

THIRD DEGREE MASTER MASON



SIGNIFICANCE

1. Age or Afternoon of life
2. Threshold of Immortality

SYMBOLISM

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. First Section | Second Section |
| a. Preparation | a. The Drama |
| b. Reception | b. Substitute Word |
| c. The Lost | c. Grip |
| d. Perfect Square | d. Emblems |
| e. Obligation | |

LANDMARKS OR PRINCIPLES OF MASONRY

1. Monotheism
2. Immortality
3. Volume of Sacred Law
4. Legend of Third Degree
5. Secrecy
6. Symbolism of Operative Art
7. Membership Restricted to Freeborn Male Adults

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Grand Lodge: **GRAND MASTER**

- 1) Permanent Members

2) Lodge Representatives

Administration

- 3) Directors
- 4) Departments
 - a. Relief
 - b. Service
 - c. Education & Training
- 5) Districts

Lodges

- a. Composition
- b. Relation to Grand Lodge

Members

- a. Obligations
- b. Privileges

COLLATER AND NON-MASONIC BODIES

CONCLUSION

THIRD DEGREE **SIGNIFICANCE**

The First- and Second-Degrees deal with active life, the third is the degree of reflection. The First Degree represents youth; the Second, manhood, the Third, the afternoon of life when the shadows begin to lengthen towards death.

The workman arriving in the Middle Chamber has come to an understanding that knowledge concerning the universe leads to God. Now, in the Third Degree, he further develops that thought and conceives that in exerting his faculties to this end he is doing the Master's work, and in so doing identifies himself with the Master, and becomes to the extent immortal.

SYMBOLISM OF THE THIRD DEGREE

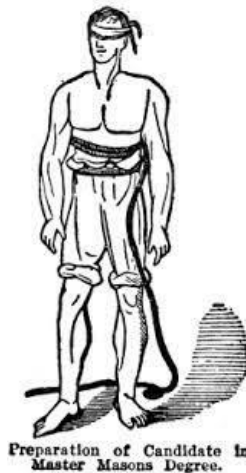
First Section

Preparation:

The position of the Cable-Tow indicates the increased dependency of the brethren on each other.

The Knocks represent the jewels of distinguishing virtues of a Master Mason, which are the fruits of his practicing the precepts of this degree.

The candidate is barefoot because this is the most solemn degree of all, and teaches the deepest truth. A Master's Lodge is assembled in the Sanctum Sanctorum. "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place wherein thou standest is holy ground."



Pass:

The pass is given for, not by the candidate, for the same reason as was explained in the Second Degree. The qualification for an understanding of this degree is a thorough belief and experience in the doctrine of the Second. Therefore, Tubal-cain, who is referred to in the Bible (Genesis 4:22) as "an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron," was legendary hero of the Operative Masons. He was of perfect strength and skill, able to perform everything pertaining to the operative art. He was said to be the inventor of the plough and of the first sword. The Greek god Vulcan, the blacksmith god, is supposed to be Tubal-cain under another name.

Reception:

The leading virtues of jewels of a Master Mason are contained in the self-control, that is, arise from habitual obedience to the voice of conscience. They are as vital to the spiritual live as the heard is to physical existence, hence the application of the Compasses to the breast.

That Which Was Lost:

This is the keynote of the degree. The secret for which the Master Mason is searching is knowledge of God, truth, the purpose of living. The allegory of something lost is used in order to portray vividly the nature of the search. Something lost has existence; it was possessed once, therefore it can be found. It is a figure of speech as old as mankind. The Jews represented their search for religious truth as a search for the name of Deity, which they said "had been once known but lost.: hence they never referred to God by name, but by a single letter of his name, as explained in the Second Degree.

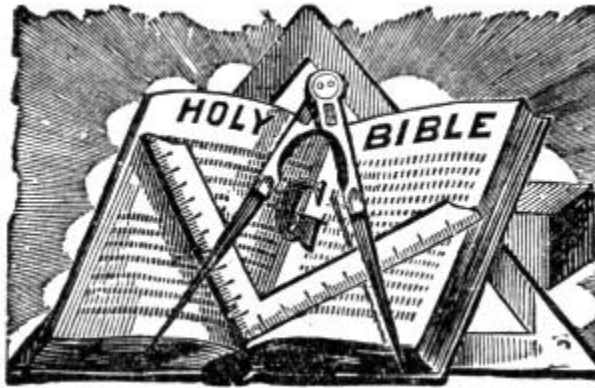
The search of the Holy Grail is an illustration of the same allegory in literature. We have partial glimpses and then lose sight of it, yet we are convinced it is there. To learn the secrets of the universe, to know God through nature and through revelation, as laid down in the Trestle-Board, these are the aims of the Master Mason. This constitutes Building the Temple. The Temple will not be completed in this world; but the act of building by the work-man will bring the Temple nearer to completion.

To the East:

Towards the light, toward further understanding.

Perfect Square:

The philosophy of the first two degrees is represented by oblong, i.e. imperfect square. Oblong Square was an old expression for a rectangle. The Square was formerly termed a perfect Square. The Master Mason's Degree is the perfection of capstone of the Masonic philosophy.



Obligation:

Some of the points of the Obligation date back to operative days and no doubt originally had a practical purpose derived from the state of manners and customs in those times. Others amplify the Obligations of the Second Degree. In the later years of man's life, widows and orphans appear on the scene and interdependency of mankind requires their protection. The dependance of the men on each other also increases.

It has been said that the Master Mason's oath and the Legend of the Third Degree embody the Landmarks of the Craft. They establish the character of the membership of the Fraternity as outlined in the Massachusetts Landmarks.

The Pass communicated:

The communication of the Pass to the candidate symbolizes his comprehension and acceptance of the basis on which the masonic doctrine of Immortality rest. As the workman does the Master's work, he partakes of the Master's nature. That

part of us which performs this work is the immoral part and survives the grave. It is in the apprehension of this truth that we find our reason for Belief in Immortality. The idea is the idea of the great philosophers, as well as the Masonic idea of Immortality.

Apron:

The method of wearing the Apron in the Third Degree, as distinguishing from that in the Second, has no particular symbolic significance. In many jurisdictions in the United States and England, the Master Mason wears his Apron as a Fellow. A general conference was held on a uniform custom, but without success. About half of our State follow the English Custom, the other half the Massachusetts practice.

The Drama:

This is the Golden Legend of Freemasonry and has been in possession of the Craft probably for centuries. The first reference to it in writing is in Anderson's *Constitutions* (1738). It was not, however, made a specific ceremony until the institution of the Third Degree, sometime in the 18th century. The doctrine of the ancient mysteries was that the human soul is immortal, and that there is a life after death.

Symbolism of the Drama:

In general, it represents the difficulties and temptation that beset man in search for the Lost World. Because symbols are only landmarks of thought, more than one interpretation of the drama is possible. Following two are the principal interpretations.

A

The ruffians are brother-masons. Every man has a dual nature, an instinct toward good and an inclination toward evil. His evil nature may suggest to him that this search for the Lost World is useless. He may reason that experience of things as they are in this world shows, that men seem to attain success in spite of, or even by means of, breaking the moral law, that "the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but time and change happeneth to all." Like the first two ruffians, he is tempted to try to attain the word by force.

The hero of the drama refuses to yield to this error. He persists in his conviction that the secrets can be obtained only by the search when the Temple is completed, and then only in the presence of perfect Wisdom, perfect Strength and perfect Beauty; the master and Wardens of morality. Yet, he cannot escape the third ruffian, Death, the last great adversary who inevitably triumphs over his physical body. He falls and is buried in the rubbish of the Temple, but his immortal part, which has been building through life, cannot be destroyed. It survives, is raised, not by a resurrection, but by the hand of the Master of the Lodge, who represents the united assistance and encouragement of the Brethren.

B

The ruffians may be looked on as personification of the external accidents and misfortunes which comes to all. The fate of the ruffians suggests that failure to follow the design laid down on the Trestle-Board brings its own punishment; that there can be no escape from the moral law; that nature had but one judgement for wrong-doing, the judgment of death. The raising after death symbolizes the masonic faith that death itself is but an incident in our progress toward eternal life.

Substitute Word:

The raising is not by the true word, but by a substitute. Man in this world never knows the truth. One may argue "I wish to be just, yet how am I to know what it justice? Under a certain set of circumstances, I do what I think to be right; yet later developments or the reasoning of some other person more clearheaded than I may demonstrate that I was wrong. Actually, I have been unjust through intending to be the opposite."

Man can only approximate truth. If he acts sincerely and according to his best lights, taking heed from failure, he has done all that human fallibility can accomplish. He takes the "first Word spoken" for his guide till wisdom finds a better. He can only search for the Lost Word, and by the very search he comes nearer to finding it.

The craftsmen had Not the Pass:

Another symbolism of the futility of escape from the moral law.

No Raising by EA of FC grip:

No progress toward Immortality is possible except through the philosophy and the fortitude exemplified in this degree. Acceptance of the moral law (First Degree) or great skill and knowledge (Second Degree) are not enough.

Lion's Paw:

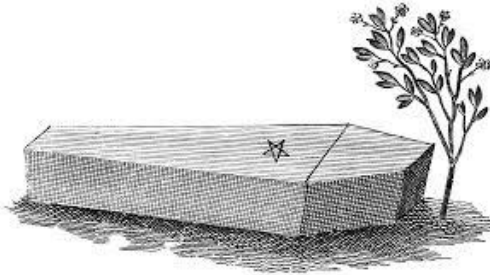
An Egyptian symbol of Immortality. Not here that many symbols of our ritual have been used in systems of philosophy and religion dating back to ancient times. This does not prove that Masonry is of ancient origin. Neither does it prove that it is not. Nobody knows.

Procession:

The procedure followed in Masonic procession is meant to exemplify the idea that the last shall be first: i.e., he that would be Master must first be servant.

Sprig of Acacia:

An ancient Hebrew symbol of Immortality. The Acacia is an evergreen plant. It is today used in ceremonial of Hebrew funerals.



Five Points:

The method of giving the Word symbolizes quiet, unobtrusive friendship, assistance given readily, speedily, effectively, without ostentation or parade.

Marble Monument:

This is an interpolation into the ritual without special significance.

Both Points Above the Square:

The final and perfect result of exercise of self-control and obedience to conscience is the attainment of the virtues Friendship, morality, and Brotherly Love, thus rounding out and completing the philosophy which has been revealed step by step through the three degrees.

EMBLEMS



Pot of Incense:

Symbolizes zeal and enthusiasm.

Beehive:

The beehive represents cooperative effort. The Third Degree particularly emphasizes mutual assistance and brotherhood.

Book of Constitutions:

Symbolizes the mutual confidence and privacy of a family.

Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid:

It enables one to construct a perfect right angle, essential in all building or construction. It has long been referred to as the Pythagorean theorem. The reference to circumstances surrounding its discover is erroneous. What is to actually happened to another mathematician, Archimedes, when he discovered the principle of specific gravity. The sacrifice of a hecatomb (one hundred cattle) is a trivial and unimportant detail. Pythagoras taught his philosophy to students organized into a sort of fraternity and sworn to secrecy. This accounts for the reference to him as an Mason. However, there is no proof that the Pythagorean fraternity had any connection with Freemasonry. The generally symbolism is suited to its purpose in spite of the incidental errors, since the emblem stands for culture, learning, intellectual curiosity.

LANDMARKS

Landmarks in Freemasonry are certain universal, unalterable, and unrepealable fundamentals. There are many Landmarks recognized by various Grand Lodges, but the following seven which our Grand Lodge recognizes are common to all: *Monotheism, Belief in immortality, the Volume of the Sacred Law, The Legend of the Third Degree, Secrecy, the symbolism of the Operative Art, and a Mason must be a freeborn male adult.*

Monotheism is the sole dogma of Freemasonry. Belief in one God is required of every initiate, but his conception of the Supreme Being is left to his own interpretation. Freemasonry is not concerned with theological distinctions. This is the basis of our universality.

Belief in Immortality is the ultimate lesson of Masonic philosophy.

The volume of the Sacred Law is an indispensable part of the furniture of the Lodge. In our jurisdiction it is usually the Bible, but any candidate may substitute it for the volume which he considers sacred.

Legend of the Third Degree has been explained

Masonic Secrecy does not extend to everything relating to the institution. A secret society is one whose members are not publicly known. Masonic bodies meet openly. Masonic symbols and philosophy are discussed in thousands of books accessible to anyone. Masonic secrets are to the fraternity as the private affairs of a family are its own concerns.

Symbolism of the Operative Art means that Masonic symbols are taken from architecture. Almost without exception they relate to the building are: Square, level, Plumb, Ashlar, Pillars, Trestle-Board. The grand idea of Masonry is that the development of the character is like the Building of a Temple; the same rules apply to both. There must first be a plan, then a foundation and framework, and finally, proportion and harmony of line. In the words of the ritual, there must be "Wisdom to contrive, strength to support, and beauty to adorn all great and

important undertakings.” This is a practical truth of universal application to all forms of achievement. The symbols of Freemasonry are drawn from the experience of the ages.

A Mason must be a freeborn male adult primarily because he must be master of his own time, his resources, and himself. In Operative masonry women and young men could not work at the mason’s trade; so traditionally membership in the Craft has been confined to male adults, and from long usage this practice has become imbedded in the Fraternity as a Landmark.

ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The Grand Lodge is the sovereign Masonic authority to which every Lodge and every member owes allegiance. It is composed of its officers, permanent members, and the representatives of the Lodges. At the head is the Grand Master, who is clothed with almost absolute masonic power. All but four of the remaining officers (two Wardens, treasure, and Secretary) are appointed by him, and from his decisions there is no appeal. But he must be elected annually by a two-thirds vote and is limited ordinarily to three terms.

The Past Grand Masters, Past Deputy Grand Master and Past Grand Wardens are permanent members, who thus ensure the continuity of the Grand Lodge regardless of what happens to the particular Lodges.

Eighty-eight per cent of the voting power, however, rest in Master and Wardens who are the direct representatives of the members of their Lodges. Every Lodge is entitled to three votes in Grand Lodge, even if only one of its representatives is present; and the members of a Lodge have the constitutional prerogative to instruct their representatives how to vote. Thus the ultimate Masonic authority is in the hands of the members.

Business affairs are entrusted to a Board of Directors elected by Grand Lodge, the Grand Master being chairman ex officio. Masonic affairs are administered by the Department of Relief, Service and Education, and various standing committees.

To provide for efficient supervision of the particular Lodges, the state is divided into thirty-three (33) Masonic Districts, each containing from five to 10 Lodges, and each assigned to a District Deputy Grand Master who is the personal representative to the Grand Master and responsible to him for the proper conduct of the Lodges in his District.

These are also three (3) overseas districts in our jurisdiction: Chili District, Canal Zone District, and China District.

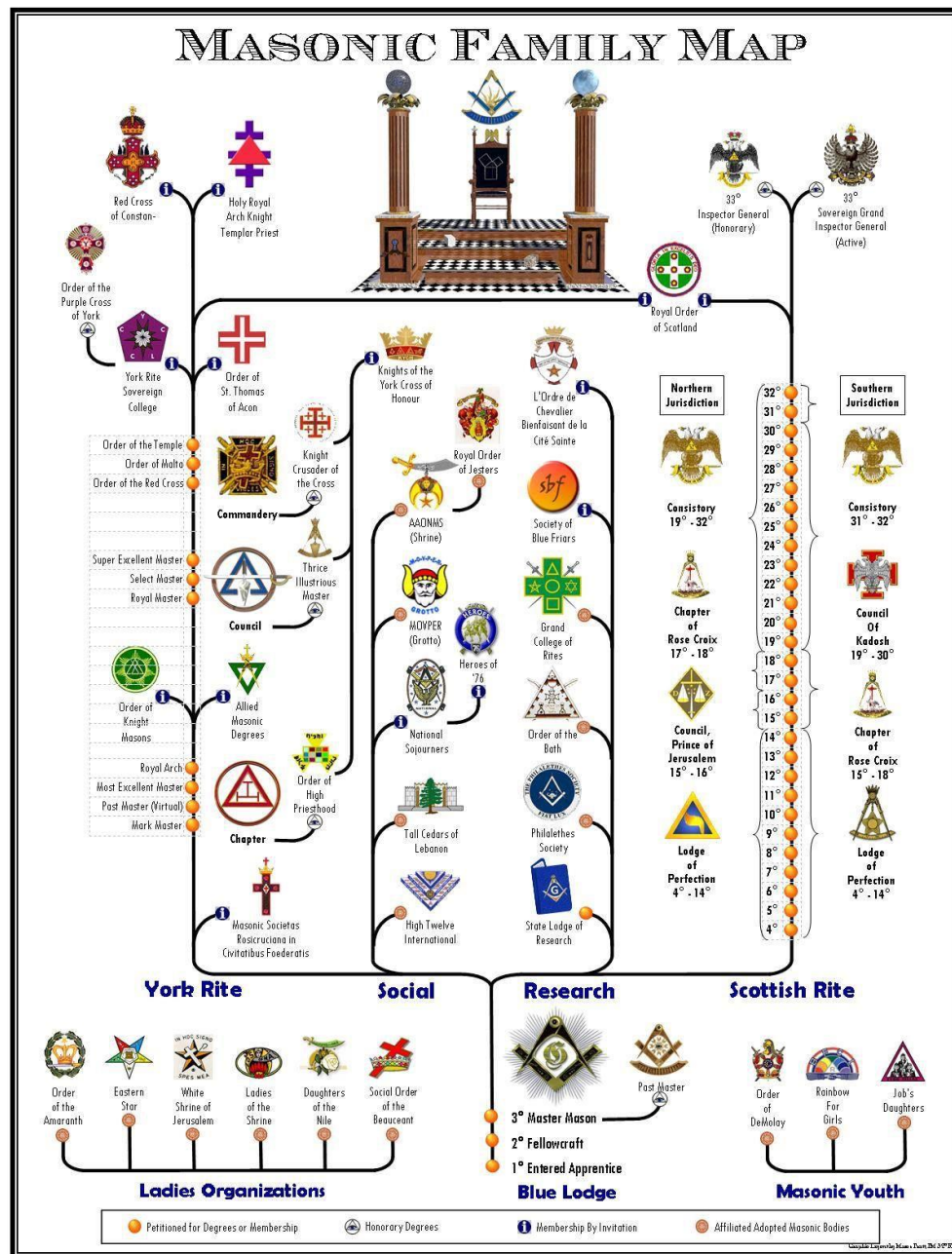
Lodges are chartered only by Grand Lodge, after a probationary period of about one year, during which they may work under a dispensation by the Grand Master

The Master, Wardens, Treasurer and Secretary of the Lodge must be elected annually by the members; the other officers are usually appointed. The Master is the sole arbiter of his Lodge subject only to Grand Lodge or the Grand Master. The members of the Lodge are the absolute final authority over its own membership.

In the final analysis the strength of Masonry lies in the individual member. He has his privileges, but all Masonic ritual and Masonic teaching emphasize his duties. The Mason who conscientiously performs his duty will enjoy his rights as a natural consequence.

COLLATERAL AND NON-MASONIC BODIES

All Freemasonry is based on the Symbolic Lodge. From the Lodge one may join other Masonic groups. Freemasonry officially recognizes as Masonic Bodies the following ; Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, Council of Royal and Select Masters, Commanderies of Knights Templar, and the several bodies of the Scottish Rite with its elaborate system of Thirty-three degrees. They are sometimes call the “higher degrees.” They are higher only in the sense that they have higher numbers and that some of them are prerequisite for others. The man who has received the three degrees in the Symbolic Lodge is a Master Mason. There is nothing higher and nothing superior to him in Masonry.



CONCLUSION

The three degrees in Freemasonry thus symbolically comprehend the building of character in the construction of one's individual Temple so essential to the fulfillment of the grand scheme of the Supreme Architect of the Universe. The First Degree emphasizes the moral foundation of all rights living; the Second Degree points the way to the full development of one's intellectual powers tempered always by the exercise of Charity in its Broadest sense; the Third Degree appeals to man's spiritual instincts leaving him with the hope of immortality.

“But Freemasonry is a society, yet not simply another society in the congregation of worthwhile societies. It fills a niche and performs a service that are essentially unique.

During the dark ages, Freemasonry of those days were almost the sole repository of the world's mathematical and architectural wisdom. By its courage and fidelity it withstood the insidious attacks of almost universal ignorance and lowered standards. Almost alone it preserved through those dark ages, and transmitted to the better ages that followed, the wisdom of the past not only in the arts of mathematics and architecture but also in the Art of Living.

When the rituals of modern speculative Freemasonry were written two centuries ago, they called them gems of wisdom from the best of all previous schools of religion and philosophy and practical living as transmitted by internal tradition and by available history.

Modern Freemasonry may therefore claim to be the world's oldest laboratory for practical and experimental research in the Art of Living. The overwhelming authority of all the experience of the past proclaims the eternal and unchanging supremacy of character. There is no substitute. There is no short cut.

The contribution of Freemasonry will only incidentally be collective; its real contribution will be in the individual lives of its members.