side of the fence is always greener", it suggests that they are dissatisfied with their circumstances and believe that others are always better off than themselves, whence envious people are said to be "green eyed". These are only a few examples of the way in which the attributes of colours are used to convey particular shades of meaning.

**Colours In Ancient Cultures**

Colours can possess deep significance, transcending their purely decorative values. Mythology and ancient records are replete with examples of colours being used as symbols to convey important cultural and religious concepts. In Hinduism, the primordial Way of the people of India combines religious beliefs, rites, customs and daily practices, in which white signifies a state of cleanliness. Hindu men wear a white garment at their wedding and if they are very strict throughout the remainder of their lives. In deference to the cleanliness of the deceased, Hindu women wear a white sari when in mourning. Among the Parsees of India and the Farsi of Iran, who are the faithful or Zardushti of the ancient Zoroastrian religion whose three principles or standards of life are Purity, Uprightness and Truth, white is the colour of purity and is worn by men and women alike. In China, Confucius insisted that scrupulously clean clothes of white linen should be worn when fasting, even though from ancient times white had been the traditional colour worn in mourning.

Those Buddhist monks in Tibet who are adepts in tumo, which is the skill of controlling their inner heat regardless of the cold, wear only a white cotton shirt even in the severest winter weather, as a mark of their accomplishment. In Japan from ancient times white was the symbol of death and traditionally a bride still wears white, to show that after her wedding she is dead to her family, thenceforth belonging to her husband alone. Brides in other cultures also wear white, but as a symbol of purity, innocence and virginity. In the ancient Mysteries, including the Osiric of Egypt, the Mithraic of Persia, the Cabiric of Thrace, the Adonisian of Syria, the Dionysiac and Eleusinian of Greece and the Druidical of the Celts, the aspirants all wore a white cloak at some stage of the ceremonies to signify their cleanliness, their innocence or their perfection.
Although white was more widely used as a religious or cultural symbol than any other
colour in antiquity, other colours also were important emblems. In Hinduism red is a
symbol of the lifeblood and it is the colour most frequently associated with women, who
wear red saris at their weddings and are cremated in red cloths. A Hindu woman wears a
bindi or tilak, the red spot in the centre of her forehead, to show that she is Shakti the
feminine power or manifestation of the creative principle. The bindi is also the Third Eye
that Gautama Buddha wore on his forehead and is depicted on images of saints. In ancient
China red was a symbol of the ambition and power of the lower self, which was worn or
used as a decoration as an emblem of good luck, as it still is.

Among the ancients red signified fire and was an emblem of the purification and
regeneration of the soul, in which sense a candidate who had reached the summit of his
perfection in the Druids was crowned with a red tiara. Green also was an important colour
that was adopted as a symbol of the astral plane, which is the plane of growth through
desire. In the Mysteries of ancient Egypt, the serpent Apep who was an inhabitant of the
earthly Duat was depicted in green. Apep signified the illusory and transitory state of all
things in the lower plane, which is gradually recognised by truth in the form of the soul,
ultimately ridding the soul of all impious desires. Among the ancient Egyptians black was
used in the negative sense to signify darkness, ignorance and evil, but they also used black
in the positive sense to in dicate the unknown or the potential for development. Green, blue
and white were sacred colours to the Druids and respectively signified hope, truth, and
light.

**Colours In Ancient Egypt**

Although several examples have been given of colours as symbols in ancient Egypt, they
alone do not adequately illustrate the importance of symbolism to the Egyptians. In his
interesting book entitled Symbol & Magic in Egyptian Art, Richard H. Wilkinson
examines the importance of symbolism in all aspects of Egyptian life. He introduces the
subject with the following statement:

"Egyptian painting and sculpture were symbolically oriented to a degree rarely equalled by
other cultures, for it was mainly through symbols that the Egyptians sought to represent
many of their ideas and beliefs about the nature of life and death."

His book covers all aspects of Egyptian symbolism, with chapters on form, size, location,
materials, colour, numbers, hieroglyphs, actions and gestures. Colour is of particular
importance in its own right, but it also complements most other forms of symbolism,
especially hieroglyphs. This relationship is emphasized in a passage from the Book of the
Dead that says "Bring me a water-pot and palette from the writing-kit of Thoth and the
mysteries which are in them".
Colours As Modern Symbols

All of the colours that were significant in ancient cultures are still important symbols. The descendants of those ancient cultures usually assigned a similar significance to a colour as that attributed by their forebears, even though the symbolism of a particular colour did not always develop in the same way among people of different cultures. Colours are as important in speculative freemasonry as they were in the ancient Mysteries, the ancient religions and modern religions alike. Although there is a recognisable arrangement of colours in speculative freemasonry, the system of colours that are in use was not designed specifically as an overall scheme or science of colours, such as those deriving from some of the ancient religions and found in some other orders of freemasonry.

Nevertheless the colours of vestments, ornaments, furniture and decorations in speculative freemasonry have not been adopted arbitrarily, but have been selected with regard to their symbolism either in relation to a moral lesson being imparted, or in reference to an historic event of importance in the ritual. Although the rituals of some of the orders and degrees in speculative freemasonry do include references to the relevant colours and explain their significance, the reasons for the presence of a particular colour must often be inferred from the circumstances. A review of the symbolic significance of the important colours, with appropriate references to their usage from antiquity to the present day, will assist in an understanding of their masonic symbolism.

White was the most ancient and the most widely diffused of the symbolic colours. It was used in all the ancient Mysteries and is still used in many religious orders. White represents light and is a symbol of truth, wisdom and knowledge, in which context a new Jerusalem is promised in Isaiah 60:1 which says: "Arise, shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you". White also is an emblem of purity and innocence. Thus the clothing of a person in ceremonial robes of white, not only in the ancient Mysteries but also in modern religious rites, is intended to signify that the lusts of the flesh have been cast off, that previous sins have been cleansed and that the person is obligated thenceforth to maintain a spotless life, thus symbolising spiritual purification. From time immemorial it has been customary to swathe the dead in white, alluding to the triumph of the soul over the empire of death and symbolising rebirth or resurrection. For this reason the mourners in many ancient cultures wore white at funerals, contrasting starkly with the wearing of black in modern times to indicate the sadness of the mourner. In this context black lacks the deeper philosophic and symbolic significance of white. White also is emblematic of the earth from which we derive our nurture and to which our mortal bodies will return at the end of our earthly existence.

Black is primarily a symbol of darkness, of ignorance and of evil. It also is used to signify disapproval, as when depositing a black ball in a ballot box. Black also is as an ancient emblem of grief and sorrow. However, it is important to realize that black, or darkness, is not used invariably to signify a bad or negative sense, because from ancient times black also has had a higher aspect that indicates the unknown or potential for development. For example, to the ancient Egyptians darkness was the mystery of all mysteries, beyond all intellectual conception and hence it was symbolic of the First Principle, the Complete One,
which was the Absolute and Unknowable Spirit. In the Muslim faith, the black stone of the Kaaba in Mecca is a symbol of the Indwelling Spirit and it represents a temple or house of God, which is a similar symbolism to that of Psalm 18:11, which says of the Lord: "He made darkness around him his hiding place and dense vapour his canopy." The following quotation from Exodus 19:9 illustrates yet another use of black, or darkness, which is as a symbol of silence and secrecy, because we read that the Lord said to Moses:

"I am now coming to you in a thick cloud, so that I may speak to you in the hearing of the people, that the people may hear when I speak with you . . .".

Blue is an ancient emblem, which is derived from the colour of the vault of heaven and is often used as a symbol of heaven. The ancient Egyptians revered blue as a sacred colour, symbolising an exalted and heavenly stature. In the Trimurti, which is the divine triad of Hinduism, Vishnu the preserver is depicted in celestial or sky blue to indicate that all wisdom emanates from God. The Babylonians regarded blue as a symbol of the Deity. The high priests of the Israelites wore robes of blue and other parts of their accoutrements were decorated with blue, signifying perfection. The Jewish historian and general, Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE), who became a Pharisee and commanded the Jews in their revolt against Rome from 66 CE, said that the blue in the veils of the tabernacle of the nomadic Israelites represented the element of air, alluding to purification and perfection. The Hebrew word used for the blue in the veils of the tabernacle is Tau Kaph Lamed Tau, or tekelet, which actually signifies purple-blue or Cerulian purple, although usually translated as sky blue. Tekelet is derived from another word Tau Kaph Lamed Yod Tau, or tekelēt, which implies perfection because it indicates a purpose or end. The Druids regarded blue as a symbol of truth, whilst the medieval Christians considered it to be an emblem of immortality and a symbol of perfection, hope and constancy. Blue has retained all of its ancient meanings over a range of circumstances, but it is especially a symbol of the intellect, of universal friendship, of benevolence and also of the mildness and fidelity that ought to characterise every freemason.

Red, crimson and scarlet are sometimes considered to be equivalent colours and all are universally regarded as an emblem of faith, but as symbols they also have individual meanings. Red has been used as an emblem since antiquity, when it usually signified fire and was an ancient symbol of regeneration and the purification of souls. In this context the phoenix was said to have risen from the ashes. Crimson also is an emblem of purification and regeneration. Scarlet is a symbol of celestial truth, which is alludes to the cleansing effect of fire. In the Egyptian Mysteries both red and scarlet were symbols of energy and life. In Hinduism red signifies blood, which is the life source and therefore symbolises the creative principle.

From ancient times the Chinese considered red to be a symbol of ambition and power, which is why red has always been an emblem of good luck to them. The ancient Israelites considered red to be a colour of dignity, appropriate to the most opulent and honourable persons, in which sense it was used to embellish the accoutrements of high priests and prophets and was the colour of the cloaks worn by the rulers of Israel. The red in the veils of the tabernacle represented fire and alluded to the purification and regeneration of the
souls of those who sought atonement. The Druids also regarded red as a symbol of the purification and regeneration of the soul. Finally, red is used as an emblem of bloodshed and also is emblematic of fervency and zeal.

Purple is a blend of blue and red which combines the characteristics of those colours. It is an ancient symbol of wisdom and celestial good and is also called the "robe of glory" referring to the soul. Purple has been regarded as a colour of dignity from time immemorial. In ancient times purple became an emblem of exalted office and nowadays it is the insignia of regal and supreme authority. Notwithstanding its appropriation to high office, purple is also considered to be a symbol of friendly union. This interpretation is especially appropriate because the Hebrew word for purple is Aleph Resh Gimel Mem Nun, or argaman, which is derived from Resh Gimel Mem, pronounced ragam or regem, one meaning of which means a friend. The purple in the veils of the tabernacle was emblematic of water and also symbolised constancy in spiritual combats, because blue signifies fidelity and red signifies war. Purple thus reminded the worshippers that they should steadfastly pursue the truth, in which sense purple is akin to blue and green. The famous Tyrian purple was costly to produce, on which account purple also became a symbol of luxury and power.

Green was an important symbol in the religion of ancient Egypt, in which Ptah was a personification of the creative force of the one absolute God who had a thousand faces and a thousand manifestations, of which Aten was regarded as the Complete One, later identified with Ra who was regarded as the Absolute Spirit and the Light and Conscience of the Universe. As the creative force, Ptah was known as the divine potter and worked in conjunction with Thoth, who was a personification of the divine intelligence and the instructor of men in the sacred doctrines of the truth. Both Ptah and Thoth were usually depicted with green flesh in the hieroglyphic records, whence green became a symbol of truth and the immortality of the divine spirit. This is why the evergreen bay tree symbolises the immutable nature of truth and a sprig of evergreen acacia symbolises hope for a moral resurrection and the immortality of the soul.

The Druids name derives from the Greek drus, meaning an oak. They regarded the evergreen oak tree as sacred and as an emblem of the immortality of the soul and of the doctrine of reincarnation that they taught. One of the Druidic rites was to cut a piece of mistletoe from an oak, because they considered it to be a cure for various ailments of old age. To the Druids green also was a symbol of hope. The green olive branch has been an emblem of reconciliation, peace and tranquillity from time immemorial. Green also was an emblem of victory in ancient times, from which arose the custom of presenting a wreath of aromatic evergreen laurel leaves to victorious athletes in the classical age. It is in this context that the green bay tree, the evergreen acacia, the evergreen oak tree and its mistletoe and the evergreen laurel leaves all signify the victory of the soul over mortal death and hence they allude to the immortality of the soul.

As yellow is derived from the sun, it is considered to be one of the most exalted colours and gold, which it also represents, is considered to be the most noble of the metals. Gold and also its substitute yellow, both signify love, constancy, dignity and wisdom. Gold also
is a symbol of spiritual qualities and of the endowments of the soul that are above the mental plane. Gold also signifies the divine light of wisdom and celestial truth, which is the condition implied in Revelations 21:18 that says: "And the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass". Yellow also is a symbol of kingship and supremacy over lower nature. However, like black, yellow is a colour that can be applied in a good or a bad sense. In the bad sense yellow is used to denote jealousy, cowardice or treason, for which reason Judas is usually depicted wearing a yellow robe in medieval paintings and stained glass windows. Orange is allied to yellow and gold and its symbolism is similar, but tinged with the fervency and zeal of its red component.

Silver is an emblem of the moon, which is the passive satellite of the earth. Silver is complementary to gold, which is an emblem of the sun, the active centre of our solar system. Silver symbolises the mental powers with which man is blessed. They comprise his passive or inner aspect, contrasting with and complementing the active aspect of his physical nature. Silver also alludes to the power of speech. The association between our mental powers and the divine light of wisdom is illustrated in the description of God's unfathomable wisdom given in Job 28:1-3 which says:

"There are mines for silver and places where men refine gold; where iron is won from the earth and copper smelted from the ore; the end of the seam lies in darkness and it is followed to its furthest limit".

In violet the red symbol of life is tinged with the blue of truth, perfection and immortality. In this context violet is an ancient symbol of mourning used by persons of high rank. Closely allied with violet is the rainbow, which is a symbol of the higher mental plane that forms a bridge between heaven and earth. The rainbow is an emblem of preservation and salvation and hence is an appropriate symbol of the divine promise that was given to Noah by God, as recorded in Genesis 9:12-14 in which God said:

"This is the sign of the covenant which I establish between myself and you and every living creature with you, to endless generations: 'My bow I set in the cloud, sign of the covenant between myself and earth. When I cloud the sky over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud.' Then will I remember the covenant which I have made . . .".

**Colours In Freemasonry**

Modern speculative freemasonry includes, extends and greatly amplifies the content of the symbolic instruction that previously was given in lodges of operative freemasons. In one sense speculative freemasonry is the theoretical application of the operative art, although not in the sense that the operative freemason applied practical theory to solve the problems associated with the design and construction of buildings. Modern speculative freemasonry has many branches. One branch comprises a number of traditional degrees relating to the temples at Jerusalem, which are the basis of speculative craft freemasonry. Another important branch is the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, which is called Rite masonry under various titles. Rite masonry comprises a comprehensive series of degrees that
include the old Rite of Perfection and extend its teachings. The Royal Order of Scotland, the Knights Templar, the Knight Templar Priests, the order of Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine, the Allied Masonic Degrees and several other orders and branches of freemasonry extend the teachings established in speculative craft freemasonry.

Each of the several branches of speculative freemasonry has one or more colours that are characteristic of it. The characteristic colours of a branch of freemasonry are symbols that are relevant either to the underlying themes of the work being carried out, or to the symbolic environment in which the work is taking place. The characteristic colours usually feature in the regalia of its culminating degree, or in that of another degree in which the work is central to the theme of that branch. These colours may be used, for example, in a cloak or mantle that is worn, or in the ribbon of a jewel, or in an apron. In many branches it also is customary to print the notice papers for meetings in the characteristic colours of those branches. There also are colours that are symbolic of particular functions or conditions relevant to the work of a degree, which are specifically explained in the ceremony. In all of these applications the symbolisms are similar to those that have already been discussed. Another way in which colours are used in speculative freemasonry is as a distinguishing emblem in the regalia of the Grand Lodge or other ruling body of the branch of freemasonry concerned.

**Characteristic Colours**

Blue is the fundamental colour of ancient, free and accepted masonry, or that branch of speculative freemasonry commonly called craft freemasonry and meeting in what are known as blue lodges. Blue is the fundamental colour because, as a symbol of universal friendship and benevolence, it is intended to remind every brother that in his breast these virtues should be equally extensive. The degrees of craft freemasonry are the basis of speculative freemasonry and are a prerequisite for membership of all branches of freemasonry. Capitular freemasonry is an extension of craft freemasonry and relates to the rebuilding of the temple and symbolically to the rebuilding of life. It is typified by the colour red and meets in Royal Arch Chapters, commonly called red lodges. Cryptic masonry is concerned with a secret vault and interconnects the themes of craft and royal arch masonry. Its meetings are held in a Council convened by the king and its characteristic colour is purple in allusion to the royal setting.

Purple also is a reminder of the close and harmonious relationship that should be maintained between the blue and red lodges. The traditional degrees are completed in Councils of Knights of the East and West and also in some of the Allied Masonic Degrees, which extend the theme of the temples at Jerusalem to the time of Cyrus and include the building of the second temple. Green is the characteristic colour of the Council degrees, which is most appropriate because the theme is deliverance and reference also is made to the waters of Babylon, by which the children of Israel sat down and wept. The rainbow is the typical colour of the associated degree of Royal Ark Mariner, which has been worked for centuries and may be regarded as a foundation degree in freemasonry.
The thirty-three degrees of Rite masonry are in groups relating to different themes, each of which has its characteristic colour. Green is the characteristic colour of the first fourteen degrees of the Rite, which begin with the preparatory degrees of the craft lodge and continue the story of King Solomon's temple at Jerusalem until its destruction. In this group green is a symbol of the immutable nature of truth that will flourish forever in immortal green, like the green bay tree. Green is also an emblem of victory and it is a symbol of the moral resurrection of the candidate, teaching him that he should be dead to vice and hope to revive in virtue. The next four degrees of the Rite are concerned with the construction of the second temple by Zerubbabel, which is followed by the erection of the third temple after the destruction of the second. The characteristic colour of these degrees is rose red, which is a symbol of love and like ruby also is a symbol of the higher qualities of the mind. Then follows a series of twelve degrees that are of a chivalric nature and culminate in a degree referred to as Kadosh, from the Hebrew Kaph Daleth Shin, which signifies holy or consecrated. There is a common theme in the Knights Templar and the Kadosh degrees, for which the characteristic colours are white and black, in allusion to consecration and in commemoration of the martyrdom of an important character in the narrative. White is the characteristic colour of the three culminating degrees of the Rite, in which equity, justice, purity and holiness are the predominant themes.

There is a tradition that in ancient times a primitive lodge in Jerusalem was dedicated to St John the Baptist, later to St John the Evangelist and finally to both Saints John, although neither is known to have had any special relation with building or masonry. Modern masonic lodges are said figuratively to have descended from that lodge in Jerusalem. The early speculative craft freemasons adopted the two Saint Johns as their patron saints and held their installments twice yearly in June and December, on the festivals of the Baptist and the Evangelist respectively. The Royal Order of Scotland was established to preserve the purity of St John's masonry as it was practised in Scotland from the earliest times. Nearly all of the work is carried out in the chapter and it traces the teachings of freemasonry from the first temple, through the second temple to the third temple. The characteristic colour of the chapter is crimson, as an emblem of purification and regeneration and as a reminder that the purity of freemasonry should be preserved with fervency and zeal. The culmination of the work is carried out in a lodge or council and relates to the rank of Knighthood conferred by King Robert the Bruce on the masons who rendered conspicuous service when fighting under him at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The characteristic colour of the council is green, in commemoration of the green fields of Bannockburn and also in allusion to the third temple and resurrection through the Messiah.

White and red are the characteristic colours of the Knights Templar, in reference to the purity of their purpose and their martyrdom respectively. White and black are the characteristic colours of the Hospitallers of St John, which are now attached to the Knights Templar, though originally they were a separate order. White is an emblem of their chastity, obedience and poverty, while black is an emblem of their humility and also commemorates those who sacrificed their lives defending the church against infidels. The characteristic colours of the Knight Templar Priests are white and red, white being emblematic of purity and holiness and red signifying faith. However green, blue, black and
gold also feature in the furnishings of the tabernacle and have the usual symbolism. In the Order of Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine, which provides a link between Royal Arch masonry and the Christian rites, the characteristic colour of the conclave is purple, alluding to its royal founder and his wisdom. In the Order's appendant degrees of the Holy Sepulchre and St John the Evangelist white is the characteristic colour, emblematic of purity and holiness.

**Colours As Typical Symbols**

Although an order or a series of degrees in freemasonry may have one or more characteristic colours, the individual degrees within the order or series may use other colours as specific symbols, typical of that degree. For example, although blue is the characteristic colour of speculative craft freemasonry, the typical colour appropriate to the first degree, or Entered Apprentice, is white emblematic of purity, innocence and initiation. Blue is the typical colour of the second degree, or Fellow of the Craft, because it is emblematic of the intellectual knowledge and practical skill of the craftsman and his faithfulness to the fraternity. Lastly, green is the typical colour of the third or sublime degree of a Master Mason, alluding to his discovery of the characteristics of divine truth, his belief in the immortality of the soul and his hope of a resurrection.

An example of several colours being used in combination is to be found among the degrees of the Royal Arch Chapter, for which the characteristic colour is red, from which is derived the expression "Red Masonry" to distinguish it from the craft which is commonly referred to as "Blue Masonry". In the degree of Excellent Master the ceremony requires veils of blue, purple, red and white to be passed successively. These separate veils allude to the colours woven together into the veil of the tabernacle and represent the elements of air, water, fire and earth. They also allude to the obstacles that must be overcome in the search for and acquisition of truth. Individually the veils are symbols of universal friendship and benevolence, of union, of fervency and zeal and of purity. Collectively they represent the ultimate discovery of the Divine Truth.

The use of several colours also occurs in Rite masonry, as in the series of degrees for which the characteristic colour is green. In that series white and black are the colours appropriate to the Secret Master, alluding to the sanctity of priesthood and the secrecy of the assignment. The degree of Perfect Master relates to the search for and discovery of the body of the Grand Master who was assassinated. The appropriate colour of a Perfect Master is green, a symbol of gladness and rejoicing for the recovery of the Grand Master's body and alluding to the resurrection of his soul. Black, scarlet and white are appropriate colours for the two degrees that recount the capture and bringing to justice of the ruffians, reminding us that "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord". In those degrees black commemorates the untimely death, scarlet alludes to the Lord's divine love and white alludes to the Lord's wisdom and is a symbol of truth. As a final example, the colour appropriate to the Royal Arch of Enoch is yellow, in allusion to the mystical plate of gold that is a symbol of the divine light of wisdom and also refers to the symbolic pillar of brass.
The clothing and regalia for each of the individual degrees in Rite masonry makes use of one or more of the colours white, black, green, royal blue, scarlet and purple to illustrate specific aspects of the allegorical teachings. Yellow or gold is always appropriate in relation to the Divinity and is frequently the colour that is used when depicting the All-seeing Eye. All-seeing Eye is used extensively in Scottish and American speculative craft freemasonry and it is also used in other orders. In speculative craft freemasonry the Sacred Symbol in the centre of the building, as well as the Glory in the Centre or Blazing Star, all are or ought to be depicted in gold. The rays of the Divine Light of Wisdom in Rite masonry and some other orders should always be depicted in gold. A final example of the symbolic use of yellow or gold is to depict the sun and its rays on tracing boards in speculative craft freemasonry and in capitular freemasonry.

**Lodge And Grand Lodge Colours**

In lodges held under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England, which was established in 1813, a Master Mason's apron is edged in Cambridge blue and the officers' collars are of the same colour. This was the original sky blue of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, which was adopted for use by the earliest lodges in England. However it is not the colour presently used in the Order, because soon after the accession of George I in 1714 the colour was changed to a much deeper blue, to distinguish the decorations from those previously conferred by the Stuarts on their adherents. This purple-blue is called royal blue and was adopted for the regalia of officers of the Grand Lodge. It is referred to as garter blue in the Book of Constitutions, but is often incorrectly called purple. However the Grand Stewards' regalia is not royal blue, but the crimson of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, which was re-established by George I in 1725 as a reward for service.

The Grand Lodge of Ireland was constituted in about 1725. Whether by coincidence or design is not known, but the light sky blue used in the regalia of the Grand Lodge of Ireland and its private lodges is the same as that used in the Most Illustrious Order of St Patrick, which was founded by George III in 1783. The light sky blue is paler than the Cambridge blue used in English lodges. The aprons used in private Irish lodges are similar to English aprons, except that the blue edging incorporates a central silver stripe that is replaced by a gold stripe in Grand Lodge aprons. The Grand Lodge of Scotland was established in 1736, when it adopted the thistle green of the Most Noble Order of the Thistle, which James II restored in 1687 and Queen Anne re-established in 1703. Private lodges under the Grand Lodge of Scotland choose their own colours for their regalia, including blue, green, red and appropriate tartans. Scottish aprons have a rounded flap and are often embellished with silver or gold fringes and edging.
CHAPTER SIXTEEN – THE FORM AND ORIENTATION OF THE LODGE

A freemason's lodge represents the universe, which is the temple of the Deity whom we serve.

The Model

The founders of modern speculative craft freemasonry embraced the underlying symbolism of their predecessors in operative freemasonry, who based their rituals on the construction of King Solomon's temple at Jerusalem. The temple was a focal point in Israel and helped to consolidate the many cults of the disparate and often warring tribes, which was politically and spiritually advantageous to King Solomon in his establishment of stability among the Israelites. The temple and its construction was an appropriate model on which to base the symbolic instruction given in lodges of operative freemasons, from which speculative freemasonry was derived. The Rev Dr George Oliver DD was one of the most learned and distinguished of the early speculative craft freemasons. His father, the Rev Samuel Oliver, initiated him in 1801 in the St Peter's Lodge of the city of Peterborough, in Scotland. Dr Oliver studied and wrote extensively on ecclesiastical antiquities and most aspects of speculative freemasonry. In his renowned treatise, Revelations of the Square, Dr Oliver gave one of the most succinct yet comprehensive explanations ever given in respect of the foundation, purpose and symbolism of freemasonry when he said:

"The Society adopted the Temple of Solomon for its symbol, because it was the most stable and the most magnificent structure that ever existed, whether we consider its foundation or superstructure; so that of all the societies men have invented, no one was ever more firmly united, or better planned, than the Masons . . . The edifices which Freemasons build are nothing more than virtues or vices to be erected or destroyed; and in this case heaven only occupies their minds, which soar above the corrupted world. The Temple of Solomon denotes reason and intelligence."

From the earliest days of operative freemasonry in Europe and Britain, Egypt was believed to have provided the prototype for the design of the temple in Jerusalem, notwithstanding the Biblical record of the participation and influence of the Phoenicians. The fact that King Solomon had obtained the Phoenician's expertise, because he thought it essential for the design and construction of his temple, appears to have been overlooked. This belief that there was an Egyptian prototype persisted right through the Middle Ages and the entire period of intensive cathedral building. When the lodges of operative masons became defunct, the belief was perpetuated in the lore of the speculative freemasonry that emerged in Britain as the successor of operative freemasonry. However, archaeological investigations in Palestine and Syria since the 1930s have unearthed a series of temples
that have similar characteristics, design and orientation to the temple at Jerusalem, usually with two pillars at the entrance. Their construction predated the construction of King Solomon's temple by periods ranging from 200 to 800 years. All of those temples were elongated about 3:1 in plan and were subdivided into compartments, permitting worshippers to make a logical progression from the profane outside world to the sacred inner sanctum. As there were no similar temples in Egypt, it is clear that King Solomon's temple did not have an Egyptian prototype, but was of the same general type as the Phoenician temples discovered in Palestine and Syria.

The precursor of King Solomon's temple was the "tent of congregation", called the tabernacle, which was a portable sanctuary for the Ark of the Covenant that was first erected by the Israelites at Mount Sinai under the leadership of Moses, about 500 years before King Solomon's temple was built. In plan the tabernacle was in the proportions 3:1, being 30 cubits long and 10 cubits wide. It was oriented east to west and had a single entrance in the east. The tabernacle proper was the mishkan, the ten linen curtains woven in blue, purple and scarlet and hung inside the northern, western and southern walls of the structure, which was covered by the ohel or tent. Towards the western end similar curtains subdivided the mishkan to form two compartments. The hekhal or Holy Place at the eastern end was a double cube 20 cubits long, 10 cubits wide and 10 cubits high. The debir or Holy of Holies at the western end was a perfect cube of 10 cubits sides.

The arrangement of the tabernacle was replicated in King Solomon's temple, but its dimensions in plan were doubled to provide a building 60 cubits long and 20 cubits wide. The Holy Place at the eastern end of the temple differed from the tabernacle in which it was a double cube. The Holy Place in the temple was a double square in plan, being 40 cubits long and 20 cubits wide, but it had a height of 30 cubits. The Holy of Holies at the western end was a perfect cube with sides of 20 cubits length, which was set on a podium 10 cubits high to maintain a uniform ceiling height. The Holy of Holies was screened from the Holy Place by curtains. Construction of the temple commenced during the fourth year of King Solomon's reign and completed a little more than seven years later, probably about 950 BCE. The only entrance to the temple was at the eastern end of the Holy Place, to which access was gained through the ulam, an unroofed porch 20 cubits wide and 10 cubits along the axis of the main building. The ulam was flanked by a pillar on each side, which could be seen from inside the temple when looking through the entrance towards the east. The left pillar was Boaz at the northeast corner of the temple and the right pillar was Jachin at the southeast corner. The temple was enclosed by small chambers three stories high on the northern, western and southern sides. The chambers had two external entrances from the surrounding courtyard, each with a winding staircase for access to the upper floors. One entrance was near the southwest corner, where the middle chamber was located and the other was near the northeast corner.

In those days it was customary for temples also to serve as state treasuries. The temple at Jerusalem was no exception and it had a peaceful existence until during the reign of King Solomon's son Rehoboam, when Sheshonq raided it in about 920 BCE. Sheshonq was a prince of Libyan descent, known in the Bible as Shishak. He founded Egypt's XXIIInd Dynasty in about 945 BCE and reigned as the Pharaoh Sheshonk I. After Sheshonq had
plundered the temple it had a very chequered history until about 720 BCE, when Hezekiah refurbished, adorned and re-established it as the centre of worship. Hezekiah was one of the most outstanding kings of Judah, renowned for his piety and vigorous political activities. However, all of the subsequent kings were idolatrous and desecrated the temple, which fell into decay. By the time of King Josiah, some 300 years after its construction, the temple needed extensive repairs that had to be financed by contributions from the worshippers. Finally in 587 BCE, during the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, the temple was looted and sacked by Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon who took the remaining Israelites into captivity.

**Orientation**

The east-west orientation of the tabernacle and the temple, with the only entrance in the east, reflects the fact that from time immemorial human beings have associated the east with the source of life and the light of knowledge. This veneration of the east originated in primitive society, probably because of the mystery then associated with the daily rising of the sun after the darkness of the night. Even in ancient times the sun was known to germinate plant life and to ripen the seed and fruits of nature. Hence the sun came to be regarded as a symbol of the commencement of a new cycle of life. This is reflected in the reverence held for the east in the Egyptian rites and other Ancient Mysteries, in which the sun was regarded as a manifestation of God. In those Mysteries the place where the sun rose was esteemed as the birthplace of God. Many of the earliest Christian churches, especially those in the eastern countries, were oriented east west and had the entrance in the east like King Solomon’s temple. It also was the custom of the early Christians, when praying in public, to turn towards the east because, as Saint Augustine said:

"The east is the most honourable part of the world, being the region of light whence the glorious sun rises."

In operative freemasonry the symbolic lodge was oriented on an east west axis. The entrance to the lodge was at the eastern end and the master was seated in the west. This arrangement was in allusion to King Solomon's temple at Jerusalem, which had a single entrance in the east, flanked by two columns. In his lectures on *Signs and Symbols*, the Rev Dr George Oliver supported the customs adopted in operative lodges when he said:

"The principal entrance to the lodge room ought to face the east, because the east is a place of light both physical and moral; and therefore the Brethren have access to the lodge by that entrance, as a symbol of mental illumination."

Notwithstanding the historical precedents, the orientation of Christian churches was reversed from about the end of the first century of Christianity. Throughout the great period of cathedral building in Europe and Britain, pains were taken to orient Christian churches and cathedrals on an east-west axis, with the entrance at the western end and the sanctuary and main altar at the eastern end. With this arrangement worshippers facing the altar during prayer were facing the east. This was in accordance with an injunction in the
Apostolic Constitutions that required the designers to *"let the church be of an oblong form, directed to the East"*. In cruciform buildings the transept also was placed to the eastern end, thus forming a Latin cross. Although the *Apostolic Constitutions* are usually attributed to Saint Clement, who died in about 101, this assumption probably is incorrect. Nevertheless Saint Clement was the first of the *Apostolic Fathers* and the second or third successor of Saint Peter in the See of Rome.

Although speculative craft freemasonry closely follows most of the symbolic precedents established by the ancient Israelites and adopted in lodges of operative freemasons, the orientation of speculative lodges is the reverse of their operative counterparts, so that the entrance is in the west and the master is seated in the east. It is not known when this reversal took place, but it probably was in deference to established religious practices in Europe and Britain during the formative days of modern speculative craft freemasonry. It is probable that the early speculative ritualists in England adopted ecclesiastical practice in the orientation of their lodges, because they had not been operative freemasons and were not familiar with the orientation of operative lodges. Most of the early English ritualists were acquainted with the *Cabalists* and their teachings, which also might have influenced them with regard to orientation. An essential doctrine of one school of the *Cabalists* ignores the orientation of the tabernacle and the temple and says that:

"*His Majesty . . . . sits on a throne in the east, as the actual representative of God.*"

Whatever may have been the reason for the change, this reversal of the orientation causes confusion concerning the position of the pillars at the entrance to King Solomon's temple and also reverses the symbolic direction in which the winding stairs are ascended to reach the middle chamber. The middle chamber was one of the rooms that surrounded the temple, but was not within the temple as is usually depicted on the second tracing board. In the Prestonian system of speculative craft freemasonry, which had been practised widely for some fifty years before the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813, the *"search for that which was lost*" proceeded logically from west to east in a lodge that was oriented in the same way as the lodges in operative freemasonry.

**The Cube And The Double Cube**

In ancient times stone altars commonly were cubical in the shape and a cubical stone often represented heathen deities. The Greek geographer and historian Pausanias of Magnesia, who was probably born in Lydia, is regarded as one of the founders of archaeology and the most important antiquarian of Roman times. In about 170 CE he wrote *Periegesis*, usually called the *Itinerary of Greece*, which provides invaluable information on the people of Greece and their beliefs, customs and history, compiled during his extensive travels and investigations. Pausanias records that the cube was the symbol of *Mercury* because he represented *truth*. He also says that *Apollo*, the god of music, poetry, archery, prophecy and the healing art, was often worshipped under the symbol of a *square stone*. Pausanias also recorded that when the great plague raged in the Roman Empire from 164 to 180, with
fatal results at Delphi, the oracle at Delphi ordered that the cubical stone erected as an altar to Apollo should be doubled and that when it was doubled in height to form a double cube the pestilence ceased. It is interesting to note that the black stone built into the Kaaba, the holy building at Mecca, also is in the form of a double cube and all Muslims revere it. The prophet Muhammad declared that the black stone was given to Abraham by the archangel Gabriel and it is reputed to be possessed of many virtues.

The Israelitish patriarchs built many altars, including Noah after the flood; Abraham at Shechem, Bethel, Hebron and Moriah; Isaac at Beersheba; Jacob at Shechem and Bethel; and Moses at Rephidim after the Amalakites were defeated. There is no information about their construction, but it is believed that they were in the form of a double cube, similar to the Altar of Incense which the Lord commanded Moses to make, as recorded in Exodus 30:1-3 and later prescribed in the Mosaic law:

"Make an altar on which to burn incense; make it of acacia wood. It shall be square, a cubit long by a cubit broad and two cubits high . . . Overlay it with pure gold, the top, the sides all round . . ."

The Altar of Incense used in the tabernacle and also in King Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem was the form of a double cube. Many altars that have been discovered in Palestine, predating the occupation of the Israelites, also are in the form of a double cube. One of the oldest and best preserved is an altar of incense that dates from the fourteenth century BCE, from the Canaanite town of Hazor. It was constructed of basalt and features an emblem of the sun god, a wheel with four spokes and a central boss, all carved in relief. Another limestone altar of incense from Megiddo, that dates from the tenth century BCE, is embellished with an decorative horizontal band at mid height and four ornamental horns at the top corners.

The Form Of The Lodge

The operative freemasons dedicated their lives to the construction of earthly or material temples, consecrated to the service and worship of God. In each of the degrees conferred in lodges of operative freemasons, the candidate represented one of the stones used in the construction of King Solomon's temple and the ritual exemplified the shaping, testing and laying of that stone. The candidate was told that he was a living stone and that the ceremonial typified his preparation as a stone for the earthly temple, symbolising the moral and spiritual preparation that he must undergo to become a living stone in the heavenly temple. Modern speculative freemasons are intended to exemplify the labours of their operative predecessors by engaging in the construction of spiritual temples in their hearts, pure and unsullied, fit to become the dwelling place of God the creator who is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, the author of truth and purity from whom all goodness emanates.

All freemasons are familiar with the rectangular shape of the modern lodge room. In earlier times a rectangle was called an oblong square, which could be any oblong with square or
right-angled corners. In lodges of operative freemasons the symbolic lodge was an oblong square in the proportions of 3:1 in plan, called a temple square, in allusion to the temple at Jerusalem. The proportions of 3:1 in plan also were those most frequently used in cathedral building. However these proportions have not been retained in modern speculative freemasonry, in which the symbolic lodge is described as an oblong square in the proportions of 2:1 in plan and called a double square. This ratio may have been adopted because the double cube had been chosen as the symbolic form of speculative lodges.

The double square is usually represented in modern lodges of speculative craft freemasons by a mosaic pavement of black and white square tiles laid out in the centre of the floor, with the length along the east west axis being twice the length along the north south axis. An indented border of black and white triangular tiles usually surrounds this rectangle. Although lodges usually assemble in buildings that are rectangular in shape, this has not invariably been the shape of all symbolic lodges. Some operative lodges, especially during the Middle Ages, were in the shape of a mason's square, or a mason's square gauge, or even a circle. Some speculative lodges, especially in Scotland and on the continent of Europe, sometimes have adopted a triangular form, which some still do. Some speculative lodges in the early 1700s had three symbolic steps in the west, on which the apprentice, the fellow of the craft and the master mason knelt in the appropriate way. Most modern speculative lodges have three symbolic steps in the east, separating the master’s dais from the floor of the lodge.

In the earliest days of speculative craft freemasonry, lodges usually occupied premises on a temporary basis, when it was the custom to indicate the symbolic shape of the lodge by marking it out with lines on the floor. Chalk, charcoal and clay were the materials most commonly used for this purpose, the markings being erased at the conclusion of the meeting. In 1766 it was recorded that the floor drawings were frequently made using a mixture of chalk, stone-blue and charcoal and that in some lodges a mixture of powdered resin and shining sand were strewn on the floor to produce an attractive appearance under bright illumination. These floor drawings and special effects later gave way to the use of removable floor cloths, which ultimately were replaced by the mosaic pavement and tracing boards when permanent accommodation was available for the sole use of lodges. Chalk, charcoal and clay naturally became the subjects of symbolism and their use for floor drawings gave rise to their inclusion in the old catechisms. In his lectures on Signs and Symbols, the Rev Dr George Oliver said that these three materials:

". . . have ever been esteemed symbolically as emblems of freedom, fervency and zeal. Nothing is more free for the use of man than chalk, which seldom touches but leaves its trace behind. Nothing is more fervent than charcoal, for when well lighted no metal is able to resist its force. Nothing is more zealous than clay, which will open up her arms to receive us when forsaken by all our friends."
The Symbolism Of The Lodge

The speculative ritualists clearly intended a masonic lodge to represent the universe, which is the temple of the Deity whom we serve. This is confirmed in one of the passages included in the explanation of the first tracing board, which reflects the words of the Lord recorded in Isaiah 66:1 as follows:

"Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool. Where will you build a house for me, where shall my resting-place be?"

A similar description of heaven as God's home and our ultimate resting-place is given in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, which was recorded in hieroglyphs in the pyramid of the Pharaoh Pepi I at least fifteen centuries before Isaiah's time, in about 2300 BCE:

"Thou hast opened the gates of the sky, thou hast opened the doors of the celestial deep; thou has found Ra and he watcheth over thee, he hath taken thee by thy hand, he hath led thee into the two regions of heaven and he hath placed thee on the throne of Osiris."

The explanation of the first tracing board describes the form of the lodge as a double cube, in length from east to west, in breadth between north and south, in depth from the surface of the earth to its centre and as high even as the heavens. In reality this does not describe a double cube, but it is an apt description of a perfect cube of infinite dimensions, which is appropriate as the representative shape of the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and the temple, symbolising truth and perfection, because the cube is one of the most ancient symbols of truth and perfection. The perfect cube is also the shape of the perfect ashlar test piece that a craftsman is required to create from the rough ashlar, by accurate squaring and polishing in his skilful hands, to prove his capabilities and demonstrate that he is worthy to be classed as a master mason. The production of the perfect ashlar symbolises the transformation of the ignorant and uncultivated mind that must be achieved by discipline and education, so as to render the living stone morally and spiritually fit for incorporation into the celestial temple. We can only speculate that when the early speculative ritualists described the masonic lodge as a double cube, either they intended that it should represent the Holy Place in the tabernacle, or they had in mind the shape of the Altar of Incense and were attracted to the combined symbolism of the cube and incense. Incense is a symbol of the purification of the soul and the cube is a symbol of perfection, which together suggests that state of purification and perfection that is necessary for admission into the Lord's temple.
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN – EAST AND WEST IN SYMBOLISM

From the earliest times sunrise and the east have been symbols of birth, light and learning, whilst sunset and the west have been symbols of death and darkness.

Sunrise And Sunset

Since our prehistoric ancestors first awoke to the glory of a primeval sunrise, east and west have held a pre-eminent position in the symbolism of human beings. Archaeological evidence indicates that the first humans dwelt in the tropical zone. It therefore would be reasonable to assume that Rudyard Kipling’s dramatic description of sunrise in his poem *Mandalay* would reflect a primitive human being’s perception of the event, that “the dawn comes up like thunder!” Imagine too the indelible impression that the sunset would have left on a primitive human being’s mind at the end of that first day. Robert Browning portrays the event graphically his poem *Home Thoughts from the Sea*, in which he says that the “sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking . . . .”. It is impossible for us to understand how primitive human beings would have comprehended the events of that first day, from awe-inspiring sunrise to overwhelming sunset, but there can be no doubt that the impact of those two events would have left a lasting impression in their minds. Since the first human beings walked on this earth, sunrise and sunset have been inescapable factors that have significantly influenced their daily lives.

The symbolism that has been derived from sunrise and sunset has evolved progressively, in parallel with the development of human mental capacity, while mankind learned and put into practice the various occupational pursuits necessary for survival. When primitive humans searched for food they became nomadic hunter-gatherers of necessity, when they could no longer find sufficient sustenance in the immediate vicinity of their original domicile. Their travels gradually took them away from the equatorial regions, where the weather had always been either hot and wet or hot and dry. As the hunter-gatherers ventured into the higher latitudes, they noticed that the sun no longer passed almost directly overhead throughout the year. After living for several years in the more temperate regions they deduced that the seasonal changes, to which they had become accustomed, were related to the elevation of the sun in the sky at different times of the year. They also observed that the germination of plant life varied with the seasons and was directly related to the influence of the sun. Thus from the earliest times sunrise and the east were symbols of birth, light and learning, whilst sunset and the west were symbols of death and darkness. In the ancient *Mysteries*, for example, the rising sun that originally typified physical birth also became a symbol of the regeneration of the soul.
**The Sun In Ancient Religions**

The discoveries that primitive human beings made about the influence of the sun naturally intensified their awe of and reverence for the sun. This fostered a conviction that the sun not only was a harbinger of birth, but that it was in fact a life sustaining orb, which in turn cultivated the belief that the sun was the source of life itself. Because the primitive human mind could not comprehend that the sun was only one of the Almighty Creator’s bounteous and life-sustaining gifts, our prehistoric ancestors began to visualise the sun as God. Thus arose the worship of the sun, which was an essential element in most of the ancient religions around the world, including the earliest that evolved in Egypt, Phoenicia, Babylonia, Persia, India, Mexico and Peru. The wandering Celts and Teutons in the primeval forests of northern Europe regularly held feasts to the sun. Offerings to the sun were also made in ancient China.

In Greek mythology one of the twelve tasks of Hercules was to kill Hydra, the many-headed water snake of the Lernaean marshes, which symbolised the dissipation of marsh malaria by the purifying rays of the sun. In ancient times, especially in Babylonia, Persia and India, the worship of the sun was often coupled with the worship of the moon and stars, collectively described as the *host of heaven*. This also was a feature of the religion of ancient Egypt and had a powerful influence on all later religions. The worship of the *host of heaven* is known as *Sabaism*, from the Hebrew *tsābā* meaning *a host*. *Sabaism* should not be confused with the ancient *Sabaeans* or *Sabians* of southern Iraq and western Iran, now living mainly in Yemen. The *Sabians*, also called *Mandeans*, derive their name from the Arabic *sābi’* meaning *to baptise*. In the Koran the Sabians are included with Moslems, Jews and Christians as believers in one true God.

**The Sun In Central American Cultures**

As recently as 200 BCE the Toltec inhabitants of Teotihuacan in Mexico began to construct the Temple of Quetzalcoatl the Plumed Serpent. The Toltecs also constructed the Pyramid of the Moon and the enormous Pyramid of the Sun, that was more than 60 metres high and larger than the Great Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt, containing at least a million cubic metres of earth, rubble and sun-dried mud brick. The two pyramids were not tombs, but temple platforms with shrines on top. The Temple of Quetzalcoatl and the two pyramids were all associated with the “*Way of the Dead*” that was about 2 kilometres long, bisecting the metropolis of ancient Mexico in a north-south direction. Teotihuacan flourished until about 650 CE when it began to fall into decay, being looted and burnt in about 750 CE. In Teotihuacan and in the many Mayan centres throughout Mesoamerica, the altars in the temples to the sun streamed with blood, including human blood, from the sacrifices made in honour of the golden orb. The Aztecs later occupied the site of Teotihuacan and built their own city over the ruins. They believed that the *Pyramid of the Sun* was the birthplace of the sun in our solar system. The Aztec empire lasted from about 1325 CE until Mexico fell to the Spanish invaders in 1521.
The Sun In South American Cultures

Among the edifices of the several regional cultures in South America, probably the best known are the “Gateway of the Sun” at Tiahuanaco near Lake Titicaca at an elevation of 4,000 metres in Bolivia and the “Temple of the Sun” at Pachacamac on the coast of central Peru. The Gateway was commenced in about 200 CE and the Temple in about 400 CE, both continuing in use until the Spanish conquest. Sun worship was also a key feature of the vast empire of the Incas on the west coast of South America. The Incan Empire extended for more than 3,000 kilometres from Quito in Ecuador to Talca in Chile and lasted from 1438 until the Spanish conquest in 1532. Archaeological investigations high in the Andes Mountains confirm that the Incas also carried out human sacrifices.

The Sun In Hinduism

The origins of Hinduism are shrouded in the mists of time. It probably is the oldest religion that has existed continuously until the present day. The Aryans of ancient India worshipped and tried to appease a number of gods who personified the forces of nature, originally revering the sun as their godhead. With the merging of many cultures down through the ages, those ancient beliefs have been modified as they have absorbed and reflected the developing social structures, progressively transmuting into modern Hinduism. As a result of this process the sun came to be regarded in its various aspects as a composite symbol of the triune essence of the Supreme Being. This triune essence is reflected in the Trimurti, the trinity in unity of God found in the mythology of the Hindus. In modern Hinduism the one Supreme Being is represented by three coeval and coequal manifestations in the form of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver and Siva the destroyer. As a composite symbol of the Trimurti, the rising sun represents Brahma and signifies birth; the midday sun represents Siva and signifies life; and the setting sun represents Vishnu and signifies death.

Religion In Ancient Egypt

Long before their first dynasty, the ancient Egyptians called the sun Ra. It is not known what the name meant, nor is it known what attributes it ascribed to the sun, but it is known that Ra was believed to possess the power of creation and was identified as the visible emblem of God and was venerated as the god of the earth. Osiris was identified with the constellation of Orion and was believed to possess the power of rebirth and resurrection. He was venerated as an astral body from the Zep Tepi or the “first time of the Gods”, who would conduct the spirits of the deceased on their celestial journeys from their earthly tombs to dwell in the heavenly Duat. Some of the most important of the extant Egyptian texts are the Wisdom of Ptah-Hotep, the Papyrus of Ani and the Pyramid Texts that date from about 2500 BCE. They say that the souls of the deceased will travel to the “abode of the blessed” in heaven, which is the “barque of millions of years” in which Ra sails.
across the sky. The ancient Egyptians believed that the sun had a morning boat and an evening boat, in which *Ra* travelled in the company of his morning and evening forms that were called *Khepera* and *Tmu* respectively. *Khepera* represented birth in both the physical and the spiritual worlds, which enabled the dead from the earthly *Duat* to burst forth into a new life in glorified form in the heavenly *Duat*. *Tmu* represented death in a compassionate sense and supposedly was the source of the “cool breezes of the north wind”, which those who mourned the dead prayed for.

Despite this obvious cloak of polytheism, Champollion Figeac, one of the earliest Egyptologists who had studied the Egyptian texts intensively, said “*the Egyptian religion is a pure monotheism, which manifested itself externally by a symbolic polytheism*” when writing in *Égypte* in 1839. This view, which has been supported by many other eminent Egyptologists including the director of the School of Egyptology in Cairo 1870-1890, Dr Heinrich Karl Brugsch, was summarised by M. Pierret in *Religion et Mythologie des anciens Égyptiens* in 1881 when he said “*the texts show that the Egyptians believed in One infinite and eternal God who was without a second*”. The relationship between the monotheism of Egypt and such concepts as “body, soul and spirit” and the “triune essence of the deity” are reflected in aspects of the Egyptian beliefs. Many of these concepts are revealed in the texts of the *Papyrus of Ani*, translated by E. A. Wallis Budge in his *Book of the Dead*, which was first published in 1895 by order of the Trustees of the British Museum. In his discussions on the “*abode of the blessed*”, Wallis Budge explains the ancient Egyptian belief that the gods dwelt in heaven, each with its *ka*, *khu* and *khaibit*, where they received the blessed dead to dwell with them. Some of the relevant doctrines relating to this belief will now be discussed briefly.

The physical body of a person considered as a whole was called *khat*, which always seems to suggest something that is liable to decay and is the word usually used with reference to a mummified body. Notwithstanding mumification, nowhere do any of the texts suggest that a person’s corruptible body will rise again. It is only the *sahu* or spiritual body, after having obtained a degree of knowledge, power and glory that becomes lasting and incorruptible and rises again. The *ka* is a person’s abstract individuality or personality which has all its characteristic attributes, but can separate from or unite with the body at will and can also enjoy life with the gods in heaven, when it seems to be identical with the *sekhem* which was the power, form or image of the body supposed to exist in heaven. They are separate from the *ab*, which is seat of the power of life and the fountain of good and evil thoughts loosely referred to as the heart and also from the *ba*, which is the soul and signifies sublime or noble and was believed to enjoy an eternal existence in heaven in a state of glory. The *ab* and the *ba* are associated with the *khu* or shining one, which is the spirit of a person that after death joins the *khu*’s of the gods in heaven. Closely allied with the *ka* and *khu* is the *khaibit* or shadow of a person comparable with the *umbra* of the Greeks and Romans and the *aura* or *subtle essence* that it is claimed emanates from all living things and affords an atmosphere for occult phenomena.

After the end of the Old Kingdom, in about 2200 BCE, Egypt fell into a state of rapid decline, when the priesthood progressively increased their authority over the people, using the accepted cosmogony and the associated pantheon of subsidiary gods to their own
benefit. This insidious state of affairs continued for more than 800 years, until the pharaoh Amenophis IV (1372-1354 BCE) and his beautiful wife Nefertiti overthrew the power of the priesthood during the sixth year of their reign. They renounced the worship of the old gods and emphasised the power of an intangible deity. Amenophis IV overruled the apparent functions of the old gods and introduced a purified form of solar monotheism as the official religion. He emphasised his action by changing the name of the sun disc of the absolute god Ra from Amen to Aten, at the same time changing his own name to Akhenaten, meaning the Glory of the Aten.

In the mind of the Egyptians, the sun represented the source of all life and creation, whose power was made manifest by its life-giving rays. It was synonymous with movement and typified the life of man, with sunrise in the east representing birth and sunset in the west representing death. The Egyptians also developed a moral conception of the sun, as a symbol of the victories of right over wrong and of truth over falsehood. The beliefs and actions of the pharaoh Akhenaten had an impact on the people similar to that of the covenant God made with Noah, who survived the great flood recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Many scholars regard Akhenaten’s unequivocal reintroduction of a monotheistic religion in Egypt as the vision of a Messiah who was before his time. However the priesthood strongly objected to their loss of power and did everything they could to resist Akhenaten changes, calling him the “heretical pharaoh”.

**Ancient Hebrew Traditions**

The significance of the covenant God made with Noah is derived from the root meaning of the Hebrew word berith, which signifies to bond or to fetter and implies a binding relationship that is based on a commitment that includes both promises and obligations. In the covenant with Noah, God’s promise established Noah’s security, in return for which Noah was obliged to construct the ark and save his family and specified creatures. As a result of this covenant Noah, who was the son of Lamech and the tenth in descent from Adam, was able to hand down to his descendants two important religious truths that he had received from the line of Patriarchs who preceded him. These truths were a belief in the existence of one Supreme Being who is the creator, preserver and ruler of the universe, coupled with a belief in the immortality of the soul. Noah’s three sons, who accompanied him in the ark, were Shem, Ham and Japhet. The Hebrew Scriptures record that the flood occurred in the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, which was 2348 BCE according to the chronology established by Bishop Ussher in 1650. Modern research indicates that the great flood would have occurred about 12,000 years ago or a little earlier, during the melt down that took place towards the end of the last great Ice Age.

In the book of Genesis we are told that after the flood the descendants of Noah’s three sons populated the earth and used a single language. However the truths handed down by Noah must have become obscured, because we also read that when they had learnt to make bricks and to use bitumen for mortar, they apparently displeased the Lord when they said “let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens and make a name for ourselves” and put their words into action. The scriptures tell us that, as a punishment
for their pride and disobedience, the people were dispersed from Babel all over the earth 
and that their speech was confused so that they could not understand one another. Babel is 
the Hebrew name of Babylon, from the Hebrew word balbel that means to confuse. The 
original Tower of Babel was the first temple tower or ziggurat mentioned in the scriptures. 
Archaeological investigations indicate that it was indeed built of bricks jointed with 
bitumen, almost certainly before 4000 BCE and possibly as early as 4800 BCE. The 
temple tower derives its name from the Assyrian word ziqqurat, which means a pinnacle 
and also is often used to signify the top of a mountain.

The descendants of Noah again lapsed into polytheism after their dispersion from Babel, in 
consequence of which there were serious deviations from the worship of the one true God 
that had been established by Noah. This lapse was not rectified until after the Israelites had 
escaped from slavery in Egypt, during the Exodus under the leadership of Moses when he 
was about 80 years old, probably in about 1280 BCE. We are told in the scriptures that the 
pharaoh’s daughter took Moses from the waterside. This most probably this would have 
been at about the end of the pharaoh Akhenaten’s reign, or very soon after. As Moses was 
brought up in a royal harem, he would have received a very good classical education and 
Akhenaten’s monotheistic beliefs would have been impressed on his mind. This might well 
have been the foundation for Moses’ belief in the one true God, but at the very least it 
would have reinforced those beliefs.

The Tabernacle

Tabernacle is derived from the Latin word tabernaculum, which means a tent. It is the 
diminutive of taberna, which means a hut. In the Hebrew Scriptures the three tabernacles 
that are mentioned all signify a tent of meeting, which is also called a tent of 
congregation. During the second year of the Exodus, Moses established the first or 
provisional tabernacle after he had destroyed the image of the golden calf made by Aaron 
and the Israelites. They had made the golden calf while Moses first spent forty days and 
forty nights on Mount Sinai, when he was in communion with the Lord. The provisional 
tabernacle was an ordinary tent, probably that of Moses himself, pitched well outside the 
camp so that it would not be disturbed by the commotion of everyday life. Although there 
was no priesthood and no ritual was carried out, the people went out to the tabernacle as if 
to an oracle. A transitional period followed, during which the whole future of the people 
depended upon their contrition and penitence. Moses displayed the most earnest zeal and 
interceded with the Lord on behalf of his people, which was rewarded during his second 
stay of forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai. This was when the glory of the Lord 
was revealed to Moses, the tables of the law were renewed and a new covenant was made 
with Israel. When Moses returned to his people his shining face was covered with a veil.

Moses then erected the second, or Sinaitic tabernacle, in accordance with directions given 
to him by the Lord on Mount Sinai. This tabernacle was a portable sanctuary in which it 
was said, “God dwelt among the Israelites”. By God’s special command the tabernacle 
was oriented due east and west, with its only entrance at the eastern end. The tabernacle 
was composed of two parts. The main part was the mishkan or dwelling, which was the
tabernacle proper. The *mishkan* was covered by the other part, the *ohel* or tent, which was in the form of a fly roof. The *mishkan* was 30 cubits long and 10 cubits wide, divided into two compartments. The compartment at the eastern end was the *Holy Place*, 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide. The compartment at the western end was the *Holy of Holies*, a perfect cube with sides of 10 cubits. The *ohel* or tent was a weatherproof covering, which the *New English Bible* describes as “a cover of tanned rams’ skins and an outer covering of porpoise-hides”. It is now known that portable shrines similar to the tabernacle were being used in Egypt before the Exodus led by Moses.

The tabernacle was constructed with vertical planks of shittim wood or acacia, each plank 10 cubits high and 1½ cubits wide, plated with sheets of gold. In earlier times it was thought that the planks were butted together to form solid walls, but modern research indicates that they were used to form a framework that was joined together by cross-rails to support ten linen curtains. The curtains were decorated with figures of cherubim woven into blue, purple and scarlet tapestry. In its strict sense, the word tabernacle refers to these curtains. The roof of the tabernacle was comprised of goats’ hair curtains. In the *Holy Place* there were a table of shewbread, a seven-branched golden candlestick and an altar of incense. The *Holy of Holies* was screened from the *Holy Place* by a veil. The *Holy of Holies* held the gold plated *Ark of the Covenant*, which was protected by two cherubim with outstretched wings. The cherubim looked down on the lid of the ark, which was called the *mercy seat*.

The tabernacle was enclosed within a courtyard that was 100 cubits long from east to west and 50 cubits wide from north to south, completely surrounded by a fence 5 cubits high. The fence was constructed with pillars of shittim wood or acacia. The pillars supported rods from which sheets of “fine twisted linen” were hung, probably similar to duck canvas. The fence formed a continuous screen around the courtyard and had a gateway 5 cubits wide at the eastern end. A screen of “needlework of blue and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen” closed the gateway. In the courtyard, spaced along the centre-line between the gate and the entrance to the tabernacle, were a brazen altar nearest to the gate and a laver nearest to the tabernacle. When the tabernacle was complete, Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, numbered the people and arranged the order in which the tribes would assemble when in camp and on the march. While Canaan remained unconquered, the host of Israel continued to move as an army. They dismantled the tabernacle to move it from place to place, setting it up again wherever the people intended to be camped for some time.

The host of Israel finally arrived at Shiloh in about 1220 BCE, where they stayed for almost 200 years. When the Philistines destroyed the central sanctuary at Shiloh in about 1050 BCE, worship was transferred to Mizpeh. Later, when the Philistines had returned the plundered tabernacle and its contents to the Israelites, the *Ark of the Covenant* was kept at Kiriath-jearim, but the tabernacle, the brazen altar and the tables for the shewbread were moved to Nob. The contents of the tabernacle were kept at Nob until about 1025 BCE when Saul, the first king of Israel, destroyed the shrine in which it was kept. Saul did this because he heard that the priests had assisted the fugitive David when he raided the shrine at Nob and then had Ahimelech and the other eighty-five priests put to death. The
tabernacle, brazen altar and shewbread were then moved to Gibeon. When Saul died about 1010 BCE, David became king over Judah in the south. After David had consolidated the supremacy of Judah over the other tribes about seven years later, he captured the Jebusite city of Jerusalem and became king over Israel in the north and the first king over the united kingdom of “all Israel”. David then moved the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath-jearim to Mount Zion, where he established the third tabernacle, usually called the Davidic tabernacle.

King Solomon’s Temple

After King David had established the tabernacle at Mount Zion, he purchased the site of the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, on top of Mount Moriah. He then began collecting materials and gathering treasure for the construction of a temple. It is recorded in I Chronicles 22:7-9, that before King David died he charged his son Solomon to build a temple, saying that although he himself had intended to build one he had been forbidden to do so when the Lord said to him:

“You have shed much blood in my sight and waged great wars; for this reason you shall not build a house in my name. But you shall have a son . . . Solomon, ‘Man of Peace’ . . . He shall build a house in honour of my name . . . and I will establish the throne of his sovereignty over Israel forever.”

King Solomon commenced work on the temple in the fourth year of his reign and completed it in a little over seven years, in about 950 BCE. It was not by chance that King Solomon secured the aid of Hiram King of Tyre and his Tyrian artificer, Hiram Abif, to construct the temple. King Solomon knew that the Tyrians were highly skilled in such projects, because they had been engaged in the design and construction of similar buildings for about a thousand years. Nor was the temple at Jerusalem the first of its kind, because many temples of similar style had been built in the Levant for centuries before King David first contemplated building a temple to the Lord at Jerusalem. Many archaeological excavations that have been carried out in Iraq, Syria and the Levant generally since 1930 show that the temple at Jerusalem was in a direct line of tradition that had been established in the Levant and was followed at least during the preceding two thousand years and probably for longer.

In 1950 a Canaanite temple, similar to King Solomon’s temple, was discovered at Hazor in northern Palestine, which dated from about 1950 BCE. Similar small temples have also been unearthed at Emar in Iraq and at Ebla and Moumbaqat in Syria, which predated the temple at Jerusalem by periods ranging from two hundred to eight hundred years. These later temples were contemporaneous with or perhaps a little later than the Sinaitic tabernacle, which strongly suggests that there had been an interchange of information and ideas between the various tribes inhabiting the lands around the eastern Mediterranean. In any event, the orientation and internal layout of the temple at Jerusalem was similar to that of the earlier temples, most of which also had two pillars that flanked their only entrance at the eastern end, similar to the layout of temple at Jerusalem.
The ground plan of the temple at Jerusalem, like the tabernacle proper, was in the ratio of 3:1 and the same internal arrangement was adopted. However the dimensions of the temple were exactly twice those of the tabernacle. Thus the Holy Place in the temple was 40 cubits long from east to west and 20 cubits wide, while the Holy of Holies at the western end was a perfect cube with sides of 20 cubits. The temple, like the tabernacle, was enclosed in a courtyard, but it was surrounded by another outer courtyard where the ordinary people could assemble. Although the fittings and fixtures in the inner courtyard of the temple were functionally similar to those in the courtyard of the tabernacle, they were more numerous and more elaborate.

**Epilogue**

In any discussion on the symbolism of an east-west orientation, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that in ancient times east and west respectively signified the regions, the places, the lines, or the directions in which the sun would be seen to rise and to set. At any given location the positions of the sun at sunrise and sunset varies throughout the year, especially as the distance of the location from the equator increases. However, the positions of the sun at sunrise and sunset at the summer solstice were almost universally regarded as the most important. Hence many temples and many of the ancient burial sites, such as the long barrows in the British Isles, actually are oriented more nearly on a northeast to southwest direction, so that at the summer solstice the rising sun will shine directly into the temple or burial chamber.

During the early period of Christian worship, when the gatherings were held outdoors, it was customary for the congregation to face the east. The earliest Christian churches had their entrances in the east, like the temple at Jerusalem. Lodges of operative freemasons have always followed the tradition of having the entrance in the east and the master seated in the west, so that the master faces the east, which is the symbolic source of light. However, lodges of speculative craft freemasons have adopted the reverse orientation. Possibly this is because, since early in the Middle Ages, Christian churches usually have been oriented with the altar in the east, which is the reverse of the orientation adopted in ancient temples. Although it is the custom to orient Christian churches on an east-west axis, site conditions have not always allowed this to be achieved. Even so, builders have often gone to extreme lengths to achieve an east-west orientation. The Canterbury Cathedral is a classic example of achieving an east-west orientation in difficult circumstances. Construction began in 1070, in the heart of a city that had been occupied continuously since about 200 BCE. This remarkable cathedral was completed in 1503, fortunately without destroying the ambience of the ancient city.

The east to west orientation is very significant in speculative craft freemasonry, because it is the symbolic source of light. The art of writing was first developed in the Near East as an essential medium of communication and traditionally the east is where learning originated. Unlike his operative predecessors, the master of a speculative lodge is seated in the east. Like the sun, which opens the day in the east, the master opens the lodge to
employ and instruct the brethren. Also in contrast to his operative predecessors, the senior warden of a speculative lodge is seated in the west, but like his predecessors it is his duty to superintend the work. Like the sun, which sets in the west to close the day, the senior warden closes the lodge when the labours of the day have been completed. A speculative craft freemason first learns the symbolism of an east-west orientation in relation to the tabernacle erected by Moses near Mount Sinai, later amplified by an account of the construction and dedication of King Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem.
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN – THE THREE GREAT PILLARS

The scriptures abound with references to structural pillars, monumental pillars

The Concept Of Symbolic Pillars

From earliest recorded history, the structural element that is called a pillar has also been used in a figurative sense to describe an imaginary prop or support on which rests the heavens or the earth, as well as to define a person who is a staunch supporter of a principle or an institution. The word is derived directly from the Latin pila, meaning a pillar or pier. The origin of the Latin word is obscure, but it is believed to have descended from the ancient Hittite pirwa, meaning a rock, through the Greek pilar in which the “r” and “l” are interchangeable. The Hebrew word for a column or pillar is ‘mwr, which is a derivative of the root word ‘mr meaning to stand, which is applied to both animate and inanimate things. When pillar is used in a figurative sense, it also implies strength.

Symbolic Pillars In Religion

The scriptures abound with references to structural pillars, monumental pillars and symbolic pillars. Some of them, like the two called Jachin and Boaz that stood at the entrance to King Solomon’s temple, were of architectural significance as well as being important religious symbols to the Israelites. As we are primarily concerned with symbolic pillars, a few examples of their figurative use will be given. It is said in I Samuel 2:8, that “the poor and the beggars will be raised up to inherit the throne of glory and become pillars of the earth”. In Job 9:4-6, we are told that God is “mighty in strength, able to shake the earth out of her place and cause the pillars thereof to tremble”. Paul the Apostle said in Galatians 2:9 that James, Cephas and John, who were held in high esteem as “pillars of society”, accepted him and Barnabas as partners and “gave them their right hands of fellowship”. In I Timothy 3:15, the church of the living God is described as “the pillar and bulwark of the truth”. Then in Revelation 3:12, in a message from the Messiah to the churches, we are told that “He that is victorious – I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God”. From the foregoing it is clear that both Judaism and Christianity have assigned important symbolic attributes to pillars, which prompts us to enquire whether pillars have an equally important standing in the traditions of other faiths.

Islam owes its origin to revelations that the Prophet Muhammad received in his visions of the angel Gabriel, which began in about 610 when Muhammad was about forty years old. A Christian monk, Bahira, had trained Muhammad in Syria from the age of twelve and in addition he had become well versed in the beliefs of Judaism. Muhammad became
disillusioned by the polytheism and superstition that prevailed in his native Mecca, when he sought the seclusion of caves for meditation, soon becoming convinced of the existence and transcendence of one true God. Because of his religious disposition, Muhammad was receptive to the revelations that he received in his visions of Gabriel. Muhammad’s visions were transcribed into the book that is holy to all Muslims, the **Koran**, which signifies the reading or the recitation. The religious observances of Islam are based on “Five Pillars” or “Foundations”, which are the recital of the creed, prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage. In many mosques these five symbolic pillars are represented by structural pillars or towers, which are incorporated into or surround the building.

The origins of Hinduism in India are shrouded in the mists of time. It did not have a founder, but developed gradually over almost five thousand years, absorbing and assimilating all of the diverse religious and cultural movements that came and went in India during that period. Hinduism acknowledges five “Facts of Existence”, or self-evident “Truths”, which are the pillars of its faith. These Five Truths are first, that **Brahman** is the Supreme Being. Second, that all living things are a part of **Brahman** and are sparks of **Atman**, or divine life, that transmute from one body to another as a result of **Brahman**’s creative strength. Third, that **Karma**, which is Sanskrit for fate and also signifies action or doing, is the sum of a human being’s actions carried forward from one life to the next. Fourth, that **Samsara** is an endless cycle of birth, life and death, which is known as the “wheel of rebirth” or the transmigration of the soul. Fifth and finally, that **Moksha** or **Mukti** is the breaking of the “Karmic chain”, which initiates the ultimate deliverance of a human being from the body-soul bondage of **Samsara** and **Karma** itself, when the **Atman** is liberated from the universe of time and space and is free to return to **Brahman**.

Buddhism is a philosophical religion that is an offspring of Hinduism, which came into existence in about 600 BCE. Buddha is not a name, but a title that was given especially to Siddharta Gautama and signifies the “Enlightened One” or the “Awakened One”. Gautama was born about 563 BCE on the borders of Nepal north of Benares. He renounced the mundane world when twenty-nine years old and sought instruction from Brahmin hermits. After devoting himself to extreme asceticism for several years he decided that such a path was a delusion that would not lead to self-realisation. Thereafter Gautama devoted himself to a simple life of intense mental activity, which culminated in his enlightenment while sitting in meditation under a fig tree at Uruvela, which henceforth became known as **Bo** or the “Wisdom Tree”. Buddhism has four principles or dogmas called the “Four Truths” that are both its Foundation and its Pillars. These Four Truths are first, that mental and physical suffering is omnipresent. Second, that the cause of suffering is a desire for possession and selfish enjoyment. Third, that suffering ceases when desire ceases. Fourth and finally, that the cessation of suffering can only be achieved by the “eightfold path” that comprises right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right mode of livelihood, right effort, right awareness and right concentration. Of all major faiths, Buddhism was the first by several centuries to become international, but with its main area of influence in Asia.
Other “Ways” In Religion

Each of the faiths so far considered has a belief in a **Supreme Being** as its central pillar, coupled with a belief in the existence of a soul in man, which ultimately will be delivered from this earthly abode. In their original forms Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism did not share these basic concepts, but believed in what is usually referred to as a **“Supreme State of Being”**. Those three faiths followed philosophical “ways” or “schools” that have since been influenced directly or indirectly by Buddhism, which has modified their beliefs to a greater or lesser extent.

Taoism is a quest for immortality. Chinese legends say that Huang Ti, the Yellow Emperor, discovered the secrets of immortality and passed them on to his followers during the Golden Age, from 2852 BCE to 2255 BCE. Taoist tradition ascribes the **Scripture of the Way and its Virtue**, the *Tao-te Ching*, to Lao Tzû who was known as the **“Ancient Sage”**. Taoists believe that everything in existence consists of spirit, seldom differentiating between spiritual and material things. The **Tao** or **way** is believed to be the hidden principle of the universe, kept in balance by the opposing forces of **yin** and **yang**, which respectively are the **female** and **male** elements, whose interaction shapes all life and ensures the unity and harmony of the universe, or **“oneness with the Tao”**. The forces of **yin** and **yang** are supported by the doctrine of **wu hsing**, which are the five activities or interrelationships that have an allegorical affinity with the natural interactions of wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Taoists do not believe in the transmigration of souls, reincarnation or resurrection. The transcendent immortality they seek must therefore be achieved during mortal life, as a precedent to entering the sublime state of mystic immortality. This is expressed in an ancient Taoist maxim that says: **“Entering the Hsüan Men, the Shadowy Portal, they pass beyond the world of dust into a realm of immortals”**.

Confucianism evolved in China under the teachings of K’ung Fu Tzû, who was known as the philosopher Confucius, born in 551 BCE. His beliefs and opinions are established in what are referred to as the **“Four Books”**, which respectively are called **The Analects**, **The Great Learning**, **The Doctrine of the Mean** and lastly **The Works of Mencius**. These are complemented by the **“Five Classics”**, which include most of the earlier authoritative writings. Confucianism in essence is an ethical system commonly known as **“the School”** or **“the Teaching”**. Confucius was a pragmatic moralist who defined his **“princely man”** as having five principal characteristics of kindness, sincerity, graciousness, loyalty and self-denial. Whilst Confucius acknowledged the then current belief in heaven and spirits, he stayed aloof from spiritual beings and referred to the deity in impersonal terms, although he recognised the deity as a motive for moral conduct. In Confucianism the origin of all things is seen in the union of **Yin** as the **passive principle** and **Yang** as the **active principle**. Confucian pragmatism strongly contrasts with the quietist philosophy and exalted mysticism of Taoists. Reverence for and the remembrance of ancestors has always been and still is a regular practice in Confucianism.

Shintoism is the indigenous religion of Japan and has neither a founder nor a written canon. Its origins are shrouded in the mists of time and it has never developed a systematic
doctrine, although mythological writings of the eighth century now provide a central theme. In Japan, the literal meaning of Shinto is the Way of the Kami, which was derived from the Chinese shin tao, meaning the way of the gods, itself a transliteration of the Japanese Kami-no-Michi. In ancient times anything that was awe-inspiring was called Kami, including natural phenomena and things either living or inanimate. Over the centuries a myriad of phenomena and things were accorded supernatural powers. Shinto ceremonies appeal to the mysterious forces of the Kami and focus on purity, devotion and sincerity. In modern times Shinto worship comprises four basic elements, which are purification, offering, prayer and a sacred meal, although the latter is often omitted on less formal occasions. These rites usually are looked upon simply as traditional ceremonial observances, with little if any thought of a deeper significance, although some of the more religiously inclined may perceive an inner spiritual meaning.

**The Pillars In Freemasonry**

The foregoing discussion compares the importance of symbolic pillars in the world’s most widespread religions, ethical systems and ways of life. It is evident that all those who have a belief in a Supreme Being as their central tenet, use symbolic pillars to express the status of man in the universe and his relationship with the Supreme Being. As a belief in a Supreme Being is the foundation of freemasonry, a logical and natural corollary is that stones, foundations and pillars should be used symbolically to illustrate some of freemasonry’s most important lessons. The symbolism used in modern speculative craft freemasonry derives naturally from the practical symbolism established by the operative freemasons who preceded them. In this context, it is interesting to note that a similar form of symbolism was also used in Biblical times, a typical illustration of which is to be found in Isaiah 28:16-17, where the coming of the Messiah is foretold in the following words:

“Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, a block of granite, a precious corner-stone or a firm foundation . . . I will use justice as a plumb-line and righteousness as a plummet”.

The pillars referred to in freemasonry may be purely symbolic, or they may be actual pillars like the two great pillars that stood at the porch or entrance at the eastern end of King Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem. In freemasonry actual pillars usually have a symbolic meaning, as well as serving some practical purpose. In this regard the pillars of King Solomon’s temple provide a good example. Although they did not support a roof for the porch, they supported two giant incense burners at the entrance to the temple, to remind the worshippers of the pillars of fire and cloud that led Israel of old through the wilderness. When the oracles named the pillars, they sought to bestow power on the line of David, as well as expressing Solomon’s gratitude to the Almighty for his bountiful blessings. The pillars at the porch of King Solomon’s temple have always been important symbols in freemasonry.

Probably the best known of the purely symbolic pillars referred to in freemasonry are the “three great pillars” called Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. It is of interest to note that
Wisdom, Strength and Beauty were not the pillars originally referred to in the Traditional History narrated in lodges of operative freemasons, nor were the two pillars at the porch of King Solomon’s temple. The Cooke MS of about 1410 includes the earliest known pillar legend, which refers to the four children of Lamech mentioned in Genesis 4:19-22, who are prominent in Hebrew tradition. Lamech’s first child was Jabal, reputedly the originator of animal husbandry and traditionally the first man to build walls and houses of stone. Lamech’s second child was Jubal, who reputedly established the art of music. Jabal and Jubal were born to Lamech’s first wife, Adah. Lamech’s third child was Tubal Cain, who reputedly invented the forge and was the first artificer of metals. Lamech’s fourth child was Naamah, reputedly the inventor of the craft of weaving. Tubal Cain and Naamah were born to Lamech’s second wife Zillah. The legend says that as the four children of Lamech feared the world would be destroyed by fire or by flood, they took counsel together and decided to inscribe details of all the crafts and sciences they had founded upon two pillars, one of marble that would not be destroyed by fire and one of laternes or clay brick that would not be destroyed by water.

As this ancient tradition is also the oldest known masonic tradition concerning pillars, it deserves further discussion. The account recorded in the old masonic documents was compiled from a number of different sources, especially the Polychronicon, a world history written by Ranulf Higden, a monk of Chester who died in about 1364. The monk’s version was derived from the Antiquities written by the Jewish historian Josephus, who in turn had copied them from the Greek historian Berosus or Berossus, a priest of Babylon, who wrote in about 300 BCE. Berosus is believed to have copied the legend from a Sumerian account, thought to be the original and dating from about 1500 BCE. The various translations reveal some discrepancies in the materials said to have been used for the pillars, but it seems that of the several alternatives the two best suited for the intended purpose were brick to resist fire and brass or bronze to resist flood. The legend concludes with the assertion that Hermes of Greece, who was known as the “father of wise men”, found the brass pillar in a cave whereby the knowledge of mankind was saved from destruction during the flood that occurred in Noah’s time. This legend was included in the historical portion of the MS Constitutions or Old Charges of the operative freemasons, but was omitted from Dr James Anderson’s Book of Constitutions that was published in 1723 for the first speculative Grand Lodge of England. However the tradition has not been lost to freemasonry, because it has been preserved in the work of the Royal Ark Mariner. In the English version one pillar is brass and the other is marble, whereas in the Scottish version one pillar is brass and the other is brick. These two pillars, with a segment of the rainbow that heralded God’s new covenant with mankind, are incorporated in the Worshipful Commander’s jewel.

**Wisdom, Strength And Beauty**

The old lodges of operative freemasons had a catechism for the instruction of supervisors concerning wisdom, strength and beauty. Supervisors were enjoined to exercise wisdom when examining the work, so as to distinguish good work from bad work; to have the strength to reject anything that was not in accordance with the plans and the designs; and to
have the capacity to appreciate beauty in the adornment of the structure. This theme was
carried into the early speculative rituals by drawing the attention of members to “three
great pillars” that symbolically support a freemason’s lodge. The “three great pillars” are
emblematic of wisdom, strength and beauty and are represented in lodges by pillars of the
Ionic, Doric and Corinthian orders of architecture. These three pillars also represent
the three Grand Masters at the building of the temple. They were Solomon King of Israel,
Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abif the Tyrian artificer in charge of the work, because
King Solomon was wise to construct the temple, Hiram King of Tyre gave strong support
with men and materials and Hiram Abif adorned the temple with great beauty. In
freemasonry the Master, the Senior Warden and the Junior Warden respectively represent
those three Grand Masters. In many speculative lodges during the 1700s a representation of
an Ionic, Doric or Corinthian pillar, as appropriate, stood before the Master and each of the
Wardens, although the practice was not universal. Often a pillar was also placed on each
side of the Master’s chair or on each side of the entrance door, representing the two pillars
at the porch of the temple in Jerusalem.

It is no longer a common practice to stand pillars adjacent to the Master and Wardens, nor
to stand a pillar on each side of the Master or the entrance door, although these customs
have not been lost entirely. In some lodges the relevant pillars are stood one on each side
of the Master and his Wardens to support canopies over them. In Scottish lodges
especially, the miniature columns on the pedestals of the Master and Wardens are of the
Ionic, Doric and Corinthian orders as appropriate. In speculative lodges the Master’s
column stands erect at all times, the lodge always being under his overall control. The
Senior Warden’s column stands erect when the lodge is at work, because the members are
then under his immediate supervision. The Junior Warden’s column stands erect when the
lodge is at refreshment, because the welfare of the members is then his responsibility. A
speculative catechism used in the early 1700s says that these three columns respectively
represent Wisdom to Contrive, Strength to Support and Beauty to Adorn. This description
has been included in the modern lecture on the Tracing Board of the First Degree, on
which representations of the three pillars are important elements. Nowadays many
freemasons would not see these three important symbolic pillars except as pictorial
representations depicted on the Tracing Board and on their Grand Lodge Certificates.

References In Sacred Writings

The qualities ascribed to Wisdom, Strength and Beauty as the three great pillars of
freemasonry are reflected in the sacred writings of all major religions of the world. The
dominant sense in which wisdom is portrayed as an attribute of God is as divine
knowledge that is intensely practical in its application, manifesting itself in the selection of
the proper means and ends for the accomplishment of God’s will. Wisdom is represented
as the art of being successful, by forming the correct plans to gain the desired results.
Strength also is typified in the sacred writings as a primary attribute of God, through which
the will of God shall be implemented. Beauty is another very important attribute deriving
from God to man. The qualities of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty are closely interwoven,
which is illustrated in the following passages of scripture derived from a wide spectrum of
the world’s major religions, from the most recent to the most ancient. These quotations from the scriptures reveal a remarkable uniformity of thought, which is entirely compatible with the explanations that are given in freemasonry. They clearly express the principles expounded in the lectures on the three great pillars of freemasonry and therefore provide a fitting conclusion to any discussion on the symbolism of pillars.

The wisdom, strength and beauty of the Creator are described poetically in the Koran, the holy book of Islam that symbolises the Word of God and is referred to as “that which is for mortals to read”. The following relevant passage from Sûrah LIX verse 24 of the Koran, was translated from Arabic into English by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall in The Meaning of the Glorious Koran:

“He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him and He is the Mighty, the Wise.”

The following three passages taken from the Authorised Version of the Bible are equally relevant in Judaism and in Christianity:

Wisdom is the topic of Exodus 31:3, when Bezaleel was chosen as the chief artisan to construct the tabernacle and God spoke to Moses saying of Bezaleel:

“I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom and in understanding and in knowledge and in all manner of workmanship”.

Strength is the topic of Psalm 18:2, when David said to the chief musician:

“The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower”.

Beauty is the topic of Psalm 19:1, when David speaks to the musician again:

“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork”.

A comprehensive example is provided in the following passage quoted from Chapter III of the Dhammapada or Words of the Doctrine of the Buddhist faith, translated by Professor Max Müller, in which Buddha says:

“As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought . . . Knowing that this body is fragile like a jar and making his thoughts firm like a fortress, one should attack Mara, the tempter, with the weapon of knowledge, one should watch him when conquered and should never rest”.

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These attributes of the Creator are also extolled in the Svetasvatara Upanishad, which is the Word of God of the Hindu faith, equivalent to the Bible of Judaism and Christianity and the Koran of Islam. The following is a relevant extract, also translated by Professor Max Müller:

“He makes all, He knows all, the self-caused, the knower, the destroyer of time, who assumes qualities and knows everything . . . the lord of the three qualities, the cause of the bondage, the existence and the liberation of the world”.

These three qualities or *Gunas* are the “three pillars” of the Hindu faith. They are the three mystical elements or principles, out of which Hindus believe that all things and beings in this world are made. They are firstly *Sattva*, which is *light* or *illumination*; secondly *Rajas*, which is *activity* or *passion*; and thirdly *Tamas*, which is *heaviness* or *inertia.*
CHAPTER NINETEEN – THE INTERIOR OF THE LODGE

The interior of the lodge is the symbolic heart of speculative craft freemasonry.

Characteristics

In most jurisdictions, the work of speculative craft lodges includes lectures on the tracing boards, which are the modern equivalents of the trestle boards used in operative lodges and of the floor drawings and later the floor cloths used in early speculative lodges. In the usual lecture on the First Tracing Board, the interior of the lodge is described as being composed of ornaments, furniture and jewels. The ornaments of the lodge are the mosaic pavement, the blazing star and the indented or tessellated border. The furniture of the lodge comprises the sacred writings, the compasses and the square. The jewels of the lodge are in two groups, one group of three that are said to be movable and another group of three that are said to be immovable. In the rituals used in most English and Scottish lodges the three movable jewels usually are the square, the level and the plumb rule. They are called movable jewels because they are the insignia of office of the master and his wardens, which are transferred to their successors when installed in their stead. On the other hand, in American lodges these three jewels are said to be immovable, because they invariably are the insignia of office of the master and his wardens. In English and Scottish lodges the tracing board, the rough ashlar and the perfect ashlar are called immovable jewels, because they always lie open in the lodge for the brethren to moralise upon. Conversely in American lodges, these three jewels are called movable because they can be placed anywhere in the lodge room that is convenient.

At first sight the description of the various objects as ornaments, furniture and jewels might seem a little strange, especially as some of the objects are included in two different categories and some of them are also called working tools. Moreover, the reasons why an object has been assigned to a particular category might not be immediately evident. In this context, one must not overlook how the English language has evolved since the rituals were written. Some freemasons might be inclined to say that the rituals should be rewritten in modern English, but that would be a self-defeating exercise because much of the rich symbolism would be lost. The language used in the rituals provides an avenue of constructive thought, which if followed to its logical conclusion can only enhance one’s knowledge of the principles expounded. Another avenue of confusion arises from the fact that in every lodge room there are many more objects that might be called ornaments, furniture or jewels in today’s language, but which have not been included in the rituals under those descriptions. Most of those additional objects and their respective symbolisms are described in other sections of the lecture on the First Tracing Board. Of the objects discussed in relation to the interior of the lodge, the jewels of the lodge and the tracing boards are of such importance that explanations of their symbolisms are given under their
own headings in other chapters of this book, so they will only be examined briefly in this chapter. Those implements that operative freemasons used as working tools, which are also included in the items of furniture or as jewels, also are discussed in their primary capacity in the chapter on the working tools of the craft.

The mosaic pavement, the blazing star depicted in the centre of the pavement and the indented or tessellated border surrounding the pavement would not be called ornaments nowadays, although they are ornamental and might be thought of as furnishings. The Latin *ordinare*, meaning *to set in order*, has a closely related word *ornare* meaning *to equip* or *to arrange*, whence its predominant sense was *to embellish*. *Ornare* had a derivative *ornamentum*, which became *ornament* in Old French and was adopted into Middle English as *ornament*. All three derivatives of *ornare* mean *to embellish*, in which sense *ornament* is used in the lecture. The English verb *to furnish* derives through the Middle French from the Old French *fornir* meaning *to furnish*, especially in the sense *to do completely*. One of the Middle French derivatives of *fornir* was *forneture*, which later became *forniture* and was adopted as *furniture* in English. In the lecture *furniture* is used in the sense of doing something completely, because a lodge is not complete and cannot be opened unless the sacred writings, the square and the compasses are open on the pedestal. The ultimate derivation of *jewel* is from the Latin *iocus*, which became *jocus* in Medieval Latin, both words meaning a *joke* or a *jest*. A Medieval Latin derivative was *jocalis*, which in Old French became *joel*, its variant *jeul* being adopted into Middle English and becoming *jewel* in English, all of which meant a *plaything*, hence a *trinket* or small *ornament* and ultimately a *jewel*. In the context of the lecture the *jewels* are *small ornaments*.

**The Ornaments**

The mosaic pavement in the centre of the lodge room floor invariably attracts attention, drawing together the physical elements described as the ornaments of the lodge. The physical interconnection of these three elements is highlighted by the fact that, in most lodge rooms, the blazing star is in the centre of the mosaic pavement, which itself is completely surrounded by the indented or tessellated border. This close physical relationship reflects how the symbolisms of the three ornaments are integrated. Taking them in their logical sequence, the mosaic pavement is called the beautiful floor of the lodge; the indented or tessellated border is called the skirt-work around the pavement; and the blazing star is called the glory in the centre. The mosaic pavement is a fundamental element of the composition, representing in particular the terrestrial aspects of mankind’s existence and the vicissitudes of everyday life. The mosaic pavement is called beautiful because it is variegated in colour and chequered in design, reminding us of the eternal sequence of day and night, as well as the diversity of objects that decorate and adorn the whole of the creation, both the animate and the inanimate parts thereof.

The indented or tessellated border alludes to the celestial sphere of our existence. In its lesser aspect, the indented or tessellated border refers to the planets in their several orbits around the sun, thus forming a beautiful corona or border around that grand luminary, as...
The indented or tessellated border does around the mosaic pavement of a mason’s lodge. In its more important aspect, the indented or tessellated border refers to the radiant canopy of stars surrounding our universe, pointing out to us the inherent insignificance of mankind except with the guidance, assistance and strength of Almighty God. The blazing star or glory in the centre has a twofold symbolism, although the more important of these is often overlooked. Lectures of or deriving from the English system usually say that the blazing star refers to that grand luminary, the sun, which illumines the earth and by its benign influence dispenses its blessings to mankind in general. However, this is only a secondary symbolism that is closely related to the symbolism of the indented or tessellated border. The old Prestonian lecture defines the primary symbolism of the blazing star in the following words:

“The Blazing Star, or glory in the centre, reminds us of that awful period when the Almighty delivered the two tables of stone, containing the ten commandments, to his faithful servant Moses on Mount Sinai, when the rays of His divine glory shone so bright that none could behold it without fear and trembling. It also reminds us of the omnipresence of the Almighty, overshadowing us with His divine love, and dispensing His blessings amongst us; and by its being placed in the centre, it further reminds us, that wherever we may be assembled together, God is in the midst of us, seeing our actions and observing the secret intents and movements of our hearts.”

In most lectures used in the Scottish system, the *Blazing Star* is simply defined as the *Glory in the Centre*. It is an ancient symbol of the *Supreme Being* like the *All-Seeing Eye*, which is widely used in Scottish and American freemasonry. The *Revised Ritual of Craft Freemasonry* that is used in some English lodges, adopts a similar approach and also puts the three ornaments in their logical symbolical sequence, saying “The Ornaments are the Mosaic Pavement, the Indented or Tessellated Border and the Blazing Star or Glory in the Centre.” Some Scottish lectures do not include the *Blazing Star* as an ornament, as for example in the *A.S.MacBride Ritual*, which says, “Its Ornaments are the Mosaic Pavement of chequered human existence and the four Golden Tassels of Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance and Justice.” These four tassels are those described as pendent to the corners of the lodge in the concluding paragraph of the *Emulation* and most other English lectures on the *First Tracing Board*. In American freemasonry the *Blazing Star* is usually said to be commemorative of the star that guided the wise men of the east to Bethlehem, whence it is said to represent *Divine Providence*. The *Blazing Star* is a symbol of the greatest antiquity and is used in a wide range of religious systems to represent the *Supreme Being*, which has always been its primary symbolism in freemasonry.

**The Furniture**

No lodge is complete, nor can a lodge be opened to carry out work, unless the three elements that comprise the furniture of the lodge are open on the pedestal, these being the sacred writings, the square and the compasses. The sacred writings are derived from God to mankind in general, because in them are laid down the divine laws that God has
revealed to mankind to regulate the life and actions of each and every person. We live in the sure knowledge that every person will be rewarded or punished, accordingly as those laws have been obeyed or disobeyed. As the sacred writings are intended to rule our actions and govern our faith, so every candidate in freemasonry must be obligated upon the holy book of his faith. A corollary to this requirement is the stipulation that no man can be admitted into freemasonry unless he believes in God.

The square and compasses are placed upon the sacred writings opened at a passage suitable to the occasion, which signifies that the divine laws laid down therein must be the spiritual foundation and moral basis on which every action is undertaken. In this context the square is said to belong to the whole craft of freemasonry, because every freemason is obligated within the square, when he is told that he must square his life and actions according to God’s divine laws. Likewise the compasses, which are an important instrument in the preparation of all architectural plans and designs, are said to belong to the Grand Master in particular as an emblem of his dignity. As he is the chief head and ruler of the craft, the Grand Master must be circumspect in his actions, must diligently uphold the divine laws and must skilfully delineate how the members of the craft should apply those laws.

The sacred writings, the square and the compasses that comprise the furniture of the lodge, are also designated as the Three Great Lights in freemasonry or the Lights of Revelation, to which the apprentice’s attention is drawn immediately after he has taken the obligation. The Scottish A.S.MacBride Ritual gives the following succinct but beautiful explanation of the Three Great Lights:

“In the Compasses we have an emblem of the Supreme Will, that encircles and over-rules the Universe. In the Square we have an emblem of the perfect Justice that governs all things. In the Holy Book we have that Will and Justice revealed in the character of the Great Creator of all; and by it we are taught how to circumscribe our desires to His Supreme Will and how to accord our actions with His Perfect Justice.”

In most Irish lodges the Three Great Lights are explained to the newly obligated apprentice in the following words:

“The Volume of the Sacred Law is recommended to your consideration and study without comment, believing that if you follow its teachings and precept, you will find them a ‘Light to your Path’ and a ‘Lamp to your Feet’. The Square is an emblem of Morality and teaches us that all our actions towards our fellow men should stand the test of the Moral Square. The Compasses, which form that perfect figure, the circle, remind us that we should endeavour to surround our conduct by a line, to keep in check unruly passions and unlawful desires. Thus the Three Great Lights teach the Freemason his duty to his God, his neighbour and himself.”
The explanation of the *Three Great Lights* that is widely used in English and Scottish lodges and their descendents around the world, which therefore probably is the best-known definition, is given in the following or similar words:

> “Let me direct your attention to the three great though emblematical Lights of Freemasonry, namely the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and the Compasses. The Sacred Writings are to govern our faith, the Square to regulate our actions and the Compasses to keep us within due bounds with all mankind, more particularly our brethren in freemasonry.”

In the foregoing discussions the *Sacred Writings*, the *Square* and the *Compasses* have been reviewed as the three elements of the *Furniture* of the lodge and also as the *Three Great Lights* in freemasonry. The inclusion of these three elements in what undoubtedly must be their most important capacity in speculative craft freemasonry, which is as the *Three Great Lights*, would appear to have been sufficient. At first sight their additional inclusion as the *Furniture* of the lodge might appear to be a redundancy, were it not for the fact that in medieval times and until at least the end of the seventeenth century, furniture had an important connotation, perhaps even a primary meaning, of doing something completely. It seems most likely that the early compilers of our speculative rituals had this sense uppermost in their minds. In any event the explanations that are given for the symbolisms of these three elements, as the *Three Great Lights* in freemasonry and also as items of the *Furniture* of the lodge, are sufficiently different to offset any suggestion of redundancy.

**The Movable Jewels**

The *Square*, the *Level* and the *Plumb Rule* are called movable jewels in English, Irish and Scottish lodges, but immovable jewels in American lodges. In respect of the jewels, the early ritualists seem to have faced a dichotomy similar to that relating to the *Furniture* and the *Three Great Lights* discussed above, because the primary roles of the *Square*, the *Level* and the *Plumb Rule* are in their functions as important working tools of the craft. Nevertheless they have also been adopted quite logically as insignia of office, in which capacity they are considered to be jewels of the lodge. The use of replicas of these three implements as jewels of office derives directly from the practices of operative freemasons. In the context of the present discussion, it will suffice only to outline their symbolism. The *Square* is an implement that enables an operative mason to determine precisely the angles of the exterior faces of a stone, thus enabling him to bring rude matter into due form. The *Square* is an emblem of *Morality* and *Justice*. It therefore is appropriate as the jewel of a Master whose duty it is to ensure that the members of his lodge conduct themselves morally and justly. The *Level* is an implement that enables an operative mason to set the work to a true level on a given plane. The *Level* is an emblem of *Equality* and therefore is appropriate as the jewel of the Senior Warden, who is in charge of the work and must see that all of the men are treated fairly. The *Plumb Rule* is an implement that enables an operative mason to erect walls and columns truly perpendicular. The *Plumb Rule* is an emblem of *Uprightness* and *Integrity* and therefore is appropriate as the jewel of the
Junior Warden, whose duty it is to see that all of the men conduct themselves with uprightness and integrity.

**The Immovable Jewels**

In English and Scottish lodges, the Tracing Board, the Rough Ashlar and the Perfect Ashlar are called the Immovable Jewels, because they lie open in the lodge for the brethren to moralise upon. The lecture on the First Tracing Board says that the Tracing Board is for the Master to lay lines and draw designs upon, so that the operative mason can erect the intended structure with order, regularity and precision. A parallel is drawn to the Sacred Writings, which are designated as the Spiritual Tracing Board in which are laid down the divine lines and moral designs that should govern our lives and actions. The Rough Ashlar is for the Apprentice to work, mark and indent on. Symbolically it represents the mind of man in its untrained state, as rough and unpolished as that stone, but which a liberal and enlightened education can transform into a Perfect Ashlar, smooth, squared and polished. Symbolically the Perfect Ashlar represents the mind of a man who has rendered himself fit to be a member of a properly organised and civilised society. In most lodges there is a Perfect Ashlar fitted with a Lewis and suspended from a tripod, which is placed at a point of vantage visible to everyone in the lodge. When the lodge has been opened the Perfect Ashlar is raised by means of a winch that symbolises labour. This is intended to remind everyone present that they are engaged in labour and that, as freemasons, they should always work diligently to improve their minds and must regulate their actions according to the divine edicts laid down in the Spiritual Tracing Board.

**Concluding Remarks**

The explanations given in the foregoing discussion are by no means complete, because the primary concern of this chapter is to bring all of the relevant features together in a cohesive arrangement. Most of the important features are examined in greater detail in other chapters under appropriate headings.
CHAPTER TWENTY – THE FOUR TASSELS

The four tassels pendent to the corners of the lodge are important operative symbols seldom explained adequately in speculative craft freemasonry.

An Ancient Operative Symbol

The Four Tassels, that are referred to near the end of the lecture on the first tracing board in various rituals, are important ornaments of the lodge. They are of great antiquity and their symbolism deserves further explanation. In fact the symbolism of the Four Tassels, which has its origins in operative freemasonry, is of great importance and its omission from many rituals, or only the briefest of references to it in other rituals, is surprising. In earlier times explanations of the origin and deep symbolic meaning of the Four Tassels were often given, but nowadays they are so rarely mentioned that many speculative freemasons, if not most, are unaware of their significance.

References In Modern Rituals

The following reference to the Four Tassels, which is taken from the English Emulation Ritual, is very similar to the references found in many other English and Scottish rituals and some Irish rituals and their derivatives around the world, probably is better known than most:

“Pendent to the corners of the Lodge are four tassels, meant to remind us of the four cardinal virtues, namely: Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice, the whole of which, tradition informs us, were constantly practised by a majority of our ancient Brethren.”

The concluding portion of that quotation is the only inkling that is given of the operative origin of the Four Tassels and their significant symbolism. Whilst the reference to the four cardinal virtues should stimulate constructive thought, no explanation is given to associate the tassels with the corners of the lodge and there is no apparent reason for them to be there. Moreover, as the concluding portion of that quotation has been omitted from many versions of the ritual, the origin and significance of the Four Tassels has become even more obscure.

In the Scottish A.S.MacBride Ritual reference to the Four Golden Tassels is made in relation to the ornaments of the lodge in the explanation of the plan or tracing board,
which is quite a brief charge. Many of the American and several of the English, Irish and Scottish rituals do not include extended lectures on the *tracing boards*, but describe much of the relevant symbolism in a series of charges. In the Scottish *Modern Ritual* the first lecture on the *tracing boards* concludes with the following statement, which is somewhat unusual and probably has its origins in the rituals of some lodges on the continent of Europe:

*“You will see that our carpet has a tessellated border, which represents the divine protection encircling humanity, whilst the four tassels, which ornament its corners, denote prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice.”*  

Before explaining the operative origins of the *Four Tassels*, it would be appropriate to consider the lecture on the first *tracing board* included in the English *Revised Ritual*, which was originally written during the 1800s, has been under continual review ever since and has received high praise from many distinguished brethren. In nearly all of its aspects this ritual is indeed a beautiful exposition of the rites and symbolism of speculative craft freemasonry, but the following section relevant to the *Four Tassels*, which is quoted from the sixth edition printed in 1962, brings into sharp focus some of the misconceptions on the subject:

*“The two Ends of the Lodge, facing severally due East and West, and the two sides, facing respectively North and South, thus indicating the four cardinal points of the compass, represent to us the Four Cardinal Virtues, namely, Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice.”*  

Moreover, the lack of knowledge on the subject is highlighted by the footnote in the ritual relating to the passage, which says:

*“The allusion sometimes made to four tassels is misleading; very few, if any, Lodges have any such thing, and they could serve no useful purpose if they had. No symbolical meaning is given to them anywhere.”*  

It is remarkable that the mistaken beliefs and indeed the lack of understanding that these two passages reflect in relation to such a fundamental aspect of masonic symbolism have not been noticed and corrected for so long a time, especially as it is not very difficult to seek out the correct information.

Before explaining the operative origins of the *Four Tassels*, it would be appropriate to consider other cords and tassels often depicted on tracing boards and surrounding the mosaic pavement, which refer to the protective care of the deity and the uniting bonds of the fraternity. Although the origin and symbolism of those cords and tassels are not the same as those of the *Four Tassels*, they also were in use before the advent of modern speculative freemasonry and the two symbolisms are often confused. Comprehensive explanations of the symbolism of the surrounding cords and tassels are given in various old rituals from the continent of Europe, at least the elements of which are still explained in their catechisms.
The Wavy Cord And The Tassels

Some early *tracing boards* of the first degree were enclosed within a continuous wavy cord that was knotted at the four corners and terminated with its two tasselled ends hanging down. In French lodges this arrangement of the cord is called *la houppe dentelée*, which means “the scalloped tassel” and is described as “a cord forming true-lovers’ knots”. The old French ritual explains that the cord should remind all freemasons that the bonds uniting them should draw them closer together, irrespective of the distances that may separate them. In German lodges the knotted wavy cord is called *die Schnur von starken Faden*, which signifies “a cord of strong threads”. The old German ritual also explains that the cord symbolises the fraternal bond by which all freemasons are united.

Also relevant to this discussion are the comments of Dr John I. Browne in the *Master Key*, which sets out the elements of the Prestonian lectures. He says that the wavy cord and tassels allude to “the kind care of Providence which so cheerfully surrounds and keeps us within its protection whilst we justly and uprightly govern our lives and actions by the four cardinal virtues in divinity”. Alternative English translations of *dentelée* are “serrated” and “indented”, whence the “indented border” has been derived. On the other hand “tessellated” is not a derivative of *houppe*, but comes from the Latin *tessella*, which is the diminutive form of the Latin *tessera* and means “a small four-sided tile”.

From the foregoing it is evident that the “*indented or tessellated border*” of black and white triangles, which usually surrounds the *mosaic pavement* on the lodge floor and also the first *tracing board*, is not the same as the knotted and tasselled wavy cord that represents the divine protection encircling humanity. Nor is the “*indented or tessellated border*” the same as the bonds that unite the members of the fraternity and should draw them closer together. As mentioned earlier, the modern indented or tessellated border is primarily an ornament that alludes to the celestial sphere of our existence. However the
tassels depicted at the four corners of most *tracing boards* of the first degree, which among other things is a representation of the lodge room, do refer to the four cardinal virtues.

**The Operative Origins Of The Four Tassels**

All speculative freemasons are or should be aware that, symbolically, they are intended to find the answers to their questions *on the centre*, which is that point within a circle from which all parts of the circumference are equally distant. The *Point within a Circle* is an ancient and sacred hieroglyph that refers to the deity. It is a symbol of sufficient importance to merit thorough contemplation, but it will suffice now to say that answers found *on the centre* are those established in accord with the decrees of the deity. Many speculative freemasons may not be aware that, down through the ages, all significant religious structures and other stately edifices have been set out *from the centre*, because such structures should be located having a proper regard for the position they will occupy in the civilised society in which they will fulfil an essential role. Their position and form therefore are expected to reflect their importance and their significance. Thus in ancient times a temple often was located on the site of an earlier sanctuary, place of offering, sacred site or memorial stone. A cathedral likewise has often been located on the site of an earlier religious structure or a succession of structures like the York Minster, to perpetuate the sanctity of the site. For this reason it usually was considered important for the centres of the old and new structures to be the same.

In operative times, when the location of the centre of an intended structure had been decided, the master mason’s first duty was to establish the centre point of the structure on the site. This was referred to as *striking the centre*. He would then determine the required orientation of the building by an appropriate method and set it out on the ground. Sacred buildings usually were required to face either due east or the rising sun at the summer solstice. If the required orientation was to be due east to west, the first step was to determine the true north-south line accurately, from which the true east-west line could be set out. In the northern hemisphere either due north could be determined by sighting the pole star at night, or due south could be determined by marking the direction of the sun at noon at either of the equinoxes. As there is no pole star in the southern hemisphere, it is necessary there to determine due north by marking the direction of the sun at noon at either of the equinoxes. In both hemispheres the correct orientation at the summer solstice could be ascertained by direct observation of the sunrise at that time.

In the northern hemisphere the true north-south line can be determined by setting up a plumb line over the established centre point and then aligning two other plumb lines with the pole star and the plumb line over the centre point, the other two plumb lines being placed one each at convenient distances outside the northern and southern boundaries of the building. The north-south line can then be set out on the ground by stretching a string line between the two outer plumb lines and passing through the centre point. The true north-south line in both hemispheres can be determined at either equinox by observing the sun’s shadow from about two hours before noon until about two hours after noon. When two or preferably three concentric arcs of sufficient length have been marked out on the
ground, using the line from a skirret that has been set up at the centre point, a
perpendicular rod of sufficient height is erected at the centre point. The several points
where the end of the sun’s shadow just touches each of the arcs, as the shadow shortens
and again as it lengthens, are then marked on the ground. A line from the centre point to
the point on each arc that bisects the distance between the two points on that arc, where the
sun’s shadow just touches the arc, indicates the true north-south line. It is desirable to use
several consecutive arcs in this observation, in case the sun is obscured when the end of the
shadow would just touch the arc, as well as to confirm the accuracy of the several
observations. It also is desirable to carry out the observation on three consecutive days,
including the day before and the day after the equinox.

When the true north-south line had been determined, it was accurately set out on the
ground by means of a string line through the centre point, from which the true east-west
axis was also set out on the ground. The east-west line can be set out from the north-south
line with the aid of three long rods having lengths of three, four and five units, with which
a right-angled triangle can be formed. As a check for accuracy, right-angled triangles
should be assembled on both the left and the right of the east-west line and the procedure
should be carried out both to the east and to the west of the north-south line. When
assembling the triangles it was customary to place the side three units long against the
north-south line, so that the side four units long indicated the east-west line. A more
accurate method of setting out the east-west line is to use two skirrets, which are set up at
two points on the north-south line that are equidistant from the centre and as far apart as
practicable. The lines from the skirrets are then extended sufficiently to intersect on the
east-west line where, for accuracy, their angle of intersection should be approximately a
right angle. As a check for accuracy this procedure should be carried out both to the east
and to the west of the north-south line. If carried out properly the line between the two
points where the skirret lines intersect is the east-west line, which should pass through the
centre point.

When the centre point of the building and the two main axes passing through the centre
point had been established, the next step in setting out was to establish the four points of a
rectangle to delineate the four corners of the principal constituent of the building. When
setting out a cathedral, for example, these four points would define the corners of the nave.
The setting out of subsidiary components, like the transepts and the chapter house, usually
could be deferred until an appropriate time during construction. The axes of the nave and
the transepts of York Minster and many cathedrals in the Gothic style intersect at the
centre point of the structure, but this arrangement is not always adopted. For example the
Salisbury Cathedral has two transepts, although the axis of the main transept does pass
through the centre point. In France the plan of the nave and transepts in some cathedrals is
in the form of a Latin cross. The three traditional shapes for temples are the square; the
oblong-square in the proportions of two to one; and the temple-square in the proportions of
three to one, like King Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem. Although the principal constituents
of religious structures are predominantly rectangular in plan, other shapes also are used.
These include the octagon adopted for most chapter houses attached to churches and
cathedrals, which were usually constructed in the style used by the Knights Templar. The
octagon was also used frequently in Byzantine churches. The circle was adopted for the
Pantheon constructed in Rome by Hadrian as the temple of the gods, which is now the church of Santa Maria Rotonda. Sometimes a circular interior has been combined with an exterior that is square or octagonal, or occasionally an even more complex shape.

The points established to locate the four corners of the principal constituent of the building were also set out from the centre point. This was achieved by fixing a skirret at the centre point, from which a line of the required length could be extended to each of the four corners in succession. The required direction of each of these diagonal lines was a function of the shape of the principal component of the building. It was one of the duties of the master mason to determine the required directions, which he then set out with reference to the north-south and east-west axes that had been established through the centre. The diagonals were set out using the three long rods, each of which was appropriately graduated to enable the required angles to be measured with reference to the main axes of the building. The method was similar to that used when setting out the east-west axis from the north-south axis, except that the right-angled triangle formed by the three rods was rotated by the required amount. Having marked the four corners, the accuracy of the rectangle was checked by comparing the measurements of the two ends and the measurements of the two sides. When the four corner marks had been established, distinctively marked perpendicular stakes were set up near them, drawing attention to their location and protecting them from inadvertent damage. Suspended coloured cords or streamers distinguished the marker stakes, in the same way as brightly painted stakes or stakes with coloured bunting are used to indicate important survey marks in the present day.

The four tassels pendent to the four corners of the lodge, that are referred to in lectures on the first tracing board, are directly related to the methods used by the operative master masons when setting out the four corners of the building and also when constructing the corners in stonework. The relationship between the four tassels and the setting out of the building is immediately evident from the foregoing description of the methods used, but their relationship to construction of the building may not be so evident. When constructing the corners of the building plumb lines were suspended from timber supports adjacent to the corners, to ensure that the corners were perpendicular as well as being correctly located in relation to the established corner marks. Lines were also strung between the relevant plumb lines at the corners, to ensure that the walls followed the correct lines to ensure that the corners were square as well as perpendicular. The four tassels also allude to the plumb lines that were set up at the corners of the building during construction.

In operative times the four tassels that were suspended in the four corners of the lodge room represented guides, which were intended to assist a freemason to maintain a just and upright life, whence was derived the reference to the four cardinal virtues that traditionally are temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice. In modern speculative lodges those four tassels, respectively representing temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice in that sequence, should commence in the southeast corner, which is on the Worshipful Master’s left hand side, then proceed clockwise around the lodge room. Nowadays tassels are not a common feature in lodge rooms, but are usually represented only by the name of one of the four cardinal virtues in each corner. In some lodge rooms the name is shown on a
decoration representing a tassel attached to a short cord, which sometimes is incorrectly depicted as a loop. In other lodge rooms the only representations of the tassels are those that appear at the corners of the first tracing board. As mentioned earlier, the cords and tassels that are often incorporated into the tessellated border surrounding the mosaic pavement have a different origin, even though in some rituals they are said to represent the four tassels.

Before considering in which corners the four tassels would have been suspended in an operative lodge room, it would be appropriate to review what the four cardinal virtues signify. In modern everyday language temperance suggests moderation or even abstinence; fortitude implies courage in endurance; prudence conveys an impression of cautious self-interest; and justice implies the awarding of what is due. Whilst all of these definitions reflect important characteristics that are relevant to the principles esteemed in freemasonry, they do not embrace all facets of importance in masonic conduct. For example, in freemasonry temperance requires the exercise of caution in thought, judgment, feeling, speech, act and deed in every aspect of life and work. The practise of temperance must be closely allied with fortitude, which implies moral courage as well as physical bravery, which requires a freemason to pursue the course that he knows to be right, even if in so doing he meets unforeseen problems and the outcome is not what he had anticipated. Even so, the pursuit of the right course of action must always be tempered with prudence, which involves the use of common sense and the proper application of reason and logic. In commonplace usage justice implies a strict interpretation of the law, but in its broader sense it should reflect the greatest good for the community as a whole. In freemasonry justice is always allied with mercy. This is why, in many versions of the lecture on the first tracing board, the reference to the four cardinal virtues is followed immediately by a statement similar to the following passage quoted from the English Emulation Ritual:

“The distinguishing characteristics of a good Freemason are Virtue, Honour, and Mercy, and may they ever be found in a Freemason’s breast.”

In this context mercy implies that justice alone is insufficient, but that it must be tempered by mercy if an equitable outcome is to be achieved. By definition mercy means forbearance towards anyone who is in one’s power, but in a parallel sense it is considered to be something good that is derived from God. Virtue and honour are important corollaries of mercy. Virtue signifies goodness, morality and probity and also implies the many attributes of honour, which in turn signifies honesty, integrity, rectitude and uprightness.

The Four Tassels In Operative Lodges

As operative lodges were oriented in the same direction as King Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem, which is the reverse of modern speculative lodges, the entrance to the lodge was in the east and the master was seated in the west. To avoid possible confusion, in the following discussion reference will be made to the positions of the officers’ stations in the lodge, not to the compass points. Operative lodges had a Master, a Senior Warden and a
Junior Warden who were located with respect to each other, except for the compass orientation, similarly to the stations of those officers in modern speculative lodges. In operative lodges there also was a fourth officer, the Superintendent of Work, whose location was on the opposite side of the lodge from the Junior Warden. In this explanation of the location and symbolism of the four tassels pendent from the corners of the lodge, all four of these officers are assumed to be seated facing inwards towards the centre of the lodge.

The tassel in the corner on the Master’s right hand side should represent justice and that on his left hand side should represent temperance. The reason for this is that, when ruling in his lodge and managing his work force, the Master should rule with justice that nevertheless must be tempered with mercy, so as to ensure that not only will the client obtain the service he is paying for, but also that his workmen will receive their just dues. The tassel in the corner on the Superintendent of Work’s right hand side should represent prudence and that on his left hand side should represent justice. Like his Master, whom he represents, the Superintendent of Work must be prudent in the use of his work force and the materials, so that the Master is properly served; but he must also ensure the men are treated with justice so that they receive the dues to which they are entitled.

The two Wardens are the officers who exercise direct control over the workmen, under the immediate supervision of the Superintendent of Work. The tassel in the corner on the right hand side of the Senior Warden should represent fortitude and that on his left hand side should represent prudence. The reason for this is that, as the officer who exercises direct control over the workmen while they are at labour, he is responsible for overcoming the many difficulties that inevitably will beset the work, which will require the utmost fortitude on his part. At the same time he must exercise his control over the men’s employment and the use of materials with the utmost prudence, to protect the men’s welfare whilst at the same time ensuring that the workmanship cannot be faulted. The Junior Warden, whose duty it is to assist the Senior Warden, is the officer primarily responsible for the men’s welfare especially when they are at rest and refreshment. The tassel in the corner on right hand side of the Junior Warden should represent temperance, in allusion to the manner in which refreshment should always be conducted. The tassel on the Junior Warden’s left hand side should represent fortitude, because he is supposed to personify Hiram Abif whose fortitude should always be emulated by every freemason.
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE – THE SYMBOLISM OF LADDERS

In most of the Ancient Mysteries the ladder was a symbol of progressive advancement.

Jacob’s Ladder

Jacob’s ladder is an important symbol in freemasonry. Jacob, the younger of the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah, was called “the father of the chosen people”. His lifespan is not known with certainty, because the biblical account cannot be correlated directly with the surviving secular records, but the available evidence indicates that he probably lived in about the eighteenth century BCE. The scriptures say that Jacob was born clutching his elder twin brother Esau’s heel (Ayin Qoph Beth in Hebrew). Hence popular etymology suggests that this is the derivation of Jacob’s name, which is said to signify heel catcher or he clutches. Another possible interpretation is “he whom God protects”, which is derived from a southern Arabic and Ethiopian word ‘akaba meaning to guard or to keep. The cuneiform and Egyptian documents of that period contain personal names from the same root and the Amorites also used a parallel form of the name. Yet another meaning of Jacob is the supplanter, which refers to the fact that Jacob deceived his aged father into giving him the birthright or blessing, which by custom should have been inherited by the firstborn son, Esau. By this deception Jacob became the recipient of God’s promise and inherited Canaan, while Esau received only the less fertile region that became known as Edom. Jacob’s mother Rebekah also used a subterfuge and obtained Isaac’s permission for Jacob to flee from Esau’s anger. This was when Jacob fled from his home in Beersheba and went to his mother’s home in the field or plain of Aram, called Padanaram, near Harran in the far north of Mesopotamia, where Isaac’s father, Abraham, had lived before he emigrated to Canaan. Later in his life Jacob and his sons went to Goshen, the territory in the Nile Delta assigned to the Israelites during their Egyptian sojourn, not far from the Egyptian court. Jacob died in Egypt, but Joseph and his brothers took their father’s embalmed body to Canaan for burial.

The central event of Jacob’s life occurred at the beginning of his flight from Beersheba, perhaps at the end of his first day’s journey by camel. He was then almost 100 kilometres north of Beersheba in the hill country near Bethel, about 20 kilometres north of Jerusalem. Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham, had camped there during his journey southwards and had erected an altar to Yahweh, to which he returned after his visit to Egypt. The scriptures tell us that Jacob slept with the bare earth as his couch and a stone for his pillow, when he had a vision of a ladder (the Hebrew word used is Samech Lamedh Mem, which is usually translated as a stairway). The ladder connected earth with heaven and had angels continually ascending and descending upon it. It was this occasion when Jacob’s realisation of God began and God promised Jacob divine protection. This promised confirmed the one given to Abraham when he was at Padanaram, that the chosen people
would possess the whole of the land from the Euphrates River to the southwest. Jacob commemorated his dream by setting up the stone on which he had rested his head as a monument. Jacob poured a libation of oil over the monument, marking the place where he knew that God was present. This event, recorded in the twenty-eighth chapter of the book of Genesis, is the basis of the story of Jacob’s Ladder in the symbolism of speculative freemasonry.

The Symbolism Of Jacob’s Ladder

Although it is usual in modern speculative freemasonry to name only the three upper staves or rounds of Jacob’s mystical ladder, in fact it has always had seven rungs. Nowadays the ladder is described as having “many staves or rounds, which point out as many moral virtues, but the three principal ones are Faith, Hope and Charity”, usually described as the Theological Virtues. Originally four Social Virtues preceded them, nowadays called the four Cardinal Virtues, which in ascending order were Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. The four Cardinal Virtues are usually represented by four tassels pendant to the four corners of the lodge. It seems that the early artists, who prepared the first of the permanent tracing boards used in lodges, had some difficulty in representing all seven virtues in the available space and in consequence reduced them to three. The three Theological Virtues are depicted in various ways, but usually a Latin cross is used to represent Faith, an anchor is used to represent Hope and a hand holding a chalice is used to represent Charity. The three Intellectual Virtues are Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, but they are seldom depicted on Jacob’s Ladder because they have always been referred to as the “three great pillars” that symbolically support a freemason’s lodge.

On some tracing boards a key also is depicted on or near Jacob’s ladder. The key is a very old symbol in speculative freemasonry, which is mentioned in some of the earliest rituals and catechisms of which copies are still in existence, for example the Edinburgh Register House MS of 1696. The old catechisms usually included the question: “What is the key of your lodge?” the reply to which was “A weel hung tongue”. This response was expanded in some rituals, as for example in the Sloane MS of about 1700, which includes the answer:

“It is not made of Wood Stone Iron or Steel or any sort of metal, but the tongue of good report behind a brother’s back as well as before his face.”

This is the first known recorded use of “the tongue of good report”, which is a significant expression that has survived in speculative rituals to the present day. The Reverend Adolphus F.A.Woodford was one of the nine eminent founders of the world’s premier lodge of research, Quatuor Coronati Lodge No 2076, which was warranted in London in 1884. In Kenning’s Masonic Cyclopaedia of 1878, the Reverend Woodford said that:

“Jacob’s Ladder in freemasonry seems to point to the connection between earth and heaven; between man and God; and to represent faith in God, charity towards all men and hope in immortality.”
Many masonic historians believe that a substantial Jacobite influence was brought to bear on speculative craft freemasonry when it was developing rapidly during the eighteenth century. They say that Jacob’s Ladder was introduced into English freemasonry as a symbol from Continental freemasonry, with the object of keeping the Jacobite cause to the forefront, but this suggestion seems unlikely.

**Other Masonic Ladders**

*Jacob’s Ladder* is not the only ladder that features in the rituals of freemasonry. Ladders of seven steps are important symbols in several of the additional degrees in freemasonry, each having its own interpretation. One such ladder, which symbolises the trials and agonies suffered by the Messiah, is ascended in the search for the *Lost Word*. Another mysterious ladder refers to our moral duties to God and man. When ascending that ladder we are warned to be just and upright; to be equitable in our dealings with others; to be kind and amiable; to be of good faith; to labour diligently; to have patience and always to act with intelligence and discretion. Coupled with that ladder is another ladder, which prescribes the seven liberal arts and sciences that we should pursue in order properly to fulfil our moral duties, namely grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. By yet another ladder we are taught that our lives should be characterised by justice and charity; by innocence; by sweetness; by faith; by firmness and truth; by a great work; and by responsibility.

As a final example of masonic ladders, there is another that embraces all of the symbolism of the ladders already mentioned. It is a ladder of seven steps, resting upon a globe that represents the earth and is surmounted with a Bible with the square and compasses open thereon. On each successive step, commencing from the lowest, are the letters *I.N.R.I.F.S.C.*. These are the initial letters of the seven Latin words *Jesus, Nazarenus, Rex, Iudaeorum, Fides, Spes, Caritas*, which signify *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews; Faith, Hope and Charity*. In this regard it should be remembered that during the Middle Ages, on the continent of Europe and also in England, the operative freemasons were primarily engaged in the construction of Christian cathedrals and associated ecclesiastical structures. This is the reason why many of the old rituals were substantially Christian in character, notwithstanding the extensive references to the Hebrew texts that are especially appropriate to the symbolism of freemasonry. It therefore was inevitable that the early speculative rituals, which were adapted from those of their operative predecessors, should be similar in character.

When the Premier Grand Lodge of speculative freemasonry was established in London in 1717 the Reverend Dr James Anderson D.D. (1684-1739), a graduate of Marischal College in Aberdeen, produced the original *Book of Constitutions* that was issued in 1723. This *Book of Constitutions* was a true lineal descendant of the old *MS Charges* of the fourteenth century or earlier, although much of the inherent Christian character had been removed, to which the *Antients* objected strongly. However, when the *Antients* sought reconciliation with the *Moderns* and their two Grand Lodges were unified under the
United Grand Lodge of England in December 1813, all specifically Christian elements were omitted from the rituals. The primary requirement for admission into freemasonry was then and still is a belief in a **Supreme Being**, irrespective of the applicant’s religion or creed.

**The “Ancient Mysteries”**

Walter M. Wilmshurst was a renowned English historian and masonic writer. In his book entitled *The Meaning of Masonry*, first published early in the 1900s, Wilmshurst discusses freemasonry in relation to the **Ancient Mysteries**. In this context the following excerpt from his book deserves serious contemplation:

> “Now one of the first things to strike any student of masonic literature and comparative religion is the remarkable presence of common factors, common beliefs, doctrines, practices and symbols, in the religions of all races alike, whether ancient or modern, eastern or western, civilised or barbarian, Christian or pagan. However separated from others by time or distance, however intellectualised or primitive, however elaborated or simple their religion or morals and however wide their differences in important respects, each people is found to have employed and still to be employing certain ideas, symbols and practices in common with every other; perhaps with or without some slight modification of form. . . . If research or reflection be pushed far enough it becomes clear that the universality and uniformity referred to are due to the fact that at one time, long back in the world’s past, there existed or was implanted in the minds of the whole human family – which was doubtless much smaller and more concentrated than now – a Proto-Evangelium or Root-Doctrine in regard to the nature and destiny of the soul of man and its relation to the Deity. . . . All the evidence . . . indicates that primitive man, however childish and intellectually undeveloped according to modern standards, was spiritually conscious and physically perceptive to a degree undreamed of by the modern mind.”

Wilmshurst defined freemasonry as a science designed to teach self-knowledge:

> “a noble science that can provide a spiritual awakening into an order and quality of life previously unexperienced”.

In most of the **Ancient Mysteries**, if not all, the ladder was a symbol of progressive advancement, which it is in freemasonry. In *Signs and Symbols*, which the Reverend Dr George Oliver DD wrote in the early 1800s, he compared masonic symbolism with the symbolism of the **Ancient Mysteries** practised in various parts of the world. He drew particular attention to the widespread importance of the ladder as a symbol and highlighted the close similarity in the interpretation of the ladder in all ages and in all rites. He summarising the masonic symbolism of ladders in the following words:
“Thus the dark clouds of divine wrath are dissipated, the heavens are opened; and we enjoy a ray of His glory in the celestial covering of the Lodge. And more than this; the same Divine Being has taught us how to attain the summit of the same, by means which are emblematically depicted by a ladder consisting of three principal ROUNDS or STAVES, which point to the three Theological Virtues, FAITH, HOPE and CHARITY.”

The Persian “Mysteries Of Mithras”

In the Mysteries of Mithras a ladder of seven rounds, called gates, was the symbolical passage of the soul’s approach to perfection. The candidate was required to pass through seven dark and winding caverns, representing the ascent of the Ladder of Perfection, in which each cavern symbolised a world, or state of existence. A planet was believed to protect each of these seven worlds and a metal of increasing purity typified each successive step when ascending the ladder. During its progress to perfection, the soul was supposed to pass successively from the First World to the seventh, called Truth. Numbered in succession from the base of the ladder to the summit, the passage through the worlds, together with their respective planets and metals, was as follows:

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<td>7</td>
<td>Truth</td>
<td>Sun</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Mansion of the Blessed</td>
<td>Moon</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>World of Births</td>
<td>Mars</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Middle World</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>World of Pre-Existence</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First World</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
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The Indian “Mysteries Of Brahma”

In the Mysteries of Brahma we also find a ladder of seven steps that symbolises the universe. Each step represents one of the seven worlds that constitute the Brahminic cosmos, which are similar to the worlds in the Mysteries of Mithras. The seven worlds of the Mysteries of Brahma, named in succession from the lowest to the highest, are: first the Earth; second the World of Pre-Existence; third Heaven; fourth the Intermediate Region, which is between the lower and upper worlds and therefore is usually called the Middle World; the fifth is the World of Births, where souls are reborn; the sixth or Mansion of the Blessed is a place where souls rest in eternal peace; and the seventh is the Sphere of Truth, which is the abode of Brahma.
The Cabalistic “Tree Of Life”

The Cabala or Kabbala is the mystical philosophy or theosophy of the Jews. The name comes from the Hebrew word kibbel, spelled Kaph Beth Lamedh meaning to receive or to accept, because it is the doctrine received from the elders. There are two divisions of the Cabala, of which the Practical is concerned with the construction of talismans and amulets and the Theoretical is concerned with all other aspects. The theoretical division is subdivided into two parts, the Dogmatic and the Literal. The Dogmatic part sets out the rabbinical philosophy and theosophy and the Literal part gives mystical explanations of sacred things. The Cabalists also have a ladder of ten steps, which they call the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is usually represented in the following form:

```
KETHER
The Crown

BINAH
Understanding

CHOKMAH
Wisdom

GEBURAH
Severity

CHESED
Mercy

TIPHERETH
Beauty

HOD
Glory

NETZACH
Victory

YESOD
Foundation

MALKUTH
The Kingdom
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The Cabalistic Tree of Life represents several concepts, of which the four worlds of the natural order of things are foremost. Four is an ancient symbol of the world and nature and of human beings within nature. Four also refers to the four seasons that relate the microcosm of humanity to the macrocosm of the universe. They are spring, summer, autumn and winter, which refer to the supernal, mental, astral and physical planes by which human evolution is accomplished. It also has various interpretations relating to Alchemy that are explained in terms of metals. The Cabalistic Tree of Life differs from the other ladders because the steps or sephiroth are not arranged in a single ascending line, but form a lattice of three triads that interconnect to form three pillars or columns supported on a base. Unlike most ladders, the sephiroth must be interpreted reading from the top down to the base. Each sephira represents a fundamental attribute or emanation of the Divine Essence, called a “Splendour”, through which the En Soph or Infinite One is able to enter into a relationship with the Finite. A fundamental concept is that the En Soph is an
absolute and inscrutable unity that has nothing without himself and everything within himself.

The central trunk of the Tree of Life of the Cabala is called the Middle Column and is comprised of four sephirot. Commencing from the apex they are the Crown, then Beauty in the midst of the foliage, followed by the Foundation where the lowest limbs branch out and lastly the Kingdom where the trunk meets the ground. The right column of the lattice is the male principal called the Pillar of Mercy. The left column of the lattice is the female principal called the Pillar of Justice. These two pillars allude to the qualities of God in pairs and show that his benevolence on the one hand refines his severity on the other. Each of these pillars is connected to the Crown and also to the Foundation, with Beauty situated between them. On the right in descending order the three sephirot of the Pillar of Mercy are Wisdom, Mercy and Firmness. On the left, also in descending order, the three sephirot of the Pillar of Justice are Intelligence, Justice and Splendour. It should be noted that each of these two pillars is named after its central sephirot, whilst the pairs of adjacent sephirot qualify the way in which human beings should apply their actions represented in each those pillars. Thus Wisdom must be exercised when showing Mercy, though Firmness also is required in its application. Likewise Intelligence is required in the exercise of Justice, so that the outcome will be Splendid in the sight of God.

The derivation of Tree of Life is explained as follows. At the beginning of time the En Soph or Infinite One sent forth into space a spiritual emanation, which formed the first sephirot, called Kether meaning the Crown. The Crown contained the other nine sephirot that sprang forth from it in the following order. The first was the male sephirot called Chokmah meaning Wisdom, which was followed by the female sephirot called Binah meaning Intelligence. They combined with the Crown to form the first triad, from which the other seven sephirot were derived. Wisdom and Intelligence then combined to produce a male potency called Chesed meaning Mercy, which produced a female potency called Geburah meaning Justice. Then Mercy and Justice combined to produce Tiphereth meaning Beauty, thus completing the second triad. A male potency called Netzach meaning Firmness, then came forth from Beauty and produced a female potency called Hod meaning Splendour. The third triad was completed when Firmness and Beauty combined to produce Yesod meaning the Foundation. Lastly, the tenth sephirot came forth from the Foundation and was called Malkuth meaning Kingdom, which is at the foot of the tree of life.

The philosophy of the Tree of Life may be explained briefly in the following terms. The upper triad consists of the Crown, Wisdom and Understanding. It represents the world of Atziluth, which is the supernal world of the emanation of the deity. In some respects the Atziluth is similar to the Trimurti of the Hindus and the Holy Trinity of the Christians. The three sephirot of the Atziluth are also referred to respectively as the White Head, the Father and the Mother. The upper triad points upwards in reference to the Deity from which it emanates. The other two triads point downwards in reference to humanity and the world that humanity occupies. The middle triad comprises Mercy, Severity and Beauty, which constitutes the world of Briah or of creation. In one sense this triad represents the divine mind and in another it is the realm of the highest created intelligence. The lowest
triad comprises *Victory*, *Glory* and *Foundation*, which constitute the world of *Yetzirah* that is the foundation of all things, wherein it is said that the universe was formed, although it was not visible externally. The fourth world is *Assiah*, which comprises the tenth *sephira* or the *Kingdom* that is the manifest or material world.

**Symbolic Journeys**

Although significant differences in substance are portrayed in the several ladders described above, nevertheless each represents an important symbolic journey. Such symbolic journeys have played a significant part communicating spiritual awareness from the most ancient times until the present. Hinduism is one of the oldest of the world’s great religions, which has evolved over more than five thousand years and is still growing. The *Veda*, Sanskrit meaning *knowledge*, is the body of sacred knowledge held to be the basis of true belief and practice among the Hindus. The hymns of the *Veda* portray the mystic fires, that inner sense of sacrifice burning forever on the “*altar of the mind*”, illuminating the symbolic journey of discovery in search of answers to what seemingly is the impenetrable human-divine mystery. The *Veda* refers to the *kalahahamsa*, or “*swan of time*”, that wings back to the sky and “*nest of eternity*”. Islam is the youngest of today’s great worldwide religions, which the prophet Muhammad established during the seventh century. *Sufism* is an important branch of Islam committed to maintaining its proper conduct as practised by the prophet, as distinct from the *shari’a* (Arabic for *the path worn by camels to the water*) or systematic organization of how Muslims should live and the *fiqh* (Arabic for *intelligence, knowledge*) or science of Islamic religious law. In the twelfth century a Persian Sufi, ‘Attar, said that quest, love, knowledge, detachment, unity, amazement and annihilation are the seven valleys that must be crossed on the symbolic journey to the king’s hidden palace. In this context annihilation is death as a necessary precursor to resurrection and life eternal. *Sufi* may be derived from the Arabic root *suf* meaning wool, alluding to their early garments.
CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO – THE JEWELS OF THE LODGE

The jewels are important instruments, stones and equipment that are used to convey lessons in morality.

The Jewels Defined

At first sight it might seem incongruous to speak of “the jewels of the lodge”, because in its most common usage jewels are articles of value used for personal adornment, especially when made of gold or silver and precious stones, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as having been the prevailing usage of the word since 1590. Nevertheless the Oxford Dictionary provides another definition to supplement the prevailing usage, noting that since 1672 an ornament worn as the badge of an order, or as a mark of distinction or honour, also has been called a jewel. In conclusion, the Oxford Dictionary records that in the Middle English, spoken from about 1100 to 1500, jewel was used in a figurative sense to describe a precious thing or person as a “treasure” or a “gem”. This is the sense intended when referring to “the jewels of the lodge”. The derivation of the word is interesting, because it originated with the Latin iocus signifying a plaything or a trinket, then came through the Old French juel into the Middle English juel, which is jewel in modern English. In speculative craft lodges operating under most jurisdictions three movable and three immovable jewels are defined, which the brethren are exhorted to moralise upon. Those six jewels are the square, the level, the plumb rule, the rough ashlar, the perfect ashlar and the tracing board.

The Rev Dr George Oliver (1782-1867) was one of the most eminent writers on freemasonry in the nineteenth century. In his lectures entitled Signs and Symbols published in 1837, he said these important instruments, stones and equipment are called jewels because “they have a moral tendency which renders them jewels of inestimable value”. It is interesting to note that the square, the level and the plumb rule are called movable jewels in English and Scottish lodges, because they are transferred to the incoming master and his wardens each year, whereas in American lodges they are called immovable, because the square is assigned to the east of the lodge, the level to the west and the plumb rule to the south. In English and Scottish lodges the ashlars and tracing board are described as immovable jewels that “lie open in the lodge for the brethren to moralise on”. The two ashlars and the tracing board probably are called immovable because during the early speculative period they tended to be located in particular parts of the lodge. In particular, the tracing board was hand drawn on the floor before the commencement of each meeting. However, in American lodges the same jewels are called movable, because it is said that they may be placed in any convenient position in the lodge, which varies from lodge to lodge. In contrast, many if not most Irish lodges do not have a tracing board.
Having regard to the allegorical importance assigned to the jewels of the lodge, it is surprising that the authors of the early speculative rituals did not indicate what they considered to be the most appropriate positions for the immovable jewels to be placed in the lodge. Nor has the United Grand Lodge of England ever issued a ruling on the subject. As a consequence, it is difficult for an enquiring mason to find definitive answers relating to the placements of the tracing board and the ashlars. In practice they may be seen in various locations, which often are only a matter of convenience, but might be traditional in relation to the particular ritual being worked or the custom in the individual lodge, district or jurisdiction. Again in his lectures the Rev Dr George Oliver says in regard to the importance and symbolism of the immovable jewels:

“I will now call your attention to a Board with a few lines, angles and perpendiculards designed upon its surface. This is the Tracing Board; and though it may appear rough and of little use, is yet an immovable jewel and contains a lesson of inestimable value. This board is for the Master to draw his plans on, for the direction of his workmen; but its mystic reference is to the great charter of our religious privileges . . . You have now before you an unhewn block of marble, rough as when taken from the quarry. This is another immovable jewel, which points to the infant mind, rough and uncultivated as this stone; and as the marble can alone can be brought into a definite and useful form by the skill and judicious management of the expert workman, so the mind can only be trained to the practice of virtue by the sedulous and insidious instruction, . . . These reflections lead us to contemplate this stone in another and more perfect form. It has been under the chisel of the expert workman and now assumes the shape of a true die square, polished according to art, which can only be tried by the nice application of the square and compass. The mind of man, after its previous cultivation and progress through the chequered scenes of good and evil with which life abounds is here represented.”

Operative Precedents

The jewels in modern lodges of speculative craft freemasonry have come down to us from the usages and customs of operative freemasons in earlier times. In operative lodges a particular stone was used as an emblem in each of the working degrees. The candidate was told, at an appropriate stage in the ceremony, that he represented that stone being wrought from its rough hewn condition, as brought from the quarries, to a state of perfection suitable for erection as a “living stone” in that most glorious of all Temples, “that house not made with hands eternal in the heavens”. Each operative degree after the first also had a representative jewel, which was a miniature representation of one of the gauges used to test the stone that symbolised the work of the degree. In operative lodges the ceremonies reflected the various stages in the preparation, testing and erection of stones in the temple of King Solomon at Jerusalem, emphasising their purpose and their importance in the structure. The symbolic teachings also were based on the work carried out to prepare, test and set up the stones in the structure.
The several types of stones and the working tools and gauges used in their preparation, testing and erection, therefore were of particular significance to the operative freemason. During his progress through the several degrees, the candidate in a lodge of operative freemasons was tested on the work he had prepared in the preceding degree, before being instructed in the work and the use of the gauges in the next degree. When a Fellow of the Craft had proved his ability to produce perfect ashlar stones, he was entrusted with a word and also with a sign representing the square, the level and the plumb rule as proof of his ability, but not as jewels of the degree. The operative degrees beyond that of a Fellow of the Craft involved special skills, increasing levels of supervision and additional responsibilities. The several relevant aspects of these duties were used symbolically to illustrate moral principles, especially those relating to the proper modes of conduct that should be followed in public and private life.

A Fellow of the Craft in operative freemasonry was a master mason in respect of his capabilities, but the title of Master Mason was usually reserved for the mason who had overall responsibility for a job. The Master Mason frequently was the chief officer of a lodge carrying out work under day labour in England, or the proprietor of a lodge carrying out work under contract in Scotland. Some of these operative aspects are reflected in the degrees of other branches of freemasonry, for which membership of a speculative craft lodge is a prerequisite. However, the direct relationship between the purpose for which a particular stone is used and its symbolic meaning no longer has a significant role in the work of speculative craft freemasonry. Nor does each of the speculative craft degrees have a jewel like that of the equivalent operative degree.

The jewels of office worn by the master and wardens in modern lodges of speculative craft freemasonry are derived from the insignia of office worn by their counterparts in the old operative lodges, except that the squares are different. In operative lodges the master’s insignia was a gallows square with arms three units and four units long, whereas in speculative lodges nowadays the master’s jewel is a try square with arms of equal length. It might seem to be an anomaly that the implements called movable jewels in speculative lodges, which are the square, the level and the plumb rule, are the working tools of a speculative Fellowcraft Freemason. However, in this context it should be remembered that in operative lodges a Fellow of the Craft was a fully qualified tradesman and a master of his craft, who was required to be proficient in the use of those tools. It also is important not to overlook the fact that possibly from as early as 1745, but certainly from no later than 1760, the square has been included as one of the three great lights in freemasonry, which must always be open on the pedestal whilst a lodge is at labour in speculative craft freemasonry. In a speculative lodge those three great lights are drawn to the candidate’s attention immediately after he has been obligated as an Entered Apprentice. The other two great lights are the Volume of the Sacred Law and a pair of compasses. When the lodge is at labour, the compasses with its legs extended are placed over the square on the open book. The square and compasses thus combined undoubtedly would be one of the best-known emblems of freemasonry.
In lodges of operative freemasons the rough ashlar typified an Apprentice and the perfect ashlar typified a Fellow of the Craft. On his entrance, a candidate for admission to the craft was placed in the northeast corner of the lodge. Later, Apprentices seeking advancement also stood in the northeast corner, but suitably qualified Fellow of the Craft seeking promotion stood in the southeast corner. This is why Apprentices and Fellowcrafts in speculative freemasonry are seated in the northeast and southeast corners of the lodge respectively. It also is why the rough and perfect ashlars are often placed in the northeast and southeast corners of speculative lodges, although sometimes they are placed in front of or adjacent to the Junior and Senior Wardens respectively. In some constitutions the jewels of thedeacons also are derived from operative practice, for example the maul of the Senior Deacon and the trowel of the Junior Deacon in Scottish lodges.

**Early Speculative Jewels**

One of the earliest known references to the jewels of a freemason’s lodge is to be found in records connected with operative freemasonry in Scotland. In the *Edinburgh Register House MS* dated 1696, which has been endorsed with the title “Some Questions Anent the Mason Word”, there is a catechism which sets out fifteen questions that must be put to a mason who claims to have the *Word*, as well as the answers he was required to give before he could be acknowledged as a mason. To the question: “Are there jewells in your lodge?” the reply was: “Yes three, perpend esler, a square pavement and a broad ovall.” Every freemason should be familiar with the square pavement, but not all freemasons may know the other two jewels.

The *perpend esler* or *ashlar* is an important stone used in the construction of masonry walls, but it is not the perfect ashlar stone required to be produced by a Fellow of the Craft as a test piece in operative lodges. Nevertheless the early speculative freemasons called it a *perfect ashlar*, possibly mistaking *perpend* for *perfect*. In speculative lodges the *perpend ashlar* was later replaced with the finely polished cubical stone used in modern lodges. The *square pavement*, to which a great deal of symbolism attaches, is no longer called a jewel and is usually included in the furniture of the lodge. The *broad ovall* is one of a multitude of names by which the *broached thurnel* appears to have been known, which will be discussed later. The *perpend ashlar* is commonly called a *header* and is usually three units long and one unit square in cross-section. It passes through the wall from the inside face to the outside face, tying the leaves of the wall together for added strength. The end faces of a *perpend ashlar* are dressed to conform with the surface finishes of the exposed faces of the walls, but all other faces are broached or scabbled to provide a good bond with the courses of stone through which it passes. The *running stone* used in wall construction is similar to the *perpend ashlar*, but it is broached for bonding on all faces except those that are to be exposed, which are dressed accordingly.

At the end of his training in the stone yard and before he could be released from his bond, an Indentured Apprentice in operative freemasonry was required to produce a satisfactory test piece in the form of a *rough dressed ashlar*, usually three units long and one unit square in cross-section, suitable for finishing as a *perpend ashlar* or a *running stone*. 
Before an Indentured Apprentice could be passed as a Fellow of the Craft, he was required to prepare a **perfect ashlar** as a test piece, similar in shape to a **rough dressed ashlar**, but fully dressed and properly polished on all faces. In operative freemasonry in Scotland, when an Indentured Apprentice had satisfactorily completed his term as an apprentice and had been released from his bond, his name would be entered in the books and he could take charge of a small gang of Indentured Apprentices, from which the title Entered Apprentice in speculative freemasonry was derived. In operative lodges a Fellow of the Craft with sufficient experience preparing finished ashlar stones, who had demonstrated his ability to control a small gang of masons, could then become a Fitter and Marker. He would be engaged in the fitting and marking of stones in the stone yard, ready for erection on site. Later still, a Fitter and Marker who had demonstrated sufficient skill in handling stones in the stone yard might become a Setter Erector, who would be engaged in assembling the stones in the structure. Freemasons with proven skills in these classes of work could advance progressively to become foremen, intendents and superintendents.

**Later Speculative Jewels**

In the early 1700s, when an apprentice was being tested on the catechisms in a speculative craft lodge he would be asked: **“What are the immovable jewels?”** to which the answer was: **“The trasel board, rough ashlar and broached thurnel”**. The word **trasel**, sometimes corrupted to **tarsel**, comes from the Old French through the Middle French **trestel**, which signified a **bar** or **beam** supported by legs, whence is derived the English **trestle**. The **trasel** board was the **trestle table** on which sketches were drawn, or over which the plans were spread. The **trasel** must not be confused with the **Indented tarsel**, in which **tarsel** comes through Middle English from the Old French **tassel**. Among other things, **tarsel** or **tassel** signifies an ornamental piece of fabric, which in modern English is the **tassel** or ornamental tuft of threads usually on the end of a cord. It is interesting to note that a **tarsel**, which is a plate supporting the end of a beam in a brick wall, is also called a **tassel**, but that comes from the French **tasseau** signifying a **Bracket**. Although most of the practical aspects of these jewels have been omitted from the speculative explanations, the philosophical aspects of the instructions that were given in operative days have been incorporated and expanded upon.

It is generally accepted that the **rough ashlar** refers to a rough hewn stone as brought from the quarries, which in olden times usually was cut one eighth to one sixteenth of an inch larger than the required finished measure. However, the meaning of the **broached thurnel** in the catechism is uncertain. It seems most likely to have been derived from the usages and customs of the operative masons in Scotland. In Scotland, **broach** meant to rough-hew, to groove or to scarify and a **broaching thurmal**, **broaching thurmer** or **broaching turner** was the chisel that operative masons used to carry out broaching work. A common form of the **broaching thurmal** is a narrow serrated chisel similar in many respects to the **scutch**, which is a cutting and dressing tool used by a bricklayer. The name probably derives from **escoussser**, an Old French word meaning to shake off. It is evident that the three immovable jewels referred to in the old catechisms of an apprentice logically symbolised three aspects of his employment. The first aspect comprised the instructions he
received for the work he was to carry out, which were represented by the trasel board. The
second aspect related to the tools that he would use to execute the work, represented by the
broached thurnel. The third aspect was his finished product, represented by the rough
ashlar. Another possible derivation of thurnel is as a variation of the French tournelle,
meaning a turret, referring to the shape of the chisel, tournelle in various forms having
been a commonly used word in England from about 1400 until at least the 1750s.

Yet another derivation of thurnel has also been suggested and seems to be very
appropriate, because it was a word that was in general use in England from the early 1400s
until at least the late 1700s. That word was the German thurm, which means a tower.
Moreover, as the French tournelle and the German thurm almost certainly have a common
ancestry, deriving from the Old French and the Medieval French tur meaning a tower, it
seems likely that the Scottish thurmal or thurmer evolved from the same source. In any
event, the cutting face of one form of the chisel generally used as a broaching thurmal is
somewhat similar in appearance to a small castellated turret when viewed from above.
Very early French tracing boards and some contemporary English tracing boards depicted
a cubical stone surmounted by a pyramid, not unlike the squat stone churches with stocky
spires often seen in Europe. This also was called a broached thurnel in early English
speculative lodges and is still depicted on French tracing boards, although long ago it
disappeared from English tracing boards. French freemasons have always referred to this
stone as “la pierre cubique a pointe”, which literally means a pointed square stone. The
original French ritual, still in use, explains that it is a model of a spire or turret, whose
various outlines provide a means of teaching the apprentice how to develop the forms of
the square, the triangle, the cube and the pyramid. Whatever may have been the derivation
and intended symbolism of the broached thurnel in early English speculative lodges and
the broaching thurmal in old Scottish lodges, it had disappeared from use by 1720.

As the rough ashlar had always been a feature in lodges of operative freemasons, its use in
lodges of speculative craft freemasons followed as a natural consequence. However, the
sequence of events that brought about the replacement of the perpendicular ashlar by the
cubical perfect ashlar as a jewel in modern speculative lodges was progressive in nature,
varying from location to location and even from lodge to lodge, with no clear boundaries
between one usage and another. The available records scarce, whilst those that are
available seldom record the dates when one custom lapsed or another was introduced. Nor
has any clear reason emerged to explain why the perpendicular ashlar was replaced by the
cubical perfect ashlar. All that can be said with certainty is that the cubical perfect ashlar
seems to have been in general use in English speculative craft lodges by about 1800. As
the perpendicular ashlar is an emblem of perfection and strength, coupled with the bonds of
brotherly love, it is a more expressive symbol than the cubical perfect ashlar. It therefore
provided a more complete illustration of the improvement that an apprentice is required to
make from his rough and unpolished state, if he is to achieve that state of discipline and
education that is essential for his advancement and which is the hallmark of the
experienced craftsman. Because the bonding of men in a strong friendship is one of the
important objectives of speculative craft freemasonry, the omission of the perpendicular ashlar
from the jewels of modern speculative lodges seems strange and a significant loss of
symbolism is the result. Taking into account the approximate time when the perpendicular
ashlar
ashlar disappeared as a symbol, it seems likely to have been one of the consequences of the disagreements between the Antients and the Moderns prior to the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England.

**Speculative Tracing Boards**

Tracing boards were an important piece of equipment in all operative lodges. The inventory of stores recorded in the Fabric Rolls of the York Minster in 1399 includes “ij tracing bordes”. In lodges of operative freemasons the locations of the tracing boards was entirely a matter of convenience to suit the work, but at least one would have been kept in the office of the Super Intendent of Work in the stone yard and another at the building site. During the construction of large buildings, such as cathedrals, there usually were drafting offices as well as the site offices. The practical tuition given in conjunction with the ceremonial work of an operative lodge, which customarily commenced at noon on the sixth day of the week, was carried out with the aid of a plan sketched on the floor or a drawing laid on a trestle board. The sketched plans and the trestle board were usually placed in the centre of the lodge room, so that those under instruction could gather round them.

In operative lodges the tracing board was used to give practical instruction to the candidates in the development of the required shapes of stones, as well as to prepare the required templates to mark out the stones appropriate for the work of the degree. It was also used to illustrate the setting out of the work and to show how the stones should be assembled in the structure. In the early speculative lodges it was customary to draw a plan on the floor of the lodge room using chalk, charcoal and any other suitable medium, much as would have been done in an operative lodge. Like the drawings of the operative freemasons, they were placed in any convenient location where the members could gather around. This practice continued until painted or printed pictures of the “floor drawings” or “floorcloths” first became available in about 1744 in France and in about 1760 in England. The location of modern tracing boards at the western end of the squared pavement, or in any other position offering a clear view, is acceptable and in keeping with ancient practice.

The oldest known set of speculative tracing boards in Great Britain belongs to Lodge Faithful, which was founded at Norwich in 1753 and now meets at Harleston in Norfolk. These tracing boards are dated 1800 and depict the modern form of rough ashlar and perfect ashlar appearing on the tracing board of the First Degree. The modern ashlars are also depicted on a set of tracing boards that was painted by William Dight in 1808 for the Lodge of Unanimity and Sincerity, which meets at Taunton. A set of tracing boards painted for the Chichester Lodge in 1811 by Josiah Bowring, a portrait painter of London, also depicts the modern ashlars. These boards appear to be the prototypes of the famous set of boards that John Harris painted in 1821, from which most modern tracing boards have been derived. The rough ashlar depicted on the tracing boards is usually placed at the foot of the Corinthian column representing the Junior Warden, who traditionally is in charge of the apprentices at labour. For a similar reason the perfect ashlar is usually placed at the
foot of the Doric column representing the Senior Warden, who traditionally is in charge of the craftsmen at labour.

During the evolution of modern speculative freemasonry there seems to have been a tendency to rearrange the symbolism and related rituals of operative freemasonry, in what might best be described as a perceived orderliness and regularity. This might have been the underlying objective in replacing a perpend ashlar with a cubic perfect ashlar, which possibly was influenced by a work entitled *The First and Chief Groundes of Archytecture*, which was published by Ihon Shute, *Paynter and Archyteecte* in 1563 and reprinted in 1912. The early speculative freemasons included many erudite scholars who wrote our rituals in the best literary English of their day. Among them, no doubt, there would have been some familiar with Ihon Shute’s work, in which he offers the injunction that “Ye shall make a four square stone like unto a dye”. He then gives a description of the origin and rise of the architectural orders, which was repeated almost word for word in some of the old masonic lectures, much of which has been incorporated with very little change into our modern rituals.
CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE – THE POINT WITHIN A CIRCLE

The Point within a Circle is an ancient and sacred hieroglyph that has been a symbol of great importance from time immemorial.

Ancient Origins

The Point within a Circle is an ancient and sacred hieroglyph that has become a symbol of great importance in speculative craft freemasonry, but the usual explanation that is given in modern rituals differs significantly from the original symbolism. However, this does not imply that it is a recent invention, but rather that the symbolism has evolved over many centuries and has taken on various interpretations. As the ancient interpretation of this sacred hieroglyph is a fundamental tenet of the philosophical system that forms the basis of speculative craft freemasonry, it is important to examine the origins of the symbol. The original symbolism reflects the most ancient beliefs in creation, although the symbol itself appears to have been derived from an unusual modification relating to sun worship, which was widely prevalent among nations in antiquity. A brief examination of ancient beliefs in Egypt, India and China will illustrate their fundamental tenets, which will then be compared with similar beliefs expressed in some relevant passages from the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Egyptian Mysteries

In the Egyptian Mysteries the sun god, Ra or Ra Harmakhis “the ever living”, probably is one of the best known. Ra was a symbol of the Logos, that is the Supreme Self or the Higher Self, who first created himself and then caused the Universe to emanate from its state of latency in Nu, who was regarded as the great god of truth and reality. The Greek historian, biographer and philosopher, Plutarch (c.46-120), tells us in his Morals that upon the first of the new made days of the Universe the god Osiris was born, when a voice from heaven proclaimed: “The Lord of all things hath appeared”. Then the goddess Isis was born. Isis was revered as the Divine Mother and was a symbol of the fount of spiritual life, which transcends the highest intellect and is the source of all higher emotions and ideal qualities that appertain to truth, love and wisdom.

The Greek philosopher Plato (c.428-348 BCE) was one of the most important philosophers of all time. He says in his Letters that the ancients signified the Holy One by calling Isis by the name Isia, which signifies a current and a movement impulse of the mind that yearns for an object and is carried onwards. The Greek historian Plutarch (c.46-120 CE) informs us that Isis and Osiris conceived Horus the Elder, or Aroueris, while they were
still in their mother’s womb, whence Wisdom (in the person of Isis) and Will (in the person of Osiris) primordially produced Action (in the person of Horus), which went forth as the Second Logos, which is the Self revealed upon the buddhic plane. The buddhic plane is the highest of the four planes that are said to constitute the arena of life in the present cycle. This Divine Union of the two sexes is represented in the Egyptian pantheon by the sacred hieroglyph of the Point within a Circle.

**Hinduism And Ancient India**

The *Veda*, or *Sastra* are the sacred writings of ancient India. They symbolise the Word of God, which is the direct utterance of the Supreme within the soul and the Divine Law of true life on the higher planes. The *Sastra* are supported by the *Upanishads*, the theosophical and philosophical treatises that communicate the secret meanings and instructions hidden in the *Veda*. All the sacred texts of ancient India were written in Sanskrit, the ancient Indo-Germanic literary language of India. The *Upanishads* tell us that in the beginning Brahma was all “this”, by which is meant the Infinite Self that is invisible in time and space, which is not to be reasoned about and cannot to be conceived. “This” is also referred to as the Higher Self. Thus Brahma symbolised the Supreme Spirit, the One Absolute Being who breathed the Divine Life into time and space to commence the cycle of life as we know it and who, at the destruction of the universe, alone will be awake.

It is a central concept of Hinduism that God is always identified with the totality of creation and can never be entirely separated from it. This concept differs significantly from the concepts held by the Egyptians and the Hebrews, because it requires that in the beginning God must have created out of himself, not from that which did not previously exist. The principles expounded in the *Veda* are interpreted in two great Hindu epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In the Hindu epics *Rama* is the incarnation or *Avatar* of *Vishnu* and he personifies the incarnate Deity that dwells in a human being’s Higher Self. Coupled with *Rama* is his wife, *Sita*, who symbolises the transmutation of the lower emotions into the higher emotions that constitute the incarnate Higher Self. Thus in Hinduism, *Rama* and *Sita* are conjoined, together representing the dual sexuality of the Deity that is portrayed by the Point within a Circle.

**Religious Beliefs In Ancient China**

Tao is the ancient religion of China that is recorded in the celebrated Taoist work, the *Tao-te Ching* or *Way and Moral Principle Classic*. The ancient Taoist religion is also called *The Way of Power*, which is supposed to have been written by Laocius, a shadowy and perhaps mythical figure of the sixth century BCE, about whom virtually nothing is known. Taoism is a fanciful philosophy. It is steeped in mysticism, but has no static standards or conventions. The meaning of the designation *Tao* is identical with the word used to translate both the Word and the Way in the first and fourteenth chapters of St John’s
Gospel. The designation *Tao* is of utmost importance in Chinese philosophy, because it primarily signifies *the way* and *the road* and is used symbolically to mean *the Way of the Universe*. The *Tao* is conceived as *the universal cosmic energy behind the order of nature*, which is believed to be the first principle, or essence, that preceded even the existence of God. The original reign of *Tao* is conceived as having been that ideal state of pristine perfection and spontaneous harmony, in which good and evil were unknown, similar to the portrayal that is given in the Hebrew Scriptures of the Garden of Eden before the fall of the human race.

Confucianism is a pragmatic *School* or *Teaching* that expresses the Taoist beliefs in a practical everyday form that the masses can understand. A central aspect of both Taoism and Confucianism is the ancient Chinese principle of negative and positive polarity. This principle is represented by *Yin* and *Yang*, wherein *Yin* is the receptive female principle and *Yang* is the creative male principle. *Yin* turns inward and comprises interior activity, while *Yang* radiates outwards in all directions like the solar flames. This ancient concept is recorded in the traditional texts of *Chou Li*, which were collated and edited by Confucius, possibly in the eleventh century BCE. Confucius expressed the concept in the following terms:

> “The Great One separated and became Heaven and Earth. It revolved and became the dual forces. It changed and became the four seasons. It was distributed and became the breathing (ch’i).”

Thus in Taoism it is said that the rhythm of the *Great Breath* produced the duality of *Spirit* and *Matter*, while *Yin* and *Yang* respectively represent earth and heaven and together the dual sexuality of the Deity and all of the creation that is symbolised by the representation of the *Point within a Circle*.

### The Esoteric Teachings Of Judaism

The esoteric teachings of the Jewish mystics are encompassed by the *Cabala*, also variously spelled *Kabbalah* and *Qabbalah*. Traditionally it was taught that the Cabala did not develop, but was revealed in its perfection to Adam, so that any new revelations were only given when the original teachings had been forgotten. Notwithstanding this tradition, there is an alternative teaching that says the Cabala was the secret part of the oral law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. In particular, the Cabala is concerned with the interpretation of the *halakhah*, the Jewish legal system that traditionally is said to go back in its entirety to Moses. In any event, the Cabala relates especially to the esoteric teachings of Judaism that have evolved from the time of the second temple, which was constructed by the Israelites after their release from captivity in Babylon, which took place under the Decree of Cyrus issued in 538 BCE. The second temple was enlarged and beautified by King Herod, who began the renovations in about 20 BCE, but the Romans destroyed it completely in 70 CE.
Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204), who is usually referred to as Maimonides, was the foremost philosopher in medieval Judaism. Maimonides brought the teachings of the Cabala into prominence through his prolific writings, putting great emphasis on the Cabalist conviction that God can be perceived most clearly through contemplation and illumination, by which the transcendence yet immanence of God can best be perceived. When explaining their teachings, the Cabalists place great importance on the subdivision of words and the numerical values of their characters. An important example in the present context relates to the *Ineffable Name*, which the Cabalists revere and have analysed in several ways. The English equivalents of the characters in the *Ineffable Name*, or *Tetragrammaton*, are *IHOH*. When read backwards and subdivided the *Tetragrammaton* forms the Hebrew words *Ho* and *Hi*. The Cabalists regard this to be a very important transposition, because in Hebrew the words *Ho* and *Hi* respectively signify *He* and *She*, which therefore mystically denotes both the male and the female aspects of the Creator. The *Ineffable Name* thus represents the *Male and Female Principle*, which therefore is equivalent in its symbolism to the *Point within a Circle*. The concept of the existence of a Creator with a dual gender has permeated all of the major religious systems since ancient times.

**Ancient Beliefs In Summary**

A belief in a *Supreme Creator* has been a central doctrine of world religions through all ages, whence it inevitably became a fundamental tenet in speculative freemasonry. The concept that the Deity has a dual sexuality likewise has been recognised and accepted from the beginning of recorded history, as narrated in the first story of the creation given in Genesis 1:27-28 of the Hebrew Scriptures:

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it.”

The dual sexuality of the Deity is again mentioned in the introduction to the generations of Adam in Genesis 5:1-2, after the second story of the creation:

“In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”

The first of those two passages of scripture also highlights fertility, which is a fundamental aspect and an essential tenet of each of the religions outlined above.

The ancient interpretation of the *Point within a Circle* evolved as a result of the fundamental concept that God existed in a state of dual sexuality and that the deity intended its creation to “be fruitful and multiply”. The Genesis account of the creation is not an original concept of the Israelites who wrote the Hebrew text, but comes directly from the creation epic of the Babylonian deity Marduk, which was known in Chaldea.
about 1,000 years before becoming a part of the Canaanite tradition, whence it was adopted by the Israelites. However, the original account was of Sumerian or even earlier origin, which the Sumerians brought into southern Mesopotamia when they first appeared there in about 4000 BCE. The Sumerians’ place of origin is still unknown. In his book entitled *Genesis of the Grail Kings*, subtitled *The Pendragon Legacy of Adam and Eve*, Laurence Gardner provides an interesting history of all that is presently known about evolution of the story of the creation recorded in Genesis.

**Ancient Interpretations**

In ancient Egypt the *Phallus*, or male personification of the generative principal, was a symbol of generation or fecundity, as it was among the Asiatic races that called it the *Lingam*. The symbolism of generation established in the ancient Egyptian Mysteries, appealed to the early Greek philosophers who visited Egypt, from whence it was adopted and used in the religious festivals of Greece. The female personification of the productive principal was called the *Cteis* among the Greeks and the *Yoni* among the Asiatic races. When the male generative principal was conjoined with the female productive principal, the ancients revered the icon as a sacred symbol of the *Great Father* and the *Great Mother*, the two elements conjointly representing the generative and creative powers of the Divine essence. In Egypt the male generative principal seems invariably to have been carved from stone, often several metres high. In India the male generative principal was variously carved from stone or cast in clay, while the female productive principal usually was a concave elliptical stone eroded naturally by water. Many of those naturally formed water worn stones have been found in the Indus River valley and date from as early as 2500 BCE. In South America phallic icons carved in marble have also been found.

In countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, the combined symbol in a three dimensional shape usually comprised a *Cteis* in the form of a circular concave pedestal, in the centre of which a *Phallus* was erected. In Asiatic countries, the combined symbol was manifested in various ways. Often a circle of stones, or sometimes even a square of stones, was used to represent the *Yoni*, but more frequently it was a concave slab or pedestal, from which the *Lingam* arose in the centre. In ancient times the male generative principal was also considered to be a symbol of the causal body, which provides the means of self-manifestation, including all of the qualities and powers of the soul. Among the ancients some regarded the *Phallus* or *Lingam* as the equivalent of the sun, realising that the earth is made prolific by the sun’s heat and light and that crops are brought to full maturity by its benign influence. Thus the union of the *Phallus* and *Cteis*, or the *Lingam* and *Yoni*, in a single compound figure or icon has been a revered and sacred symbol of birth and regeneration from time immemorial, which is aptly represented by the hieroglyphic of a *Point within a Circle*.

In addition to its usage in the three dimensional form, the *Point within a Circle* was also used by the ancients in carvings or as bas-reliefs to decorate buildings and monuments. It is significant that in plan the *Point within a Circle* was an arrangement commonly used in many ancient religious monuments, such as the stone circles erected by the Stone Age
people and later by the Druids. In ancient times the **Point within a Circle** was used as a symbol to represent the sun, because of the sun’s life sustaining aspects. The symbol is still used to represent the sun in astronomical notation. It seems a paradox and is to be regretted that in speculative craft freemasonry the candidate, who symbolically has undergone a rebirth at his initiation, is not made aware of the ancient and highly significant symbolism of the **Point within a Circle**. A discerning candidate, who hears the explanation of the Tracing Board of the First Degree for the first time, must be at a loss to understand why so little is said about the **Point within a Circle**, when the symbol obviously must be of considerable importance to feature on the pedestal. This is especially true having regard to the fact that in ancient Egypt two erect parallels were used in conjunction with the **Point within a Circle**.

**Evolution Of The Point Within A Circle**

In its decorative form on Egyptian monuments, two erect parallel serpents of the cobra species, representing the **Power** and **Wisdom** of the **Divine Creator**, usually supported the point within a circle. Sometimes a serpent with its tail in its mouth represented the circle, which was called the **Ananta** from the Sanskrit word meaning **eternity**. At the centre of the circle, on either side of the point, the Egyptian equivalents of the **Alpha** and **Omega** were often inscribed to represent the omnipotence of God, symbolically surrounded by His whole creation, which was considered to have no limits within the scope of His boundless **Power** and **Wisdom**. In this form of the hieroglyph, the circle also was expressive of the protection of the collective people of the world by those two great and parallel attributes of the Divine Creator, His boundless **Power** and **Wisdom**. The two grand parallel lines referred to in modern rituals of speculative craft freemasonry are derived from this ancient symbolism.

**Speculative Interpretations**

In modern speculative rituals the parallel delineating the northern boundary of the circle is said to represent Moses, the great leader and lawgiver of the Hebrew people, whence it is the symbol of **Power**. The parallel delineating the southern boundary is said to represent the wise and mighty King Solomon who constructed the temple at Jerusalem, whence it is the symbol of **Wisdom**. From ancient times these two parallel lines have also been said to represent the limits of the sun’s northern and southern declinations in summer and winter, which are the solstitial points reached on the twenty-first days of June and December, from whence are derived the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn. These dates are very close to the anniversary dates the Christian churches have ascribed to St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, who have been regarded as the patron saints of freemasons from medieval times. This is why the two grand parallel lines were referred to the two Saints John in the formative days of speculative craft freemasonry, prior to the union of the **Antients** and the **Moderns**, when the intention was to expunge any specifically Christian references from the
rituals. Even so, the two Saints John are still referred to as the two grand parallels in some jurisdictions.

In modern speculative rituals very little explanation is given about the symbolism of the point within a circle. There is only a brief statement of geometrical fact and a short ethical exhortation to be as conversant with the doctrines contained in the Holy Book and as adherent thereto as were those two great parallels, Moses and King Solomon. By way of explanation, it is also said that a freemason who traverses this circle must necessarily touch on the Holy Book and these two great parallels and that if he keeps himself thus circumscribed he cannot materially err. Some understanding of the origins and the deep symbolic import of the ancient hieroglyph greatly enhances this meagre explanation of the **Point within a Circle**. The point or **Yod** at the centre of a circle also has an ancient religious meaning, signifying the **Omnificence** of the deity, which is alluded to in the following words from *The New English Bible* version of Isaiah 40:22 and Proverbs 8:27 –

> “Have you not perceived . . . God sits throned on the vaulted roof of earth, whose inhabitants are like grasshoppers? He stretches out the skies like a curtain, he spreads them out like a tent to live in; he reduces the great to nothing . . .”

> “When he set the heavens in their place I was there, when he girdled the ocean with the horizon, when he fixed the canopy of clouds overhead and set the springs of the ocean firm in their place, when he prescribed . . .”

**Ancient Parallels**

Earlier it was mentioned that the **Point within a Circle** was a sacred symbol that represented the **Divine Union** of the two sexes in the ancient Egyptian pantheon. It also was mentioned that in ancient Egypt two erect parallels were made use of in conjunction with the **Point within a Circle**. Those two erect parallels could be lines or representations of columns, but usually were representations of the cobra. The cobra or serpent played an important role in the symbolism of ancient Egypt and also was an emblem worn by the pharaohs as a symbol of their imperial wisdom and power. When used in conjunction with the **Point within a Circle**, the two erect cobras stand head uppermost and appear so be supporting the circle at their mid points, one on the left or northern side and the other on the right or southern side. They represent the **Serpent of the North**, which is Lower Egypt and the **Serpent of the South**, which is Upper Egypt. The **Serpent of the North** is a symbol of the lower emotions that emanate from the union of mind and desire, which is the lower mental plane that Lower Egypt was said to typify. By contrast, the **Serpent of the South** is a symbol of the wisdom that emanates from the higher planes of existence. To the majority of ancient Egyptians the land of Upper Egypt to the south was regarded as an almost mystical country, which they referred to as the **“land of the Gods”**.

The symbolism of the serpents supporting the **Point within a Circle** was reflected in the crowns worn by the ancient pharaohs. The red crown of Lower Egypt was in the form of an open mouth with a projecting tongue that was curled up and backwards at the tip, so as
to return upon itself. Red symbolises the power of the lower self and the shape of the crown symbolises the uttered *Word of Power*, which is an expression of the *Divine Life* on the lower planes that must return to its source. The tall white crown of Upper Egypt was the crown of Osiris who symbolises the *Higher Self* and refers to the “*voice*” or *Word* that in the beginning was “*with God*”. White, of course, is the symbol of perfect purity and symbolises the power of the upper self over the lower self. The combined crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt after the union, the *Sekhet* or *Peschent Crown* was an emblem of the Divine supremacy over the higher and lower natures of the soul. Other regal emblems the Egyptians used in conjunction with the crowns were the *crook* and the *flail*, representing *shepherding* and *agriculture*. They symbolised the protective care and sustenance of the *Divine Shepherd and Husbandman* and were a reminder of the mount of aspiration that every individual must climb in order to obtain perfection.

**Concluding Remarks**

In freemasonry the interpretation that is given for the point within a circle, bounded by two erect parallel lines, clearly has its origin in the ancient Egyptian hieroglyph and its interpretation. However, most of the original esoteric meaning has been overlooked and the identities of the two grand parallels have been changed, presumably in an endeavour to establish a setting that reflects the traditions of freemasonry. Moreover, in some respects the ancient symbolism has been reversed, insofar as the point is said to be that position which, if occupied by the individual freemason, is one from which he cannot err. In that context the circle represents the boundary line of the individual’s duty to God and to his fellow man, while the two grand parallels represent two human paragons of integrity, which is not the same as the union of emotion and wisdom by the encircling power of the Deity that was represented in the Egyptian hieroglyph. As a written hieroglyph, the point within a circle signified the sun and represented light, including the light of wisdom that comes from above. Used with appropriate determinatives, it also expressed many aspects of time and the seasons.
CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR – THE LEWIS

The lewis is a device that enables an operative freemason to raise large stones to the required heights and set them in place with safety and precision.

Speculative Connections

The lewis is a device that has been used by stonemasons and erectors for many centuries. It provides an anchorage in a stone, which enables lifting tackle to be attached to assist in the raising and lowering of stones that are too heavy or too awkward to be man-handled into position during transportation and erection. The first time that a speculative craft freemason learns about the lewis is usually as an entered apprentice, during the lecture on the tracing board, when he is told that lewis denotes strength and signifies the son of a mason. The use of the word in speculative craft freemasonry seems to have arisen as a result of the old friendship between France and Scotland, which came to be known as the "Auld Alliance".

The seeds of the friendship between France and Scotland were sown in Scotland during the reign of David I (1124-1153), who was more Normanised than his predecessors. After subduing the rebellious men of Moray in 1134, David I parcelled out their lands to his French speaking Norman adherents. The friendship between France and Scotland crystallised during the reign of William I, King of Scots (1165-1214) and known as "The Lion", who was having difficulties with Henry II of England and sought the assistance of Louis VII of France in 1166. However the alliance was not formalised until during the struggle for Scotland's independence from England, when a joint council was established and a treaty was signed between France and Scotland in October 1295, during the reign of John Balliol (1292-1296).

One of the earliest initiatives that resulted from this friendship was the involvement of the Travelling Masons of France in the design and construction of the Abbey of Kilwinning, which was founded about 1150. The French operative freemasons introduced the device into Scotland as a leveor. The Scottish operative freemasons were soon calling the device a lewis, which at first sight appears to be an adaptation of the French word. Nevertheless, the
intimate association between the operative freemasons and the clergy in those days must not be overlooked. The clergy regularly spoke in Latin, which at least the Master Masons must have understood and spoken, so that the word lewis is more likely to have been an adaptation of the Latin word leuis which means to levitate. Whichever was the derivation, it was not long before lewis was used in Scotland to designate the son of a freemason as well as the device to which it originally referred. It is relevant to note that lewis was not known in England until it was introduced by the Reverend Dr James Anderson D.D. (1684-1739), a Scottish freemason, when he prepared the second edition of the Book of Constitutions for the original Grand Lodge of England in 1738, in which he referred to the eldest son of a freemason as a lewis.

The Constitutions and Laws of the Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland permit sons of Master Masons under the Grand Lodge to seek admission when they have attained the age of eighteen years instead of the twenty one years otherwise required, which now is also allowed under the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. The Constitutions of the United Grand Lodge of England do not make any similar provision, although there is a custom, as distinct from a rule, that a freemason's eldest so may be initiated before any other candidate under consideration at the same time, but not in precedence to any candidate who has already been approved for admission.

The term lewis is not used in the United States of America, except under the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, where it appears in the Constitutions drafted in 1727, only ten years after the first Grand Lodge was formed in London and 110 years before the United Grand Lodge of England was formed. No right of early admission is recognised in the United States of America, although some lodges hold ceremonies to welcome new offspring of members and some establish endowments in the names of the offspring, which are passed over to them after their initiation.

**The Origin Of The Name**

A great deal has been written about the origin of the name, but much of it is fanciful, such as the suggestion that it arose in consequence of its use by an architect in the service of Louis XIV of France (1638-1715). In fact the device and its name were in common use in France from an early date, but that was as a direct result of the Roman occupation and the similarities of language. The probable derivation of the word has already been mentioned in connection with the use of the device in Scotland during the 1150s, but some further comments are relevant. The Latin word leuis, meaning to levitate, gave rise to the Middle Latin word levis meaning light in weight. Both of these words aptly reflect the purpose of the lewis, which is to make the lifting of a stone easy, or in the vernacular to lighten the load. The early Latin leuare, the Middle Latin levare, the Old French leveor, the Middle English levour and the modern English lever are all descendants of the Latin leuis and have the same meaning. Moreover, euis would be spelt as lewis in modern English.

It is of interest to note that by 1676 the Compagnonage, the brotherhood of masons who comprised the Compagnons du Tour or Travelling Masons of France, had changed their
name for the lifting anchorage to louve meaning a she wolf, which is the feminine of loup
meaning a wolf. It is said to be in allusion to the vice-like grip of a she-wolf's jaws when
angry. From that date onwards the Compagnonage also referred to the son of a mason as a
louveteau meaning a wolf cub and to the daughter of a mason as a louveine. These
expressions seem to have originated from a play on words, most probably having in mind a
requirement in ancient Egypt for the candidate in the Mysteries of Isis to wear the mask of
a wolf, in deference to the wolf-headed god Upuaut, which signifies "he who opens the
way", which is a most appropriate symbolism for a candidate in freemasonry. The god
Upuaut must not be confused with another Egyptian god of similar appearance, the jackal-
headed god Anubis which signifies "the Lord of the land".

**The Lifting Device**

In its usual form the lewis comprises two iron or steel wedges separated by an iron or steel
spacing plate which, when assembled together, form a dovetailed tenon that was fitted into
a dovetailed mortice cut in a stone to receive it. The cross-section of the spacing plate
usually is three times as wide as it is thick and its length usually is about four times its
width. Each wedge has the same length and width as the spacing plate, but its thickness
varies. About a quarter of the length of each wedge at is upper end has the same cross-
section as the spacing plate, but the lower three quarters of the length is tapered only on the
face that will be its outer face when the wedges are placed back to back with the spacing
plate between them. The taper is such that the lower end of each wedge is one and one half
times as thick as its upper end.

Matching holes are provided in the upper ends of the two wedges and the spacing plate, so
that a shackle bolt can be inserted through them when the lifting device has been
assembled in the dovetailed mortice cut in a stone to receive it. The shackle bolt olds the
three pieces in their correct positions when the lifting tackle is attached. In ancient times
the lifting tackle would have been supported from a tripod or a guyed gin pole, but
nowadays a mobile crane generally would be used for lifting. When two wedges and a
spacing plate of these proportions have been assembled in this fashion, the cross-section of
the device at the upper end of the tapered section is a rectangle with sides of four units and
three units, whilst the cross-section at the lower end is a square with sides of four units,
thus forming a dovetailed tenon.

It is obvious that, if a tapered hole of these dimensions is cut into a stone to form a
dovetailed mortice, the two wedges can be inserted into the hole when placed back to back.
If the wedges are moved apart after they have been inserted into the mortice the spacing
plate can then be inserted between them. A suitable working tolerance is allowed in the
cross-sectional dimensions of the mortice, so that the components of the device can be
inserted easily. The mortice also is made slightly deeper than the tapered length of the
wedges forming the tenon, so that after lifting the stone the device can be tapped down into
the mortice to free the spacing piece, which can then be removed to allow the wedges to be
removed. When the mortice is being cut into a stone, it is commenced as a rectangle four
units by three units in cross-section at the surface and continued with these dimensions to
the required depth of the mortice. The sides of the hole that are four units wide are then progressively undercut, so that its full depth the mortice is a square with sides of four units.

Although the device is simple to use, the location of the mortice to receive it is of utmost importance. It is preferable to use a single lifting point when this is practicable, because this allows for a simple arrangement of the lifting tackle which will permit the stone to be rotated and swung into position with the least difficulty. To achieve this, the mortice should be cut directly above the centre of gravity of the stone. If the stone is square or oblong in plan the location of the mortice is easy to determine, because it is at the intersection of the diagonals. If the stone is a T-shaped footing corner stone it can still be lifted from a single point if it is not too heavy, but greater skill is required to determine the point.

When it is necessary to lift a stone such as an L-shaped corner stone, great care must be exercised and at least two lifting points must be used. Required, for example at the midpoints of the two legs. The stonemason must exercise considerable skill when determining the actual dimensions of the device and the direction in which the mortice must be expanded towards the bottom. If the device is too small, it will pull out when the stone is being lifted. If the mortice is expanded in the wrong direction, the stone may split when being lifted. If the stone is too soft or is badly laminated it may not be possible to use a lewis. Great skill and care is also required when determining the number and locations of the lifting points, especially for awkwardly shaped stones and for very large stones.

The History Of The Lewis

The lewis was used extensively by the Romans from long before the Christian era, which has been confirmed by wide ranging archaeological investigations. It is not known whether the lewis was used by the builders who preceded the Romans, but having regard to the extraordinary building skills displayed by the ancient Egyptians and the Phoenicians in particular, the Romans probably acquired the art from them. As earlier archaeological investigations tended to concentrate on the recovery of artifacts, the evidence could easily have been overlooked. Some interesting examples of the known use of the lewis by the Romans include the construction of the colosseum in Rome, which was completed in 80 BCE; the construction of the amphitheatre in Pompeii, which was commenced in 70 BCE; and the construction of the temple at Baalbek from about 60 CE until about 250 CE. Baalbek is of special interest, because the size and weight of many of the larger stones in the Temple of Jupiter, the first of the Roman temples that was constructed there, necessitated the use of multiple anchorages to enable them to be lifted and placed into position. Several examples of stones that have multiple anchorages are easily found among the ruins of Baalbek.

The Romans introduced the lewis into Britain for the construction of Hadrian's wall around 200, when it was erected to prevent the incursions from Scotland into England. An astute observer can still find mortices in many of the more massive stones in the ruins of Hadrian's wall. Later, when Oswey was king of Northumberland, the Saxons used the
lewis when they constructed the abbey at Whitby, which was founded by St Hilda in 657 to accommodate the monks and nuns. Whitby Abbey was the chief seat of learning in the north of England for several centuries. Thereafter the device was used widely in England, although it was not known as a lewis until the name was introduced from Scotland by Dr James Anderson.

**Symbolism**

Although the lewis is a remarkably simple device, a great deal of skill and precision is required when fabricating its components and when locating and cutting the mortice in the stone. To choose the wrong size of the device; to choose the wrong location for the hole; to orient the undercutting of the hole incorrectly; or to fail to match the size of the mortice and its undercut surfaces accurately with the assembled tenon, at the very least would damage the stone, but could split it or allow it to fall. Provided that everything is done correctly, the stone can be raised with ease, rotated as required and placed in position accurately and without damage. Thus the lewis symbolically comprehends the teachings of all the working tools of an apprentice freemason, reminding us that knowledge, grounded on accuracy, aided by labour and sustained by perseverance will, in the end, overcome all difficulties, raise ignorance from despair and promote happiness in the paths of science. Furthermore the lewis is a most appropriate symbol of strength.

It is clear from the derivation of the name that lewis, when used with reference to the son of a freemason, originated with the Travelling Masons of France, many of whom who were engaged to construct the Abbey of Kilwinning in Scotland during the 1150s. This use of the expression was transmitted from operative freemasonry in Scotland to speculative craft freemasonry in England during the seventeenth or eighteenth century. The lewis is mentioned in the catechisms of speculative craft freemasons in England from the eighteenth century, when it was said to denote strength and to be depicted in a freemason's lodge as a cramp of metal dovetailed into a stone. The catechisms define the duty of a lewis as being:

"To bear the heavy burden of his aged parents, so as to render the close of their days happy and comfortable."

The catechisms also define his privilege for so doing as being:

"To be made a mason before any other person, however dignified by birth, rank or riches, unless he through complaisance waives this privilege."

From these old catechisms are derived the references in modern rituals. In modern speculative craft lodges, as well as being depicted on the tracing board, a lewis is often displayed inserted in a perfect ashlar suspended from a tripod. The perfect ashlar is customarily raised from its base when the lodge is opened and set back on its base when the lodge has closed, respectively signifying that the lodge has commenced labour or that it has ceased labour and is going to refreshment.
An Anachronism

In Scottish operative lodges in olden times, if an apprentice serving his indentureship failed to complete his practical training and could not pass his tests, then he could not be recorded in the books as an Entered Apprentice. Accordingly he was release from his bond and thereafter was described in the old Scots tongue as a lowsance, which sometimes was spelled incorrectly as lousance. The Scots word signified freedom from bondage, that is liberty, being derived from the verb lowse, which has a pronunciation midway between the words loose and louse in English. Lowse means to loose, to unyoke or to redeem.

In common usage it was customary to use the verb lowse instead of the longer noun lowsance. A lowsance was not precluded from all stonework but, like the cowan or dry-stone diker in Scotland, he was not allowed to be engaged on any tasks requiring special skills, nor was he allowed to participate in any ceremonial work restricted to those having the Mason Word. A curious clerical error that purports to describe a Lewis appears in the Harris MS No 1 that dates from the second half of the seventeenth century in which the rehearsal of the charges to a Free Mason says:

"You shall not make any Mold, Square or Rule for any that is but a Lewis; a Lewis is such a one as hath served an Apprenticeship to a Mason but is not admitted afterwards according to this manner and Custom of making Masons."

Clearly the Lewis that is recorded in this manuscript was intended to be read as a Lowse, but had been confused by the draftsman who probably was not aware that in Scotland the verb lowse was commonly used in place of the noun lowsance.

An Anglo-Saxon Lewis

Although lewis was not used in England in a masonic context until 1738, the word evolved in the Anglo-Saxon language with a very similar usage many centuries earlier. Britain is renowned for its interesting place names, the origins and evolution of which illustrate the derivation, diversity and richness of the English language. Countless articles have been written on the subject, including an extensive series called Notes and Queries which includes an article on Lewisham, a suburb of London south of the River Thames. The name literally means the home of Lewis, which include an article onLewisham, a suburb of London south of the river Thames. The name literally means the home of Lewis, which is derived from the Old English ham meaning a home, whence hamlet also is derived. It is recorded in the Charter of Ethelbert dated 862, that Lewisham was then known as Liofshema mearc which means the place of Liofshema, which is derived from the Old English mearc meaning a boundary or a limit. This Ethelbert was not the sixth century King of Kent who became the first Christian ruler of Anglo-Saxon England, but the son of King Ethelwulf who became King Ethelbert I of England when his father died in 858. As
Liof or leof means dear and sunu, suma or shema means son, the name Liofshema literally means dear son. By the seventeenth century the place was called Lews'am, whence the present name evolved through changes of etymology. Thus lewis evolved through Old English meaning dear son, at the same time coming through Latin and French and denoting son of a mason.
CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE – THE TWO GREAT PILLARS OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

*Two decorated pillars were set up in the porch of the temple as sacred obelisks.*

**Prelude – The Israelites In Egypt**

The two great pillars that King Solomon erected in the porch at the entrance to the temple at Jerusalem were sacred obelisks, which were symbols of the greatest significance to the Israelites. To appreciate how important the temple and its two pillars were in the lives of the Israelites, from early in the first millennium BCE, the preceding millennium in the history of the Israelites must be seen in proper perspective. Of particular importance were the strong cultural and intellectual links developed between the Israelites and the Egyptians, during the 430 years or so while the Israelites lived in the delta region of Egypt prior to their Exodus. The history of the Israelites records that they suffered enslavement for the last century of their residence in Egypt, but their enslavement was not harsh when compared with the usual standards of that era. The Hebrew word for a *slave* is *Ayin Beth Daleth*, or *eved* in English, a variant of *Ayin Waw Beth Daleth*, or *oved* in English, the root word that is used when referring to a worker in general. The Hebrew language is most closely related to the western Semitic language of Ugarit in northern Syria. The Hebrew script was derived from the Phoenician in about 710 BCE. As *Heth Beth Resh*, or *habiru* in English, the name *Hebrew* originally did not have an ethnic or racial connotation, but literally meant to be *bound* or *joined together*.

The word comes from *Heth Pe Resh*, or *hapiru* in English, a word of Arabic origin that literally means a *digger*, originally referring to *foreign servants*, in particular the Indo-Aryan Hurrians who migrated into the Fertile Crescent from the north during the third millennium BCE. The *habiru* were a class of people who made their living carrying out manual work, often under contract. An interesting cognomen in the biblical texts is the genteel *ibri*, also meaning *Hebrew*, which is used as a patronymic for Abraham and his direct line of descendants. The use of *ibri* in the Old Testament is consistently ethnic, which suggests that the expression may have had a derogatory nuance. However the designation *ibri* later became an exclusive epithet, claimed with pride by those Jews whose cultural and religious heritage had not been modified by the consecutive influences of Greek and Roman rule that began in 336 BCE with Alexander the Great and continued until the Roman Emperor Caracalla extended citizenship to all free residents around the Mediterranean in 212 CE.

In Exodus 1:7-14 we are told why the Israelites were enslaved and what work was required of them:
“And the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly and multiplied and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them. Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, . . . Come on let us deal wisely with them: . . . Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh the treasure cities Pithom and Raamses. . . . And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour; and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick and in all manner of service in the field; . . . .”

Thus, although the Israelites were primarily relegated to working on the land and constructing cities during their period of enslavement, the livelihoods of most of them did not differ substantially from what they had been previously. Their memory of their enslavement and its outcome is revealed in the exhortation given in Deuteronomy 15:15, which says:

“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you.”

There can be no doubt that the exposure of the Israelites to Egyptian culture, for more than four centuries, profoundly influenced their lives and was an important element in shaping their religion. This was especially significant with respect to Moses. It is generally agreed by biblical historiographers that Moses was brought up in the Pharaoh’s courts, where he received a substantial education and is credited with having obtained the “wisdom of the Egyptians”. The cultural influence of the Egyptians on the Israelites did not cease during their period of enslavement. Indeed, it continued to be felt long after the Exodus of the Israelites under the leadership Moses. Until a few decades ago the beginning of the Exodus was dated at about 1440 BCE. However, more recent archaeological investigations have enabled biblical events to be correlated better with other relevant records than was possible using only the biblical genealogies, on which basis the Exodus that heralded the foundation of Israel as a nation probably commenced in about 1280 BCE, during the reign of the Pharaoh Ramses II. Thus the “new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph”, mentioned in the passages from Exodus 1:7-14 quoted above, would have been the Pharaoh Seti I who, according to the most recent chronology, would have ruled from 1312 BCE to 1298 BCE. Moses would have been born at the beginning of Seti I’s reign, during the period when the Pharaoh’s edict was in force that every Hebrew son should be cast into the river at birth. Ramses II was the Pharaoh who succeeded Seti I and ruled for sixty-seven years.

Precursors Of The Temple At Jerusalem

Because the Egyptians had played such a significant role in the development of the Israelites, it is understandable why it had been assumed for centuries that the temple of King Solomon in Jerusalem would have been based on a model of Egyptian origin. However, modern research has revealed that the layout of the temple in Jerusalem was
essentially the same as the pattern that had been adopted in the many older temples constructed in Syria, Iraq and the adjacent regions. As those older temples were the true predecessors of the temple in Jerusalem, some knowledge of them will establish a better understanding of the significance of the two great pillars that King Solomon erected at the porch or entrance to the temple at Jerusalem. The extensive archaeological excavations that have been carried out in Iraq and Syria since the 1930s provide strong evidence that King Solomon’s temple did not have an Egyptian heritage, but that it was in fact a continuation of a line of tradition that had been firmly established in the countries bordering the eastern extremity of the Mediterranean Sea, long before the temple in Jerusalem was built.

Investigations have shown that this line of tradition reflected significant changes in human attitudes to the divinity, which had been taking place during a period of about 2,000 years before the construction of the temple at Jerusalem was commenced. The first temple discovered in this line of tradition was a small sanctuary adjacent to the ancient royal palace at Tell Ta'Yinat in northern Syria, which was excavated during the early 1930s. This find was followed by the discovery of a Canaanite temple in the same line of tradition, which was unearthed during archaeological excavations that were being carried out in the ancient lower city of Hazor during the 1950s, in northern Palestine. Hazor had only been occupied for about 500 years when it was completely destroyed and burnt. The destruction of Hazor occurred about 500 years before construction of the temple at Jerusalem began, but Hazor was never inhabited again.

During the 1970s, while excavations that were being carried out on the banks of the Euphrates River before constructing the dam wall that forms Lake el-Assad, four similar temples were revealed, that had been built at Emar between 200 and 400 years before the temple at Jerusalem was built. Other temples of similar design have since been discovered at Ebla and Moumbaqat in Syria, predating the temple at Jerusalem by about 800 years. The oldest known temples of this type so far discovered are three at Tell Chuera, which is in the foothills of the Taurus Mountains of Asia Minor, all dating from about 2500 BCE. The temples in Syria and Palestine are not like the Egyptian temples of that period, but their characteristics are similar to those of the temple at Jerusalem. These temples are elongated about 3:1 in plan and are subdivided into compartments like the temple at Jerusalem, with a single entrance at the eastern end of the building and a holy place at the western end.

Notwithstanding the similarities in the temple layouts in Palestine and Syria, it is evident from the diversity of their dimensions and details that King Solomon's temple was not copied from a single design, but rather that it followed a general type that allowed for a logical progression from the profane outside world to the sacred inner sanctum. The deep significance of this is reflected in the Bible by the names given to the various parts of the temple. The temple at Jerusalem had a single entrance at the eastern end, which was reached by passing through the *ulam*, an open porch or entrance flanked by two columns, one at the north-eastern corner and the other at the south-eastern corner. The *ulam* opened into the *hekhal*, the hall for daily worship by the priests, the presentation of offerings and the performance of ritual. The *hekhal* gave entrance to the *debir* at the western end, which
was the **Holy of Holies** where the **Ark of the Covenant** was kept and where God was said to dwell.

**Historical Background**

When humans first emerged from their Stone Age existence and learnt to erect primitive shelters, they developed a desire to build shrines or temples wherein they could worship the supreme being in the **“Lord's house”**. Modern research, supported by archaeological discoveries in the countries bordering the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, indicate that the original **Tower of Babel** probably would have been in existence by about 4800 BCE. It is the first structure mentioned in the Bible and is named after Babel, one of the chief cities founded by Nimrod in the land of Sumer, which was ancient Babylon. No direct archaeological evidence has yet been found that positively confirms the existence of a city and tower at Babylon before about 1800 BCE. However there is a text of Sharkalisharri, the king of Agade who ruled in about 2250 BCE, which mentions that he had restored the temple-tower or **ziggurat** at Babylon, which implies that there was an earlier sacred city on the site. It is now believed that the **ziggurat** built by Ur-Nammu, who was king of Ur in about 2100 BCE, replaced much earlier **Towers of Babel**. These **ziggurats** comprised a series of superimposed platforms, each of which was from 10 to 20 metres in height and progressively smaller in area. A temple was erected on the top platform, to which it was thought that God would descend to communicate with mankind. Access to the temple was gained by a series of ramps or stairways.

When Abraham was born, probably in about 1900 BCE in Ur of the Chaldees, he was called Abram meaning **high father**. Abram, who was a son of Terah and a descendant of Shem, was the ancestor and a patriarch of the Hebrew race. Although Abram lived in idolatrous times he was a man of outstanding faith who believed in one God, **Yod He Waw He or Yahweh**, meaning **“He who creates”**. Abram’s people came to know him as **“the friend of God”**. After his father died Abram moved to Harran in the far north of Syria, where he received God's call when he was 75 years old. It was then that Abram received **Yahweh**’s promise that he would inherit the whole of the land southwest of the Euphrates River. After Abram had received God's promise he journeyed south into Canaan, where he rescued his nephew Lot and defeated the Amorites led by Chedorlaomer, the king of Elam. On his return from the rout of Chedorlaomer and his allies, Abram was greeted by Melchizedek, the king of Salem, who was called a priest of the **“God Most High”**, that is of **El Elyon**. Melchizedek presented Abram with bread and wine and blessed him in the name of the **“God Most High”**. In return Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of his spoils as a tithe, by which he acknowledged Melchizedek’s greatness. He then declined Melchizedek’s proposal that Abram should keep all of the spoils, but said that those who had accompanied him should keep their spoils. This was when God renewed his covenant with Abram and Abram changed his name to Abraham meaning **“father of a multitude”**.

Within a year of that event, when Abraham was 100 years old, his son Isaac was born, but Abraham lived for another 75 years. A severe and extended famine in Canaan and the Negeb was the reason why Isaac's son Jacob, who was known as the **“father of the chosen**
people", led the Israelites into Egypt. This migration of the Israelites into Egypt was made at the invitation of Jacob's son Joseph, who had been sold into slavery in Egypt many years before, but later became a viceroy there. Moses was born in Egypt into the tribe of Levi, who were priests from birth. We have already seen that Moses was born at the time when a decree was in force in Egypt, requiring all male Hebrew children to be slain at birth. Notwithstanding the decree, Moses was saved by the compassion of a daughter of the Pharaoh, previously often identified as Hatshepshut, whose father was Tuthmosis I. As the latest chronologies associate Queen Hatshepshut’s rule over Egypt with the period 1490-1468 BCE, there can be no doubt that it was the daughter of a later pharaoh who rescued Moses. As mentioned earlier, it is now believed that Moses was born at the beginning of the reign of the Pharaoh Seti I, in about 1312 BCE. In any event there is general agreement that Moses was brought up and educated in the Egyptian court, later becoming the great leader and lawgiver who delivered the Israelites to within reach of the “promised land” of their forefathers.

It was noted earlier that after the Israelites had lived for about 430 years in the delta area of Egypt, they were being subjected to ever increasing hardship and oppression. To escape slavery they fled from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, in about 1280 BCE during the reign of Rameses II. Their escape is known as the Exodus. During the Exodus they led a semi-nomadic existence for about 40 years, wandering through the wilderness of Sinai and the desert lands of Edom, which culminated with their crossing of the Jordan River to reach their “promised land”. Because of their wanderings the Patriarchs could not build a permanent shrine for worship, which had been their custom in every city in Mesopotamia even before Abraham had left there in answer to God's call.

Early in their Exodus from Egypt, the Israelites lapsed into idolatry. That was when Moses spent forty days on Mount Sinai, where he received the stone tablets bearing the Ten Commandments, which were regarded as a “title deed” of Israel's covenant with God. It was during his forty days on Mount Sinai, that Moses received God’s command that he should erect a portable shrine and construct the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the portable shrine, called the Tabernacle, or tent of congregation. The Tabernacle was the sanctuary of the Israelites during their wanderings through the desert, where they believed that “God dwelt among the Israelites”. However, the Tabernacle continued to be used as the provisional meeting place of the people with God long after the Israelites entered Canaan. Under the Judges it was at Shiloh and in Saul's reign it was first at Nob and later at Gibeon.

When King David had consolidated his power and built for himself a permanent palace, the lack of a permanent shrine of Yahweh seemed invidious to him. It was for this reason that King David said, as it is recorded in II Samuel 7:2 of the New English Bible:

"Here I live in a house of cedar, while the Ark of God is housed in curtains".

However, we are told in I Chronicles 22:8 that the Lord had expressly forbidden King David to build a temple, because his hands were stained with the blood of his enemies. We
are also told that the Lord said to King David that he would have a son, Solomon, who
would be known as "a man of peace" and that he would build the temple.

King David purchased the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite as the site of the temple,
which is within the area now called Haram es-Sherif, the highest point on Mount Moriah at
the eastern side of the Old City of Jerusalem. Although the precise location of the temple
on Mount Moriah is uncertain, the available evidence suggests that the Holy of Holies was
at the highest point, which is now the location of the mosque known as “The Dome of the
Rock”. The biblical records tell us that King David also gathered treasure and collected
materials for the building of the temple. It is recorded in the scriptures that when King
David was on his deathbed he entrusted the building of the temple to his son and successor,
King Solomon, who became renowned for his wisdom. In I Chronicles 22:6 we are told:

"He sent for Solomon his son and charged him to build a house for the Lord the
God of Israel".

The background to the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, the events that occurred during
the Exodus, the wars that consolidated of power by King David, the building of the temple
by King Solomon and its subsequent chequered history, are all recounted in graphic detail
in two books that approach the subject from different perspectives. The first is an account
of the Hebrew people and their trials and tribulations over fourteen centuries of human
turmoil and change, which Joan Comay vividly portrays in The World's Greatest Story,
which is subtitled The Epic of the Jewish People in Biblical Times. Her narrative brings
into focus the whole spectrum of human activities that influenced the Jewish religion,
leading to the establishment of the tabernacle during the wanderings of the Israelites in the
deserts of Sinai and ultimately to the construction of the temple at Jerusalem. The second is
The Bible and the Ancient Near East, by Cyrus H Gordon and Gary A Rendsburg, which
has been progressively updated since 1953 and correlates the results of continuing
archaeological investigations with history as recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Some of the
more esoteric aspects of the evolution of the Hebrew people are examined by Laurence
Gardner in his recent thought-provoking book entitled Genesis of the Grail Kings, which
is subtitled The Pendragon Legacy of Adam and Eve. Gardner begins the history of the
Israelites with their Mesopotamian origins, but surprisingly his tabulation of events during
their residence in Egypt is not based on the latest chronology. He dates the beginning of
the Exodus as 1330 BCE, instead of about 1280 BCE. As a result, his account of the early
days of Moses in Egypt and the conclusions he reaches are not the same as those given
earlier in this chapter.

The Temple At Jerusalem

King Solomon commenced the actual construction of the temple in the fourth year of his
reign and completed it seven years later, in about 950 BCE. He had entered into a treaty
with Hiram King of Tyre, whereby Hiram permitted Solomon to obtain cedar and cypress
wood and blocks of stone from Lebanon. Furthermore, Solomon's workmen were
permitted to fell the timber and quarry and hew the stones under the direction of Hiram's
skilled workmen. In addition, Solomon also had the services of a skilled Tyrian artisan named Huram, or Hiram Abif, who took charge of the castings and the manufacture of the more valuable furniture and furnishings of the temple. In return, Solomon sent supplies of wheat, oil and wine to Hiram King of Tyre.

The temple at Jerusalem was 60 cubits long and 20 cubits wide, with its axis oriented from east to west. The ulam or porch at the eastern end of the temple was 10 cubits long on the axis of the temple and 20 cubits wide. The hekhal, or Holy Place, had a length of 40 cubits along the axis of the temple and a width of 20 cubits. Contrary to popular conception, the Holy Place was accessible only to the priests. The members of the public were only admitted into the surrounding courtyards, but were segregated according to their status. The inner sanctuary at the western end was the debir, or Holy of Holies, which was a perfect cube with sides 20 cubits long. It is probable that the Holy of Holies was only accessible to the high priest during the atonement ceremony, once a year.

There can be no doubt that King Solomon's temple at Jerusalem was a magnificent edifice, surpassing anything that had preceded it. The temple was noted for the lavish beauty of its detail and finish, not for its size. The walls of stone were lined inside with cedar carved with cherubim, palms, garlands and opening flowers. The ceilings also were lined with cedar and the floor was planked with cypress. The floor, walls and ceiling were all overlaid with thin plates of gold. The Holy of Holies was separated from the Holy Place by double doors of cypress and screened with a veil. The doors probably were left at least partly open to provide light, because there were no windows in the inner sanctuary. Within the Holy of Holies there were two cherubim carved from olive wood and overlaid with gold, standing 10 cubits high with the tips of their outstretched wings touching over the Ark of the Covenant. In the north and south walls of the Holy Place, close to the ceiling, there were latticed windows to provide light during the hours of daylight.

The main temple building was enclosed on its northern, western and southern walls by a series of chambers that were three stories high. These chambers served as storerooms and offices and may also have provided accommodation for the priests. There was no entrance to the chambers from inside the temple, but there were two external doors, one near the southeastern corner of the main building and the other near the northwestern corner. Each of these doors gave access to an internal spiral staircase leading to the upper floors. The building complex was on a platform, which was elevated above the terraced courtyards that completely surrounded it. Access to the porch of the temple was gained by ascending ten steps from the upper or inner court, to which access was gained by ascending eight steps from the great or outer court that surrounded it. The brazen altar, the brazen sea and the lavers were in the upper court, where the sacrifices and other ceremonials took place. The public could watch the ceremonials from the outer court, but they were not allowed to mingle with the priests participating in the ceremonials. The outer court was enclosed within walls comprising three courses of hewn stone, surmounted by a row of cedar beams. Access to the outer court, from the surrounding environment, was gained by ascending seven steps. It is believed that porticos and vestibules were provided in the surrounding environment, near to the gates that gave access to the outer court.
The Two Great Pillars

Hiram was responsible for casting the two great pillars that were set up at the porch of the temple, one on each side. The porch did not have a roof and the two pillars at the entrance to the temple were free standing. In operative freemasonry there is a tradition that when King Solomon named the two pillars he was standing in the Holy Place and looking through the entrance door towards the east. Thus the right pillar, called Jachin, was at the southeastern corner of the temple and the left pillar, called Boaz, was at the northeastern corner of the temple, which is consistent with the description given in the sacred writings. The pillars were hollow, 18 cubits high and four fingers thick. They were cast hollow to save scarce materials and also to reduce their weight for handling and transportation. The suggestion that the pillars were used as archives to store the constitutional rolls is an embellishment that is not founded on fact.

The pillars were cast vertically in moulds that were dug in the ground, using the “lost wax” method that the Assyrians had developed during the Bronze Age, probably in about 1200 BCE during the reign of King Shalmaneser. When castings are made using the “lost wax” process, the outer mould is formed concentrically around an inner mould of sand or other suitable material that is coated with wax. When the molten metal is poured into the mould, most of the wax melts away leaving a thin skin of slick material, which allows the casting to be removed easily when it has cooled. Because pillars, like those at the porch of King Solomon’s temple, were common in Syria, Phoenicia and Cyprus at that time, the “lost wax” method of casting was well known to the Tyrian artificers. Each pillar in King Solomon’s temple was surmounted by a double capital, which had a combined height of 5 cubits and probably was cast in two parts. The lower section of each capital, called the chapiter, was embellished with lotus work comprising four open and everted petals, each petal being 4 cubits wide. The upper sections of the capitals were not spheres, as is usually stated, but were large bowls. They did not represent what was then known of either the terrestrial globe or the celestial sphere. Modern research has revealed that the bowls surmounting the pillars almost certainly were vessels to contain oil, which could be ignited and would burn steadily.

Archaeological investigations reveal that similar decorated pillars were used in Palestine and Cyprus during the period 1000 BCE to 900 BCE, which spans the period during which the temple at Jerusalem was under construction. The bases of similar pillars have been uncovered at the sites of the temples at Hazor and Tell Ta'Yinat, each of which also had two columns at their entrances. The Greek historian Herodotus (c.484-425 BCE), who was called the “Father of History”, travelled widely throughout the lands that bordered the eastern half of the Mediterranean Sea. In his treatise called Histories, Herodotus described two great pillars near the temple of Hercules at Tyre, making special reference to the fact that they “shone at night”. The two great pillars that stood at the porch of King Solomon's temple were erected and dedicated before the temple was completed. In I Kings 7:21, in relation to Hiram's work, we read the following:
"And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple; and he set up the right pillar and called the name thereof Jachin; and he set up the left pillar and called the name thereof Boaz."

The wording of this text is unusual in some respects, because it allows for more than one translation. The expression “he set up”, which is repeated three times, appears at first sight to be used to add emphasis to the statement, but there is another equally valid interpretation. This is because the Hebrew word that is used for a column or pillar is 'mwr, which is a derivative of the root word 'mr meaning to found, to lay the foundation of, to establish, to stand or to set up. Moreover, a pillar is frequently used in the scriptures in a symbolic sense, when it can have a variety of meanings. On at least one occasion 'mwr is used to signify the house of the living God, as it does in I Timothy 3:15. The possibility of an alternative translation is supported by the fact that the two names given to the pillars are also common words that would usually be translated with their ordinary meanings. For these reasons a portion of the text could be translated as “I establish God's House in strength”, from which may be derived the following expression:

"For the Lord said, in strength will I establish this Mine House that it shall stand firm forever."

God's promise to King David and King David's response to God are both relevant. They are recorded in I Chronicles 17:12 and I Chronicles 17:24 of the New English Bible in the following words:

“It is he shall build me a house and I will establish his throne for all time."

“Let it stand fast, that thy fame may be great forever and let men say 'The Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God'."

It has often been said that the pillars were named with the intention of enshrining the memory of King David's ancestry through his maternal line, because Jachin occurs as a Simeonite name and was a name used in a priestly family, as well as through his paternal line because Boaz was a wealthy landowner of Bethlehem and the great grandfather of David. However, experts have shown convincingly that the names of the pillars were key words used by oracles who sought to bestow power on the dynasty of David and to express Solomon's gratitude to the Almighty prior to the dedication of the temple, when the oracles would have used words such as “Yahweh will establish (yakin) thy throne for ever" and also “In Yahweh is the king's strength (boaz)", which are consistent with the alternative translation given above. The pillars set up at the porch of the temple at Jerusalem have also been interpreted as sacred obelisks with their blazing, smoking wicks recalling to the worshippers the pillars of fire and cloud that led Israel of old through the wilderness. These immense fire altars or incense stands were similar to their Phoenician counterparts and would have illuminated the facade of the temple on Mount Moriah at night, whilst also catching the first glint of sunrise in Jerusalem and producing a cloud of dark smoke during the day. Hence both interpretations would have been equally valid.
**Subsequent History**

In ancient times, temples not only were the focus of religious activity. Often they were the real centres of power in a region, especially when the priesthood was in the ascendency. Temples also served as state treasuries, being filled with booty when the nation was powerful and overrunning its enemies, or emptied to pay tributes to its overlords when in a state of oppression. King Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem was no exception. After the temple was completed there were many years of affluence while King Solomon was at peace with the neighbouring peoples. Throughout that period of affluence King Solomon used forced labour and imposed excessive taxation to carry out his many building projects, during which huge quantities of treasure were accumulated in the temple. Rehoboam, King Solomon's son by the Ammonite princess Naamah, assumed power in about 930 BCE. Spurred on by his rebellious and demanding contemporaries, Rehoboam told the people that they would be taxed and punished even more severely than before, which soon brought an end to the loose confederation of tribes that ostensibly had been a united kingdom. With the encouragement of Shishak, the King of Egypt, ten of the twelve tribes of Israel revolted under the leadership of Jeroboam, who previously had incurred the wrath of Solomon. After the revolt Jeroboam became the first king of the separated kingdom of Israel in the north.

Rehoboam remained king of the kingdom of Judah, based in Jerusalem, but he feared the interests of Shishak, the king of Egypt who had supported Jeroboam in his activities. Rehoboam fortified the cities of Judah, including Bethlehem. Judah was also strengthened by an influx of priests and Levites who had deserted the kingdom of Israel, in protest against the breakdown in religious practices that had become prevalent in the northern kingdom. Rehoboam and his subjects prospered for a time, until idolatrous practices gradually corrupted their worship of God. It is recorded in I Kings 14:25-28 that Shishak raided the temple and palace in about 925 BCE, when he took all the treasures of Jerusalem as a tribute and established his rule over the land. The prophet Jeremiah pointed out that these calamities had occurred because the nation had sinned in the sight of God, which led Rehoboam and his people to repent. Several years later, when Shishak had departed, the worship of God was restored. Rehoboam was not a great king and his reign was marked by sporadic wars with the northern kingdom, which continued until his death in about 915 BCE. Nevertheless, he was buried among the “good kings” in the city of David.

Later kings used accumulated treasure to purchase the friendship of allies, or to pay tribute to buy off invaders, including Hezekiah during his reign of about thirteen years as co-regent with Ahaz. Hezekiah became the sole king of Judah in about 715 BCE and became one of its most outstanding kings, renowned for his exceptional piety, his measures for religious reform and his vigorous political activities. Hezekiah reopened the temple and cleansed it of everything that made it unfit for use, then restored true worship. He also reaffirmed the ancient covenant between Yahweh and Israel, when he received the celebration of the Passover on an unprecedented scale. At Hezekiah’s invitation, many Israelites from the northern kingdom also attended the Passover festivities. Hezekiah is also celebrated for building a reservoir and tunnel to supply fresh water to within the city.
walls of Jerusalem. All of these events are recorded in II Kings 20:20 and in II Chronicles 32:30. Hezekiah’s son, Mannaseh, ruled as co-regent with his father during the last ten years of his father's reign until Hezekiah’s death, probably in about 685 BCE.

Idolatrous kings succeeded Hezekiah. They desecrated the temple and allowed it to fall into decay, until the time of Josiah more than three centuries after the temple at Jerusalem had been completed. The temple was then in need of extensive repairs, which could only be financed by contributions made by the worshippers. Josiah carried out an even more thorough reformation than Hezekiah had, including the destruction of all of the “high places” that had been used in idolatrous worship. He eliminated every vestige of heathen worship and once again reinstated the celebration of the Passover, at a level surpassing even that of Hezekiah. Josiah died in battle at Megiddo in about 609 BCE when Necho II, the king of Egypt, advanced through Palestine to assist the Assyrians at Harran. Despite the strongest of assurances that he had received to the contrary, Josiah thought that the Egyptians were a threat to his kingdom and therefore opposed Necho II. Finally in 587 BCE, during the reign of Zedekiah the last king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon looted the temple and sacked Jerusalem. It is recorded, in II Kings 35:13, that the two great pillars of the temple were broken up and that the metal was carried off to Babylon. It is of interest to note that in Ezekiel's vision of the ideal temple, during his exile in Babylon, he intended to replace the two great pillars with wooden columns.

**A Universal Symbolism**

Pillars, or columns, have been symbolic objects used among all communities in all ages of recorded history. Sometimes they stand in solitary splendour, but often they are arranged in groups. Single pillars commonly serve as memorials, some of the most famous being the obelisks that were erected at the ancient temple complexes in Egypt. As memorials, individual pillars typify two of the fundamental symbolisms of a column or pillar, which are firstly as an emblem of the higher mind that is receptive of the spirit of truth and love and secondly as an emblem of the perfected soul. The latter symbolism especially is reflected in Revelations 3:12, the *New English Bible* version of which tells us:

> “He who is victorious – I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; he shall never leave it. And I will write the name of my God upon him, . . .”

As the two great pillars of the temple at Jerusalem have already been discussed in some detail, it only needs to be mentioned that twin pillars suggest stability and imply strength. Groups of three pillars suggest cooperation and imply perfection, typified by two harmonizing trios of *Wisdom, Strength* and *Beauty* together with *Faith, Hope* and *Charity*. Four-pillar groups suggest completeness and imply fulfilment, of which the “four pillars of the kingdom of heaven” are typical. They represent four symbolic states that are the foundation for human aspiration towards spiritual being. Those four states are *earth*, a symbol of the physical state, coupled with *water*, a symbol of the intermediate plane of nature that connects the physical state with the mental plane, coupled with *air*, a symbol of the mental plane and also *fire*, a symbol of the fount of spiritual life.
CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX – GEOMETRY AND THE SACRED SYMBOL

Geometry and freemasonry are synonymous and the sacred symbol is an emblem of the Deity whom freemasonry serves.

The Traditional Relationship

The blazing star is a symbol of the greatest antiquity, which was used in the ancient mysteries and probably before them. In freemasonry the sacred symbol has always been closely associated with geometry and also the blazing star, which is also called the glory in the centre. Down through the centuries many different symbolisms have been assigned to the blazing star, most frequently relating to attributes of the deity. It is not known when the blazing star was first used as a masonic symbol, but in speculative freemasonry in England its use was firmly established when it appeared on a primitive tracing board prepared for the instruction of Entered Apprentices very early in the 1700s. The blazing star was included in the furniture of the lodge in the Grand Lodge Instructions of 1735. Nowadays it is usually called an ornament of the lodge and is said to represent the sun, which illuminates the earth and thus dispenses its blessings to mankind. The Reverend Dr. George Oliver (1782-1867) wrote a monumental work entitled Historical Landmarks and other Evidences of Freemasonry Explained. As a renowned antiquary and masonic writer, Dr Oliver said that the blazing star represents beauty and he called it “the glory in the centre”. From the earliest days of speculative freemasonry it has been customary, though not universally so, to include a pentacle or pentagram within the blazing star. Originally the pentagram included the letter G at its centre as a symbol of God.

In the Old Constitutions, under which the operative freemasons worked in medieval England, geometry held the pre-eminent position among the arts and sciences and was considered to be synonymous with freemasonry. The Halliwell or Regius MS is the oldest known copy of the Old Constitutions, but it is believed to be a copy of a much earlier document. When the Regius MS was found it was thought that it had been transcribed in about 1390, but it is now regarded as dating from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, preceding the Cooke MS by about fifty years. The Cooke MS was the oldest document available for reference by the Reverend Dr. James Anderson when he compiled the first and second editions of the Constitutions for the first Grand Lodge of England in 1723 and 1738. The older and more comprehensive Regius MS comprises some sixty-four pages of verse written on a finer kind of parchment called vellum. An eminent masonic historian, Robert Freke Gould, suggested the document should be named the Regius MS because of its historical importance, also having regard to the fact that it was in the Royal Library commenced by Henry VII and presented to the British Museum by George II. The Regius MS sets out “the Constitutions of the art of geometry according to Euclid”, using geometry and masonry interchangeably throughout.
In speculative craft freemasonry under the English jurisdiction, the earliest known version of the Fellow Craft’s Degree is a copy printed in 1730. In this version the catechisms include a question to the candidate asking why he was made a Fellow Craft, to which he replied: “For the sake of the letter G, which means geometry or the fifth science”. Then, with respect to receiving his wages in the middle chamber, the candidate was told that he would see “a resemblance of the letter G, which denotes the Grand Architect and Contriver of the Universe”. This theme is continued in a later catechism printed in 1766 in which the candidate, when asked why he was made a Fellow Craft, replied: “For the sake of the letter G, which is enclosed in a Great Light (the Blazing Star)”. When asked to explain this, the candidate replied: “Glory for God, Grandeur for the Master of the Lodge and Geometry for the Brothers”. In Hebrew the letter G is called Gheé-mel meaning a camel. It is interesting to note that Gheé-mel is considered to be a corruption of the letter Yod, which is the initial letter of Jehovah, represented by the Tetragrammaton, which to the Hebrews is the most sacred name of God. The Yod is also the symbol by which the Tetragrammaton is represented in the Cabala, the mystical philosophy of the Jews.

**The Tetragrammaton**

In modern rituals of the English speaking fraternity, the second tracing board informs us that when the craftsman entered the middle chamber to receive his wages, his attention was especially arrested by certain Hebrew characters now depicted in a Fellowcraft lodge by the letter G, which denotes God the Grand Geometrician of the Universe. The characters referred to are the four that comprise the Tetragrammaton, a name derived from the Greek words tetra, meaning four and gramma, meaning letter. The equivalent Hebrew name is the Shem Hamphorasch, meaning the Separated Name. Reading from right to left in Hebrew the four characters of the Shem Hamphorasch are Yod He Waw He, which is also known as the Ineffable or Unpronounceable Name. It is called the Ineffable Name because it represents God who cannot be described in human terms and therefore is beyond human expression. It was the name of God that the Israelites in ancient times were forbidden to utter, for which traditionally they always substituted another word, such as Adonai meaning Lord. An eminent Jewish rabbi, philosopher and commentator and the foremost figure of medieval Judaism was Moses ben Maimon (1135-1204), who is usually referred to as Maimonides. In the Guide to the Perplexed, which probably was his greatest work, Maimonides said that all the names of God are derived from God’s works except the Shem Hamphorasch, which alone indicates the substance that is the self-existent essence of God, thereby expressing that which is altogether within Himself and completely separate from His works and His other attributes.

In the Ineffable Name the character Waw, which is also called Vau, may be pronounced either as a W or as a V according to the structure of the word. The four Hebrew characters of the Ineffable Name are variously transcribed as YHWH or JHVH in English. The original pronunciation is uncertain because the ancient Hebrew text was not vocalised, but modern research of inscriptions dating from the second and first millennia BCE indicate that it should be pronounced as Yahweh, which is supported by the early Christian
literature. The Greek theologian, Clement of Alexandria (150-c.215), transliterated the word into Greek as *iaoue*. However, by the fourth century CE the Greek *beta* was pronounced as a *V* and the *Ineffable Name* was transliterated as *iabe*. In fact, *Yahweh* is the only real name of God that appears in the Hebrew Scriptures. The name *Yahweh* is derived from the Hebrew verb *havah* meaning *to be*, which is spelt *He Yod He*. It also is closely associated with the Hebrew verb *chavah* meaning *to live*, which is spelt *Heth Yod He*. The innermost substance of the Shem Hamphorasch was revealed at the burning bush when Moses asked God what he should say to the children of Israel when they asked who sent him to lead them out of Egypt. When God told Moses to say that “the God of their forefathers had sent him” he asked God, in Exodus 3:13-14, what he should reply when the Israelites ask him who is God. God tells Moses that he should say “‘ehyey ‘asher ‘ehyeh”, meaning “I AM; that is who I am”, which may also be translated as “I will be what I will be”. In this sentence *I AM* is expressed by the Hebrew word *‘ehyeh* spelt *Aleph He Yod He*, another important four letter Hebrew name of God transliterated as *AHIH* in English.

The Tetragrammaton is commonly represented by the letters *JHVH* in English, which is spelt *Jehovah* and is usually transcribed as *Lord* in the Bible. In the Cabala, the characters of the Tetragrammaton are transposed and subdivided into two component pronouns. The first pronoun comprises the characters *He Vau*, the Hebrew word *Ho* meaning “He” in English. The second pronoun comprises the characters *He Yod*, the Hebrew word *Hi* meaning “She” in English. Thus, according to the Cabala, the Tetragrammaton mysteriously represents the twofold sex of the Creator, which is expressed in the passage in Genesis 1:27 which says:

“So God created man in his own image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”.

Albert Gallatin Mackey (1807-1881) was one of the most erudite of the masonic historians. He drew attention to a remarkable coincidence with respect to the initial consonants of the three Hebrew words that mean Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, the three great pillars of freemasonry. Taken in their reverse order the first pillar is Gomer meaning Beauty, which is spelt *Gheé-mel Mem Resh* in Hebrew. The second pillar is Oz meaning Strength, which is spelt *Ayin Zayin* and the third pillar is Dabar meaning Wisdom, which is spelt Daleth Beth Resh. Thus Gomer, Oz and Dabar, the initial consonants of the Hebrew words for Beauty, Strength and Wisdom, transliterate as *GOD* in English.

**Substitutes For The Tetragrammaton**

The importance of the *Yod*, the initial letter of the Tetragrammaton, has already been noted in relation to the Cabala, the mystical philosophy of the Jews. It was of equal importance in the Talmud, the fundamental codes of the Jewish civil and canon law, respectively the Mishna and the Gemara. The *Yod* was peculiarly sacred among the Talmudists, who saw in it the inaccessible light of the deity that they considered to be of boundless efficacy. The *Yod*, inscribed within an equilateral triangle, has been the symbol
of the deity from time immemorial. If a circle of rays surrounds an equilateral triangle with a Yod at its centre, it is called a Glory and is emblematic of God’s eternal glory. When the rays of the Glory emanate from the Yod at the centre of the triangle, thus enshrouding the Yod in their brilliancy, it is a symbol of the Divine Light. The Yod and the gallows square are very similar in shape. The gallows square was one of the original forms of the Hebrew character Gheé-mel and also of the Greek letter Gamma, both of which correspond to the letter G in the Roman and English alphabets.

Gheé-mel has the numerical value of three, which alludes to the triune essence of the deity. Gheé-mel is also associated with the third sacred name of God in Hebrew, which is Ghandol and means “the Mighty”. In the ecclesiastical script used in medieval Europe, the capital letter G was represented by an upright gallows square having arms in the ratio of three to four. The gallows square is also shown embroidered on the vestments of the disciples as they are depicted in medieval paintings. Some eminent masonic researchers believe that the medieval operative lodges probably emulated the Jewish custom of using a character, such as the Yod, to represent the Tetragrammaton and to express the presence of God. In this context researchers have suggested that the gallows square would have been used instead of the Yod within an equilateral triangle, firstly to represent God, but also to express that pre-eminent characteristic of masonry, which is geometry, thereby concealing the symbolism in greater mystery. Moreover, as this would have kept the square in constant view of all the brethren and fellows, it would also have been a forcible reminder to them that the square is one of the most important of the moral emblems of the craft.

A close study of most tracing boards of the Fellowcraft or second degree will reveal that four Hebrew characters, usually surrounded by a Glory, are depicted in the dormer above the screened entrance to the Holy of Holies, representing the Tetragrammaton. Thus, although the letter G nowadays is usually used to represent the Tetragrammaton in a lodge room, the Tetragrammaton is still depicted on the tracing board of a Fellowcraft. In Scottish lodges, the tracing board of a Fellowcraft usually incorporates another composite symbol, which complements the Tetragrammaton above the entrance to the Holy of Holies. It comprises two interlaced equilateral triangles, called the Seal of Solomon or the Shield of David, in the centre of which is a letter G. This composite symbol is usually surrounded by a “Glory” and is depicted near the upper edge of the tracing board. It is equivalent to the blazing star, or glory in the centre, which was suspended from the ceiling in early English speculative lodges, but later was replaced by the letter G alone. The composite symbol highlights the operative origins of speculative craft freemasonry in Scotland.

The original form of the blazing star, including the letter G, was discontinued in England after the Antient and Modern Grand Lodges united in 1813. Since the amalgamation the blazing star, or glory in the centre, is no longer referred to in English freemasonry as a symbol of the deity, but is said to represent the sun. Nevertheless, even nowadays when it is suspended from the ceiling over the centre of the mosaic pavement, the letter G is called the Sacred Symbol and is described as representing God, the Grand Geometrician of the Universe. The centre of the mosaic pavement is where the blazing star should be depicted, when it usually includes a pentacle or pentagram. In Scottish lodges the pedestal, with the
three great lights placed thereon, are located in the centre of the mosaic pavement immediately under the letter G. This symbolises that all knowledge, goodness and light that is contained in the Volume of the Sacred Law and comprehended by the square and compasses, is derived directly from God.

**The Pentagram**

The **pentagram** is an open five-pointed star formed by drawing a continuous series of interlaced straight lines, commencing from any one of five equally spaced points on a circle, then proceeding in a clockwise direction to every second point until returning to the original point. These five straight lines thus form an endless knot in the shape of a five-pointed star that includes a **pentagon** in the centre. **Pentagram** is derived from the Greek words *pente* or *penta* and *gramma*, which mean *five* and *letter* respectively. Because the star looks like a Greek *alpha* or capital letter A that has been interlaced cyclically five times, with one leg from each of the two As with their apexes at adjacent points on one side of the circle meeting and forming the apex of another A on the opposite side of the circle, it is also known as a *pentalpha*. The **pentagram** is also called a **pentacle**, from the Latin word *pentaculum* meaning *five angles*, which is analogous to the Old French word *pentacol* from *pendre* meaning *to hang* and *col* meaning the *neck*. The **pentagon** is a plane rectilinear figure having five equal sides and five equal included angles, from the Greek word *pentagonon* in which *gonon* is a derivative of *gonia* meaning an *angle*. In ancient times the **pentacle**, the **pentagon** and other similar figures were all worn as amulets.

The **pentacle** is said to have been the star of the Magians and five was a sacred number among the early Hebrews. The doctrine of numbers as symbols was fundamental to the philosophy of the Pythagoreans, who regarded five as a mystical number. Pythagoras (c.580-500 BCE) was a Greek mathematician and philosopher, who believed in immortality and the transmigration of the soul. He adopted the pentagram as the symbol of the school he established at Crotona, in southern Italy. The pentagram is an ancient symbol of the embodiment of the five sacred elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether or light; and also of the five senses of sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Because of the many virtues attributed to the pentagram down through the ages, it has been given many titles including the “Sacred Pentagram”, the “Pentacle of Solomon” and the “Pentalpha of Pythagoras”. Medieval operative free masons regarded the pentagram as a symbol of deep wisdom, in deference to Pythagoras whom they called their “ancient friend and brother”.

The **pentagram** was used as an architectural ornament in most of the ecclesiastical buildings constructed by the operative free masons during the Middle Ages. When first used in speculative craft lodges, the **pentagram** was adopted as a **talisman** and also to represent the **morning star**. Originally the pentagram had a gallows square in the centre, later replaced by the letter G. The “Antients” adopted the **pentagram** as their emblem of the Royal Arch, which is preserved in the jewel of an Excellent Master. In European lodges the pentagram is commonly used as the Master Mason’s jewel, confirming the close link between the degrees of Royal Arch and Master Mason.
From the dawn of history the **pentagram** has been a mystical symbol credited with magical virtues. The **pentagram** was used throughout the East as a defence against evil spirits and the Druids wore it on their sandals as a symbol of the deity. During the Middle Ages, in Europe and also in Britain, the **pentagram** was worn as an amulet or charm hung around the neck or attached to the clothing to ward off evil. It was also used as a door mark to keep out witches. The symbolic use of letters in the scriptures is typified in Isaiah 44:6, in which the Lord states that “I am the first and I am the last”. The symbolism is amplified and extended in Revelation 22:13, when the Lord God also states that “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last”. The description of the **pentagram** as a **pentalpha**, which is a series of five As interlaced, is of special significance. Most modern alphabets are descended either directly or indirectly from the pictographs that were used in Palestine at four thousand years ago or earlier. The Phoenicians were the first to formalise those pictographs as an alphabetical script, which were adapted by the Greeks and modified by the Romans, from which the modern English alphabet was derived directly.

In most languages **A** is the first letter of the alphabet. In the English, Roman and Greek alphabets the capital letter **A** is almost identical with the first character of the Canaanite pseudo-hieroglyphic script, which was in use by about 2000 BCE. The first character in the Canaanite script represented an “ox”, like the Egyptian hieroglyph that preceded it, although the two characters were quite different. The first character in the Hebrew alphabet is **Aleph**, which also represents an “ox”, but its resemblance to “the head of an ox” is much cruder than its Egyptian predecessor. When used as a word in Hebrew, the letter **A** originally meant with or together and also signified “the beginning”, from which was derived its associated connotation of “unity” or “one”. Because the Hebrew characters do not include numerals, numbers are represented by characters, in which respect **Aleph** signifies one. The Hebrew character **Aleph** is comprised of a **Waw** or **Vau** that is inclined from the upper left to the lower right, together with two **Yods**, one at the upper right corner of the character and the other is at the lower left corner. This combination of the Hebrew characters used to form **Aleph** is said to typify the “Trinity in Unity”, the “hook” of the **Vau** uniting the **Yods** of the deity, on which account the **Aleph** is regarded as one of the sacred Hebrew characters.

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**Geometry, Pythagoras, Euclid And Plutarch**

The traditional history of the craft of freemasonry, set out in the *Old Charges* of the medieval operative free masons, says that Nimrod the King of Babylon was a Master Mason who loved the craft well and that masons were first made much of at the building of the Tower of Babel, called a **ziggurat**. A **ziggurat** typically comprised a series of platforms of diminishing area, commonly five in number, each of which was from about 5 metres to 20 metres in height. Babel was one of the chief cities built by Nimrod in the land of Shinar, or Sumer, in Babylonia. Nimrod was a son of Cush, referred to in Genesis 10:8-13. Archaeological investigations reveal that in fact the tower was built of burnt bricks jointed with bitumen, as recorded in Genesis 11:2-9. It is not known when the tower was first constructed, but it had been restored at the behest of Marduk in ancient times, many
centuries before Sargon destroyed it by about 2350 BCE. Tradition also says that Nimrod sent sixty lodges of freemasons to build Nineveh on a site that has been occupied since about 4500 BCE.

When Imhotep, the royal architect of Egypt, designed the Step Pyramid he built at Saqqara for the Pharaoh Zoser in about 2650 BCE, he was the forerunner of a new era of geometry. The Step Pyramid is reputed to be the first great stone edifice built by man, so that Imhotep is usually credited with the invention of stone masonry, which thereafter replaced the mud bricks previously used to construct important buildings. Zoser’s pyramid was erected in six unequal stages over a traditional mastaba tomb constructed of mud brick. The Step Pyramid reached a height of 62 metres and was completely encased in dressed limestone. The Egyptians also credit Imhotep with establishing the science of medicine, even though his official title was Chief of the Observers, suggesting that astronomy must also have been one of Imhotep’s many capabilities. The famous Bent Pyramid of Dashour, built by Sneferu in about 2550 BCE, is about eight kilometres south of Saqqara. The northern or Red Pyramid at Dashour, which is also reputed to have been built by Sneferu, is considered to be the earliest known tomb that was designed as a true pyramid with uniformly sloping sides.

Abraham is known as the ancestor of the Hebrew people. He was born in about 2160 BCE in a city called Ur of the Chaldees, on the Euphrates River in Sumeria. When Abraham was about 75 years old he travelled to Haran, about 900 kilometres to the north on the Balih River, from whence he journeyed south into Canaan and thence westwards into Egypt. Abraham is reputed to have communicated to the Egyptians some knowledge of the more advanced Babylonian geometry. From about that time, the Egyptians were using a triangle with sides three, four and five units long as a square to set out a right angle. Pythagoras was born on the Greek island of Samos and travelled widely through Egypt, Chaldea and Asia Minor, where he solved many mathematical problems. Pythagoras is famous for the resolution of a right-angled triangle, known as Pythagoras’ Theorem, which is the foundation of the forty-seventh proposition of Euclid (c330-260 BCE), the distinguished Greek mathematician who was born in Alexandria. Euclid is best known for his systematic arrangement of previous discoveries, which he set out in the thirteen books that comprised his Stoicheia or Elements, nine of which dealt with plane and solid geometry using definitions, axioms and theorems.

In Egypt and India the number five was revered as a reminder of the five human senses and also of the five elements or manifested planes of nature, which were considered to be sacred. The five human senses are hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting and smelling. The five sacred elements are earth, water, air, fire and ether or light, which respectively represent the physical, astral, mental, buddhic and atmic planes of nature. The ancient beliefs concerning the five sacred elements are summarised by the renowned Greek biographer, Plutarch (c.46-120), in the following passage from his work entitled Morals:

“The world may in a certain sense be considered as composed and compacted out of five other worlds; for example, the one is of earth, the other of water, the third
of fire, the fourth of air and the fifth element some call heaven, some light and others ether.”

Some eminent authorities have drawn attention to the intimate relationship that exists between the Royal Arch and the inner workings of the Installed Master’s ceremonial, deriving from the ancient ceremonies practised in the lodges of operative free masons. In this respect there also are connections between the Installed Master’s ceremonial and the degree of Most Excellent Master. The recognisable components of the Royal Arch work that are included in the installation ceremonials in some jurisdictions of speculative craft freemasonry, receive even greater emphasis in the ceremonials of the Royal Order of Scotland. The pentagram is a component of the jewel of the Deputy Grand Master in the Grand Lodge of England and of some other Grand Lodges that have an English heritage. The pentagram is also a central feature in the jewels of the Provincial and District Grand Masters and the Grand Superintendents in the English and Scottish jurisdictions. In several jurisdictions the pentagram is used as the basic element of the Past Master’s jewel.
CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN – THE NUMBER FIVE IN SYMBOLISM

From ancient times the five physical elements have represented the five active planes of life.

Eastern Precedents

Most nations in antiquity considered five to be a mystical number. This belief seems to have been prevalent long before the advent of writing, so that the original reasons for its existence are not known. One of the earliest written references to five appears in the ancient Hindu scriptures, which were written in Sanskrit from the Vedas onwards. Sanskrit is the oldest known branch of the Indo-European family of languages and is the sacred language of India. Hindu is a Persian word derived from the Sanskrit *sindhu* meaning a river, especially the Indus River. A fundamental aspect of Hinduism is known as *sanatana dharma*, Sanskrit words respectively meaning eternal and law, which refer to the absolute and eternal nature of God. The Upanishads are the divisions of Vedic literature that set out the philosophical and metaphysical treatises of Hinduism. In the Svetasvatara Upanishad, VI. 2, is a fundamental declaration that God created the universe from the Ultimate Reality of Himself, given in the following words:

“It is God’s command that this work (that is the creation) unfolds itself, which is called earth, water, fire, air and ether.”

From ancient times five planes of activity have been recognised in our present cycle of life, from the outermost or physical plane to the innermost or spiritual plane. When the two higher planes of our future existence are added, called the latent planes, the material nature of the universe is represented by seven planes. The five planes of activity in our present cycle of life are represented by five physical elements, which are earth, water, fire, air and ether. We can discern these five physical elements with our five senses, which are sight, sound, touch, taste and smell. Of these five elements earth represents the physical plane, which is basic to our present cycle of life. Water represents the subconscious plane that is between the physical and mental planes, reacting with each of them. Fire represents the emotional plane, which is the seat of desire and passion and energises the subconscious plane. Air represents the mental plane and ether represents the plane of light, or heaven. The two latent planes of our future spiritual existence relate to the human soul and its spirit. The reaction of the latent planes to the Voice of God and the immanence of the Divine Reality is reflected in Revelations 3:20-21 of the New English Bible:

“Here I stand knocking at the door; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him and he with me. To him who is victorious I will grant a place on my throne . . . .”
Buddhism is an offspring of Hinduism that originated in India about 600 years before the birth of Christ. Buddha is not a name, but a title that was especially applied to Siddhartha Gautama, who founded the religion after he had achieved enlightenment for himself. Buddha signifies the “Enlightened One”, or the “Awakened One”. In Buddhist scriptures the words that traditionally were spoken by Buddha are called Sutras, the Sanskrit word *sutra* meaning a thread, which in the course of time also came to mean a rule. The Hindu beliefs that relate to the five elements are also important tenets of Buddhism, in relation to which one of the Sutras says:

> *Know that when in the beginning all was perfect void and the five elements were not, then Adi-Buddha, the stainless, was revealed in the form of Flame and Light*.

Sikhism is another offspring of Hinduism, which was founded in northern India by the Guru Nanak (1469-1539). Nanak taught a strict and unambiguous form of monotheism and he endeavoured to harmonise the Sufi traditions of Islam with the Bhakti traditions of Hinduism. Both of these traditions are based on a close, direct and personal experience of God, which is very similar in nature to the ideology of protestant Christianity. The five elements of the Hindus and the Buddhists are also referred to in the Adi-Granth, the sacred book of the Sikhs, in which it is written that:

> *God pervadeth the five elements, the three worlds, the nine regions and the four quarters of the universe. The Almighty supporteth the earth and the heavens*.

In this context the three worlds relate to the body, the mind and the spirit, whilst the nine regions relate to the emotional, subconscious and mental planes that play an active role in each of those worlds.

From ancient times the Chinese sages also maintained that there are five original elements. Arranged in the sequence in which the sages said that they came into existence, which is in their descending order of importance, those elements are water, fire, wood, metal and earth. Although there is no simple definition of the meanings and interactions of these five elements, they may be explained by saying that water represents the spiritual plane, fire represents the emotional plane, wood represents the intellectual plane, metal represents the mental plane and earth represents the physical plane. Earth was envisaged as being at the centre of a circle formed by the other four elements, which was intended to indicate that the physical existence is only a temporary centre for the soul on its journey towards the eternal light of heaven.

An interesting corollary to this perception of the five elements is the belief that the Yang and the Yin, which are the male and female components of spirit and matter, contain the five elements in embryonic form. Also that, from the time when the Yang and the Yin were united and the five elements were intermingled in the centre of the universe, moisture and heat operated on each other and produced an intelligent being. Another corollary to the interaction of the five elements is an ancient Taoist philosophy, which seeks to explain the
eternal cycle of creation, destruction and resurrection. It teaches that earth generates metal and overcomes water; that metal generates water and overcomes wood; that water generates wood and overcomes fire; and that wood generates fire and overcomes earth.

**Egyptian Precedents**

Although the images associated with the iconography of Egypt’s ancient religion are often grotesque or demoniac and seem to have been used to represent countless gods and goddesses, nevertheless the fundamental beliefs were monotheistic. In fact the ancient religion was one of profound hope, coupled with a belief in the resurrection of the soul to an eternal life. The cosmogony of ancient Egypt and the beliefs concerning death and resurrection are closely interwoven in processes that involve five distinct elements. The first element concerned the beginning of creation and was a belief that, before time began, **Ra was the Absolute Spirit or Light and Conscience** of the universe diffused in the primordial **Chaos**. It was believed that the second element came into existence at the beginning of time, when **Ra** became aware of himself in the **Great Silence** and called up his own image, **Amon**, to be the spirit of the universe. This call was the **Word or creative power** that activated the third element and resulted in the materialisation of **Shu** and **Tefnut**, which respectively were **space-air and movement-fire**. They in turn generated and separated the earth **Geb** from the sky **Nut**, thus ending **Chaos** and establishing equilibrium in the universe. The fourth element was the introduction of the fertilising force of **Osiris** and the procreative power of **Isis** as a life bearing couple, which established and nourished terrestrial and celestial life. The fifth and final element of creation was the introduction of the forces of evil in the form of **Seth** and **Nephthys**, who were a destroying couple. Nevertheless, the destroying couple were destined forever to succumb to the life bearing couple, thereby inducing eternal rebirth.

The various passages and chambers in the Great Pyramid of Khufu illustrate the five elements in the ancient Egyptian beliefs concerning death and resurrection. As there are no hieroglyphic inscriptions in this pyramid that are equivalent to the **Pyramid Texts** of Unas, we cannot be sure that its passages and chambers were intended only to be used during the burial of a pharaoh, or if they were also used in ceremomial rites similar to those of the **Eleusinian Mysteries**. It seems most likely that their intended use was for both of those rites of passage. The materials and colours used in constructing the passages and chambers of the Great Pyramid of Khufu are of special significance. The first element of the rite of passage would have taken place in the subterranean compartment called the **Chamber of Ordeal**, which could be regarded as a counterpart of the dark pit of nothingness that is the Jewish **Sheol**, or the Roman Catholic **Purgatory** where it is believed that souls after death are purified from unforgiven venial sins. The **Chamber of Ordeal** is excavated some 25 metres deep in the bedrock under the pyramid and is accessed by a narrow, steeply descending passage.

The second element of the rite takes place in a **Grotto**, which also is excavated in the bedrock just under the base of the pyramid. It represents the **Well of Life** and is accessed by ascending a very steep shaft. All of these passages, shafts and chambers were left rough
and unadorned in the same state as they were excavated, symbolising the original and final states of human existence, which calls to mind the preacher’s words in Ecclesiastes 12:7, which say:

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

The third element of the rite takes place in a chamber of glistening white limestone, emblematic of truth and regeneration, which has been described as the Queen’s Chamber, but in reality it is the Chamber of Regeneration and Rebirth. The fourth element takes place in the Hall of Truth in Darkness, through which a soul reborn must pass in humility before its resurrection. This hall is called the Grand Gallery and is constructed of polished black granite, symbolic of the Inscrutable Source of all things. To the Egyptians darkness was the mystery of all mysteries. The setting of the fifth and final element of the rite is the highest chamber in the pyramid, constructed of polished red granite, emblematic of fire and purification. It is the Chamber of Resurrection, called the King’s Chamber.

**Classical Precedents**

Not long after Cyrus the Great had founded the Persian Empire, he defeated the King of Lydia in 545 BCE and annexed his extensive territories. As a result the neighbouring Greeks, living in the Ionian colonies of the eastern Aegean, came into contact with the Persians for the first time. From that time onwards the early Greek philosophers travelled widely throughout Egypt and the countries of the Near East. They studied, absorbed and disseminated the knowledge accumulated by the ancient civilisations of these regions, which profoundly influenced the development of modern concepts. The Persian influence dominated the political development of Greece and Asia Minor for more than two hundred years, until 331 BCE when Alexander the Great of Macedonia inflicted his third and final defeat of the Persian king, Darius III surnamed Codomannus, at Gaugamela also known as Arbela. During his flight Darius was treacherously slain by Artaterxes, one of his satraps. Alexander then occupied Persepolis, the capital of Persia. It was during this tumultuous period that the earliest of the Greek philosophers were born in Ionia. They learnt to make abstract generalisations and developed conceptual thinking into a practical and useful art.

Pythagoras was one of the most celebrated of those philosophers. He was born at Samos in about 582 BCE, more than a century before Socrates became eminent. Pythagoras was educated as an athlete, but he abandoned it as a profession and devoted himself to the study of philosophy, travelling widely throughout Egypt, Chaldea and Asia Minor. During his travels, Pythagoras is reputed to have undergone several initiations in his search for knowledge. In about 529 BCE Pythagoras settled in Crotona, a Greek colony in southern Italy, where he established a religious community. His celebrated institution was often referred to as the Italic School, which soon acquired so good a reputation that adherents flocked there from all parts of Greece and Italy. As the early Greek philosophers were living in the eastern Mediterranean, they had ready access to all the knowledge accumulated over many centuries by the Babylonian and Egyptian mathematicians and
astronomers. Some of them even studied under Egyptian teachers. Thus the early Greek philosophers were able to take full advantage of the considerable achievements of their counterparts in nearby countries.

Pythagoras and the other philosophers who preceded Socrates (c.460-399 BCE) were not as concerned as he was with the usual subjects of epistemology, ethics and morality, but concentrated their efforts on formulating rational laws for mathematics, the physical sciences and astronomy. Pythagoras’s system had a profound influence on the work of Plato and the later philosophers, astronomers and mathematicians. The originality of the philosophers who preceded Socrates is reflected in their attempts to arrange all the knowledge they had accumulated from Babylon and Egypt into universal theories, whilst at the same time formulating principles to integrate and explain all the facts on which their theories were based. Thales (c.624-545 BCE), who was born in Miletus, was the traditional founder of Greek philosophy, but he left no writings of his own. Several centuries later Plutarch (c.46-120 CE), the renowned Greek historian, biographer and philosopher who was born in Chaeroneia, said in his Biographies that it was a profound desire to formulate general principles which had led Thales to ask: “What is the basic substance of the universe?”.

Many theories were advanced concerning the nature of matter or being, but water, fire, air, earth and ether usually were named as the main elements. Some of the early philosophers declared that matter is always changing, whilst others maintained that it is static. Nevertheless it was Homer, the Greek epic poet who probably lived in the second half of the eighth century BCE and is renowned for writing the Iliad and the Odyssey, who is reputed to have been the first to divide the world into five portions. He said that Earth and Olympus are the two extremes, which respectively represent the physical and heavenly attributes of nature. Homer assigned three gods to the intervening portions, of which Hera signified fire and represented perception, Hermes signified air and represented the mind and Hades signified water and represented desire. In another of Plutarch’s well-known works, Morals, it is recorded that when addressing an assembly at Delphi he had referred to the five elements in the following terms:

“The world may in a certain sense be considered as composed and compacted out of five other worlds; for example, the one is of earth, the other of water, the third of fire, the fourth of air; the fifth element some call heaven, some light, others æther”.

Among the early Greek philosophers, two others also deserve special mention. The first was Leucippus, who was born at Miletus in about 490 BCE. He was the originator of atomic cosmology and the first to suggest that all matter is composed of atoms that are indivisible units. Democritus (c.460-370 BCE), who was born in Abdera, was the second. He adopted and developed Leucippus’s theory and proposed that all matter in the world consists of an infinite number of minute particles, the various combinations of which account for the different properties and qualities of matter.
Among the many other classical philosophers who established the foundations from which modern philosophy developed, three should be mentioned. Of them the first was Socrates (469-399 BCE), who was born in Athens and played a pivotal role in the development of Greek philosophy. Socrates was responsible for bringing about decisive changes in philosophical emphasis. His work ranged from speculation about the natural world and cosmology to a focus on ethics and conceptual analysis. The second was Plato (c.428-348 BCE), who probably was born in Athens. As a pupil of Socrates and later his close associate, Plato became one of the most important and influential philosophers of all time. The third was Aristotle (384-322 BCE), a Macedonian who was born in Stagira. He went to Athens as a pupil of Plato and later became a teacher at Plato’s academy. Aristotle wrote prodigiously and covered the whole field of knowledge at that time. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are revered as three of the greatest figures in Greek philosophy. They established principles that shaped the development of progressive thought for centuries after their own time. Their methods exerted a powerful influence on the conduct of transactions in later learned societies and the founders of modern speculative freemasonry also adopted their systems.

The Legacy Of Pythagoras

The schools established by Pythagoras at Cretona and elsewhere have been cited by many masonic scholars as the models on which speculative lodges of freemasonry were established. Whilst there is no doubt that Pythagoras’s schools provided a pattern that influenced the form of monastic institutions established during the first century of Christianity, no evidence has been found that proves a direct connection between the schools and freemasonry. Nevertheless, nearly all lodges of operative freemasons in Britain were intimately associated with monastic institutions, from when the first Christian church in England was established by Saint Joseph of Arimathea in 63 CE, reputedly at Glastonbury, then throughout the Middle Ages. It is to be expected, therefore, that lodges of operative freemasons would have assimilated by association the influence of the Pythagorean schools on the monastic institutions. Pythagoras adopted the mode of instruction practised by the Egyptian priests, also dividing his scholars into Exoterics and Esoterics as the Egyptians had done before him. The Exoteric scholars only attended public assemblies, where general ethical instruction was given, but the true school comprised only the Esoteric scholars, whom Pythagoras referred to as his “companions and friends”.

A candidate’s life and character were investigated rigorously before admission to the privileges of a Pythagorean school as an Esoteric scholar. If accepted the candidate was sworn to secrecy during an initiation ceremony and was required to submit to the severest trials of fortitude and self-discipline. The conduct, clothing and meals within the school were regulated with frugality and with the severity prevailing in the strictest monastic institutions. Pythagoras instructed his Esoteric scholars in the usual arts and sciences, as well as on his interior or hidden doctrines, which he explained by means of symbols. Within his system of instruction there were three degrees. The first degree was Mathematici, which covered the study of the exact sciences. The second degree was
Theoricti, which taught an understanding of God and theorised on the future state of man. The third or highest degree was only communicated to a select few who were intellectually capable of grasping the full meaning of the Pythagorean philosophy, which was based on the doctrine of numbers as symbols. Pythagoras had studied the doctrine of numbers in Egypt and the Near East, where numerical symbolism had prevailed from the earliest times in recorded history.

In Pythagorean symbolism the number one was set aside to represent the unity of the godhead, which was the most important secret imparted in the ancient mysteries. The number five was considered to be a mystical number, because it is the sum of the first even and first odd numbers except the one representing the godhead. The number five was regarded as a symbol of the opposites represented by the mixed conditions of order and disorder, happiness and misfortune, life and death. This combination of odd and even numbers also represented the union of the male and female elements and symbolised marriage. Among the Greeks the number five was a symbol of the world, said to represent the elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. Pythagoras used the pentagram to illustrate the symbolism of the number five, for which reason it is also called the Pentalpha of Pythagoras. In the classical era the pentagram was so revered that it also became known as the Sacred Pentagram.

The Pentagram

The pentagram is an open five pointed star formed by drawing a continuous series of interlaced straight lines. Commencing from any one of five points equally spaced on the circumference of a circle, the line proceeds in a clockwise direction to every second point on the circle until returning to the first point. The interlaced legs of the pentagram thus also form a pentagon in the centre of the star. Pentalpha is derived from the Greek words pente and alpha meaning five and the letter A. This is because the figure has the appearance of five letters A interlaced cyclically, so that the two legs of an A with its apex at one point on the circumscribing circle are coincident with one leg from each of two As that have their apexes at two points on the opposite side of the circle. Pentagram and pentagon are also derived from the Greek using the words gramma and gonia, respectively meaning letter and angle. Pentacle comes from the Latin word pentaculum, which means to hang. The Latin word is descended from the Greek pentakt, a compound word derived from pente and aktis, respectively meaning five and rays. The Pythagoreans called the sacred symbol a pentacle, by which name it frequently appears in Hermetic formulae. The sacred symbol in the form of a pentagram is also called the Pentacle of Solomon, which differs from and must not be confused with the Seal of Solomon. The Seal of Solomon comprises two open equilateral triangles interlaced to produce an open six-pointed star, which is also called the Shield of David.

From the dawn of history the pentagram has been used throughout the East as a talisman or amulet to charm away evil spirits. It is also said to have been the star of the Magians, the ancient Persian priests referred to in the scriptures as the “Wise Men of the East” who followed the star to Bethlehem. The Druids, or holy men of the Celts, are reputed to have
worn the pentagram on their sandals as a symbol of the Deity. In German the symbol is called a drutenfuss, which originally meant Druid’s foot, but has become corrupted to mean witch’s foot. In the Middle Ages the symbol was used as a door mark to keep out witches. In medieval times the operative freemasons regarded the pentagram as a symbol of deep wisdom, in deference to Pythagoras their “ancient friend and brother”. The pentagram was used as an ornament in the decoration of most ecclesiastical buildings erected during the Middle Ages. The pentagram was also used in early lodges of speculative freemasons as a Talisman representing the Morning Star, suspended from the ceiling in the centre of the building, directly over a point within a circle marked on the floor. In those days the name of the one true God in Hebrew, the Tetragrammaton, was depicted in the centre of the Talisman.

Nowadays, in lodges of speculative freemasonry held under most constitutions, the letter G has replaced the Talisman and is called the Sacred Symbol, which in many rituals is referred to during the closing of the Second Degree. It is also mentioned in most lectures on the tracing board of the Second Degree, which say that it was drawn to the attention of every Fellowcraft when entering the middle chamber to receive his wages. The pentagram also alludes to the trials and tribulations that must be overcome, with the help of God, when ascending the winding staircase of this earthly life. Finally, the pentagram should remind us of the five points of fellowship derived from the customs of operative freemasons, which every Master Mason should practise throughout his mortal life.

In ancient times, when the centre of a sacred building had been established on the site, the orientation of the building was determined, the diagonals were laid out and the corners were fixed on the ground. After a sacrificial offering had been made at the centre of the building site, a centre stone was bedded down to signify the foundation of the building and then the centre point was struck. Sacrificial offerings were then made in succession at the four corners of the building, commencing at the northeast, after each of which a corner stone was bedded down. In operative lodges and in modern lodges of speculative craft freemasons working under the Scottish and many other constitutions, the candidate is obligated in the centre of the mosaic pavement, representing the foundation stone of the spiritual structure he is beginning to erect. He is then at the centre of the five points of fellowship, the other four points being the four corner stones which, in modern lodges of speculative freemasons, are usually represented by squares or tassels at the four corners of the mosaic pavement.

**Euclid’s Forty-Seventh Proposition**

When Pythagoras visited the valley of the Nile River, he learned that for thousands of years the Egyptians had utilised a triangle in the ratios 3:4:5 to produce a right angle, which they put to practical use when constructing the many pyramids, temples and other stately edifices for which they are famous. The Egyptians held the right-angled triangle, with sides in the proportions 3:4:5, in the highest regard and called it the “triangle of the Deity”. It was their symbol of eternal nature, wherein the female principal Isis was represented by the side of three units, the male principal Osiris was represented by the side
of four units and their offspring *Horus* was represented by the hypotenuse of five units, which signified the Deity’s procreative attributes. This symbolism is very significant, because three, four and five are all regarded as sacred numbers. Among the ancients three was one of the most sacred numbers and frequently used in relation to the Deity. Four is the tetrad or quaternary of the Pythagoreans, who called it a perfect number. The name of the Deity frequently consists of four letters, like Adad of the Assyrians, Amon of the Egyptians, Oeos of the Greeks, Deus of the Romans and the Tetragrammaton of the Hebrews.

Pythagoras especially appreciated the Egyptian symbolism of universal nature, because it was his doctrine that all things proceeded from numbers. It was Pythagoras who first produced a mathematical proof that the sum of the squares of the base and the perpendicular of a right angled triangle equals the square of the hypotenuse, thus formulating the universal solution that later became the theorem proved by Euclid in his forty-seventh proposition. Pythagoras adopted the diagram of the forty-seventh proposition as a symbol of his school, in addition to the sacred pentagram, which he had used for that purpose from a very early date. Pythagoras taught the mystical power of numbers in conjunction with metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, which were principal doctrines of his philosophy.

Pythagoras also was proficient in music and he is said to have invented a number of musical instruments, as well as having demonstrated the mathematical relationships of musical intervals. When the Reverend Dr James Anderson wrote the Constitutions for the original Grand Lodge of England in 1723, he included in the frontispiece a diagram of Euclid’s forty-seventh proposition, with the Greek word Eureka below it. *Eureka* signifies “I have found it!” Dr Anderson mistakenly thought that Pythagoras had exclaimed *Eureka* when he solved the forty-seventh proposition, but reliable sources attribute it to Archimedes, another Greek mathematician born in Syracuse about 287 BCE, when he discovered how to test the amount of alloy in a gold crown.

**Other Mystical Aspects**

Another aspect of the masonic symbolism of five that receives little or no explanation, except in some of the Scottish tracing boards, relates to the middle section of the winding stair that represents the journey of life. The winding stair has fifteen steps in sections of three, five and seven steps. The five steps of the middle section relate to the physical aspects of life. In one sense they symbolise the five states of matter in our environment, which are earth, water, fire, air and ether or light. In a complementary sense they symbolise the five human senses whereby the environment can be comprehended and appreciated, which are touching, tasting, smelling hearing and seeing. The number ten was a mystical symbol in ancient times, which numerologists considered to be the source of all things, being twice the value of five and equal to the sum of the first two even and first two odd numbers. Ten and one were both used to signify the godhead.
The number ten was represented symbolically by the *Tetractys* of Pythagoras, an equilateral triangle composed of ten dots arranged in four rows, with one dot at the apex, then two, then three and then four dots forming the base. The *Tetractys* was the equivalent of another ancient symbol of the deity, the *Yod* in the centre of an equilateral triangle. The Talmudists considered the *Yod* to be extraordinarily sacred, because in Hebrew it has a numerical value of *ten* and also is the initial letter of the *Tetragrammaton*, the *Ineffable Name* that is spelt *Yod He Waw He*. The character *Waw* is also called *Vau* and may be pronounced either as a *W* or as a *V*, according to the structure of the word. These four Hebrew characters are variously transcribed in English as *YHWH* and *JHVH*, which respectively are translated as *Yahweh* and *Jehovah*. 
CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT – THE SYMBOLISM OF SEVEN AND OTHER MYSTICAL NUMBERS

In all ages and by all peoples the number seven has been regarded as a symbol of perfection.

Mystical Or Sacred Numbers

The word *mystical* comes from the Greek adjective *mustikos*, which is derived from the noun *mustes*, which literally means close-mouthed. The noun is closely associated with the verb *muo*, which literally translates as “I shut my mouth and close my eyes” and hence signifies secrecy. In ancient times *mustes* was the word used to denote an initiate into a religious sect. The Greek word *mukos* and the Sanskrit word *mukas* are associated words that both mean dumb, whence the English word *mute* was derived through the Latin word *mutus*. In its original usage the word *mystical* was applied to any language, symbol or ritual that was only understood by those who had been initiated into sacred rites by the priesthood. The early philosophers adopted the word *mystical*, using it to designate the inner or esoteric doctrines of their schools. The symbolism derived from numbers probably is the oldest and most widely diffused of all arcane methods used to communicate profound concepts. A belief in the power of numbers, sometimes for good and sometimes for evil, was the foundation of many superstitions. Numbers are used symbolically in nearly all religions and references abound in the sacred writings. The doctrine of numbers was fundamental to the philosophy of Pythagoras. He was born at Samos in about 582 BCE and studied extensively in Egypt and the Near East, where numerical symbolism had long prevailed, from whence he brought the theories that were the basis of the system he taught in the school he established at Crotona in Italy.

The eminent American masonic author, Dr Albert G Mackey, was one of the most erudite scholars, renowned for the extent of his research. Of the many books he wrote, his *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* is still regarded as a standard reference work, almost a century after it was first published. He summarised the universal interest in numbers and their relevance to freemasonry in the following words:

“Among the Greeks and Romans there was a superstitious veneration for certain numbers. The same practise is found among all Eastern nations; it entered more or less into all the ancient systems of philosophy; constituted a part of all the old religions; was accepted to a great extent by the early Christian Fathers; constituted an important part of the Cabala; was adopted by the Gnostics, the Rosicrucians and all of the mystical societies of the Middle Ages; and finally it has carried its influence into Freemasonry. The respect paid by Freemasons to
certain numbers all of which are odd, is founded not on the belief of any magical virtue, but because they are assumed to be the type or representatives of certain ideas. That is to say, a number is in Freemasonry a symbol and no more. It is venerated, not because it has any supernatural efficacy as thought by the Pythagoreans and others, but because it has concealed within some allusion to a sacred object or holy thought, which it symbolises.”

The Symbolism Of Numbers In Ancient Egypt

Numbers played a very important role in the ancient Egyptian culture that prevailed for almost four millennia. Richard H. Wilkinson defines that role in his book entitled Symbol & Magic in Egyptian Art, when he says:

“Just as verbal and “visual” puns were felt to reflect an important aspect of reality, the relationships between the abstract numbers found in myth and in nature were also seen as meaningful patterns reflecting divine planning and cosmic harmony.”

Although one was a symbol of individuality and pre-eminence, it also had an element of plurality reflecting the Egyptian belief that, when the creator saw his own image in the primordial darkness, he beckoned it with the creative word and produced his offspring, from whence the world was populated. Thus one also represents the male and female duality of the deity. Two is the number of duality, which is a fundamental concept in the Egyptian view of life and the universe, thus complementing the unity in duality expressed in one. The combination of one and two produces three, the number of plurality that is reflected in the concept of body, soul and spirit and the triune essence of the deity. The number four signifies totality and completion and it appears repeatedly in Egyptian art and ritual, especially in relation to the four cardinal points, the four pillars of the sky and the four quarters of heaven. Seven is the sum of three and four and thus connotes plurality, completeness and totality, which symbolises perfection.

Significant Numbers In The Hebrew Tradition

Because the initial letter of the Tetragrammaton or Ineffable Name is Yod, the Hebrews have always regarded it as a symbol of the Deity. As Yod has a numerical value of ten, the number ten has always been regarded as an important number. Another significant number in the Hebrew traditions is fifteen, which is revered as sacred. This is because the word Yod He is the two-lettered name of God translated as Jah, but usually rendered as the Lord in English language Bibles. Jah has the numerical equivalent of fifteen, as Yod is ten and He is five. In reverence for the two-lettered name of God, the number fifteen is usually written as Teth Waw, Teth being nine and Waw (or Vau) being six. In their original sense Yod signified a hand and He signified the window of God’s house, suggesting the dedication of human endeavour to God’s service. Teth signifies a snake or serpent, an
ancient Egyptian symbol of Divine Wisdom when extended and an emblem of eternity when looped with its tail in its mouth.

Another meaning of Teth is the building material clay, whilst Waw is a symbol of unity, so that these characters also imply dedication to the service of the one true God. The character Teth is generally regarded as a mystery letter, because it has the same sound as Taw (or Tau), the twenty-second and last letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Moreover, Taw signifies a cross and it was the “mark of Cain” placed on Cain’s forehead to indicate that, although guilty, he was to be spared. Like the Hebrews, most of the ancient mystics held the number fifteen in the highest regard, because it is the product of three and five. In this context three is regarded as a perfect number and a symbol of completeness, whilst five signifies unity in diversity and represents the number of manifest planes of existence, or divisions of the material nature of the universe, usually described as the physical, the subconscious, the mental, the spiritual and the heavenly.

The esoteric teachings of Judaism are encompassed in the Kabbalah (or Cabala). Tradition says they were revealed to Adam in their perfection, but were lost and again revealed from the time of the second Temple of Zerubbabel. The teachings are founded on a contemplation of the transcendent yet all pervasive nature of God when considered in relation to ten sefirot, which are the divine emanations of Ein Sof, the infinite God in his transcendence. The interactions of the sefirot are often portrayed diagrammatically as an intricately interlaced tree of life, in which the three highest sefirot are an ethical triad comprising the supreme crown, wisdom and intelligence. The lower seven constitute the trunk and branches of human reality and comprise love, power, beauty, endurance, majesty, foundation and kingdom. The teachings of the Kabbalah were produced in a literary form during the Middle Ages, when many of the most important aspects were set out in a collection of books referred to as the Sefer ha-Zohar, which is the Book of Splendour. It is a mystical commentary on the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures, also on some of the Hagiographa, the third section of the Hebrew scriptures.

Three sections of the Book of Splendour are important in the present context. They are the Three Strands of Spirit and Highest Grade of Faith, which are doctrinal discourses on the book of Genesis, in conjunction with the related Three Aspects of the Soul, which is a doctrinal discourse on the book of Exodus. Briefly, the three strands or aspects of the mortal soul are regarded as separate entities, each with its own abode, but linked to form a unity. The Neshamah is the innermost or holy soul, which is the vehicle through which one strives to achieve a pure and saintly life. It is associated with the Ruah or spirit that shall return to God who gave it and also with the Nefesh or natural soul that resides in every human being. Closely associated with these three strands of the mortal soul is a fourth or heavenly component, called the supernal soul. The supernal soul is related to the Sepharim and may be regarded as a part of them. The Sepharim are the three creative attributes of the self-existing, almighty and everlasting God. The three Sepharim are derived from the root word Samech Pey Resh, or Sephir, which means to count or to tell. The three Sepharim literally signify firstly number or concept, secondly the word and
thirdly the writing of the word. However, it is said that to the Creator these three aspects actually are the entity itself, for which reason some ancient Rabbis said that:

“\textit{Idea, word and work are one and the same to God}”.

According to the cabalistic teachings, when the body dies the \textit{Ruah} ascends to a holy place that is called the Lower Garden or Mount Zion, while the \textit{Neshamah} ascends to the higher domain from whence it emanated, but that the \textit{Nefesh} must hover over the body for seven days to consummate its transition. If the \textit{Neshamah} is found to be unfit to be readmitted into its domain, the \textit{Ruah} cannot enter the Lower Garden and the \textit{Nefesh} cannot reunite with them, so that all three continue to float in space and undergo suffering. Immortality can only be achieved if the \textit{Neshamah} achieves a sufficiently holy state to allow it to unite with the \textit{Nefesh} after mortal death and ascend to the heavenly abode with the \textit{Ruah}, where all three unite with the supernal soul. This concept is very closely allied to the ancient Egyptian beliefs concerning death and resurrection, from which it most probably was derived. The ancient Egyptians believed that when the divine spirit \textit{Ka} left the body, it released the soul \textit{Ba} to begin its life in the hereafter. If the deceased had led a blameless life, the divine spirit \textit{Ka} and the soul \textit{Ba} were ultimately reunited in the hereafter with the eternal and intangible sheath \textit{Khu} and the shadow or umbra of the body, the \textit{Khaibit}, before ascending to the heavenly \textit{Duat}.

Another important exposition on the cabalistic teachings that is given in the \textit{Sephir Yezirah}, or \textit{Book of Creation}, concerns the use of numbers as symbols. The creation is discussed having regard to the ten \textit{sefirot}, or divine emanations from \textit{Ein Sof}, as well as the derivation of the cosmos as reflected in the Hebrew alphabet. Some of the alphabetical and associated numerical symbolism will now be examined. Seven consonants in the Hebrew alphabet may be aspirated to produce a hard sound, or not aspirated so as to produce a softer sound. They are \textit{Beth}, \textit{Gimel}, \textit{Daleth}, \textit{Kaph}, \textit{Pey}, \textit{Resh} and \textit{Tau}. These seven double consonants are said to serve as models of hardness and softness and of strength and weakness. When written, the letters are distinguished by a dot if a hard sound is intended. When aspirated to produce a hard sound they are said to symbolise wisdom, wealth, fruitfulness, life, dominion, peace and beauty in that order. When not aspirated they are said to symbolise the opposite characteristics, which are foolishness, poverty, barrenness, death, dependence, war and ugliness. These seven double consonants are also said to designate a host of other well known things that commonly are referred to in groups of seven, such as worlds, heavens, seas and days of the week.

The three Hebrew letters \textit{Aleph Mem Shin} are of special significance, because they are taken together to represent the three primary elements of air, water and fire, with the hissing fire above, the still water below and the breath of air between them to establish and maintain equilibrium. The twelve simple letters of the alphabet are arranged in four groups of three, which are said to represent the functions of the human organs in various groups. In this context four is a symbol of the material aspects of the body and three is a symbol of cohesion within each of the groups. The four groups of letters are \textit{He Waw Zayin}, \textit{Heth Teth Yod}, \textit{Lamed Nun Samech} and \textit{Ayin Sadeh Qoph}, to which are assigned the following interpretations. The first group is speaking, thinking and walking, or creative
activity. The second group is seeing, hearing and working, or responsive activity. The third
group is coition, smelling and sleeping, or survival conduct. The fourth group is anger,
swallowing and laughing, or reactive behaviour.

The Number Seven

The number seven was venerated in all of the ancient mysteries, which suggests some
common basis for its distinction. The Pythagoreans called seven the perfect number
because it was made up of three and four, representing the triangle and the square, which
they considered to be two perfect figures. The number seven is revered among Jews and
Christians and is frequently alluded to in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.
The first reference is in Genesis, which records that after the six days of creation the Lord
rested on the seventh day and declared it holy. The traditions recorded in the Old
Testament include the ritual sprinkling of a bullock’s blood seven times and the burnt
offering of seven lambs. From when it was first used in the tabernacle in about 1280 BCE,
during the Exodus under Moses, the menorah or golden candlestick of seven branches has
been a symbol of the Israelitish identity. The Pesach, which is the Jewish Passover or
Festival of Unleavened Bread, originally was two separate festivals, one for the flocks and
one for the harvest. In about 620 BCE King Josiah combined the two festivals as a
pilgrimage festival lasting for seven days, during which mazzah or unleavened bread must
be eaten at least on the first night.

The Sukkot or Feast of Tabernacles also lasts for seven days and is intended to be a
reminder that the Lord required the Israelites to dwell in sukkah or booths when he
brought them out of the land of Egypt. It is significant that Yom Kippur, the Day of
Atonement, begins at sunset on the ninth day of Tishri, which is the seventh month of the
Jewish ecclesiastical year. According to the aggadah, or rabbinical teachings, this was the
day when Moses received the second tablets of the law. When King Solomon built the first
temple in Jerusalem it was completed in seven years. The miraculous feeding of four
thousand by Jesus was achieved with seven loaves and a few fish, but seven basketfuls
were collected afterwards, signifying that Jesus can completely satisfy. The early Christian
church had seven deacons and the Revelation to John was addressed to seven churches.
The seven golden candlesticks, seven seals and seven stars mentioned in the Revelation
signify the consummation of God’s plan.

Referring again to Dr Albert G Mackey’s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, we find the
following summary of the use of the number seven among the ancients:

“It is singular to observe the important part occupied by the number seven in all
the ancient systems. There were, for instance, seven ancient planets, seven
Pleiades and seven Hyades; seven altars burned continually before the god
Mithras; the Arabians had seven holy temples; the Hindus supposed the world to
be enclosed within the compass of seven peninsulas; the Goths had seven deities,
namely the Sun, the Moon, Tuisco, Woden, Thor, Friga and Seatur, from whose
names are derived the days of our week; in the Persian mysteries there were
seven spacious caverns, through which the aspirant had to pass; in the Gothic mysteries the candidate met with seven obstructions which were called the Road of Seven Stages; and finally, sacrifices were always considered as most efficacious when the victims were seven in number.”

In classical mythology, the Pleiades were the seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione and sisters of the Hyades. They were transformed into stars, but one of them became invisible out of shame because she married a mortal. The Pleiades is a star group is in the shoulder of the constellation Taurus. It is from this story that the name pleiad is frequently given to groups of seven, especially illustrious persons. The Hyades were seven nymphs, also the daughters of Atlas and Pleione, who like their sisters were placed among the stars in the constellation Taurus and supposed by the ancients to bring rain when they rose with the sun. The Hyades is a V-shaped cluster of stars that form the face of the bull in the constellation Taurus, but only twelve of more than two hundred stars in the cluster are visible to the naked eye.

**Symbolic Numbers In Freemasonry**

Among the ancients, three was a number of perfection and completeness. It is for this reason that the equilateral triangle or sacred delta has always been a symbol of the deity, being said to typify the self-existent, all-powerful and eternal aspects of the deity. The Yod within an equilateral triangle also signifies the deity, but it has the additional significance of service to the deity, because the Yod in the Hebrew alphabet represents a hand. The All-seeing Eye is often substituted for the Yod. These symbols and also the radiated triangle, which is a triangle placed within and surrounded by a circle of rays, are all used in speculative freemasonry. In religious applications the rays usually surround the triangle without entering it, when it is called a Glory and is an emblem of God’s Eternal Glory. In masonic applications the rays often emanate from a small circle in the centre of the triangle, so that the triangle appears to be enshrouded in the brilliance of the rays, when it is a symbol of the Divine Light. In Christianity the triune aspects of the deity are the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, called the Holy Trinity. In Hinduism the equilateral triangle is revered as a personification of the Trimurti, the creative, preservative and destructive aspects of the one true God that is without form or quality, eternal, unchangeable and occupying all space. These three aspects of the divine are known as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.

The material world is typified by the square that represents passive matter, which is in contrast to the force that is symbolised by the triangle. It naturally follows that the square is an emblem of the earth and humanity, whereas the triangle is a symbol of heaven and the Deity. The square, when surmounted by a triangle, depicts the elevation of a cubical stone that has a pyramidal apex. This is the form of the broached thurnel depicted on the earliest English tracing boards of an apprentice. The broached thurnel is still shown on French tracing boards and is called “la pierre cubique a pointe”. When seen in elevation the shape of the broached thurnel resembles a mason’s apron with the flap turned up, as worn by operative freemasons. The broached thurnel symbolises the union of force and matter...
and the oneness of God and man, which implies perfection. It has nine solid angles, which are one at the apex, four at the junction of the pyramid and the cube and four at the base of the cube. Because nine is the square of three, the number nine was especially revered by the ancients, who considered it to signify the attainment of perfection on the three lower planes of existence, these being the body, the mind and the natural soul.

In speculative freemasonry three, five and seven are numbers that are of special significance, each having its own interpretation as well as sharing interrelated characteristics. An axiom of the ancient Roman Artificers especially relevant to freemasonry is that “it requires three to make a college”, from whence was derived the requirement of three to form a lodge. These are the three principal officers, who are the master and his two wardens, all of whom must be present for the opening, working and closing of the lodge. The ancients regarded the number five as representing the five elements, the five senses and the five divisions of the material nature of the universe, but five also was considered to signified incompleteness because it did not include the two latent spiritual planes required to complete the planes of existence. In freemasonry five are required to hold a lodge, without which number a lodge cannot exist. The five required are the three principle officers and also two fellows of the craft, because the latter are experienced craftsmen and therefore are symbolic of the material world. Because the number seven includes the latent spiritual planes, the ancients considered it to be a perfect number, signifying the completion or consummation of life. This is why it is said that seven members are required to make a lodge perfect, these being the three principal officers and two fellows of the craft already mentioned, together with two entered apprentices whose initiation is symbolic of rebirth and entrance into the spiritual plane. There also are the seven liberal arts and sciences called Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy, the study of which tend so effectively to polish and adorn the mind.

Although it is not a universally accepted concept, many consider that the winding staircase is comprised of three flights or sections, respectively having three, five and seven steps, making a total of fifteen steps. This aspect is referred to in several Scottish tracing boards where various explanations are given, including an allusion to the three required to rule a lodge, the five noble orders of architecture and the seven liberal arts and sciences. Among the early ritualists of speculative freemasonry, several were erudite scholars who were knowledgeable in the Hebrew scriptures. This is one of the reasons why many Hebrew words and concepts are of special significance in the rituals of speculative freemasonry. It is beyond question that those early ritualists were well aware of the significance of the number fifteen in relation to the sacred or two-lettered name of God that is translated as Jah.

For this reason it is logical to assume that a total of fifteen steps would have been chosen specifically for the winding stair leading to the middle chamber, where certain Hebrew characters signifying God immediately arrested the craftsman’s attention, nowadays represented by the letter G in lodges of speculative craft freemasonry. Those Hebrew characters comprise the Tetragrammaton, being the Yod He Waw He that signifies Yahweh, the great and unpronounceable name of God that is usually rendered as Jehovah.
in English language Bibles. It is important to note that although Yah or Jah comprises the first two characters of the Tetragrammaton, it is not an abbreviation but a name in its own right, which is called the two-lettered name of God. It is also significant that three parties each of five trusted craftsmen were chosen to search for the missing master, because their efforts resulted in the establishment of a substitute word.

The numbers twenty-seven and eighty-one also are symbols used in speculative freemasonry. Twenty-seven was important to the ancients because it is the cube of three, which they considered to be a perfect number. In Hebrew twenty-seven is represented by the characters Kaph and Zayin, which respectively represent the palm of the hand and a weapon. These are appropriate symbols for the degree of Excellent Master, in which twenty-seven is a significant number, although there is no known record of twenty-seven being chosen as a significant number for the degree because of those characters. Eighty-one derives its importance from being the square of nine, which itself is the square of three. Coincidentally, eighty-one also equals twenty-seven tripled. Although nine is a significant number in some of the advanced degrees, the ancients considered it to be a bad omen. They regarded nine with terror and called it the fatal number. To them nine was a symbol of versatility and change, as well as being an emblem of the frailty and uncertainty of human existence, on which account they avoided all numbers that are derived from nine. The Pythagoreans also detested the number eighty-one.
CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE – INTELLECT AND SYMBOLISM

Symbolism is a unique characteristic of the human intellect.

Intellect, Intelligence And Reason

To appreciate the interrelationship between intellect and symbolism, it is desirable to recognise the difference between intellect and intelligence and to reflect on how they interact, through the process of reasoning, to initiate an activity or other response. Intellect comprises all of those faculties and rational powers of the mind and the soul that enable human beings to know, understand and reason, but it does not include the faculties of sensation and imagination. Intellect is derived from the Latin intellectus, which signifies perception, discernment, understanding and comprehension. It is the function of the intellect to perceive similarities and to disclose differences, either choosing or rejecting concepts of different kinds that are presented to it. Although the human psyche can only comprehend the outcomes of intellectual processes through mental awareness, nevertheless the intellect primarily operates on the spiritual plane. Intellect is instinctively drawn towards the ideal, enabling the individual’s ego to evolve and ultimately to achieve perfection. In contrast, the faculties of sensation and imagination are closely related to feeling and will, which clearly distinguishes them from the fundamental powers of thought and comprehension.

Intelligence is derived from the Latin intelligentia, which literally signifies knowledge, taste, the capacity to understand or the ability to choose. When compared with intellect, intelligence primarily operates on the mental plane and is the emotional and sensual counterpart of intellect. Intelligence is more than the straightforward ability to perceive and to understand that is implied by intellect because, being aided by intuition, it also has regard to feeling and will, as well as to any relevant external influences, thus enabling rational choices to be made. Reason is derived from the Latin ratio, which signifies a reckoning, an account, a consideration or a calculation. The process of reasoning is the interactive use of intellect with intelligence, which enables thoughts to be adapted to produce actions that will achieve a relevant objective. Reason or rationality is the faculty of making judgements and inferences, which is the guiding principle of the human mind in the process of logical thought.

René Descartes (1596-1650), a French philosopher, mathematician and scientist, was often called the father of modern philosophy. He said that human reason is universal, by which he meant that a being having reason is not limited to a fixed collection of responses, but is able to devise a suitable response for a new set of parameters. Descartes also connected the faculty of reason with the ability to use language. Many experiments have been carried out on a diverse group of animals, ranging from monkeys through dogs and octopuses to
dolphins, in an endeavour to find out whether they have the facility of mental perception
and the capacity to make rational decisions equivalent to those capabilities possessed by
human beings. These experiments have clearly demonstrated that animals have a capacity
to seek out food and to avoid danger in unusual situations, as well as to locate their own
kind or to return to their previous habitats under exceptional circumstances, but they have
not established that these capacities are anything more than innate hereditary responses.
Such responses would have developed as a direct result of environmental influences over
many thousands of years, which is in accord with Charles Darwin’s theory for “the
survival of the fittest”. For this reason the possession of a superior intelligence, the
capacity of intellect and the ability to reason are still considered to be the most important
characteristics that differentiate human beings from all other members of the animal
kingdom.

**Language**

Language is the method of communication that uses spoken or written words in an agreed
way to convey ideas from one person to another. Scholars of linguistics conceive language
in various ways. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) was a Swiss linguistics scholar who
was one of the founders of modern linguistics, whose work was fundamental to the
development of structuralism. Saussure regarded language as a system of arbitrary, though
mutually dependent and interactive signs. He emphasised the importance of a *diachronic*
or historical approach to the study of language, which sees it as a continually changing
medium, rather than a purely *synchronic* or behavioural approach, which only considers
language in the state that it is in at any particular time. In contrast to these approaches
Avram Noam Chomsky (1928- ), an American professor of linguistics, considers language
to be a set of rules and principles in the mind of the speaker. He developed the concept of a
*generative grammar*, taking into account the *surface* or superficial meaning of a sentence
and also its *deep* or underlying meaning. Language is central to the transmission of culture
and it is essential for the communication of a society’s spiritual beliefs and sacred values,
which can only be achieved through the medium of ritual speech and symbolism. *The
Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, by David Crystal, includes discussions on all
aspects of language, its development and usage, its relationship with symbolism in human
communications and also, for comparison, various methods of non-human communication.
Those wishing to explore the important part that symbolism played in the development of
language, as well as the evolution of symbolism as an instrument of communication, would
probably find most of the information they require in this book.

**The Concept Of Symbolism**

Symbolism is as old as human beings themselves. Communication is one of the greatest
assets of the human race, which was developed by means of symbolism. Before intelligible
speech evolved, humans used grunts and gestures as symbols to draw attention to their
needs and convey the emotions they were experiencing. As humans became articulate in
speech, they sought to record their words for transmission to others at a distance, or to make permanent records of their thoughts. These desires naturally fostered the development of writing, originally by means of pictographs in which each picture or character was a symbol or combination of symbols. The hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt were the most advanced form of pictographic writing ever devised and were in use before 3250 BCE. The Sumerians of Babylonia, now southern Iraq, were using a script in about 3200 BCE, in which tiny pictographs represented words, but we do not know when or where the script originated. The ideographic characters used in modern Chinese writing evolved from pictographs before 1000 BCE and even, as today, enabled intelligible written communications to be exchanged between peoples whose dialects were mutually incomprehensible.

Clay tablets found in the 1960s at Tartaria, in Transylvania, have been dated from about 4000 BCE. Their engravings include some pictographs similar to those found in megalithic markings in Britain, in the Linear A script found in Minoan Crete and also in inscriptions on Paleo-Elamite vases found in Persepolis, which suggests that some form of written communication must have occurred earlier than previously was believed. Structural changes in the earth’s crust, physiographical reshaping of the soil mantle, cyclical changes in climate and even the impact of extraterrestrial bodies on the earth since the last great Ice Age have all caused significant changes in topography, limiting the capacity of archaeological investigations. The relationships between the diverse groups of pictographs have not yet been discovered, nor has their influence on pictographic writing in Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, the Sumerian and Phoenician pictographs provide the first traces of our modern alphabet.

Hieroglyphs were the sacred language of ancient Egypt, but they continued in use until late in the third century CE. As the form and structure of the hieroglyphs were too clumsy for practical purposes in everyday use, a cursive form of script, written with a pen and called hieratic, was soon developed for trade purposes and accounting records. A simplified cursive form, called the demotic, was in general use by 700 BCE, but both cursive forms necessitated considerable professional training for proficient writing. Until quite recently it was believed that the earliest hieroglyphs had been based on Sumerian pictographs that the Egyptians had borrowed near the beginning of the First Dynasty, in about 3100 BCE. However, archaeological investigations carried out at Abydos and elsewhere in southern Egypt since 1988, prove that the Egyptians were using an advanced system of writing in 3250 BCE and probably much earlier, long before the pharaonic monarchy was founded when King Narmer completed the unification of the Kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt in about 3100 BCE. This new evidence indicates that the Egyptian hieroglyphs did not develop progressively from primitive pictographs. Some characters were always used as an alphabet and others as phonetic signs called determinatives, either in front of or after a picture sign, to indicate the precise interpretation or sound of the picture and hence its correct meaning. Thus literary expression came into being. Another useful characteristic of Egyptian hieroglyphs is that they can be written in any direction, to suit the requirements of the text and its location on the object being inscribed.
The earliest Sumerian pictographs represented objects. Later some pictographs came to be associated with sounds, especially the sounds of the initial consonants of the names assigned to the objects represented. In the course of time it was realised that pictographs could be used to represent the same sounds in other words, from which an alphabet evolved and spelling began. Originally the Sumerian pictographs had a vertical format and were inscribed in vertical columns commencing from the right of the tablet and reading downwards. Some time between 3000 BCE and 2500 BCE the pictographs changed to a horizontal format, when it was found more convenient to inscribe them in horizontal lines commencing from the top of the tablet and reading from left to right. Because the Sumerians found it difficult to inscribe curved lines on clay, they soon replaced their pictographs with characters comprising a series of short straight lines, which developed into the cuneiform script, from the Latin cuneus, which means a wedge. The script was called cuneiform because nearly all of the short lines used to form the characters were wedge shaped, having been made by the imprint of a square ended stylus on wet clay.

In Byblos, which was the Gebal of Canaan mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures, pictographic impressions first appeared on seals from about 3100 BCE and seem to have been the first steps in the growth of Phoenician writing. The cuneiform script was fully developed in Akkadia, or northern Iraq, by about 2800 BCE, from whence it spread throughout the eastern Mediterranean region. Signs from Byblos, dating from about 2500 BCE, are in a script similar to that which was then being used in Syria. The Akkadian cuneiform script, which had become the language of trade and diplomacy that was in use between Syria and Egypt before 1400 BCE, is considered to be the forerunner of the Phoenician alphabet and our modern alphabets. The clay tablets on which the cuneiform script was inscribed varied in size according to the amount of text, ranging from small tags to tiles as large as 30 centimetres by 45 centimetres. However the longer historical and commemorative inscriptions were often written on large clay prisms or cylinders. By the fifth century BCE, the simplified Phoenician and Aramaic scripts had supplanted the cuneiform script in most areas, although cuneiform script continued to be used for temple documents in Babylon until about 75 CE. Pottery and other objects from Byblos and Sidon, during the period from 2100 BCE to 1700 BCE, show that a linear script called pseudo-hieroglyphics was then in use. Various called Canaanite, Sinaic or proto-Phoenician, this script was one of the earliest forms of a non-Egyptian alphabetical script. Archaeological studies testify that the use of this script rapidly became so widespread in the Middle East that an alphabet, usually called the Phoenician alphabet, was in general use by 1500 BCE. This alphabet progressively replaced the cumbersome cuneiform scripts of Babylonia and Assyria and the more complex hieroglyphic writing of Egypt. It has been shown that the ancient Hebrew alphabet is linked to the hieroglyphs of Egypt through the Sinaic script. Early samples of the script have been found in the region of Sinai, where the Hebrew scriptures record that Moses was instructed to write the Table of the Law, probably in about 1280 BCE.

As in the Sinaic script and the basic hieroglyphic pictographs from which that script was derived, each letter in the Hebrew alphabet originally represented an object and hence conveyed a specific meaning. Over time the meaning amplified through thought processes to represent additional associated meanings. For example aleph, the first letter in the
Hebrew alphabet, represents the head of a bull, derived directly from the Egyptian hieroglyph representing the animal. In the Hebrew system of characters aleph also has the numerical value of 1. Because the people had worshipped the bull in antiquity, Hebrew priests in ancient times used aleph to represent the deity. In later times the yod became the symbol of God, because it is the initial character of the Tetragrammaton and also of Jah, the two-letter name of God revered by the Hebrews. Aleph is the equivalent of alpha in the Greek alphabet. In the Sinaitic script, the equivalent of the Hebrew aleph looks very much like the Greek alpha, which in fact was derived from it. Depending upon the era of the Sinaitic script, its equivalents of aleph also bear a close resemblance to either the capital A or the small a of our modern Roman characters, all of which evolved from the alpha of the Greek alphabet. Such progressive developments of the alphabet aptly illustrate the fertile imagination of the human mind when using symbols.

Another example that deserves special mention is the eye used in the Egyptian hieroglyphs. This Egyptian character was carried forward into the Sinaitic script in a similar, though more rounded form, whence it was adopted in a modified form as a Hebrew character. In Hebrew the equivalent character is called ayin, which means an eye. However, it was also used to signify a well or spring of water. It is of particular interest to note that the English word for the physical organ also is eye, which is pronounced almost exactly the same as the Hebrew word and its equivalent in other languages of the Near East. The shape of ayin in the present formal Hebrew script is very different from the teardrop shape of its prototypes in the Sinaitic script and the Hebrew script of 700 BCE and earlier. Although ayin now looks more like a small y in the Roman alphabet, nevertheless the original shape was round, in the form that it was carried forward into the Greek alphabet as omicron, which is similar to the capital O and small o of our modern Roman alphabet. It is interesting to note that the equivalent eye in the Egyptian hieroglyphs was also used to depict the "all-seeing eye of God" in the Egyptian texts, in exactly the same sense as it is used in Psalm 33:18, which says that "the eye of the Lord is upon thee", signifying God's watchful care over humanity. There are many similar threads of interest that have their origins in the Egyptian hieroglyphs and continue through the Sinaitic script into the Hebrew characters, thence into the Greek alphabet and ultimately into our modern Roman alphabet. This proves beyond doubt that symbolism is an integral part of our nature and our language, without which all communication would be barren.

**Symbolism In The Scriptures**

The scriptural texts of all religions are copiously illustrated with symbolic references. Frequently those references are simple figurative statements, although emphasis may be given by expanding the theme into a short metaphorical passage or even as lengthy parable. Symbol comes through the Latin symbolum from the Greek sambolon, a derivative of samballien meaning to throw. The Greek sambolon means to put together or to compare in ordinary usage, but it also is used to signify a token. This is analogous to the Latin use of symbolum to indicate a mark or sign as a means of recognition. Metaphor is derived from the Greek metaphor, meaning transfer or transportation, but in Greek usage the word is also used to signify a figure of speech, in the way as it is used in English...
to indicate that a quality usually attached to one kind of object is transferred to another. **Parable** also comes from the Greek language, in which *parabole* literally means *putting things side by side*. It is somewhat similar in meaning to **allegory**, from the Greek *allegoria* meaning *to say things in a different way*. This brief outline of the background to our language reveals its extraordinary capacity to communicate abstract thoughts by symbols.

A key objective in the use of parables and allegories is to present interesting illustrations, from which moral or religious truths are easily deduced. The value of teaching in this way is twofold, because assimilation is easier and retention is improved when the recipients draw their own conclusions from the illustrations presented. In modern usage a parable is a short descriptive story intended to convey a single truth, whereas an allegory usually is a more elaborate exposition in which the details present several comparisons. A good example of a parable, or simple figurative statement in the scriptures, is found in Psalm 23:1 –

"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want".

Another well known example of a parable is the Old Testament prophecy that is said to foretell the birth, death and resurrection of the Messiah, which is recorded in Psalm 118:22 in the following words:

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner-stone".

A typical example of a short metaphorical passage relates to the latter part of the reign of Jeroboam II, in about 750 BCE, which was a period of economic boom when the living conditions were luxurious, moral corruption was rampant and idolatry was prevalent. The impending judgment of Israel was foretold by the prophet Amos, in Amos 7:8-9, when he quoted the Lord's words as:

"I am setting a plumb line to the heart of my people Israel; never again will I pass them by. The hill-shrines of Isaac shall be desolated and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste; I will rise, sword in hand, against the house of Jeroboam."

This prophesy was fulfilled during the reign of Hezekiah's son Menasseh, in about 650 BCE, when the Lord found the people to be irredeemably warped by sin and declared an irrevocable sentence of destruction upon them, which is graphically recorded in II Kings 21:13-14 by the words:

"I will mark down every stone of Jerusalem with the plumb-line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe away Jerusalem as when a man wipes his plate and turns it upside down."

A representative parable, in Matthew 20:1-16, tells the story of labourers in the vineyard to illustrate the fairness of God. It shows how God deals with men graciously, though not necessarily in strict accordance with their merits. The landowner engaged various labourers
and agreed their day's wages with them, then set them to work at different times of the day. When paid at the end of the day some labourers complained that their pay was not fair, but the landowner said that it was his prerogative to set the wages and theirs to accept them. In the fourth chapter of Mark is an interesting series of parables readily understood by the peasant farmers of the day, concerning the vicissitudes of sowing seed, how seed grows secretly at night and how a minute mustard seed can grow into a tree. Many dramatic allegories are found in the scriptures. Those in Ecclesiastes are not divine revelations, but an exposition of how ordinary humans reason, reminding us that all "under the sun" is complete emptiness, except that which comes from above in the form of God's revelation and salvation. Two passages in Ecclesiastes deserving special attention are in Chapter 11, which exhorts “youthful diligence” and in Chapter 12, which reminds us of our “inevitable destiny”.

Symbolism In Speculative Freemasonry

The initiate is informed that freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. In this respect the system of instruction in freemasonry closely parallels that used in the scriptures. The basic symbols of freemasonry are drawn directly from a consideration of the implements used by operative masons, supplemented by the characteristics of the various building stones, the methods used to prepare and test the stones, the erection of the building and even the building itself. The ways in which these implements, methods and materials are applied in operative freemasonry are used to demonstrate basic truths and to inculcate analogous actions on the part of the individual. The purpose is to stimulate intellectual comparisons and to promote an intelligent consideration of courses of action and their outcomes, thereby inducing the individual to discover, by the process of rational reasoning, the moral lessons inculcated by the symbols. These visible symbols of freemasonry have greatly enriched our language by introducing such descriptive epithets as "square conduct", "upright intentions", "on the level" and a host of other expressions now in everyday use.

The esoteric teachings of speculative freemasonry are incorporated in the ceremonial in which the candidate plays an active part, including the apparently exoteric components of preparation and introduction. They are essential elements of the ceremonials, which by their nature are intended to create an enduring impression on the candidate's mind. The various ceremonials include journeys and other relevant activities in a dramatic and allegorical form, which are intended to create a lasting impression. These instructions are supplemented and amplified by appropriate addresses and allegorical lectures. In addition to the moral instruction that is communicated through exoteric symbols, the system of instruction is intended to stimulate contemplation, thereby helping the individual to formulate personal answers to the following three fundamental questions:

"What are we and from whence did we come?"
"What is our purpose on earth and in life?"
"What is our ultimate destiny?"
These questions are intimately related to the three elements of human existence, the body, the mind and the soul. Each in turn is reflected in the ceremonials of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason, which allegorically relate to birth, life and death and provide symbolic instruction that is intended to assist candidates to find their own answers to these three fundamental questions.
CHAPTER THIRTY – THE NOBILITY OF LABOUR

In all religions labour is a symbol of spiritual endeavour.

Labour In Myth And Religion

In all the myths and ancient religions, as also in modern Judaism, Christianity and Islam, work or labour, the labourers themselves, their wages, their places of work, the works they perform and the results of their labours all are of symbolic significance. In the language of the myths and religions of the world, work or labour is a symbol of spiritual endeavour. In religious symbolism work represents the struggle of the soul to attain perfection and the labourers characterise those qualities of the soul through which those endeavours are put into effect. Wages represent the rewards that will be received for the progress made, or the punishment that will accrue for a lack of progress. Such symbolic payments are commensurate with the spiritual advancement achieved or a failure to advance, as expressed in the old saying that “the wages of sin is death”. As masonic symbolism has been adapted from or is closely allied to the symbolism of myth and religion, it would be appropriate to trace through those sources how the concept of the “nobility of labour” evolved.

Symbolism In The Judæo-Christian Scriptures

There is a broad spectrum of the Judæo-Christian religious symbolism involving labour, which is illustrated in the following excerpts from the New English Bible. The excerpts are quoted as a continuing narrative in the sequence they occur in the bible, each identified by its biblical reference. The narrative shows how the various elements of religious symbolism concerning labour are interwoven and it brings out the close parallels with masonic symbolism.

"You shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow until you return to the ground; for from it you were taken. Dust you are, to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:19) You have six days to labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God; that day you shall not do any work. (Exodus 20-9-10 & Deuteronomy 5:13-14) Seventy years is the span of your life, eighty if your strength holds; the hurrying years are labour and sorrow, so quickly they pass and are forgotten. (Psalms 90:10) When God makes the sun rise, they (the young lions) slink away and go to rest in their lairs; but man comes out to his work and to his labours until evening. (Psalms 104:22-23) You shall eat the fruit of your own labours, you shall be happy and you shall prosper.
The good man's labour is his livelihood; the wicked man's earnings bring him to a bad end. Correction is the high road to life; neglect reproof and you miss the way. (Proverbs 10:16-17) A lazy man is torn by appetite unsatisfied, but the diligent grow fat and prosperous. (Proverbs 13:4) What does man gain from all his labour and toil here under the sun? Generations come and generations go, but the earth endures forever. (Ecclesiastes 1:3-4) What profit does one who works get from all his labour? (Ecclesiastes 3:9) God will judge the just man and the wicked equally; every activity and every purpose has its proper time. In dealing with men it is God's purpose to test them and to see what they truly are. (Ecclesiastes 3:17-18) Whether they plant or water, it is all the same, though each will get his own pay for his own labour. (I Corinthians 3:8-9) If anyone builds on that foundation with gold, silver and fine stone, or with wood, hay and straw, the work that each man does will at last be brought to light; the day of judgement will expose it. For that day dawns in fire and the fire will test the worth of each man's work. If a man's building stands, he will be rewarded; if it burns, he will have to bear the loss; and yet he will escape with his life, as one may escape from a fire. Surely you know that you are God's temple, where the Spirit of God dwells. (I Corinthians 3:12-16)

There is a parable in the New Testament about a vineyard owner and his labourers, which brings into focus the essential elements that comprise the concept of the "nobility of labour", including the justness of recompense. These elements are also emphasised in passages from the Koran and the Bhagavad Gita that are quoted to later. In the New English Bible, Matthew 20, the parable is given in the following words:

"The kingdom of Heaven is like this. There was once a landowner who went out early one morning to hire labourers for his vineyard; and after agreeing to pay them the usual day's wage (literally one denarius or a penny for the day) he sent them off to work. Going out three hours later he saw some more men standing idle in the market place. 'Go and join the others in the vineyard' he said 'and I will pay you a fair wage'; so off they went. At midday he went out again and at three in the afternoon and made the same arrangement as before. An hour before sunset he went out and found another group standing there; so he said to them 'Why are you standing about like this all day with nothing to do?' 'Because no one has hired us' they replied; so he told them 'Go and join the others in the vineyard.' When evening fell, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward 'Call the labourers and give them their pay, beginning with those who came last and ending with the first.' Those who had started work an hour before sunset came forward and were paid the full day's wage. When it was the turn of the men who had come first, they expected something extra, but were paid the same amount as the others. As they took it they grumbled to their employer: 'These late-comers have only done one hour's work, yet you have put them on a level with us, who have sweated the whole day long in the blazing sun!' The owner turned to one of them and said 'My friend, I am not being unfair to you. You agreed to the usual wage for the day, did you not? Take your pay and go home. I choose to pay the
last man the same as you. Surely I am free to do what I like with my own money. Why be jealous when I am kind’ Thus will the last be first and the first last.”

In this passage the “kingdom of Heaven” signifies the consummation of a human being's earthly endeavours, which can only be attained through the acceptable completion of a life's work and is often referred to figuratively as that “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”. The thoughts and actions of the “landowner” represent Will, Wisdom and Action, the three divine aspects of humans as they labour in this earthly arena of life. The thoughts and actions of the “labourers” symbolise those qualities of the soul with which a humans must work for their improvement while on earth, as well as the greed and jealousy inherent in human nature. The “vineyard” represents the sphere of human spiritual wisdom, illustrating the broader aspects of human nature that must be developed to achieve a rewarding spiritual end. The “work” symbolises the efforts that human souls should make towards the attainment of perfection, through their endeavours on earth. The “fair wage” not only symbolises those specific spiritual acquisitions that will reward human beings for the successful completion of their life's work, but also serves as a reminder that reward must not be the only objective of work.

The Teachings Of Muhammad

The correct name for the religion of the Prophet Muhammad is Islam, which is the infinitive of the Arabic verb meaning to submit. The followers of Islam understand this to mean “submission to the will of Allah”, whence the expression “inche Allah” is derived, meaning “God willing”. The correct term for a follower of Islam is Muslim, which is the present participle of the same verb. To appreciate the Islamic concept of the nobility of labour, it is helpful to know something of the origins Islam and its principal beliefs. Islam is derived from the revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad, who was born at Mecca between 570 and 580. He was the posthumous son of a little known father and his mother died when he was about six years old. After his mother died he was brought up by his grandfather and later by his uncle Abu Talib. The Traditions tell us that when Muhammad was twelve years old he went to live with his uncle in Syria, where he met and received religious instruction from a Christian monk named Bahira. Although little of Muhammad's youthful life is known with certainty, there is no doubt that he was well versed in the scriptures of the Jews and the Christians, whom he referred to as the “People of the Book”. The three most important doctrines of Islam are first that the one God, Allah, is the source of both good and evil. Second, that Allah's will is supreme, without any restriction from laws or principles. Third, that it is Allah alone who decides those who will be forgiven and those who will be punished.

Sir Norman Anderson (1908– ), a world-renowned expert on the law and practice of Islam, was appointed Professor of Oriental Laws at the University of London in 1954. Writing on Islam in The World's Religions, which Professor Anderson edited, he summed up the essence of Islamic belief in the following words:
"The Muslim God can best be understood in the desert. Its vastness, majesty, ruthlessness and mystery – and the resultant sense of the utter insignificance of man – call forth man's worship and submission, but scarcely prompt his love or suggest God's."

The practice of Islam concentrates on religious observance, central to which are the Five Pillars or the "foundations of religion", which are the recital of the creed, ritual prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage. Muslims believe that they can only attain paradise by a strict observance of the Five Pillars, coupled with an acknowledgement of the Unity and Transcendence of God, as distinct from salvation based on the life and works of the individual. Nevertheless the 'aqa'id, which are the "Articles of Faith" that are attributed by tradition to the Prophet Muhammad himself, require among other things that a Muslim must believe "in God, his Angels, his Books, his Messengers, in the Last Day . . . and in the Decree both of good and evil". Muhammad's upbringing undoubtedly shaped his early beliefs. Most of the important themes of the Judæo-Christian scriptures are reflected in the Qur'an or Koran. Despite Islam’s attitude to salvation, the Koran highlights the rewards for good works when discussing the transcendence and immanence of God in verses 35 to 40 of Sûrah XXIV – Light:

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. . . . Light upon light, Allah guides unto His light whom He will. And Allah speaks to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things. . . . Men whom neither merchandise nor sale divert from remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and paying to the poor their due; who fear a day when hearts and eyes will be overturned; that Allah may reward them for the best of their works and increase the reward for them of His bounty. Allah gives blessings without stint to whom He will. As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are as a mirage in the desert. The thirsty one supposes it to be water until he comes to it and finds it naught; and finds in the place thereof, Allah, Who pays him his due; and Allah is swift at reckoning . . . And he for whom Allah has assigned no light, for him there is no light."

**The Teachings In Hinduism**

Hinduism is one of the oldest living religions in the world. It did not have a single founder, but originated in the ancient pre-Aryan civilisations of India. Its concepts and practices evolved gradually over five thousand years or more, assimilating all of the diverse cultural and religious movements in India. Although there are some obvious affinities between Islam and the bhakti or devotional sects of Hinduism, especially the nirgunam form, which stresses an imageless and formless God, the doctrines of Hinduism are in stark contrast with those of Islam. This is because Hinduism places much more emphasis on the conduct of life, than it does on the strict forms of religion required by Islam. The central tenet of Hinduism is the law of karma, which is the principle of moral action and reaction applied to both good and evil behaviour, whence it is said that “as a man sows, so shall he reap”. Hinduism seeks the fundamental truths that are behind all manifestations, without any of the sharp distinctions that have developed between religion and culture in western civilisations. Hinduism is still an evolutionary faith, absorbing the ideals and ethics of
Christianity and other modern religions, but it is not credeal like Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Hindus call their religion sanatana dharma, which means “the eternal religion” having neither beginning nor ending, but coeval with life itself. All religious truths are considered to be manifestations of the One Truth, or the Ultimate Reality. In the Bhagavad-Gita, or the “Song of the Lord”, Krishna declares:

“Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them; for on all sides, whatever path they choose is mine.”

The knowledge and ultimate acceptance of this profound truth is an inner mystical experience which the Hindu expresses in this familiar prayer:

“From delusion lead me to truth. From darkness lead me to light. From death lead me to immortality.”

The sacred law that is set out in the many Hindu scriptures, as well as the basic assumptions of the faith, are called the dharma. The dharma is not merely a religious belief, but a total way of life and conduct directed towards the search for Brahman, who is the “Eternal Being” or “Reality”, to which the law of karma is central. Karma is action or doing, which is expressed as a moral interpretation of the natural law of causation. Karma says that every action is the effect of a cause, which in its turn is the cause of an effect. It operates as an inexorable law of retributive justice, so that bad actions reap suffering and bondage, whereas good actions lead to freedom. An essential adjunct to karma is a belief in the transmigration of the soul, which is called samsara. In Hinduism the soul is believed to be eternal and shares the very essence of Reality. Good and evil are considered to be a function of the extent to which the soul is either attached to or detached from the Individual Self, so that when the soul reaches its True Self morality is transcended and the soul is released from the wheel of rebirth and from the bondage of karma, thus achieving salvation. In the Hindu scriptures the war in the Mahabharata is an earthly war, whereas the war in the Bhagavad Gita is symbolic. The importance placed on unselfish work in Hinduism is emphasised in Juan Mascaró’s translation from the Sanskrit of the Bhagavad Gita, 2. 47-50, when Krishna as the charioteer of the soul addresses Arjuna as the soul of man:

“Set thy heart upon thy work, but never on its reward. Work not for a reward; but never cease to do thy work. Do thy work in the peace of Yoga and free from selfish desires; be not moved in success or failure. Yoga is evenness of mind – a peace that is ever the same. For work done for a reward is much lower than work done in the Yoga of wisdom. Seek salvation in the wisdom of reason. How poor those who work for reward! In this wisdom a man goes beyond what is well done and what is not well done. Go thou therefore in wisdom: Yoga is wisdom in work.”
The Teachings Of Buddhism

Buddhism is an offspring of Hinduism that came into existence almost six hundred years before Christ and about twelve hundred years before Islam. Although a wide variety of doctrines and customs are practised in Buddhism, they are all derived from the Four Truths of Siddhartha Gautama's enlightenment. Gautama was given the title of Buddha, which signifies the “Enlightened One” or the “Awakened One”, whence the name of the religion is derived. The Four Truths deal with suffering; with the cause of suffering; with the concept that suffering ceases when desire ceases; and finally with the Eightfold Path which leads to the cessation of suffering. The steps in the Eightfold Path are right views, right aspirations, right speech, right conduct, right mode of livelihood, right effort, right awareness and right concentration. Two of these steps in particular, namely right mode of livelihood and right effort, involve karma in a sense very similar to that as it is understood in Hinduism, insofar as a man's future existence is always considered to be affected substantially by his present actions. Buddhism teaches that everything that exists passes through an ever-continuing cycle of birth, growth, decay and death, but that in reality there is no such thing as death. The ultimate goal of Buddhism is Nirvana, a Sanskrit word literally meaning extinction, but in this instance referring only to tangible existence. Nirvana is an ethical state in which karma comes to an end and all future rebirth is eliminated, all craving is extinguished and there is a final release from all suffering.

Other Eastern Religions

Sikhism is a monotheistic sect of northern India that was founded by Nanak (1469-1538), who sought to harmonise Islam and Hinduism, but could not overcome the essential differences in the doctrines. The Punjabi word sikh is derived from the Sanskrit sikṣya which means a learner or a disciple. Salvation is seen as a mystical union with the Formless One, primarily through the power of bhakti or devotion, coupled with jnana or knowledge and karma or action. The sacred scriptures of Sikhism are the Adi-Granth, which is the sole authority. Sikhism is the only bhakti sect that has separated itself from the fold of Hinduism. Taoism and Confucianism are the ancient native religions of China and Shinto embraces the traditional religious practices that originated in Japan. Taoist mysticism contrasts with Confucian pragmatism, but both are ethical systems for the regulation of conduct in the earthly sphere, without any great emphasis on God or an after-life. Shinto has never developed a systematic doctrine, but is an amalgam of attitudes, ideas and ways of doing things, depending upon a personal faith in the kami. Although kami cannot be defined precisely, it involves the concepts of above and superior.

In ancient times kami was referred to anything that was awe-inspiring. Taoism, Confucianism and Shinto do not have sacred scriptures similar to those of other religions, from which their beliefs concerning labour and its rewards can be ascertained and compared. However, some aspects of these religions are of interest. One of the most important tenets of Chinese philosophy is a belief that the cosmos is governed by two opposing forces, the yin and the yang. The yin is the feminine force, which represents the
earth, coldness, darkness and death. The **yang** is the masculine force, which represents heaven, warmth, light and life. The word **Tao**, from which Taoism derives its name, signifies both “the Word” and “the Way”, which have identical meanings to those of the same words when used in the New English Bible translation of the gospel according to John:

“When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God and what God was the Word was.” (John 1:1) “I am the way; I am the truth and I am life.” (John 14:6)

In the mysticism of Taoism, the **Tao** is conceived as the first principle that even precedes God and is the universal cosmic energy underlying the order of nature. In the pragmatism of Confucianism, the importance of virtue, propriety and correct ritual is emphasised. Confucius is the Latin rendering of K'ung Fu-tsu, or the Master K'ung whose name was K'ung Ch'iu and who probably was born in 552 BCE. Much of Buddhism has been absorbed into Taoism and Confucianism over the last thousand years or so. The origins of Shinto are hidden in the prehistory of Japan, but it received its present name in the sixth century from two Chinese characters, *shen*, meaning “divine being” and *tao*, meaning “the way”.

### Labour In Masonic Symbolism

Thousands of the adherents of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Sikhism, as well as Christians, are freemasons who find the tenets of the fraternity to be in accord with their personal religious beliefs. Many Muslims also have been freemasons and some still are, although the more extreme sects of Islam consider that freemasonry belongs only to the infidel. Nevertheless, from the foregoing outline of religions established on a worldwide basis, it is obvious that the principles and tenets of freemasonry are not in conflict with the beliefs of those religions. Furthermore it is evident, from the scriptural texts quoted, that masonic symbolism relating to the concept of the “nobility of labour” is in close accord with religious symbolism concerning labour and its rewards. It is only natural that freemasonry should have many symbols illustrated by practical aspects of operative freemasonry, but many symbols in the scriptures also aptly relate to the operative art. The scriptural texts quoted and the religious beliefs outlined above leave us in no doubt that labour is more than “the lot of man”. It is not only a necessity, but also a noble virtue. The monks of old taught, although they did not always practise, the wise precept that *laborare est orare*, which signify “labour is prayer”, although it is often quoted as “labour is worship”. Freemasonry teaches that the object and chief aim of all mankind is to labour well and truly, with honesty and persistence, for the good and ultimate salvation of humanity.

In the *Bulletin du Grand Orient de France*, December 1868, there is an address given by Brother Troue to the brethren of St Peter's Lodge in Martinico, which includes the following explanation that aptly illustrates how closely the principles and tenets of freemasonry relate to the concept of the “nobility of labour”:
“Our name of Freemason and our emblems distinctly announce that our object is the elevation of labour.

We do not, as Freemasons, consider labour as a punishment inflicted on man; but on the contrary, we elevate it in our thoughts to the height of a religious act, which is the most acceptable to God because it is the most useful to man and to society.

We decorate ourselves with the emblems of labour to affirm that our doctrine is an incessant protest against the stigma branded on the law of labour, which an error of apprehension, proceeding from the ignorance of men in primitive times has erected into a dogma; an error that has resulted in the production of this anti-social phenomenon which we meet with every day; namely, that the degradation of the workman is the greater as his labour is more severe, whereas the elevation of the idler is higher as his idleness is more complete.

But the study of the laws which maintain order in nature, released from the fetters of preconceived ideas, has led the Freemasons to that doctrine, far more moral than the contrary belief, that labour is not an expiation, but a law of harmony from the subjection to which man cannot be released without impairing his own happiness and deranging the order of creation.

The design of Freemasons is the rehabilitation of labour, which is indicated by the apron we wear and the gavel, the trowel and the level which are found among our symbols.”
CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE – THE WORKING TOOLS OF THE CRAFT

*From time immemorial the working tools of an operative freemason have been used as symbols for moral instruction.*

**The Craft**

A craft originally was an organisation of workers who had a range of skills in a particular trade or vocation. Craft comes from the Old English *craeft*, derived from the Old Saxon and Old German *kraft*, which originally meant *strength* and *skill*. Its adjective *craeftig* meant *crafty* and signified *dexterous* or *expert*. The sinister aspects of *crafty*, which include *cunning* from the Old English *cunnan* meaning *to know*, are modern usages of the word that were not in vogue when the crafts flourished in medieval times. This change in the usage of *cunning* is reflected in different versions of I Kings 7:14 of the Bible, which records that Hiram King of Tyre sent Hiram Abif to Jerusalem to assist King Solomon in the construction of the temple. In the *Authorised Version* issued by King James VI in 1611, Hiram Abif is described as “*filled with wisdom and understanding and cunning to work all works in brass*”. In the *New English Bible* issued in 1970 Hiram Abif is called “*a man of great skill and ingenuity, versed in every kind of craftsmanship in bronze*”.

Family peace guilds, called *frith*, existed in London by about the middle of the tenth century. The first merchant guild is believed to have originated in Dover in about the middle of the eleventh century, when it seems that the first weaver guilds also were established. In medieval times the workers in many crafts established fraternal associations for the mutual assistance of their members, which they called *gilds* and later *guilds*, derived from the Old English *gield* that was a synonym of the Old Norman *gild* signifying a company self supported by subscriptions. There is ample evidence that the craft guilds were well established in Britain by about 1135, during the reign of Henry I.

Although the craft guilds came into existence to safeguard the interests of skilled workers in the various trades, they also were religious fraternities whose members were required to attend church frequently and also on a regular basis. Under the protection of their guild and with the assistance of its members, many families rose from serfdom to become employers within a few generations. The operative masons who erected ecclesiastical structures in medieval times became the largest and most effectively organised of all the craft guilds and were soon called “*the free masons*”, or more familiarly as “*the craft*”. The rough masons, wallers, slaters, paviors, plasterers, bricklayers, carpenters, bronze founders, iron workers, gold smiths and white smiths, all of whom worked closely with the freemasons on the more important building works, often formed their own craft guilds in the larger centres.
Lodges Of Operative Freemasons

Although the members of most crafts could find work in the vicinity of their homes, many members of the craft of freemasonry frequently had to travel long distances to find work and establish new project sites. This undoubtedly was a significant factor leading to the establishment of lodges. In operative practice the lodge originally signified the place of work, especially the stone yard. The English word was derived from the Old French loge meaning an arbour, which was adopted into Middle English to mean a stall as in modern theatres. The earliest known reference to a lodge as a building occurs in the accounts of the 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 was an Old French verb and mansiones a Middle Latin noun, which respectively signify to lodge and a household, reflecting the influence of French and Latin on the English language. In England old operative documents often refer to lodges as places of residence, but sometimes they also were repositories for tools and implements, as at the York Minster in 1399. A body of masons also became known as a lodge by association, almost certainly in medieval times. Perhaps unexpectedly the first known references in this context are to be found in relation to operative practice in Scotland, in the minutes of the Aitchison's Haven Lodge in 1598 and also in the Schaw Statutes of 1598 and 1599.

In medieval times many of the lodges must have worked independently, because travel was very difficult and time consuming. Even so, there is evidence that annual assemblages of free masons were taking place during the 1300s, which were the gatherings that Henry VI sought to prohibit by the Statutes of 1436 and 1437. The guild system proved to be highly successful until it was devastated by the Reformation of 1530-1560, when Henry VIII confiscated most of the guilds’ possessions. Henry VIII’s son, Edward VI, completed the disendowment of the guilds by an Act of 1547 under which any remaining guild funds that had been dedicated for religious purposes were confiscated, as also were the funds of all other religious fraternities. The guilds that survived the Reformation became the Livery Companies of the City of London, of which the “Fellowship of Masons” probably is the best known. It came into existence very early in the 1300s and was called “The Worshipful Company of False Masons of the City of London” from the grant of its arms in 1471 until some time in the 1500s. In 1655, during the aftermath of the Reformation, it was renamed "The Company of Masons".

In operative lodges the supervisory officers included foremen, intendents, superintendents, wardens and deacons, who were responsible for control of the various sections of work. All were fully qualified craftsmen who had been promoted through the ranks when they were sufficiently experienced and had demonstrated the skill and ability required to undertake progressively higher levels of responsibility. The titles and duties of the supervisory officers were not standardised. Medieval guilds in England had wardens of the craft and wardens of the mystery. In medieval lodges in Scotland the chief officers frequently were deacons, often supported by wardens, although the two offices sometimes merged into one or the warden was the chief officer. In some assemblages the freemasons worked under the control of deacons, although wardens were responsible for overall supervision of the lodges. By the second half of the seventeenth century, Master Masons
began to rule operative lodges in Scotland and had Wardens as their deputies. Evidence suggests that English speculative lodges had Wardens in the seventeenth century and that Deacons were later introduced following the practice in Scotland.

**Training In Operative Lodges**

In medieval times in England, apprentices in freemasonry were recruited from suitable boys, usually aged between twelve and fifteen years. A youngster learning the mason trade was indentured as an apprentice in an operative lodge. His training nominally was for a period of seven years. The earliest known regulation relating to apprenticeships in London dates from about 1230, but it was not enforced strictly for many years. Almost a century had passed before apprenticeship was in general use, at about the time the Fellowship of Masons was formed in London. A boy seeking engagement and considered to be acceptable by the members of the lodge was required to swear that he would be obedient and learn the craft. He was then bound over as an Indentured Apprentice to a senior freemason, often the Master Mason himself, who was the apprentice’s master for his period of indentureship. Whilst in training the apprentice lived with his master and gave him implicit obedience in all things, with little recompense other than food, clothing and lodging. His place in lodge life was equally subordinate.

In England, an apprentice who had a good record was tested in the stoneyard for practical proficiency at the end of his indentureship. If he proved himself to be capable and passed an examination in the lodge, the members voted on his admission into full membership. When accepted, he was regarded as a fully qualified tradesman. However, as he had not yet gained sufficient experience to take charge of construction, he would be required to work under the guidance of expert craftsmen for as long as seven more years, although the time varied considerably. When he had proved his ability to take charge of building work, he was accepted as a Fellow and was free to engage subordinate labour and to carry out work in his own right. The title of Fellow is first found in English documents towards the end of the fourteenth century, when it clearly signified membership of a fraternity, but did not appear to indicate a specific grade of proficiency.

Records in Scotland dating from the fifteenth century show that youths were apprenticed to monasteries for periods varying from five to nine years. When an apprentice mason had satisfactorily completed his training in the stoneyard he was "entered" in the books of his lodge. This feature of Scottish operative practice dates from 1598 and probably earlier. Entered Apprentices in Scottish lodges were put in charge of small groups of junior apprentices, although they were still required to work for a few more years under the overall guidance of experienced masons to develop their proficiency and leadership. In Edinburgh the Trade Regulations, incorporated in the Seal of Cause of 1475, provided for an apprentice to serve a term of seven years, after which he was to be examined by four searchers. When found to be proficient he became a Fellow of the Craft and was entitled to all the privileges of the membership of his lodge. In operative lodges Fellows of the Craft were fully qualified masters of their craft in all its aspects. They were allowed to engage labour and to take charge of building work. In operative freemasonry the title of
Master Mason usually referred to the master tradesman who was in charge of a building project, often the proprietor of the lodge engaged to carry out the work.

It is of interest to know that the word fellow is related to the Middle English word fee, which signified a fief or payment, derived from the Old High German fihu or fehu. It has an important cognate in the Scandinavian group of Germanic languages, the Old Norman felag, which signified a placing together of property and hence a partnership. From this usage came the Old English feolaga, then the Middle English felaghe, which later became felawe, whence the English fellow, signifying an associate, a companion and an equal. Thus a Fellow of the Craft was someone who held membership in his craft, for which a fee usually was payable, in consequence of which he accepted the duties of his position and enjoyed the privileges of membership. Nowadays the title Fellow usually applies to the highest grade of membership in a scientific or technical institution, but it also is used in universities to designate the holder of a Fellowship.

Speculative Lodges

Records from the beginning of the 1500s indicate that Scottish and Irish operative lodges accepted persons of stature as honorary members, even though they were neither operative masons nor craftsmen in any other trade. However, this custom does not seem to have begun in England for another hundred years, when the "Fellowship of Masons" in London established an inner fraternity known as the Acception, whose members were not necessarily members of the Company. Although seven members of the Company were enrolled in the Acception during 1620 and 1621, the King's Master Mason, who also was the Master of the Company in 1633, was not enrolled in the Acception until 1639! The Company's records show that several non-operatives were enrolled in the Acception from 1663 onwards. The English craft guilds were decimated by the Reformation of 1530-1560, after which period any lodges of operative freemasons that were established were only set up for the duration of specific projects. With the exception of an Assemblage at York, there are no records of English lodges transforming from operative to speculative practice as they did in Scotland, although many operative freemasons in England were involved in the establishment of speculative lodges. By contrast with England and Ireland, most operative lodges in Scotland continued well into the 1750s, some of them much longer, many of which become speculative lodges almost as a matter of course.

The titles Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft were not used in English lodges until the 1700s, when both of these speculative grades were adopted from operative freemasonry in Scotland. They became firmly established in English speculative freemasonry when they appeared in Dr James Anderson's Constitutions of 1723. The first known use of these titles in England was by the very old operative Assembly of Masons at York, called the York Grand Lodge, which was independent from the Grand Lodges formed in London. Unfortunately the earliest surviving minutes of the York Grand Lodge date from 1712, when it already was in the process of becoming speculative. Of particular interest are the minutes of its meeting held in 1725 on the Festival of St John, which record that "E.P. (Entered 'Prentice), F.C. and M.M. attended", clearly indicating that these three degrees
were being worked at that time. Prior to that meeting the Master was usually referred to as the President, but at that meeting he became the Grand Master, when a Deputy Grand Master and Grand Wardens also were elected. It has been established beyond doubt that admissions to the grades of Apprentice and Fellow were of an esoteric nature at least as early as 1598. In speculative craft freemasonry the degree of Master Mason is similar to the ceremonial of the Ancient Drama in operative freemasonry that has been enacted annually from time immemorial.

**Religious Influence**

Because so much of its work was carried out in an ecclesiastical environment, the craft of freemasons was subject to a stronger religious influence than any of the other craft guilds. This no doubt explains why the old operative ceremonies were based on stories from the scriptures and included extensive moral instruction. In this respect the *Old Charges* were a key element in the induction of candidates into English operative lodges, providing a foundation for the ethical teaching carried out in the weekly meetings. An essential part of the *Old Charges* was the traditional history, in which the concurrent development of civilisation and masonry was recounted on the basis of legends derived from biblical history, supplemented by allegorical anecdotes of contemporaneous events. Erudite researchers have expressed the opinion that a learned monk, who was well acquainted with the usages and customs of the mason's trade, probably prepared the *Old Charges*. Those researchers are of the opinion that the subject matter of the *Old Charges* is much older than the earliest manuscript presently known, which is the *Regius MS* dating from about 1390. It is possible that much of the original material relating to the conduct of a freemason may have been derived from the earliest trade ordinances that are known to have come into effect near the end of the eleventh century, although no copies have yet been discovered. No other medieval craft guild or religious fraternity is known to have possessed a document similar to the *Old Charges*.

Although the traditional history and charges were not identical everywhere, they had a consistent theme and were regarded by the medieval operative freemasons in England as the foundation of their craft in all ages and in all places. Authentic copies of those *Old Charges* constituted the authority under which operative lodges held their meetings, centuries before warrants were issued by the early Grand Lodges. An interesting aspect of the traditional history is the allegorical account that Charles Martel (688-741), known as Charles the Hammer in France, established freemasonry in England. This account might have a factual basis. Masonic legends in France include the anomalous assertion that Charles Martel learnt the craft of freemasonry from a curious mason named *Naymus Graecus*, who had been present at the erection of Solomon's temple.

Scotland had a close association with France, which began when the Irish apostle and Benedictine monk St Columba (521-597) established the first monastery at Iona. St Columba converted the northern Picts to Christianity and also worked in Brittany and the Vosges district of France, where he founded the great abbey at Luxeuil. Having regard to this religious association, which was supported by a significant inflow of operative
freemasons from France to Scotland, it perhaps is surprising that Scottish operative lodges did not have their own traditional histories. The few Old Charges possessed by Scottish lodges of operative freemasons obviously were copied from English sources and date from about the time when the Seal of Cause was issued in Edinburgh in 1475. Likewise there is no evidence of Irish operative lodges having a traditional history similar to that of their English counterparts, but there is ample evidence that they used their working tools as symbols for moral instruction early in the sixteenth century.

Operative lodges traditionally met at noon on the sixth day of each week, when they conducted their business, inducted their candidates and imparted moral instruction. That time of meeting is the basis of the paradoxical answer to one of the questions put to a speculative Entered Apprentice during his examination, to he replies “when the sun was at its meridian”. Operative masons were obligated under oath and were subject to penalties that were customary for the period. In operative lodges the candidate in each of the several degrees was told that he represented a particular stone required in the construction of Solomon's temple. The ceremonial and its inherent religious components were woven around the preparation, testing and placement of that stone in the temple, symbolising the erection of a spiritual temple.

The perambulations of the candidate around the lodge room also related to the erection of the temple. Candidates were taught by charge and catechism and were required to learn much by rote. From the earliest times, one of the most important components of the ritual was a moral interpretation of the many working tools of a mason. This is not surprising, because the names of so many of the tools express a moral quality without requiring any further definition. The working tools presented in the speculative degrees were not the only ones used by the Apprentice, Fellow and Master in operative lodges, but were chosen to illustrate the teachings of the speculative degree.

Operative Working Tools

The Fabric Rolls of York Minster of 1360 list a kevel, sometimes incorrectly called a keevil, which was similar to a very large gavel and was the stone-axe used to break and roughly shape stones in the quarry. The name was used in Scotland and northern England until the early 1800s, but its origin is obscure, though probably deriving from the Old Norman French keville, which means a key, from which a clavicle also is descended. The Fabric Rolls of York Minster provide a detailed inventory of the tools stored in the masons' lodge at the end of the year 1399, including stone-axes, iron chisels, mallets, tracing boards, a hatchet, a big gavel, a compass and a host of other tools.

Some of the less familiar tools listed in early inventories include stone-hammers and stone-axes in a large variety of shapes and weights; setting-hammers with hollow heads for the hard stone hewers; scabbling hammers for the rough layers; various hammer-axes, brick-axes, pickaxes and mattocks; chisels, puncheons and augers; crowbars, levers and wedges; and mallets, mauls and trowels. The principal wooden tools used by operative freemasons were the straight-edges, rules, squares, levels, plumb-rules and heavy setting mauls.
required to ensure that the stones were placed and set to the correct lines and levels during the erection of the structure. They were wooden to avoid marking the dressed and polished stones. Thus we read in I Kings 6:5 of the *New English Bible* that:

"no hammer or axe or any iron tool whatever was heard in the house while it was being built".

**The Apprentice's Working Tools**

The three symbolic working tools of an Entered Apprentice in a speculative lodge are not the same as those presented to his operative counterpart when first indentured. The tools presented to an Indentured Apprentice in an operative lodge were the metal straight edge, the maul or mallet and the chisel, which were the first tools he would learn to use. As the metal straight edge is used as a guide for the chisel when dressing a stone, so it constantly reminds the apprentice that he is required to maintain a straight and undeviating course of action in his work and in his dealings with others. As the maul or mallet applies the driving force to the chisel, so it reminds the apprentice that it is his duty to work hard and diligently in the stoneyard and also in his private life. As the keen edge of the chisel is accurately shaped to cut the stone, it impresses upon the apprentice's mind that knowledge is essential in all activities. The three tools in combination remind the apprentice that all difficulties can be overcome if the correct approach is used with knowledge, hard work and perseverance.

During the course of his indentureship, the apprentice mason learned to use many more working tools, including such implements as axes, bevels and squares, callipers and compasses, gauges of various shapes, hammers, rasps and scrapers – the range was limited only by the sizes and shapes of the stones he was required to cut and dress. The twenty-four inch gauge that is presented to a speculative Entered Apprentice nowadays was introduced to impress upon the candidate the importance of allocating his time properly, so that it would be well spent. In operative freemasonry this aspect of an apprentice's duties were impressed upon him throughout his training, by the strictest adherence to his daily schedule of practical instruction, his weekly attendance in lodge and his regular participation in the religious services of the institution for which his lodge was working.

The maul or mallet, which is also called a *mell* in northern England and Scotland, must not be confused with the heavy setting maul, which is also known as a beetle or sledge hammer. The beetle is a very heavy wooden mallet with a long handle used for driving wedges, crushing broken stone for a macadam road surface, or beating down paving stones. The beetle derives its name from two of the Old English words meaning to beat, respectively *bietl* and *beatan*. A heavy wooden truncheon is also called a beetle. The speculative ritualists replaced the maul with a common gavel, which in fact is never used with a chisel. Moreover, as the gavel is an emblem of power in the sense of government, it is not a very appropriate symbol with respect to the duties of an apprentice. The similarly shaped implements used in operative masonry was the much larger kevel and the stone-axe which had a steel cutting edge, with which the quarrymen broke and roughly shaped the
stones. As the stone-axe symbolises the force of conscience, the early speculative ritualists might have intended the wooden gavel to be a miniature representation of it.

It is possible that later ritualists may have inadvertently called the beetle a gavel, which is a name of American origin from the nineteenth century that refers to its gable-like shape. Unlike their speculative counterparts, the master and wardens in an operative lodge did not use gavels, but carried truncheons, which have been staffs of authority since early medieval times. The master also had a maul as a symbol of his authority and his driving force in the lodge. In some Irish lodges the master's emblem of authority was a stone-axe or hammer and the wardens carried truncheons. In some Scottish and American lodges of speculative craft freemasonry the operative custom of using the maul as an emblem of the master's authority is still in practice. In Scottish lodges the senior deacon's jewel is a maul and the junior deacon's jewel is a trowel, which indicate that the respective responsibilities of the senior and junior deacons are to exercise control in the work and to maintain harmony.

The Fellow's Working Tools

Of the several wooden working tools used in operative lodges, the square, the level and the plumb rule were appropriated to the Fellowcraft in speculative craft freemasonry. This is logical because his operative counterpart was a mason of superior status who was directly responsible for ensuring that the building was erected in strict conformity with the working plans. It should be noted that operative masons used three different squares, each for a specific purpose and each having an important though somewhat different symbolical meaning. Each of these squares has an important place in the speculative ritual, although they are not differentiated in the ritual so that the subtle differences of meaning that are explained in the charges might be missed by anyone who is not familiar with operative practice. Attention will be drawn to these differences when discussing the symbolism of the square. The working tools of a Fellowcraft freemason in a speculative lodge are only miniature representations of the operative tools and they are made of metal as a matter of convenience, so that it may be difficult to envisage how they would have been used in building construction.

The levels and plumb rules used by operative freemasons were closely related, because each utilised a line and plumb bob to determine the vertical plane and hence the correct attitude of the implement. In their simplest form, as used continuously in operative freemasonry at least from the times of ancient Egypt, the frames of both implements were constructed from stout wooden staves that could be dressed perfectly and would not warp or twist. The level generally was in the shape of an equilateral triangle constructed from staves about two cubits or a little over a metre long, with the line and plumb bob suspended from one apex. When the plumb line hung vertically and the point of the plumb bisected the base, the base was horizontal and could be used either to lay levels, or to try and if necessary to adjust horizontals. From the use of the level, in conjunction with the beetle or heavy setting maul, the expression "setting to a dead level" is derived. The plumb rule usually was a stave about two cubits long, with its long edges dressed parallel
to each other. A line and plumb bob were suspended from the upper extremity of the stave on its centre line to determine its verticality. Either long edge of the stave could be used to set verticals, or to try and if necessary to adjust upright members to the vertical plane.

As the apprentice in operative lodges learnt to use a wide range of tools during his period of training, so also did the fellow during his first few years whilst under the supervision of more expert craftsmen. In addition to the square, level and plumb-rule, he learnt to use the wooden straight-edge, plumb lines or plummets, string lines and skirrets, trowels and the Pythagorean square composed of three graduated rods in the ratios of 3:4:5. String lines and skirrets are used to set out lines, but the wooden straight edge is the implement used to test a course of stones for straightness along a line or a vertical series of courses for the uniformity of its surface. A plumb line or plummet is used to plumb a point in a vertical plane and three plumb lines are used together to line up intermediate points in straight lines over long distances, but the plumb-rule is the implement used to check the stones for verticality in successive courses. The Pythagorean square is used when setting out a building, but not when checking right angles during erection, for which purpose the gallows square is the correct implement. The working tools of a fellow thus fall into two distinct groups, one for use when setting out a building and the other for use during its erection.

**The Master's Working Tools**

Most **Fellows** could set out a building if given the location of a corner of the building and one of the building lines commencing from that corner. However, most stately edifices were required to be set out from a given centre point, which only the most capable craftsmen were competent to perform. Thus it usually was only the master of the lodge, the **Master Mason** himself, who set out the building with the assistance of some of his most experienced craftsmen. For this purpose he utilised plumb lines, string lines, skirrets and the Pythagorean square. In the northern hemisphere the Pole Star can be sighted to determine the north-south axis. This is done by sighting the Pole Star through a plumb line set up over the required centre point, then lining in two other plumb lines at or beyond each of the required northern and southern extremities. In both hemispheres the north-south axis can be established by the bisecting an equidistant transition of the sun from the eastern quarter to the western quarter, sighted through a plumb line set up over the required centre point. When the north-south axis has been established it is marked with a string line, so that the east-west axis and the required diagonals can then be established using a Pythagorean square in conjunction with string lines drawn from a skirret at the centre. There are paintings at Thebes in Egypt, dating from 3000 BCE or earlier, which show masons using a stretched cord to draw a line in this fashion.

In medieval times the **Master Mason** usually would be provided with only a description of the required sizes and layout of a building he was required to construct. More often than not the details would be developed progressively with input from the owner over many years of construction. Thus another very important duty of the **Master Mason** was to prepare layout plans of the building for the owner's approval, from which the **Master**
Mason would prepare detailed designs and working drawings. The Master Mason would also prepare detailed drawings for the most important components of the structure, even to the extent of detailing the designs of the windows and the symbolic decorations incorporated in most ecclesiastical buildings. As the pencil and compasses were essential implements used by the Master Mason of an operative lodge when preparing designs and drawings, it was appropriate to include them with the skirret and line as the working tools of a Master Mason in a speculative lodge.

In Zechariah 2:2 in the New English Bible, when Zechariah saw a man carrying a measuring line he asked where the man was going and was told:

"To measure Jerusalem and see what should be its breadth and length".

The symbolical use of the measuring line in Biblical times is confirmed by a passage in Jeremiah 31:39 in the New English Bible, which tells us that:

"The time is coming, says the Lord, when the city shall be rebuilt in the Lord's honour, from the Tower of Hananel to the Corner Gate. The measuring line shall then be laid straight out over the hill of Gareb and around Goath."

The Symbolism Of The Square

The three types of square used by operative freemasons were the square gauge, the try square and the gallows square. The square gauge is an enclosed square of the required inside dimensions to test a cubic ashlar or the cross section of a running stone. The try square has two arms of equal length that include an angle of 90°. It is not calibrated to measure lengths along the arms, because it is only used to test the angle between the two faces of a stone along the arris where they meet, to ensure that they subtend a right angle. The gallows square is used to set out right angles and has two arms of unequal length that include an angle of 90°. Both arms are calibrated on the inside and outside edges to facilitate the measurement of dimensions when scribing stones for cutting. It is also used to set out column bases, wall recesses and other details in the ground plans of structures. The usual sizes of gallows squares used in operative lodges were a small square in the ratio of 2:3 and having 12" x 18" arms; a general purpose square in the ratio of 3:4 called a Pythagorean square and having 18" x 24" arms; and a large square in the ratio of 2:3 and having 24" x 36" arms, which was used to check corners and other wall intersections both internally and externally.

When admitted for advancement as a Fellowcraft in a speculative craft lodge the candidate is told that, having been obligated within the square, he is bound to act on the square to all mankind. This exhortation derives from the operative practice of requiring the candidate to kneel with both knees bare on an ashlar stone that was placed within the square gauge. The reason for the change is not recorded, but the present method of supporting the candidate's elbow within the angle of a small Pythagorean square was substituted for the operative practice at about the time when reconciliation between the Antients and the Moderns was
achieved. The traditional "Square and Compasses" emblem should incorporate a try square that has not been calibrated and a similar square should also be used to form the emblem representing the three great emblematic lights of freemasonry. Because the try square is used to test the angles of a perfect ashlar stone, it is a universal emblem of morality and justice that inculcates truthfulness, honesty and a strict obedience to the law of God's Word. It therefore is rightfully included in the three great emblematic lights by which we shall be tried as "living stones". In Isaiah 28:16 of the New English Bible we read:

"These then are the words of the Lord God: look, I am laying a stone in Zion, a block of granite, a precious corner-stone for a firm foundation; he who has faith shall not waver".

In Psalm 118:22 we also read that:

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner-stone".

The gallows square, with arms in the 3:4 or Pythagorean ratio, is the traditional emblem of the Master that has been used by operative freemasons from time immemorial. It is still used as the Master's emblem by them and by most Continental freemasons. As the gallows square is used to set out the work, which is the Master's duty, so it is the most appropriate square to use as the emblem of the Master's office. For some reason that has not been recorded, but apparently during the 1830s after Euclid's 47th Proposition was introduced as the basis of the speculative Past Master's jewel in England, the speculative Master's emblem was changed to a try square. Perhaps this was a result of the early speculative ritualists' passion for symmetry.

The Master's jewel is a symbolic reminder that he is required to rule his lodge justly and properly, that his conduct must be exemplary and his decisions impartial. In English speculative freemasonry the Immediate Past Master's jewel is a miniature illustration of Euclid's 47th Proposition, suspended from a gallows square with sides 3 units and 4 units long and a hypotenuse 5 units long. About two thousand years before Euclid developed his 47th Proposition, which is one of general application, some skilful craftsman in ancient Egypt had discovered the usefulness of a right angled triangle with sides in the ratios of 3:4:5. Nevertheless the discovery is traditionally attributed to Pythagoras of Greece, who had studied and worked in Egypt and learnt about the use of the triangle there. The 3:4:5 ratios are the basis of the operative freemason's Pythagorean triangle of rods that are used to set out a structure.

The jewels of Scottish Masters and Irish Past Masters, as well as of many American Past Masters, incorporate the try square and compasses combined. This is a symbolic reminder that, in addition to conducting themselves squarely and taking impartial decisions, Masters must keep all their actions within due bounds. The letter G within the square and compasses is a common decoration on the flap of freemasons' aprons in Scotland and America, which combines the foregoing symbolism with the following. In medieval Europe the shape of the gallows square with arms in the ratio of 3:4 was used in
ecclesiastical script to represent the capital letter $G$, because it was the same shape as
\textit{Gamma} in Greek. The gallows square, as well as the Greek \textit{Gamma} that is equivalent to $G$
in the Roman alphabet, all stand for \textit{God} and represent His great attribute of "\textit{Justice}". In
medieval paintings of the Christian disciples, the gallows square is often found embroidered on their vestments, as it is on some priestly robes even to this day. Eminent researchers have stated that the gallows square was also used in early speculative lodges where the letter $G$ is used nowadays, thus showing that the square is one of the most important moral instruments of the craft of freemasonry, while at the same time representing God in His capacity as the Grand Geometrician of the Universe.

\textbf{The Symbolism Of The Level}

As a working tool of an operative freemason, the level is used to set all required points to
the same level on a construction site. From this is derived its symbolic interpretation,
which is equality, but such equality is not expressed in relation to wealth or to poverty in
the fiscal sense. The symbolism of the level is not applied in the secular sense concerning
social distinction, civic responsibility or service to mankind, but is applied in the moral
sphere with reference to the internal rather than the external qualifications of a human
being. The level alludes to that fraternal quality which, in recognising the \textit{Fatherhood of
God}, also accepts as a necessary corollary the \textit{Brotherhood of Man}. The level reminds us
that we are infinitesimal creatures in God's grand scheme of the universe. It naturally
follows that all human beings must appear the same in His sight, in which sense we are all
equal and subject to the same infirmities and vicissitudes of life, seeking the same
immortal mansion and preparing to be judged by the same immutable laws.

The equality of brethren in the lodge is that of the dignity and worth of the human soul,
which is the same for everyone regardless of man-made distinctions. Masonic equality also
recognises that one man may have greater potentialities for service, for life or for reward
than another, but it also denies that any differences of that nature should preclude anyone
from aspiring to any height, however great. The level reminds us that we have all sprung
from the same stock and are all partakers of the same nature, so therefore we all share the
same hopes. Thus the level is an appropriate emblem of the Senior Warden, because when
the lodge is at labour all symbolically are under his immediate supervision and therefore
are on a common level of subordination.

\textbf{The Symbolism Of The Plumb Rule}

Plumb lines and plumb rules are implements used to determine a vertical plane and are
often called plummets in the scriptures. Each depends upon a line from which a heavy
plumb bob is suspended, so that when hanging freely the line is perpendicular. These
devices are among the oldest emblems and all have similar symbolic interpretations. The
plumb is a symbol of truth and rectitude of conduct. It inculcates the integrity of life and
that undeviating course of moral uprightness that alone can distinguish a good and just
man. When erecting earthly structures the operative mason pays strict attention to the vertical, as determined by the plumb, because any deviation from the upright contributes to instability. In like manner the speculative freemason should be guided by the unerring principles of right and truth that are symbolised by the plumb, neither succumbing to the pressures of adversity nor yielding to the seductions of prosperity. We read in Isaiah 28:17 of the *New English Bible* that the Lord said:

"I will use justice as a plumb-line and righteousness as a plummet; hail shall sweep away your refuge of lies and flood-waters carry away your shelter".

Also, in Amos 7:7-8 we read that the Lord said to Amos:

"I am setting a plumb line to the heart of my people Israel; never again will I pass them by."

It is interesting to note that, from the most ancient times, many common words used in everyday speech have had a symbolic meaning that is related to their practical usage. Thus the Hebrew word *tsedek* denotes rightness and straightness in a physical sense, whilst signifying what is right and just in a moral sense. The Greek word *orthos* in the physical sense means straight, erect or standing upright, whilst in the ethical sense it signifies right, correct, proper and equitable. In Latin the word *rectum* denotes something straight or upright and also someone of honesty and integrity. In English the word *right* has a similar duality. In the moral sense *right* denotes something that is just, fair or equitable, while in the physical sense it indicates that something is straight, or perpendicular. Likewise, when referring to the angle that is produced when a line or a plane is placed in a position perpendicular to another line or plane, like a vertical wall standing on a horizontal floor, which interrelates the use of the plumb and the level, the angle of 90° thus formed is called a right angle. The plumb rule is appropriate as the jewel of the Junior Warden, because it is emblematic of the upright conduct that should always distinguish the brethren during their periods of refreshment, when symbolically they are under the Junior Warden’s control.

### The Symbolism Of The Pencil

The pencil, like the quill in olden times and the pen in modern times, is a symbol of learning and knowledge. Writing is a visible expression of the human intellect that is used to convey our thoughts and inner feelings. By association, the pencil is a symbol of the law of God that is laid down for us in the sacred writings. As the pencil is used by the skilful architect to delineate the intended structure faithfully and accurately, so it should remind us of our responsibilities as individuals, always bearing in mind that our thoughts, words and actions are all recorded by the Most High who, having left us free to choose our own course of action will assuredly hold us responsible for our behaviour. The symbolism of the pencil is not restricted to freemasonry. From ancient times the pen and the tablet have been symbols of the Holy Spirit and writing has represented the divinely inspired scriptures. For example, hieroglyphs originally were the sacred language of ancient Egypt.
This symbolism is typified in the records of the Sufis, the mystics of Islam, who say of the writing of the Koran:

"God created under the Arsh (Throne) and of its light a great 'Tablet' in colour as a green beryl and a great 'Pen' in colour as an emerald and filled with ink which was of white light. God cried 'Write O Pen!', whereupon it moved over the Tablet and wrote thereon everything that should happen till the Last Day and the Tablet was covered over with the writing. And thereon was then inscribed the Divine original of the Glorious Koran."

In this dissertation the Tablet is the "table of the heart" on which the Pen, which represents "Divine Expression", inscribes the "Law of Wisdom" that expounds the involution and evolution of the human soul, from its descent into the human being, its liberation from earthly restraints and its ascent to reunite with God at the end of this earthly existence.

**The Symbolism Of The Skirret**

The Oxford English Dictionary describes the skirret as an instrument for measuring land and aligning trenches, working on a revolving centre pin. The origin of the word is said to be unknown and the first recorded usage is shown as 1853. As the skirret was a species of water turnip that was commonly cultivated in Europe in those days, it seems likely that the name of the instrument was derived from the vegetable during the measurement of farming lands. The large roll of line held on the rotating spool at the upper end of the handle would appear very much like the vegetable. The skirrets usually displayed in lodges of speculative craft freemasons are only miniature representations of the operative freemason's implement. In operative freemasonry the skirret is commonly used to mark out the ground for the intended structure. In so doing the line is unreeled from the spool then chalked and tautly stretched out, so that when it is pulled up off the ground at about mid-length and released under tension, a straight chalk line is marked on the ground. The skirret is also used with a fixed length of line to set out equal distances from a centre or other given point on the foundation plan, which is the way it is used when setting out the ground plan of a building from its centre that has been established on the ground. The use of the measuring line in ancient times has already been mentioned. Symbolically, the skirret represents the sacred writings in which a straight and undeviating line of conduct is clearly laid down for our guidance. Thus the symbolism of the skirret is closely related to that of the pencil, which represents the sacred writings themselves.

**The Symbolism Of The Compasses**

The compasses are used to describe a circle about a given centre point. The name of the instrument comes from the Old French compasser, thence through the Middle English compas, both meaning to measure and also proper proportion. This also is the derivation
of the old expression *to compass about*, which means *to encircle* or *to circumscribe* an area. The compasses represent a circle, which is a symbol of the all-embracing principle of Divine manifestation that is perfect and entire, including everything and wanting nothing, having neither beginning nor ending, timeless and absolute. Thus they are applied in Proverbs 8:27-29:

"When he established the heavens I was there, 
when he set a compass on the face of the deep, 
when he made firm the skies above, 
when he established the fountains of the deep, 
when he assigned the sea to its limit, 
so that the waters might not transgress his command, 
when he marked out the foundations of the earth . . . ."

In freemasonry the compasses or dividers are used to determine with accuracy and precision the limits and proportions of the intended structure being designed and the dimensions of the stones being shaped. The compasses symbolise the unerring justice and impartiality of God, who has accurately defined for our guidance the limits of good and evil and has prescribed our obedience thereto, but has left us free to choose, in the certain knowledge that we will be rewarded or punished accordingly as we have obeyed or disobeyed his Divine commands. The compasses also remind us that we must keep our passions and prejudices within due bounds.
CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO – THE TRACING BOARDS

The tracing boards enable a freemason to represent his deepest thoughts in visible form.

Operative Origins

The tracing board is an emblem in speculative freemasonry that is derived from the tracing boards used in design and the laying out tables used in the stone yard or on the construction site by operative freemasons. In operative times the tracing boards and laying out tables were often called trestle boards, because they were large flat boards set up on trestle legs so that they could easily be moved when required. The master mason used the drafting or tracing board, equivalent to the modern drawing board, to prepare a general layout and the overall design for the required building. The laying out tables also were important items of equipment, because the details of the structural components and the joints required for fabrication and erection were worked out on them. These details were then transferred to working plans drawn up on the drafting or tracing board. In its original context "to trace" did not mean "to copy" as it does in modern architectural offices. It signified to trace out or to draw, in the sense implied by the Latin word tractus, from which it was derived and come down to us through the Italian, Spanish and French languages. In the process of evolution, the word acquired many diverse meanings, including to sketch, to scheme and to devise, as well as to plan. The Fabric Rolls of the York Minster provide one of the earliest known records of the use of tracing boards in England. From the inventory of stores for 1399 we know that "ij tracyng bordes" were then in use.

In operative freemasonry the kind of laying out table or tracing board that was used varied to suit the specific purpose for which the drawings were required. For example, full-scale details of joints and special fixtures were often set out on the site of the building, using the floor as a laying out table. Details found necessary during erection of the building and therefore required for immediate use, were often sketched on a portable slate. Archaeological excavations at several sites have unearthed slates used for that purpose and have also revealed design details that had been prepared on stone floors and on dressed stones later incorporated into the building. The final layout and detailed plans were usually drawn to scale on parchment that had been soaked and stretched wet over a drawing board, or on skins specially prepared for that purpose. In the Exeter Cathedral there are old documents recording the purchase of parchment in 1377, for preparation of the drawings required to continue the work that was begun in 1270 to transform the Norman church that had been built from 1112 to 1206. Those documents also record that a skin was purchased in 1389 for the working drawings required to complete the east window.
Speculative Development

As the early speculative craft lodges were usually held in rented rooms, it was customary to sketch appropriate emblems on the floor in chalk or charcoal, so that they could easily be erased at the end of the meeting. A temple and other symbols were usually drawn, often encircled by a wavy cord having open looped knots and tassels at the ends. This was the indented tassel or indented tarsel referred to in the old catechisms, but it is not, as is sometimes suggested, the indented or tessellated border that is referred to in modern rituals. The knotted and tasselled cord symbolises the universal bond of friendship that should unite every freemason with his brethren. The four tassels often seen in the corners of the mosaic pavement have the same significance as the indented tassel, but those depicted at the corners of a modern tracing board in the first degree represent the tassels suspended in the corners of a lodge to represent the four cardinal virtues. Tassels are ancient symbols, which are derived from the Hebrew word tsitsith, or Sadhe Yod Sadhe He, which means both tassels and fringes. Numbers 15:37-40 in the New English Bible tells us that the tassel should be used as a reminder:

"The Lord spoke to Moses and said speak to the Israelites in these words: You must make tassels like flowers on the corners of your garments . . . Into this tassel you shall work a violet thread . . . to ensure that you remember all my commandments and obey them . . ."

As lodges became larger, the floor sketches gave way to durable floor cloths that could be rolled up after the meeting. Later these cloths were stretched over a trestle table or trasel, sometimes incorrectly called a tarsel. Still later the cloths were hung on the walls to save wear and tear, but nowadays they are usually replaced by less expensive printed tracing boards. The tracing board is called a jewel of the lodge, in which sense it is an important emblem in its own right, because it represents the spiritual tracing board that comprises the sacred scriptures in which are laid down the moral plans and divine laws that should govern our lives and actions. Each degree in speculative craft freemasonry has a tracing board comprising a multiplicity of emblems that have their individual symbolisms, but also are used collectively to illustrate the important truths communicated in that degree. The meanings of the symbols on a tracing board are explained in an associated lecture. In modern freemasonry tracing boards are mainly used in speculative craft lodges, although in earlier times they were widely used in most orders of freemasonry, some of which will be discussed. A very early set of tracing boards in the modern format was prepared for the Chichester Lodge by one of its members in 1811, Brother Josiah Bowring. He was a well-known portrait painter of London, who was initiated in the lodge in 1795. Most tracing boards now used in speculative lodges are derived directly or indirectly from a set prepared by Brother John Harris and published in about 1821. Brother Harris was a miniature painter and architectural draughtsman whose designs generally followed those of Brother Bowring.

Tracing boards in speculative craft freemasonry are usually rectangular with sides that are in the proportion of the phi ratio, which is called the Golden Section. It is mathematically and aesthetically elegant and results in the rectangular shape that is most pleasing to the
human eye. The phi ratio equals half the sum of unity and the square root of five, which is 1.618 approximately. It also is the ratio that the sum of the length and width of a rectangle bears to its length. The phi ratio has some remarkable mathematical properties, including the fact that the square of phi equals phi plus one and the reciprocal of phi equals phi minus one. It is linked to the Fibonacci Series, in which each term after the second is the sum of the two preceding terms, beginning with 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 and continuing to infinity. The ratio of each number to its predecessor progressively converges on the phi ratio as infinity is approached. The Fibonacci Series is frequently found in nature, like the ratios between the planetary orbits and the Mendelian laws of heredity. The phi ratio was the proportion used in the design of the Parthenon in Athens and in many other ancient classical buildings. In architectural and decorative work that is designed to utilise standardised components like tiles, rectangles in the proportions of 8:5 or a ratio of 1.6 are often used for convenience as an approximation of the phi ratio. Interpreted symbolically, the phi ratio represents the human soul, while the repeated application of the ratio reflects the human soul's dynamic development in an upward spiral. This suggests that, in the speculative degrees of craft freemasonry, the designers of the tracing boards were not only concerned with physical form and external symbolism, but also with aesthetics and inner spiritual symbolism.

Physical form, mental development and moral progress are represented by several different rectangles. The perfect square symbolically represents the physical plane, the external and lowest plane in the material nature of the universe, as well as the lower mental plane and basic knowledge. The oblong square has a ratio of two to one and symbolises the upward mental and moral progress of mankind in its search for the divine. In early speculative lodges this was represented by the perpend ashlar, which is a perfect square in cross-section and an oblong square in elevation. The Holy Place in the tabernacle and also in the temple at Jerusalem was an oblong square. It is represented in speculative lodges by the mosaic pavement, which therefore should be and usually is an oblong with sides in the ratio of two to one. The temple square has the proportions of three to one and represents the pi ratio, which is approximately 3.142, from which the circumference of a circle can be calculated being equal to 2 pi times the radius. The pi ratio reminds us of that important ancient symbol, the point within a circle, which typifies the creative power and infinite wisdom of God. Interpreted symbolically, the pi ratio represents the human search for the divine, for spirituality and for eternity. The tabernacle and its successor, the temple at Jerusalem, each had a ground plan in the proportions of three to one, which is called a temple square. The dimensions of the temple at Jerusalem were 60 cubits long from east to west and 20 cubits wide, twice those of the tabernacle. This proportion has always been adopted for the floor plan in lodges of operative freemasons. The tabernacle and also the temple at Jerusalem had a Holy Place and a Holy of Holies. The Holy Place was in the proportion of two to one, called an oblong square or a double square. The Holy Place has an important counterpart in the double cube of the altar of incense that stood in front of the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The altar of incense was two cubits high and square in section with sides of one cubit, made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. The Holy of Holies was a square in plan and cubical in shape, with sides of 10 cubits in the tabernacle and 20 cubits in the temple.
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Speculative Craft Freemasonry

The tracing boards used in the three degrees of speculative craft freemasonry differ significantly both in presentation and purpose. They are all in the proportion of the phi ratio and are presented in an upright or portrait format. Their main features will now be summarised. In the first degree an indented border of black and white triangles surrounds the tracing board, the black triangles outside and the white inside. Usually a tassel is depicted at each corner. Symbolically the viewer is facing the east, the orientation being identified with west at the bottom and east at the top. Within the borders a perspective view of the interior of a symbolic lodge is shown with a mosaic pavement of black and white tiles. The symbolic lodge has no walls and is open to the heavens, which suggests the universality of the science. Three pillars, one each of the Ionic, Doric and Corinthian orders, are shown standing freely on the pavement in the east, west and south respectively. Various implements are depicted on the mosaic pavement, in the centre of which there is a pedestal supporting an open volume of the scriptures on which are placed the square and compasses. A ladder rests on the scriptures and reaches to a blazing star in the heavens, where the sun, moon and seven stars also are shown. The rungs of the ladder support several symbols that represent the moral virtues. There is an explanatory lecture, which gives details of the symbolic teachings of the degree and sets out the precepts on which speculative freemasonry is based, of which a belief in God is the central tenet. The tracing board in the second degree is intended to represent the interior of the first temple at Jerusalem, looking towards the Holy of Holies in the west. This representation of the temple is entirely hypothetical, because the arrangement differs significantly from the description recorded in the scriptures. In particular, an entrance to the Holy Place is shown on the left, which would be in the southeast corner, with a pillar on each side. Those pillars represent Jachin and Boaz, which flanked the only entrance to the temple that was in reality at the eastern end of the building. A winding stair is shown leading from the entrance depicted in the southeast to the Holy of Holies in the west. In fact there was no winding stair in the Holy Place, although there were two in the chambers surrounding the southern, western and northern walls of the temple, one in the southeast and the other in the northwest. Although the River Jordan was east of the temple, on the tracing board it is towards the southwest when looking through the entrance shown in the southeast. A small waterfall can also be seen and an ear of corn growing nearby, reminding us of the defeat of the Ephraimites by Jeptha and his army. The lecture on the second tracing board describes the two great pillars in detail and explains how King Solomon's temple was constructed.

The tracing board of the third degree usually has a solid black border as a symbol of mourning and also to represent an open grave. As might be expected this tracing board is orientated facing west, opposite to the tracing board in the first degree, thus emphasising the differences between our entrance to and exit from this mortal existence that are symbolically represented in the two degrees. Within the grave is a coffin with its foot at the eastern end, the traditional orientation of graves to face the rising sun. An acacia bush, an ancient emblem of immortality, is placed at the western end of the grave near the head of the coffin. The interior of the temple is depicted in a vignette shown on and near the centre of the coffin, looking towards the Holy of Holies in the west. The emblems of mortality and the working tools of a master mason are displayed at the head of the coffin, while the
working tools of a craftsman are near the foot. Also near the head of the coffin is a plaque, which has inscriptions similar to those of an epitaph on the headstone of a grave. Various other inscriptions also appear on the coffin. The accompanying lecture recapitulates the circumstances surrounding the untimely death of the principal architect and the subsequent recovery of his body. The importance of fidelity is emphasised and we are reminded of the faithful and diligent service that is required of us, in accordance with God's laws and for the benefit mankind, if we hope to receive our reward in a life hereafter.

Mark And Royal Arch Freemasonry

The instruction of a craftsman begins in the second degree and is continued in the degree of mark master mason, in which the work is closely related to the construction of King Solomon's temple at Jerusalem, before the untimely death of the master craftsman. The tracing board of the mark degree also is in portrait form, in the proportions of the phi ratio. It shows an external view of the temple and surrounding countryside, looking towards the west. A sunbeam can be seen striking the roof of the temple, as a symbol of the commencement of a new cycle of life. Although the River Jordan is east of the temple, it is shown in the distance on the right, which is to the north. The scene is framed within an arched gateway of dressed stones decorated with various symbols.

In the centre of the keystone that completes the crown of the arch, is a circle circumscribing an equilateral triangle. From ancient times the equilateral triangle has been a symbol of the deity, because it is regarded as one of the most perfect figures. The circle, which is also regarded as a perfect figure, is a symbol of the all-embracing aspects of divine manifestation and is an emblem of eternity. Eight Hebrew characters, Heth Beth Aleph Aleph Sadhe Shin Mem Sin, are engraved within the circle. They are the initial letters of the words of two quite different Hebrew sentences. One sentence relates to the principal artificer at the time when preparations were being made for construction of the temple. The other relates to Hiram King of Tyre, at the time when construction of the temple had been completed and Solomon King of Israel was arranging for its dedication. When the two Hebrew sentences have been translated into English, the initial letters of the words in each sentence are HTWSSTKS. In the corners of the tracing board, immediately above the archway, there is an inscription in Hebrew that is taken from Psalm 118:22 and reads "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner-stone". This statement is repeated and amplified in I Peter 2:7-8, when the apostle Peter writes his first general letter to the Christians in the five provinces of Rome.

An open volume of the sacred writings and an All-seeing Eye respectively adorn the two stones uppermost in the arch, one on each side of the keystone. The sacred writings are to govern our faith and the All-seeing Eye reminds us that the eye of the Almighty is always upon us to aid us in our laudable undertakings. Most of the other symbols depicted on the arched gateway represent well-known working tools of an operative freemason. In addition a rope and anchor, a ladder and an hourglass are also depicted. The rope and anchor represents our spiritual attachment to the deity and is a symbol of that firmly grounded hope that arises from a life of true and faithful service in the sight of the Lord. The ladder
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represents Jacob's ladder and is a symbol of the faith we entertain of being rewarded for a well-spent life in a life hereafter. The hourglass reminds us, by the speedy passage of its sands, that human life is only of a transitory nature and that as a consequence we must carry out our allotted tasks while it is yet day, before the night comes when no man can work. The hourglass is intended to emphasise the important and fundamental lessons of life that were imparted to the candidate when he received the degree of Master Mason.

The working tools depicted on the arched gateway are the mallet, the chisel, the plumb rule, the trowel, the twenty-four inch gauge, the square and compasses, the level, the cramp and the axe. The mallet is the operative freemason's tool that is similar to, but not identical with, the common gavel in symbolic speculative craft freemasonry. The mallet is used to impart a driving force, especially to the chisel. Morally it teaches us to correct irregularities, to curb ambition, to restrain envy, and to moderate anger. As the chisel is the operative freemason's tool used to cut and dress the stones, so emblematically it represents the education and discipline that is required to develop the latent virtues of the mind and develop human knowledge. The plumb rule is used by operative freemasons to try and when necessary to adjust the upright elements of a structure when setting them on their proper bases. It denotes that justness and uprightness of life and actions that ought to be practised by every freemason. The trowel is a tool used by operative freemasons to spread the mortar that binds the stones where required to complete the structure. Symbolically the trowel teaches us to spread the mortar of kindness and affection that should unite all members of our fraternity and ensure that brotherly love, relief and truth are practised in all of their aspects.

In speculative freemasonry the twenty-four inch gauge is a modern implement that replaces the straight edge, the twelve-inch rule and the three-foot rule that were used by operative freemasons in medieval Britain. No doubt the twenty-four inch rule was chosen for this purpose because its twenty-four parts could be used symbolically to represent the twenty-four hours of the day. The apprentices in operative freemasonry did not have a graduated rule, but they used a straight edge as a guide for the chisel when cutting a stone. The craftsmen used the graduated rules when marking out the stones ready for cutting and together with the straight edge when checking the dimensions and finish of the stones when being dressed and polished. Symbolically the twenty-four inch gauge reminds us that we must correctly apportion our time for labour, refreshment and sleep, having due regard to the duties we owe to our creator and to our fellow men, as well as for the benefits accruing to our families and ourselves. The symbolism associated with the rungs of the ladder is closely interrelated with that of the subdivisions of time associated with the twenty-four inch gauge. As we have received, so we should freely give. Our labours should not be focussed on the gratification of individual ambition, but should be directed for the benefit of all mankind, reflecting the virtues of faith, hope and charity that are represented in the ascent of the ladder.

The symbolism of the square and compasses is so well known that only a brief summary will suffice. The square teaches us to regulate our lives and actions by the principles reflected in the use of the line and rule by the operative freemason. The compasses teach us to limit our desires suitably in every position of life, so that we may rise in station by
merit, live respected and die regretted. The level is a perfect complement to the square and compasses, being an implement used by the operative freemason to lay levels and prove horizontals. Symbolically it is an emblem of equality, reminding us that all are equal in the sight of God, so that rank and fortune will not be criteria for our advancement to a life hereafter, only goodness and service to God and man. The cramp is an implement used by the operative freemason to lift stones and other objects of great weight and put them in their proper places. Symbolically it represents that close and strong union that ought to bind together all members of our fraternity and help to overcome any difficulties that may be encountered. The axe is used by the operative freemason to cleave stones. Symbolically it has been an implement of punishment from time immemorial, reminding us of the punishment that awaits us if we fail to obey God's laws and commit offences towards God or man.

In the foreground of the tracing board, immediately in front of the left hand column supporting the arch, the craftsmen can be seen receiving their wages. Immediately opposite, in front of the right hand column, are the perfect cubic ashlar of the master, the keystone of the senior warden and the perpend ashlar of the junior warden. The cubic ashlar is distinguished by the master's square and the perpend ashlar is distinguished by the junior warden's plumb. The keystone is fitted with a lifting ring attached to the stone by means of a lewis and has the same markings as the keystone that completes the crown of the arch. These three stones occupy prominent positions on the tracing board so as to impress upon our minds the important lessons imparted to the craftsman during the ceremony of his advancement as a Mark Master. Finally, in the lecture though not illustrated on the tracing board itself, there is a dissertation on the masonic cipher that in earlier times was of considerable importance to the operative freemason. It is a symbolic reminder that we must keep secret a brother's confidences with the same strict caution as we maintain our own private affairs.

The royal arch degree relates to reconstruction of the temple at Jerusalem after the Israelites had returned from their captivity in Babylon. The tracing board in portrait form is in the proportion of the phi ratio. It depicts the ruins of the temple on which is superimposed a view of the interior of the temple, placed over an underground vault shown in section and representing the secret vaulted shrine in which the Sacred Word was deposited. The interior view of the temple is entirely symbolic and it is surrounded seventeen standards or banners. The royal arch banner, a Triple Tau within a circle, is depicted in the middle of the four principal banners under which the Israelites marched through the wilderness and camped around the Tabernacle, all arranged as an arc near the ceiling. The other twelve standards are the banners of the tribes of Israel, arranged in two columns of six, one on each side. In the centre of the pavement six candlesticks are placed to delineate a greater and a lesser equilateral triangle. A circle circumscribes the greater triangle. The circle represents the Sacred Word itself and the greater triangle represents the creative, preservative and destructive powers of the deity. Each light of the lesser triangle bisects a side of the greater triangle. These lights represent the Light of the Law as it was revealed in the Patriarchal, Mosaical and Prophetic Dispensations. An open volume of the scriptures, a scroll and various working tools rest on the mosaic pavement that forms the floor of the temple. A pedestal of pure virgin marble stands on the floor of the vaulted...
shrine, within a circle inscribed with the twelve signs of the zodiac. Twelve is regarded as a complete number, which represents all that can be seen or perceived. The zodiac is an ancient symbol of the cycle of life through which the soul accomplishes its development. On top of the pedestal there is a plate of pure gold inscribed with a circle, an equilateral triangle and various Hebrew characters. These inscriptions represent the Sacred Word and several attributes of the deity. All are brilliantly lit by sunlight shining through the cavity that was prepared by the workmen when clearing away the rubbish of the old temple, reminding us that the creator is the source of all life and light and the spring and fountain of virtue.

**The Ancient And Accepted Rite**

The Ancient and Accepted Rite is of French origin. Although many degrees of the Rite have tracing boards in the proportions of the phi ratio, some of them are a square, or an oblong square, or a temple square, as is appropriate to the symbolism of the degree. The 9º tracing board is in the upright portrait form and the 10º is in the horizontal landscape form. The 9º and 10º are concerned with the search for the three ruffians after the untimely death of the master craftsman and with bringing them to justice. Both of these tracing boards are in the proportions of the phi ratio, alluding to the return of the principal architect's soul to God who gave it. Scenes of the search for and recovery of the ruffians are shown on the boards. These tracing boards are in contrast to that of the 11º, which is a square, because it deals with the mundane matter of selecting and appointing twelve princes to administer the districts occupied by the twelve tribes of Israel. The tracing board of the 11º depicts the physical details of the temple, reminiscent of the second tracing board of speculative craft freemasonry and also the tracing board of a mark master mason. However, to stress the importance of God in all matters, the board is surmounted by a triangle in which one of the names of God is inscribed in Hebrew. A square tracing board is also used in the 16º, which relates to other temporal matters, in particular the troubles caused by the Samaritans before the erection of the second temple at Jerusalem, which necessitated Zerubbabel's journey to Babylon. That was when Zerubbabel sought to have the Edict of Artaxerxes rescinded by Darius and to obtain from Darius written confirmation that he would honour the Decree of Cyrus, enabling the children of Israel to live and work in Jerusalem unmolested and to commence the reconstruction of the temple. Within the square is a heptagonal figure with an open volume of the scriptures in the centre and an irradiated sword above it. Various temporal emblems are at the seven corners.

The 7º and 8º relate to the appointment of a group of specialists immediately after the death of the principal architect, to ensure that the preparation of the working plans continued in accordance with the designs that had been approved by the three Grand Masters and also that the work would continue to be carried out in accordance with those designs. As these activities symbolise the upward mental and moral progress of humanity in its search for the divine, the tracing boards of these two degrees are oblong squares in the proportion of two to one. In the centre of the board of the 7º is a pedestal in the form of a perpend ashlar, supporting an open volume of the scriptures with the square and compasses on it. On the 8º board all of these are replaced by an emblem, which is an open
pentagon in which an equilateral triangle encloses a circle circumscribing a nine pointed star, within which are three concentric equilateral triangles with three Yods at their centre. The lecture explains how this emblem represents the many attributes of the Deity. Both boards also include temporal emblems and have at their heads an irradiated triangle inscribed with different characters.

The 4º, 5º and 6º tracing boards are in the proportion of three to one, the shape of a temple square, representing the pi ratio and symbolising man's search for the divine, for spirituality and for eternity. In the tabernacle and later in the temple the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies represented those aspirations. These degrees relate to the time immediately after the death of the master craftsman who had been personally responsible for the Holy of Holies. The temple was nearing completion, but the Holy of Holies required work of a special nature beyond the competence of an individual mason. Accordingly the work was entrusted to a group of seven skilled masons under the leadership of Adoniram and substitutes were provided for the secrets that were lost on the death of the master craftsman. King Solomon also made arrangements for the transfer to Hiram, King of Tyre, of the twenty cities in Galilee that had been promised to him in recognition of his assistance during the building of the temple. The tracing board of the 4º is subdivided into a double square to represent the Holy Place at the eastern end and a square to represent the Holy of Holies at the western end. In the centre of the Holy Place is a volume of the scriptures with the square and compasses on the open pages. Various items of the temple furnishings are arranged around it. Symbols representing the Divine Spirit are depicted in the Holy of Holies. In the 5º the orientation is reversed and the temple furnishings are replaced by a hollow square of mosaic pavement and other symbols. Both boards include representations of the two great pillars correctly oriented at the eastern end of the tracing board. The tracing board of the 6º is entirely symbolical. It has reminders of this earthly existence at the foot of the board, whilst at the head of the board a Yod placed in the centre of an upright oblong square represents God in his celestial sphere. The Hebrew characters Beth, Nun and Shin are arranged in the centre in the shape of an equilateral triangle, signifying a covenant, a promise and peace, to remind us of God's special relationship with mankind.
CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE – THE TRACING BOARD OF A MASTER MASON

*The dust shall return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.* – Ecclesiastes 12:7

**The Modern Format**

In 1811 Brother Josiah Bowring, a well known portrait painter of London who had been initiated in the Chichester Lodge in 1795, prepared a set of tracing boards for his lodge. His tracing board of a Master Mason included a large scroll draped over most of the lower half of the coffin. In the centre of the scroll was an interior view of King Solomon's temple, looking towards the Holy of Holies in the west, which occupied nearly all of the area resting on top of the coffin. A eulogy, comprising five lines of Hebrew characters, was inscribed on the portion of the scroll overhanging on the right side of the coffin. Various symbols were depicted on the portion of the scroll overhanging on the left side. An epitaph, also in Hebrew characters, was inscribed at the bottom of the scroll, part of it on the right side of the overhanging portions and part of it on the left. Brother Bowring's tracing boards are among the earliest known in the modern format. They are of special significance, because Hebrew characters were used for all inscriptions on the tracing board of a Master Mason. Some 20 years after Brother Bowring had prepared his boards Brother John Harris, an architectural draughtsman and miniature-painter, also prepared a set of tracing boards that he published in about 1821. His designs were similar to Brother Bowring’s, except that Brother Harris omitted the scroll that is a central feature of the tracing board of a Master Mason prepared by Brother Bowring. Brother Harris also converted the Hebrew characters on the coffin to equivalent cryptic characters or Roman numerals. Most of the tracing boards used in modern speculative lodges have been derived directly or indirectly from the set prepared by Brother Harris.

As the general appearance of Brother Harris's set of three tracing boards appealed to the Emulation Lodge of Improvement, it decided to adopt them. Even so, in about 1846, the Emulation Lodge of Improvement commissioned Brother Harris to modify his design of the Master Mason’s tracing board, to include a scroll inscribed in Hebrew similar to that
adopted by Brother Bowring in his design. Brother Harris completed his new design about three years later. He included Hebrew inscriptions on the scroll and also three Hebrew characters, *He*, arranged on the coffin in the form of a triangle. However, he did not use Hebrew characters for the other inscriptions on the coffin, but continued to use the cryptic characters and Roman numerals as on his earlier board. This tracing board is called the "Improved Harris". In lodges that do not follow the Emulation working, the scroll on the tracing board of a Master Mason is usually omitted and the three Hebrew characters, *He*, are represented by the Roman numerals 5. The “Improved Harris”, or Emulation tracing board, provides the background that is essential for a proper understanding of the tracing boards of a Master Mason. It is an advantage to know the derivation and meaning of the words that the Hebrew characters represent. It also is important to remember that Hebrew is written from right to left, as also are the cryptic characters used to replace Hebrew characters. All of the words represented by the Hebrew characters and the substituted cryptic characters are explained in the *Geneva Bible* published by Thomas Bodley from 1560 onwards and also in the later editions published by Christopher Barker from 1580 onwards, which is usually called the *Barker Bible*.

The *Geneva Bible* has comprehensive marginal notes. William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and many eminent scholars and philosophers of that era used it extensively. The *Barker Bible* includes those marginal notes and also tabulations of Hebrew names and associated words, with explanations of their meanings. Both Bibles continued in popular use by educated people long after the *Authorised Version* of King James was issued in 1611 and it would have been very familiar to the early speculative ritualists. Most Biblical names and other significant words in masonic usage were derived from the unpointed Hebrew texts from which the *Geneva Bible* and *Barker Bible* had been translated. As those texts were written using only the twenty-two consonants without vowels, their interpretation was often a matter of opinion. Moreover, unless Hebrew characters are written with great care, some can easily be mistaken for others, with consequential changes in pronunciation and meaning. For example if the left leg of *He* (the equivalent of *H* in English and meaning a *Window*) inadvertently joins the top of the character, it becomes *Heth* (the equivalent of a guttural *Ch* in English and meaning a *Fence*). If *Tau* (the equivalent of *T* in English and meaning a *Cross*) is written carelessly, it could easily be mistaken for either *He* or *Heth*. As in the English language, many Hebrew words also have various different meanings according to the context in which they are used. Factors such as these would have contributed to many of the variations found in the pronunciation and interpretation of Hebrew words that are of significance in freemasonry.

**The Emulation Tracing Board**

A detailed examination of the Emulation tracing board of a Master Mason will develop our understanding of the tracing boards in common use and will put them in a better perspective. Most of what follows is not included in lectures on the tracing board, nor is any explanation of the symbols on the board and their meanings usually given. Many tracing boards of a Master Mason differ from the Emulation board in their details, but five basic elements are common to nearly all boards. These five elements will now be described.
with reference to the Emulation board. The first element is an enclosing rectangle with sides that are in the proportions of the phi ratio, which is approximately 1.618 and is called the Golden Section. These proportions are mathematically and aesthetically elegant and produce the rectangle that is most pleasing to the human eye. The derivation and symbolism of the phi ratio are explained in the chapter discussing tracing boards in general. The board is in portrait form with a thick black border, oriented so that east is at the foot of the board and west is at the head of the board. This black border represents a grave, reminding us of our ultimate destiny on earth. The second element is a coffin enclosed within the grave, with its head to the west. The emblems of mortality and the implements with which the master craftsman was slain are resting on the coffin. A memorial tablet near the head of the coffin is inscribed with details of the master craftsman and a record of his death, similar to an inscription placed on the headstone of a grave. Three Hes also are depicted on the coffin in the form of an open triangle, with its apex to the east near the foot of the coffin. They allude to the untimely death of the master craftsman and are intended to remind us of human frailty.

The third element comprises a Master Mason’s working tools. The compasses are placed between the pencil and skirret, with its legs extended to enclose a circle having a point at its centre. When thus placed, the working tools remind us that during our mortal lives we must keep our passions and prejudices within due bounds, while using our mental and manual skills in the Lord's service. The fourth element is a large parchment scroll placed within the triangle of Hes and draped over most of the lower half of the coffin, with the ends hanging down on each side. A depiction of the interior of the first temple at Jerusalem is at the centre of the scroll, viewed looking westwards towards the Holy of Holies, which can be seen through the partly drawn curtains at the western end of the Holy Place. On the overhanging right hand side of the scroll is a brief eulogy to the master craftsman, inscribed in Hebrew. The overhanging left hand side of the scroll depicts an equilateral triangle near its upper edge and near its lower edge a circle circumscribing a pentagram or open pentacle with a Yod in the centre. Along the bottom of the scroll an epitaph is inscribed in Hebrew, partly on the right side and partly on the left. The scroll and its inscriptions remind us that, at the close of this mortal existence, all those who have faithfully served the Lord may hope to enter that house not made with hands, the Eternal Temple in the heavens. The fifth element is an acacia bush at the head of the grave, reminding us that an immortal soul dwells in every mortal frame.

**Important Biblical Names**

Before considering the various elements of the board in detail, it would be helpful to review the parts played by several Biblical people who were significant, directly or indirectly, during the building of the first temple at Jerusalem. It is important to know the Hebrew characters and the cryptic transliterations representing these Biblical names, as well as to understand the meanings of their names. All of this is relevant to the inscriptions relating to the untimely death of the master craftsman. The spellings of the names and words that follow are from the unpointed Hebrew characters. For convenience they are written as in English, from left to right, but it must be remembered that in Hebrew they
were written from right to left. Of those responsible for the construction of the first temple at Jerusalem, the three best known are Solomon King of Israel (Shin Lamedh Mem He, which probably means peaceful), Hiram King of Tyre (He Waw Resh Mem, which signifies altitude or exalted) and Hiram Abif the skilful and experienced master craftsman whose first name is the same as that of the King of Tyre and whose second name, Aleph Beth Yod Waw, could signify his father. However Abif probably was a surname, which is the sense ascribed to it by Luther and the Swedish translators. Heinrich Gesenius (1786-1842), an eminent German biblical scholar and Hebrew lexicographer, says in his book Hebräisches Elementarbuch that Abif variously signifies a master, teacher, or chief operator. This interpretation is supported by the modern New English Bible translations, firstly in I Kings 7:14 which describes Hiram Abif as "a man of great skill and ingenuity, versed in every kind of craftsmanship in bronze" and again in II Chronicles 2:13 where he is called "a skilful and experienced craftsman, master Huram".

In addition to those three important persons, there are another three Biblical characters that are of special significance to a Master Mason. Those three are Tubal Cain, Machbanai and Adoniram. Because Tubal Cain (Tau Beth Lamedh and Qoph Yod Nun, usually translated as Tubal the Smith) is one of the four founders of the crafts named in the Bible, he is referred to in the earliest known copy of the Old Charges of the operative freemasons, the Regius MS of about 1390. The New English Bible version of Genesis 4:22 refers to Tubal Cain as "the master of all coppersmiths and blacksmiths". He is the first artificer in metals mentioned in the scriptures. In this context there can be no doubt that Hiram Abif, the chief worker in bronze at the construction of King Solomon’s temple, who was responsible for casting the two great pillars and all the lavers and other ceremonial vessels, was indeed a master craftsmen and a worthy successor of Tubal Cain who therefore deserved the appellation of Master.

Machbanai (Mem Heth Beth Yod Nun Aleph Yod), was an important person who is referred to in I Chronicles 12:13. He was the eleventh of the band of Gadite warriors who joined King David in the wilderness at Ziklag, in about 1002 BCE, when they formed a mighty host and made David king over all Israel. They routed the Philistines and recovered the Ark of the Covenant, which they conveyed to Jerusalem. King David was then able to begin preparations for the building of the temple at Jerusalem. Machbenai appears in I Chronicles 2:49 as Machbenah (Mem Heth Beth Nun He) and there are several other variations or derivatives of the name in the Bible. They include Machir (Mem Kaph Resh or Mem Waw Heth Yod Resh) in Genesis 1:23 and also Machi (Mem Heth Yod) in Numbers 13:15. There are several other variations in spelling to be found in the Revised Version and also in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which illustrate the difficulties in achieving exact translations of the old unpointed Hebrew texts. Machbanai and its variants have several meanings, which include the smiter that is relevant to his role as a member of the mighty host. It can also mean the builder is smitten and the builder (or master) is slain, which are relevant to later events during the building of the temple. A number of closely associated and similar sounding words that are of special significance are discussed in the section on significant Hebrew words.
Adoniram (Aleph Daleth Nun Yod Resh Mem, meaning my lord is exalted) was another very important character involved in the construction of the first temple at Jerusalem, even though he is often overlooked. King Solomon appointed Adoniram as the superintendent over the levy of thirty thousand workmen from among the Israelites, who were sent in courses of ten thousand a month to work on Mount Lebanon. The first mention of Adoniram is in II Samuel 20:24, when as Adoram he was an officer in charge of the tribute levied by King David. Later, in I Kings 12:18, he is called Adoram when he was one of the officers in charge of the levy under Rehoboam, a son of King Solomon. Rehoboam was the last king of the united monarchy and also the first king of the southern kingdom of Judah. Adoniram is referred to for the last time in II Chronicles 10:18, when he was called Hadoram, the chief officer of Rehoboam's tribute. The Bible records that when Adoniram was sent by King Rehoboam to collect the usual taxes, the rebellious people of the northern tribes stoned him to death, which precipitated Jeroboam's revolt against the king in about 922 BCE. Both Adoram and Hadoram are shortened and familiar forms of Adoniram.

**Significant Hebrew Words**

We will now examine the various derivations of Machbanai and some other closely related words with respect to their interpretations and their relevance to the untimely death of the master craftsman, Hiram Abif. The initial letters of the words that comprise Machbanai and other names, as well as of other relevant words, appear on the tracing board of a Master Mason either as Hebrew characters or as their cryptic transliterations. As in all languages, an interesting aspect of a study of Hebrew names and their associated words is the uncertainty, in any particular instance, whether the associated words came into the language as derivatives of the name, or whether the name is composed of words reflecting characteristics of the person. As with many English names, either possibility might be the appropriate alternative, but no attempt will be made in this review to allocate a probability in respect of a particular usage. This examination is not exhaustive, nor does it set out to assign all of the available meanings of a name.

Several of the more important root words and their meanings will be examined, from which are derived the various expressions in common usage. The root words may be examined in relation to a commonality of meaning, or to a similarity in sound, or to a possible mistake in the reading of a Hebrew character for one or another of the reasons already mentioned. Sometimes these categories overlap, even though the overlapping elements may not be immediately evident. Some relevant words relating to building, arranged in the alphabetical order of the Hebrew characters, are: *bena* meaning to build, spelled Beth Nun Aleph; *banah* meaning to build up, spelled Beth Nun He; *bonai* or *b’nai* both meaning a builder, spelled Beth Yod Nun Aleph Yod; and *b’nain* meaning a building, spelled Beth Nun Yod Nun. Words relating to striking and death include the following: *mooch*, which means to kill and is spelled Mem Waw Heth. It is also written as *mooth* and is spelled Mem Waw Tau. Another is *machah* meaning a smiter, spelled Mem Heth Yod. Yet another word of similar import is *machah*, meaning to destroy or to blot out, which is spelled Mem Heth He. Finally in this context is the similarly sounding *makkah*, meaning a blow or smiting, which is spelled Mem Kaph He. There also are
several other relevant words that have similar sounds, but have quite different meanings. They are: *maq* meaning *putrid* or *rottenness*, spelled *Mem Qoph*; the interrogative *mah*, spelled *Mem He*; and the definite article *h*’ or *ha*, spelled *He*. All of these words are of importance when endeavouring to make an objective interpretation of the Hebrew inscriptions on the scroll and the other characters that appear on the Emulation tracing board.

**The Physical Components**

Although the several physical components depicted on the board are individually related to one or another of four of the five elements of the tracing board, their symbolisms are so closely interwoven that their meanings can be understood better if they are first considered together. Nevertheless, it is important also to consider the more esoteric components separately. When appropriate, some of the significant variations that appear on modern tracing boards will also be mentioned. The physical components are the grave, the coffin, the elements of mortality, the acacia bush, the working tools of a Master Mason and the implements with which the master craftsman was slain. The coffin is placed in the grave with the foot towards the east, which has been the traditional and symbolic orientation for burials in all beliefs and in all ages, so that the interred body is directed towards the rising sun, which is an ancient emblematical reference to a belief in resurrection. The emblems of mortality are placed over the pectoral region of the body to symbolise the departure of the spirit from the body, which is eloquently expressed in one of the Scottish rituals:

"Look on this ruin, it is a skull  
Once of ethereal vision full.  
This narrow cell was life's retreat,  
This space was thought's ambitious seat.  
What beauteous vision filled this spot,  
What dreams of pleasure long forgot.  
Nor love, nor hope, nor joy nor fear  
Has left one trace or record here,  
Yet this was once ambition's airy hall,  
The dome of thought, the palace of a soul."

The acacia, or shittim wood, is an evergreen and one of the few trees that can survive the rigours of the harsh wilderness and deserts of the Holy Land, for which reason it has been regarded as an emblem of immortality since ancient times. Joel prophesied that in the Day of the Lord the Valley of Shittim would receive the life-giving water. Shittim was esteemed as a sacred wood among the Israelites. It was used to construct the *Ark of the Covenant*, the frames of the tabernacle, the table for the shewbread and for all other sacred furniture. In the Greek language *akakos* and *akakon*, which respectively mean *guileless* and *harmless*, are derived from *akakia*, which means *acacia* and in Greek is also used as an alternative word for *inosens*, which means *innocence*. The acacia bush at the head of the master craftsman's grave reminds us that his virtuous conduct, integrity of life and fidelity to the trust placed in him should be emulated by every Master Mason. An ancient
custom, still in use, is to carry or wear a sprig of evergreen such as acacia, rosemary or myrtle at funerals and commemorative services. Acacia is also regarded as a symbol of initiation. A special plant became associated with a particular rite in the ancient initiations and religious mysteries, ultimately being adopted as a symbol of that rite. Such symbolic plants include the lettuce in the mysteries of Adonis, the lotus among the Brahmins, the lotus and the Erica or heath among the Egyptians, the mistletoe among the Druids and the myrtle in the mysteries of Greece. In freemasonry acacia is a symbol of initiation, not as an apprentice, but into the life hereafter as it is emblematically portrayed in the third degree. The acacia bush reminds us that innocence must lie in the grave until the voice of the Most High calls it to a blissful eternity.

The working tools are placed at the head of the coffin, because the brain is the seat of learning. The pencil, skirret and compasses invoke the mental faculties rather than manual skills in their use. The pencil is used by the skilful architect to define precisely the requirements for the structure, which symbolically warns us to carry out all of our responsibilities to God and man, as our words and actions are recorded by the Almighty Architect to whom we must give an account of our conduct through life. The skirret is used to mark out the ground with accuracy for the foundation of the intended structure, symbolically pointing out that a straight and undeviating line of conduct is laid down in the scriptures to govern us in our pursuits. The compasses are used to delineate exactly the limits and proportions of the several parts of the building, to ensure that beauty and stability adorn the completed work. The compasses symbolise the unerring justice and impartiality of the Most High, reminding us to keep our passions and prejudices within due bounds because we will be rewarded or punished accordingly as we have obeyed or disregarded His divine commands.

The implements with which the master craftsman was slain are the plumb rule, the level (or the square in the Irish working) and the heavy setting maul. They are placed at the foot of the coffin to signify that all earthly pursuits have been trampled underfoot by death. The plumb rule and level (or square) reflect the utmost integrity of the Master craftsman, even in the face of the gravest danger that resulted in his death, which is signified by the heavy setting maul. From time immemorial the heavy setting maul has been an emblem of death by violence. The heavy setting maul is the implement used by operative masons to set ashlars and paving stones level and to bed them down on their foundations, from which is derived the expression *setting to a dead level*. On many tracing boards a try square, the Master's emblem of office in speculative craft freemasonry, is shown near the foot of the coffin to signify that Hiram Abif died in office while serving the Lord. On some boards three gallows squares, the emblem of office of a Master in operative freemasonry, are depicted on the vertical face at the foot of the coffin. Because three is regarded as the most perfect and most sacred number, the three squares at the foot of the coffin show that the Master craftsman had lived a blameless life, on the square with all mankind, as he was when he departed this life. When associated with the acacia bush at the head of the coffin, the three squares also signify that a state of perfection can be achieved only when the immortal spirit is raised in the life hereafter.
The Characters That Form A Triangle

The triangle formed with the three Hebrew characters He or the three 5s has several interpretations, of which the first is mystical. From ancient times the equilateral triangle has been an emblem of God and a symbol of perfection. Because the apex is pointing downwards, we are reminded that perfection can only be achieved by passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The sum of the three He's forming the triangle is the mysterious and omnific 15, a sacred number that is symbolic of the name of God. The number 15 is sacred because it is the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew characters Yod He, which signify Jah. This is the "two lettered" name of God that is used in Psalm 68:4 and is usually translated as Lord in the Bible. Most biblical scholars consider that this "two lettered" name is a name of God in its own right, equivalent to the Tetragrammaton. The Tetragrammaton is spelled Yod He Waw He and is also called the Ineffable Name, which is transcribed in English as YHWH or JHVH and is usually rendered as Yahweh and Jehovah. However, some say that the "two lettered" name of God is only a contraction of the tetragrammaton. Because the Hebrew characters do not include separate numerals, other characters are used as substitutes for numerical values, the Yod representing 10 and the He representing 5. However, as a mark of respect and in veneration of the sacred name, Yod and He are not usually used together to represent 15, but Teth and Waw are substituted respectively representing 9 and 6.

The temporal interpretation of the three He's or 5s, commencing with the lowest and moving clockwise, relates to the individual in his natural environment and to his civic obligations. The first character concerns our physical surroundings and represents the five natural forms of matter envisaged by the ancients, which are earth, air, water, ether and fire. The second character concerns our mental capabilities and represents the five human senses by which we perceive our environment, these being feeling, hearing, seeing, tasting and smelling. The third character concerns our moral responsibilities that are represented by the five points of fellowship, which are to meet a brother on the square and sustain him when in difficulty or danger, to support him in his virtuous and laudable undertakings, to pray for him and assist him in his times of need, to keep inviolate his private affairs and lawful secrets and to vindicate his reputation with as much sincerity in his absence as in his presence.

There also is a collective interpretation of the three characters that is of particular interest to speculative freemasons. The three He's are the initial letters of the three Hiram's who assisted King Solomon in the design, supply of materials and erection of the temple. They were Hiram King of Tyre, Hiram Abif and Adoniram, who are included in the important biblical names already discussed. The characters also refer to the fifteen trusted craftsmen who, in masonic legend, were chosen by King Solomon to make a diligent search for Hiram Abif when he had disappeared from his place of work at the temple. The craftsmen were formed into three lodges of five and went forth in different directions, acquitting themselves in their various duties with the utmost fidelity. When the body of the Master craftsman was found it was recovered and conveyed to Jerusalem, where it was interred as near to the Holy of Holies as Israelitish law would permit.
Finally, the three characters represent the five perfect points of entrance in each of the three speculative degrees of freemasonry, which are preparation, obligation, sign, token and word. Test questions on the perfect points of entrance can be traced back to the catechisms used by the operative freemasons, with whom they comprised an essential part of the instruction received. The perfect points of entrance are included in the earliest known speculative ritual, the *Edinburgh Register House MS* of 1696, which contains a description of the Scottish ceremony for the initiation of an Apprentice. They also appear in the *Dumfries No 4 MS* of about 1710 and in the *Trinity College, Dublin MS* of 1711. The test questions are used more extensively in the Scottish and Irish workings than they are in the English workings.

### The Inscriptions On The Coffin

Immediately above the emblems of mortality is a memorial inscription, similar to those that appear on the headstones of graves. The Roman numerals on the plaque are the clue to deciphering the cryptic characters. It is immediately evident that the numerals are intended to be read from right to left, as the Hebrew characters would have been written, but it may not be so evident that in fact they are seen as a mirror image. If all of the cryptic characters are visualised as being read from within the coffin, then they are readily decipherable as standard characters that were used in most of the old treatises on masonic scripts. From time to time writers have said that they have found errors in the script, which they have blamed on Brother John Harris's transcription, but those claims seem to have been based on a false premise, especially as some of the cryptic characters are the same whether read from within the coffin or from outside. In the following comments all characters that are written from left to right must be visualised as they appear in the inscriptions, which is from right to left.

The three characters above the date are the equivalent of *He Aleph Beth* and refer to Hiram Abif. The date is shown as *AL 3000*, which is a reference to the Latin *Anno Lucis* meaning "*in the Year of Light*", calculated by adding 4,000 to the years BCE (Before Common Era). In 1650 Archbishop Ussher dated the creation of the world and the appearance of Adam at 4004 BCE, which was rounded off when determining the *Year of Light*. On the basis of the then available knowledge for dating Biblical events, King Solomon’s temple was nearing completion in about 1000 BCE, or AL 3000, when the master craftsman was slain. Modern research indicates that the date probably would have been about 950 BCE, or AL 3050, but the difference is of no consequence in relation to the legend. On most modern boards cryptic characters equivalent to *Tau* and *Qoph* are placed to the right and left of the plaque respectively, but preferably they should be at the head of the coffin, each side of the working tools as on the Emulation board. The *Tau* and *Qoph* are the initials of Tubal Cain, who was sent to King Solomon as the Master Smith, although his duties became much wider in scope. There is no Hebrew character for *C*, but the sound derived from the initial *Qoph* of Cain has been transliterated as a *C* in the cryptic characters.

Immediately below the emblems of mortality, reading from right to left, there are cryptic characters equivalent to *Mem Beth*, which appear twice on the Emulation board, but only
once on some modern boards. On the Emulation board and in English lodges that derive from the **Antients**, as well as in all Scottish lodges, these characters allude to the first words spoken when the indecently interred body of Hiram Abif was discovered. The first pair of characters allude to an exclamation of shock that was spoken in Hebrew when the body was discovered: "Mahhah b'nai?" spelled "Mem He, He, Beth Yod Nun Aleph Yod!", the equivalent in English being: "What! Is this the builder?" In the Irish and also in some Scottish workings this is expressed as "Alas, the builder!" whilst in some Scottish workings "The death of the builder!" is used less correctly. The second pair of characters allude to an expression of distress: "Machi b'nai!" which is spelled "Mem Heth Yod, Beth Yod Nun Aleph Yod!", equivalent in English to "The builder is smitten!" The Jacobite masons in Scotland must have noticed that the Hebrew pronunciation of this comment is almost identical to the Gaelic "Mac benach", from *Mac* which means son and *bennaich* which means to bless, hence signifying "the blessed son", an enigmatic title that the Stuart freemasons applied to their idol, the Young Pretender. The close relationship between Scotland and France under the **Auld Alliance** is illustrated by an equivalent expression in the French Rite, said to mean "He lives in the son!" which cannot be derived from the Hebrew.

In their book entitled *The Hiram Key*, Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas propose another interesting derivation for the exclamations, which they relate to the murder of Seqenenre Tao II, a Theban king of Egypt, in about 1600 BCE. They suggest that the words come from the Egyptian "Ma'at-neb-men-aa" and "Ma'at-ba-aa", meaning "Great is the established Master of Freemasonry" and "Great is the spirit of Freemasonry" respectively. In this context they say that *Ma'at* has been translated as *Freemasonry* because there is no other modern single word that conveys the multiplicity of ideas of the Egyptian word, which they sum up as being "truth, justice, fairness, harmony and moral rectitude as symbolised by the regular purity of the perfectly upright and square foundation of the temple". *Ma'at* is used in this context in the pyramid texts.

It might be tempting to assume that the circumstances are too remote for such an origin to be feasible, were it not for the fact that so much of our modern English language has been derived progressively through a series of different languages over several millennia, especially words and expressions relating to the liberal arts and sciences and to religious and esoteric subjects generally.

English rituals derived from the **Moderns**, as well as some American rituals of similar origin, use a different Hebrew pronunciation for the first exclamations made by the Fellows of the Craft who discovered the body of Hiram Abif, based on two Hebrew verbs of similar pronunciation. Those words are *mookh* spelled *Mem Waw Heth* and *makkah* spelled *Mem Kaph He*, which respectively mean to kill and to smite, whence are derived the exclamations "The master is slain!" and "The builder is smitten!" These versions appear to have been introduced by the **Moderns** in about 1730, to distinguish them from the **Antients** who retained the original words and whose rituals and customs differed little from those of their Irish and Scottish brethren. Another version of the exclamation used in some English and American workings comes from a similar sounding Hebrew noun, *maq* spelled *Mem Qoph* and meaning rottenness, whence the expression "He is rotten!" and
the more fanciful "rotten to the bone", which clearly is a play on words incorrectly combining Hebrew and English.

There is ample evidence that, prior to the union of the Antients and Moderns early in the 1800s, the Moderns were only using one word, even though the Antients were using the two words that had always been used by their Irish and Scottish brethren. The original word used by the Moderns was based on the Hebrew makkah, spelled Mem Kaph He, meaning a blow or smiting, but it appeared later with many different spellings and pronunciations. The earliest known version appears in the Sloane MS of about 1700, when it seems that only two degrees were being practised in England. Four versions of the word were in use by the end of 1725 and at least eight by 1763, but in all there have been at least sixteen versions of the word. There is little doubt that almost all of them were either fanciful corruptions or mispronunciations of the various Hebrew words we have examined. The union of the Antients and Moderns more or less stabilised the usages, whilst permitting the distinctions already mentioned.

The scroll and the temple

An important feature of the Emulation tracing board is a scroll draped over the lower half of the coffin, in the middle of which is depicted an interior view of the temple. This view is usually shown in miniature near the middle of the coffin on other boards. The views vary in detail, but contrary to I Kings 6:14-35 they all show a series of columns around the interior walls. These columns probably were included as symbols, possibly representing the five noble orders of architecture and hence the work for which the master craftsman was responsible, but no explanation is given in the old catechisms or in modern rituals. On the Emulation board the ceiling of the Holy Place is flat as described in the Bible, but on other boards it usually is arched. The Emulation board shows a continuous series of small arched windows along the walls of the Holy Place, near the ceiling, which would have provided the only light as it is recorded in the scriptures. Most other boards show a series of arches supported on columns along the full length of the Holy Place, but without windows, although the Holy of Holies at the western end appears to have a flat ceiling, as in the Biblical description.

On all tracing boards the curtains at the western end of the Holy Place are partially open, which reveals the Holy of Holies and permits a glimpse of the Ark of the Covenant and the Cherubim guarding it. Some boards depict a priest standing in front of the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The floor of the temple is not shown overlaid with gold as described in I Kings 6:30, but is depicted symbolically as a mosaic pavement of black and white tiles. On most modern boards the first arch is inscribed with characters that usually are indecipherable, although they are supposed to replicate the eulogy and epitaph on the scroll of the Emulation board. The representation of the temple on the board is explained beautifully in another Scottish ritual:

"The great lesson conveyed to us symbolically by this board, by the coffin enclosing all within its cold embrace, is that at that very moment, even from death itself springs life..."
immortal. Here in the bosom of death we see the mosaic pavement typical of life; not life traversed by toil and difficulty, as formerly represented by the winding stair, but of life eternal, triumphant over death, leading directly through the porch to the Holy of Holies. Observe the dormer window, emblematically admitting the revelation of divine truth; but it is one of the most beautiful and at the same time one of the most mysterious doctrines of masonic symbolism that the Freemason, whilst always in search of truth, is destined never to find it in its entirety. That teaches him the humiliating but necessary lesson that the knowledge of the nature of God and of man's relation to Him, which knowledge constitutes divine truth, can never be acquired in this life. Such consummation only comes to him when he has passed through the gateway of death and stands in the court of light, with the full light of revelation upon him."

**Inscriptions On The Emulation Scroll**

A eulogy, written in basic unpointed Hebrew characters, is on the overhanging right hand side of the scroll. It relates to the inscriptions on the coffin. An epitaph, written in basic unpointed Hebrew characters, is at the bottom of the scroll and also relates to the inscriptions on the coffin. As the original texts of the inscriptions are not available, an interpretation of the Hebrew characters on the tracing board must suffice. This presents some difficulties because, even on the largest tracing boards, some of the Hebrew characters lack clarity and definition, so that they cannot be read with certainty. It might be supposed that it was not intended that the inscriptions should be read, but this would not be in keeping with the meticulous care taken in other details and the interrelationship of all components of the tracing board. As the script is composed only of root words without vowels, prefixes or suffixes, its interpretation is limited to character recognition for word definition and for grammar. The interpretation of modern Hebrew writing is assisted by vowels, prefixes and suffixes.

Because the script on the tracing board is comprised of root words as in the original Biblical writings, a different interpretation of a character may allow an alternative composition of the root word. Unless they are carefully written, it is possible to confuse several pairs of Hebrew characters, of which the following are of particular relevance to the inscriptions on the scroll. *Yod, Waw, Zayin* and also *Nun*, in the forms that are used at the end of a word, could easily be confused if poorly written. Several pairs of characters, *Beth and Kaph, Daleth and Resh, Gimel and Nun*, as well as *Mem and Samech*, are similar in shape. Three other characters that are of the same general shape are *He, Heth* and *Tau*, which could easily be misread if poorly written, because the left leg of *He* does not quite join the top as in *Heth*, while the left leg of *Tau* has a slight curve at the lower end. We do not know if Brother John Harris correctly transcribed all of the characters from the original scroll on Brother Josiah Bowring's tracing board, or if the original itself included any errors.

A study of the script shows that a few small differences in the interpretation of characters could produce interesting changes in the translations of the eulogy and epitaph that are worth mentioning, though none alters their underlying meanings. A Hebrew sentence with
an active or finite verb usually commences with the verb, followed by the subject and then the object. Passive verbs are usually omitted when a word links the subject to the predicate that then follows. Several interpretations have been considered, but some clearly are not relevant to the circumstances. The root words and their relevant meanings for the adopted interpretations are set out below in the sequence in which they appear on the scroll. The interpretations give the exact meanings of their Hebrew counterparts, although equivalent modern English words could have been substituted, for which there are other Hebrew words. For example extremity is used with its ancient connotation of death, as intended in extreme unction. The alternative expressions are familiar and may have been avoided deliberately.

The Eulogy

The first line of the eulogy appears to be Heth Yod meaning by the life of and Kaph Lamedh meaning wholly, completely, to be finished. The second line appears to be Resh Heth Shin meaning to give up or to throw up followed by Lamedh Beth meaning life or the heart or the vital principle. The third line appears to be Shin Resh meaning violence, destruction and Aleph Lamedh meaning unto, into or causation. The fourth line looks like Sadhe Yod Resh meaning to go or to prepare for a journey. The fifth line is like Aleph Beth meaning father and Yod meaning to. If this is the correct interpretation of the characters, then the eulogy may be expressed in the words: "Having given up his life as a result of violence, he has passed on to the Father." There is no doubt that the first character in the first line of the eulogy is Heth, but if it should have been He then the first line actually becomes a significant noun and the structure of the sentence is altered. The alternative translation of the first line then becomes He Yod Kaph Lamedh, which means the temple and in Hebrew usage specifically the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. However, the structure of the sentence and its interpretation would only make sense if the inscriptions in cipher at the head of the coffin were included. As the ciphers originally were in Hebrew characters their inclusion might have been intended and the eulogy would read: "Hiram Abif, the Master Smith at the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, gave up his life as a result of violence and has passed on to the Father." In all of the circumstances this is the preferred interpretation.

The Epitaph

The part of the epitaph on the right of the scroll seems to begin with Beth Heth meaning to rest, followed by He Waw meaning alas!, then by Qoph Sadhe Resh meaning extremity and finally Beth meaning in. The part of the epitaph on the left side of the scroll appears to be Yod Kaph Shin Resh meaning right, proper, or to be acceptable, followed by Heth Yod meaning to live, then by Nun Aleph which is an exhortation when following a verb, then by Sadhe Beth meaning glory, splendour or beauty and finally Yod meaning in. When read together, these two parts of the epitaph testify to a belief in the resurrection, saying: "Alas! He is at rest! In his extremity may he be acceptable to live in glory!"
Although the portion of the epitaph on the right of the scroll clearly ends with Beth, the two or possibly three characters preceding it are not very clear. Their interpretation can affect the sentence structure and also the interpretation of the preceding characters. The first two characters clearly read Beth Heth, which means to rest, but the next two characters He Waw, which usually signify a lamentation such as Alas! could signify a possessive pronoun such as his in a different context. If only two characters precede the final Beth, the last root word on the right of the scroll might then be interpreted as Qoph Sadhe Beth, which means to cut off; to cut down, extremity or end. The intermediate character or characters are the most obscure and might be interpreted as Qoph Teth Beth, with similar meanings to Qoph Sadhe Beth, but also meaning destruction. If on the other hand the obscure writing represents three characters, which seems likely, other interpretations are possible for what would then be the root word preceding the final Beth on the right of the scroll. One is Qoph Beth Resh, the usual noun for a grave, a burial place or a sepulchre as well as the verb to bury; another is Qoph Sadhe He meaning to cut off or to destroy; and lastly there is Qoph Beth Lamedh meaning to kill or to slay. It is interesting that all of the alternative nouns and verbs would be appropriate to the general tenor of the epitaph, but grammatically the noun is to be preferred. The preceding He Waw then becomes a possessive adjective and the final Beth becomes an idiomatic preposition, so that the epitaph would then read: "At rest in his grave, may he in his destruction be acceptable to live in glory."

**The Symbols On The Scroll**

On the left hand side of the scroll, immediately above the epitaph, a pentacle circumscribed by a circle has a Yod in the centre, signifying the omnificence of God. The pentacle represents man and the single point directed heavenwards represents his integrity and goodness. Operative freemasons considered the pentacle or pentagram to be a symbol of deep wisdom and it is found among the architectural ornaments of most religious structures of the Middle Ages. Among speculative freemasons the pentacle is an emblem of the five points of fellowship, which typifies the bond of brotherly love that should unite the whole fraternity. The pentacle, circle and Yod combine to herald a victory in death and a resurrection in the hereafter by the grace of God. At the top of the scroll, above the pentacle, an equilateral triangle with its point uppermost signifies perfection. From time immemorial the equilateral triangle has been used almost universally as a symbol of the Deity. The pentacle and the Yod within a circumscribing circle, when coupled with the equilateral triangle, indicate that as the master craftsman, Hiram Abif, had completed his earthly labours in the service of the Lord, he would return to his Maker and receive his reward in life eternal. Thus the symbols on the left hand side of the scroll aptly sum up the message that is conveyed by the inscriptions on the coffin, in conjunction with the eulogy on the right hand side of the scroll and the epitaph at the bottom of the scroll.
Interpreting The Hebrew Inscriptions

Those who wish to examine the foregoing interpretations in greater depth may need more information on sentence structure, verb forms and nouns, for which purpose the Introductory Hebrew Grammar by R. Laird Harris is a useful reference. The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon by Benjamin Davidson is an invaluable source of information for a detailed study of Hebrew words used in the Bible. It is arranged alphabetically and includes every word and inflection used in the Old Testament, as well as identifying where each word is used. Other useful references for the derivation of significant Hebrew words and for Biblical history relevant to this discussion are The New Bible Dictionary published by the Inter-Varsity Press, Unger's Bible Dictionary by Merrill F. Unger and a book edited by John Bowker entitled The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions. A book by Roy A. Wells, entitled Some Royal Arch Terms Examined, also is very informative concerning the derivation and meaning of many Hebrew words relevant in freemasonry. He also comments on the Gaelic interpretation of one of the words, but in doing so he misses one vital point. The word itself certainly was not one that had been coined by the Jacobite freemasons in Scotland, but the very close similarity of its pronunciation in Hebrew and Gaelic no doubt gave rise to its special connotation when used in Scotland and France.

End of Volume 2 ‘The Square and Compasses’ by Don Falconer