



For Further
Enlightenment



THE
YORK RITE
OF
FREEMASONRY



Presented to

_____ Lodge No. _____

by _____

THE YORK RITE OF FREEMASONRY

FOREWORD

We know the pleasure and gratification experienced on having been raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason. You have every right to lift up your head with pride in the knowledge that you are now numbered among the thousands of good men throughout the world who stand for continual promotion of Brotherly Love, Religious Freedom, and a Democracy which will bring peace and happiness to men of all creeds and Nations.

Do not let your Masonic education stop here!

The True Mason is continually seeking for more Light and Knowledge, and when he asks for this Light and Knowledge he is often told by well-meaning but mistaken Brothers that "as a Master Mason he has received all there is in Masonry" and thus, while not being really satisfied, he believes and the quest for light ends.

The purpose of this informative folder is to give a concise and connected view of the light as it is developed in the several degrees and orders of the York Rite, and it is hoped that these words of counsel and advice will make it clear to you that there are excellent reasons why you should complete your necessary Masonic education.

SYMBOLIC DEGREES (Lodge)

Entered Apprentice

Fellowcraft

Master Mason

CAPITULAR DEGREES (Chapter)

Mark Master

Past Master

Most Excellent Master

Royal Arch Mason

CRYPTIC DEGREES (Council)

Royal Master

Select Master

Super Excellent Master

CHIVALRIC ORDERS (Knights Templar or Commandery)

Order of Red Cross

The Mediterranean Pass and Order of Malta

Order of the Temple

AN EXPLANATION

First, let us explain to the initiate and to the uninitiate, so far as may be done, the symbolism and the connection between the Degrees and Orders of the York Rite and the necessity of taking all of them in the pursuit of "More Light" in Freemasonry.

To promote a better understanding of the York Rite of Freemasonry, it is essential that we dismiss from our minds the idea of division or separation between the three Bodies that compose the York Rite. Such a separation is merely formal and for convenience.

The York Rite is a Whole—not an aggregate of three Bodies.

You cannot stop on the way—either with Blue Lodge, Chapter or Council, and claim to be a finished Mason. The work as progressively taken sheds light upon the prior degrees and orders, and no Mason can feel that he has everything to which he is entitled as an earnest seeker after truth until he has received all of them.

You should not be misled by the Brother who tells you confidentially, but mistakenly, that "the Blue Lodge is all there is."

These degrees and orders are full of the most important and beautiful moral lessons ever imparted to man. They are entitled, each and all of them, to be respected and loved for themselves alone, and not as stepping stones to something else.

The following brief account of the York Rite is founded upon traditional and ethical elements and does not undertake a historical or critical analysis.

THE SYMBOLIC DEGREES

*(Conferred in Lodges under the Jurisdiction of
a Grand Lodge)*

The Entered Apprentice is a bearer of burdens, the Fellowcraft a skilled workman and the Master Mason a director of the work.

The Entered Apprentice Degree, the First degree in Freemasonry, admonishes the candidate to obey the rules and regulations and learn to practice secrecy. The background of this degree, like many others, is the building of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. The Entered Apprentice is taught symbolically to labor upon the building of the Temple, to subdue his passions, and to improve himself in Masonry. He receives here the beginning of the instructions which are to guide him in the search of the secret of Freemasonry.

The Fellowcraft is instructed in the principles of Geometry. The different Orders of Architecture are explained to him and he is enjoined to study the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, and to proceed on his journey toward the attainment of Masonic knowledge.

The Master Mason is taught numerous very important moral lessons governing his conduct in the world towards others; that he must answer and obey the rules of the order; must not cheat, wrong or defraud a brother or a Lodge of Masons, but on the contrary must help, aid and assist a distressed brother, his widow and orphans. Preparation for the life to come is inculcated by beautiful ceremonies. The Temple

is not yet completed, and those faithful craftsmen who have labored so long upon it are deprived, by the wickedness of others of that for which they have wrought. The candidate receives light as fully as it may come to him in the Symbolic Lodge, and the substitute for that which by further search he may hope to receive later, the real secret of a Master Mason. The building of the Temple symbolizes the perfection of our moral life and the continuous effort to erect within ourselves a spiritual building, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

THE CAPITULAR DEGREES (*Conferred in R. A. Chapter*)

MARK MASTER

This is the first of the four degrees in the Chapter, and in it, the candidate is still symbolically laboring on an unfinished temple as in the preceding degrees of the Blue Lodge. He is taught the nobility of labor and that in the erection of his moral and spiritual temple he must determine and prepare the materials of which that temple is to be constructed and to have due care that in so doing the work which he shall present, bearing his mark, shall be such as to designate him as one worthy of admission to "that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." This degree is perhaps as old as, if not older than any other Degree of Ancient Craft Masonry. It is so ancient, in fact, that its real origin cannot be traced exactly; but in 1598, in Scotland, Statutes were issued which required the Operative Mason to register his "Mark." No degree in Freemasonry can hardly be more interesting, more inspiring, or more instructive, than that of the Mark Degree.

PAST MASTER

In former times no one was eligible for the Royal Arch except Actual or Past Masters of Lodges, which meant that very few could receive it, so the degree of Past Master was instituted whereby one might become a "Virtual Master" by means of the ceremony of the degree, and thus be eligible for exaltation to the Royal Arch.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER

This Degree recites the events surrounding the completion of King Solomon's Temple and its dedication with imposing ceremonies to the services of the Most High God; the very idea upon which Masonic Symbolism has been based. King Solomon offers a sublime invocation, and fire comes down from heaven and consumes the burnt offerings and the sacrifices. The Brethren rejoice that their long labor is ended, lay aside their aprons, are greeted as Most Excellent Masters, and receive their reward. This ends the cycle of degrees having to do with the erection of King Solomon's Temple and brings us up to the sublime story, spanning centuries of time, set forth in the Royal Arch Degree.

ROYAL ARCH

Its ceremonies for the most part are founded upon the return of the Israelites from captivity, their permission to rebuild the City of Jerusalem and the House of the Lord, and the discovery of many important relics and documents which had lain concealed for many years.

This Degree is known as the summit of Ancient Craft Masonry. It was considered so important in our early history that none but actual Masters of Lodges were permitted to receive it. This degree brings to light that for which the Master Mason has searched. Wherever there is a loss there should be a recovery, and the Royal Arch Degree vividly portrays that recovery. Thus are connected together in the most intimate way the work of the Blue Lodge and the work of the Chapter, neither being complete without the other.

THE CRYPTIC DEGREES (Conferred in Council of R. & S. M.)

It is a peculiarity of the York Rite, whether intended or not by the authors, that the movement of the degrees is often inverse, and the historical connection reversed so that we apparently go forward in regular progression, the knowledge and light gained always reflects backward upon the path we have travelled before, and degrees that seemed complete when we received them are found to require the explanation of the subsequent degrees before they can be understood. That is what makes the infinite interest in the work, and causes the reflective Mason to continually study the sublime precepts and ceremonies of the order. This is especially true of the Cryptic degrees, two of which historically preceded the Royal Arch but which hold in reserve their valuable teachings until the candidate is ready to receive them with the most impressive effect.

ROYAL MASTER

In this degree Hiram Abif is alive and speaks, imparting to the candidate the sublime teachings of useful labor on earth and a worthy end of life. The tragedy of his untimely death is again brought forth with the great loss suffered by the Craft. This is one of the most beautiful degrees in all Masonry, with lessons so impressive that they are never forgotten. It is especially illustrative of the third and seventh degrees.

SELECT MASTER

In this degree we have dramatized one of the incidents that occurred during the building of the Temple. It is closely connected with the Royal Arch Degree, and in fact it affords the explanation needed for its perfect understanding.

The place of meeting represents a "Secret Vault" or crypt beneath the Temple. Our three ancient Grand Masters appear in charge of a very important work connected with the Temple. One of King Solomon's most particular friends is promoted to the work, in which only a limited number are employed. The historical object of the degree is to commemorate the deposits of an important secret or treasure. Certain secrets are imparted to the candidate which make clear to him the preceding degrees. It is highly dramatic and of the greatest interest.

SUPER-EXCELLENT MASTER

This degree has no connection either in history or symbolism with the Royal and Select Master degrees. It refers to circumstances that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, commander of the army of the King of Babylon, and the ceremonies are intended to represent the final destruction of the Temple and the carrying away of the captive Jews to Babylon as exemplified in the Royal Arch Degree. The Super Excellent Master Degree is divided into three striking scenes. The first scene represents the Jewish captives at Babylon under the direction of Haggai, the Prophet. In the second scene King Zedekiah, of Judah listens to his false counselors and despises the warnings of the Prophet Jeremiah, and the vengeance of the Lord is poured upon him. Jerusalem is captured and its wicked King is taken with his sons before King Nebuchadnezzar, who causes the sons to be put to death before their father's face, after which he deprives the wretched parent of his eyesight and carries him in chains to Babylon.

In colorful and spectacular manner, this degree portrays the fatal effects which follow the violation of sacred obligations.

THE CHIVALRIC ORDERS

(Conferred in Commandery of Knights Templar)

ORDER OF THE RED CROSS

The Illustrious Order of the Red Cross continues the story of the Royal Arch and deals with the period in Jewish history, in the reign of King Darius, when the Jews were returning to Jerusalem and the efforts to rebuild the Temple. A grand council was convened at Jerusalem to deliberate upon the unhappy condition of the country and devise means to secure the favor of the King and his consent to their proceeding with the rebuilding of the city and Temple.

Zerrubbabel participated in this council (represented by the candidate) and offered his services to travel to the Persian court and remind the King of his former promise to aid the Jews in the work. When Zerrubbabel's turn came he proclaimed The Almighty Force of Truth.

The King was so pleased that he told Zerrubbabel to ask what he would and it should be granted. Zerrubbabel then reminds him of his vow to rebuild Jerusalem and restore the holy vessels which were taken from the sack of King Solomon's Temple, and to rebuild the house of the Lord. The King then makes a decree accordingly, and to perpetuate it he forms a new order founded upon TRUTH, the Order of the Red Cross, which is then conferred upon Zerrubbabel. This Order prepares the way for the transition from the scenes of Ancient Craft Masonry to Chivalric Masonry founded upon the Christian religion and the practice of Christian virtues.

Here we bid farewell to all the degrees having to do with the building of King Solomon's Temple, its destruction and the rebuilding of the city and temple, and we go forward to the period of the Crusades when the Order of Knighthood was formed to recover the Holy Sepulchre and to protect the pilgrims who visit its sacred shrines.

THE MEDITERRANEAN PASS AND THE ORDER OF MALTA

This order is the first Christian order encountered by the candidate. The members represent soldiers of the Cross and the Order is dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The candidate humbly solicits to be admitted to the privilege of the Mediterranean Pass to enable him to safely undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, and also to be enrolled as a Knight of Malta. In a beautiful and impressive ceremony, this order enjoins a strict adherence to the cause of Jesus Christ and the performance of those virtues emphasized in His teachings.

ORDER OF THE TEMPLE

We now approach one of the grandest and most impressive orders in all Freemasonry; which completes the York Rite. The Order of the Temple, takes its name and receives much of its inspiration from a chivalric and military organization of the 9th Century when the world was in a state of chaos, not knowing what was coming next. The candidate represents a Knight of the period that succeeded the Crusades, who has made a vow to visit the Holy Sepulchre, and is an aspirant to become a Knight Templar the better to fulfill that vow. As a trial of his worthiness there is enjoined upon him seven years of

preparation, beginning with an unarmed pilgrimage in the direction of the Holy Shrine. After having served six years of this preparation he is commanded to devote the remaining year of preparation to penance as a trial of faith and humility. Beautiful lessons of the death and ascension of our Saviour are inculcated and the candidate is at last received into full fellowship in the most solemn manner. The scene in connection with the final obligation is probably the most impressive (and the one most likely to be remembered) in all of Freemasonry.

Templars of the present day are men who by their loyalty and devotion are making Templary the splendid Christian Order which has the respect and admiration of the public at large, and good fellowship and loyal friendships have made the Order stand for something of supreme value in life. Those who have labored for Templary find in it something friendly, comforting and satisfying. It is not entirely ritualistic; rather it is laid in the hearts of men who are working for the good of the Order. It is a high responsibility to be the successors in this modern world of an Order so ancient, so noble and so glorious.

AFTERWORD

Brethren! Know Your Masonry! We trust this information may be of great assistance to you in deciding to advance in Masonic knowledge. Master Masons are urged to give consideration to the advantages which will be theirs in belonging to the remaining bodies of York Rite Masonry. They are eligible to petition for membership in them after being raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

The journey you began as an Entered Apprentice Mason was actuated by lofty motives and you were impressed with the truths and principles which the first three degrees inculcate, yet the half was not told you. The revelation of the lost word, the manner of receiving wages, and what were the wages, are still a mystery to you. Therefore, why be content with only a limited education when with but slight effort you may acquire a full and complete knowledge of these and many other important truths that will inspire and imbue you with that fervency and zeal that distinguishes the great leaders of our Craft.

ORDER OF MASONIC DEGREES IN THE YORK RITE

The following is the order in which the York Rite Degrees and Orders would be portrayed if presented in their chronological order:

1. The Portion of the Royal Arch antedating the building of the Temple (Chapter).
2. The Entered Apprentice (Lodge).
3. The Fellow Craft (Lodge).
4. The Mark Master (Chapter).
5. The Royal Master. First Section (Council).
6. The Select Master (Council).
7. The Master Mason (Lodge).
8. The Royal Master. Second Section (Council).
9. The Past Master (Chapter).
10. The Most Excellent Master (Chapter).
11. The Super-Excellent Master (Council) and one section of the Royal Arch (Chapter).
12. The Concluding Section of the Royal Arch (Chapter).
13. The Red Cross (Commandery).
14. The Order of Malta (Commandery).
15. The Order of the Temple (Commandery).

From this arrangement it can be readily seen that any Mason who does not take all the degrees and orders in the York Rite cannot possibly have a thorough knowledge of even the Symbolic Lodge, let alone the Chapter, Council and Commandery.

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