



THE
YORK RITE
OF
FREEMASONRY



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THE YORK RITE

is a democratic rite and
thus is sometimes called
The American Rite

American in the arrangement of symbolic, capitular, cryptic, and chivalric degrees into one system

American in that its history coincides with that of the American Republic The General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons was established in 1797.

American in that its bodies are to be found in every State of the American Union, as well as in every city and town of consequence throughout our broad Domain

American in that its highest offices are open to any man of character and ability

American in its ideals, its philosophy and its government.

American in that it teaches true patriotism and love of country

American in its support of those fundamental institutions—the home, the church, the state, and the school

American in its democratic organization, for in its council halls each member has a right to be heard Wherever the American Flag flies will be found branches of the American Rite.

THE YORK RITE IS ANCIENT CRAFT MASONRY

The York Rite

Are You a Freemason? Then you must be interested in what this pamphlet has to say

It is the story of the *York Rite of Freemasonry* Is this some new rite recently developed? Something added to the Masonic system? It is *not* It is the grouping of degrees according to the best American traditions, of some of the oldest and most beautiful degrees of the whole Masonic system

The *York Rite of Freemasonry* is a system of degrees which includes those of the lodge, chapter, council, and commandery, often referred to as American Rite Masonry While most of the degrees of this rite were born and nurtured in England, yet it is in North America that they have attained their highest development, and it is only in America that there is a regular arrangement of the degrees. Many writers and students of the fraternity believe that in the degree of Royal Arch Mason the climax has been reached in Masonic symbolism

As a Master Mason you should be interested in Masonic advancement, not that you will thereby become a better Mason, but that you may have a better understanding of the Masonic system, additional Masonic contacts, and an explanation of that great symbolism upon which the fraternity has builded a glorious superstructure Masonic degrees are not merely *degrees*, but are exemplifications of homely virtues often neglected and lost sight of in the busy lives we now live For each Masonic degree teaches some specific virtue, and exemplifies it in a dramatic way intended to make deep impressions on those who witness or receive it Some men spend their entire lives learning

the lessons necessary to make them living stones in the great spiritual temple Others may, and do, learn these lessons in other ways—and so the lessons exemplified in the degrees—lessons of honesty, charity, harmony, justice, spirituality, service, fortitude, hope, prudence, fidelity, truth, religion, faith, love, and toleration—become part of one's life—evading the harder method of learning by experience

Before going further, may we place before you the regular gradations of this *York Rite of Freemasonry*, the names of the various degrees or orders, and other pertinent facts

1 The *lodge*, often referred to as the "blue lodge," consisting of the three degrees of (a) Entered Apprentice, (b) Fellowcraft, and (c) Master Mason.

2 The *chapter*, members of which are referred to as Royal Arch Masons Chapters confer the four degrees of (a) Mark Master, (b) Past Master, (c) Most Excellent Master, (d) Royal Arch Mason

3 The *council*, members of which are referred to as Royal and Select Masters Councils confer the three degrees of (a) Royal Master, (b) Select Master, and (c) Super-Excellent Master

4 The *commandery*, members of which are termed Knights Templar Commanderies confer Orders, instead of the usual term Degree, and these Orders are (a) Order of the Red Cross, (b) Order of Malta, and (c) Order of the Temple

Invitations Unnecessary

It is not necessary that you receive an invitation to petition for any of these Masonic degrees In fact these bodies will be pleased at the opportunity of adding a member to their ranks No restrictions as to religion, political belief, or nationality is imposed, except in commanderies of Knights Templar which restrict their membership to those who believe in the practice

of the Christian virtues, although they do not require membership in any church.

All bodies of the *York Rite of Freemasonry* abstain from discussion of political, religious, or controversial matters, these matters being prohibited by the parent organizations The *York Rite* makes war on no church, religion, political party, class or racial group It confines its activities to the sole purpose of making better men and Masons It is not an "anti" organization

Universality of the Rite

There are more Royal Arch Masons in the world than in any other Masonic group While recent figures are not now available, they number more than one million members American Masons will swell with pride to learn that the largest Masonic group under one banner is the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the United States of America, which numbers approximately one-half million members

Royal Arch Masonry is universal Masonry, its thousands of chapters dotting all sections of the earth, although temporarily obscured for the time in some places because of the world war In Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in Australia, in North and South America, and in many of the islands of the seas, are to be found Royal Arch Masons, and chapters of Royal Arch Masons, all of which are recognized as regular Masonic bodies England alone has 1,751 chapters, 467 of them being in the City of London Our own General Grand Chapter has subordinate chapters in Alaska, China, Hawaii, Chile, Canal Zone, Cuba, the Isle of Pines, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Japan, and Puerto Rico In Africa are 166 chapters, located in such out-of-the-way places as the Gold Coast, Cape of Good Hope, Egypt, Transvaal, Orange Free State, North and South Rhodesia, Nigeria, Tanganyika, Natal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Kenya, East Africa, South Africa, British East Africa, Uganda, Isle of Mauritius, Cape Province, Morocco and Nyasaland

In other sections of the world we find chapters in such places as Alaska, Arabia, Syria, Bermuda, Canada, China, England, Ireland, Scotland, Malay States, Fiji Islands, Chile, Hawaii, Mexico, Canal Zone, Philippine Islands, Puerto Rico, Gibraltar, India (142 chapters), Cyprus, Isle of Malta, Japan, Madeira Islands, New South Wales, New Zealand, Australia, Palestine, Queensland, St Helena, Siam, Tasmania, Turkey, Victoria, Western Australia, Jamaica, St Thomas, Cuba, Isle of Pines, Trinidad, Argentina, British Guiana, Uruguay, and Peru

The General Grand Chapter is not limited to jurisdictions in the United States. It includes three Canadian provinces (Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan), the grand chapters of Mexico, Philippines, Germany and Italy

Number of Degrees

The *York Rite* does not consist of a large number of degrees. Its degrees are conferred—never communicated, believing that if a degree is worth anything at all it is worth the effort necessary to confer it. Your Masonic education will not depend so much upon *how many* degrees you may receive, but upon how well you understand and practice those you have received

Freemasonry a School

The *York Rite* of Freemasonry may be likened to a school. When you have received the three craft degrees of the lodge, you have received the "Three R's." By advancing you take up the high school and college courses of the fraternity. There is nothing more interesting, more tragic, nor more educational than the periods of history which furnish the background for the chapter and council degrees, and in the commandery is brought to light not only some of the old Jewish history, but the principles enunciated by the Great Teacher who gave to the world the New Dispensation of Love, Truth,

and Toleration—those virtues most needed in the world today.

Once there was a time when all of what is known as Freemasonry was contained in one degree. This was followed by a natural development resulting in a system of degrees known as Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. In the latter degree was a beautiful tradition explaining much of the Masonic symbolism. But when two rival grand lodges in England united more than a century ago, a vital and essential part of the third degree was removed and placed in a degree known as the Royal Arch. The Mother Grand Lodge was confronted with a large series of degrees and rites which it regarded as superfluous, causing it to make the following official edict:

"Ancient Craft Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, namely, those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and Master Mason, including the *Holy Royal Arch*."

Thus did the Mother Grand Lodge set out Royal Arch Masonry as something to be attained by those who were interested in Masonic advancement. Why? Because in Royal Arch Masonry is found the essentials of symbolism and philosophy necessary for a Master Mason to understand that which he has received only in part.

There is nothing higher in Freemasonry than the Royal Arch. When you have attained that degree you will have attained by regular gradations to the summit of the Royal Art. While the degrees of the Council will assist you in the understanding of the chapter degrees, they are not regarded as superior degrees. Nor is the Order of the Temple a higher Order. It is intended only to explain the Christian interpretation of the Masonic system. You may attain or receive other degrees and orders, but in the attainment of the Royal Arch degree you have reached the summit of *Ancient Craft Masonry*.

Why Take Additional Degrees?

You learned early in your Masonic career that Freemasonry was a progressive science. By the word progressive is meant advancement. The statement means that one who is a Freemason should never be satisfied to remain in a static condition, but that he should take every opportunity for self-improvement.

There are individuals, few in number, who proclaim that all Freemasonry is bound up in the system of three degrees. To all these we would answer in the words of one of our friends, now deceased:

"To the same extent, it may be said that everything that exists may be found in drab, old Mother Earth. All the stately trees of our majestic forests come from the drab earth, but you would have difficulty in finding them there. Moreover, if you did find them there you would have them only in their component, prosaic elements, and not as you find them 'round about us, in all their beauty. The wonderful flowers that delight the eye with their color and their foliage, and fill the air with their fragrance, came from the unattractive earth. There is no element of theirs that does not come from there, but if found, it would not attract the eye, or spread its delicate scent abroad, because to do so there must have been a transformation of the commonplace into the elaborate and beautiful.

"Every word in the English language is to be found in our alphabet of twenty-six letters. You may remember them all, be able to repeat them by rote, forward and backward, or by starting in the middle and going in either direction, but, if so, what knowledge would you have of the beauty of literature?"

We do not belittle the three craft degrees in making such a statement, for these degrees are the foundation—they are in fact indispensable. They are to Freemasonry what reading, writing, and arithmetic are to the student—the basis for such studies as astronomy, geography, mathematics, science and the arts, which have been instrumental in raising man's standards of knowledge.

The Degree of Mark Master. The opening degree of the Royal Arch Chapter is highly regarded by Masonic students and ritualists as being one of the most beautiful degrees in all Freemasonry, teaching lessons which have proved of value in all walks of life. The scene of the degree is laid in one of the workshops erected near King Solomon's Temple, and the candidate is taught many interesting historical facts, as well as given practical demonstrations of the value of *Honesty* and *Charity*.



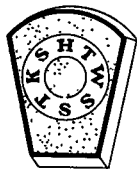
The Jewish half-shekel of silver, represented above, is often mentioned in the scriptures and is referred to in the degree. While it was worth less than twenty-five cents in our currency, yet Masonic tradition proves that no amount is insignificant in the face of urgent need.

The Degree of Past Master. For many years this degree was conferred upon those who had served as Masters of Masonic lodges. In some states this practice is still maintained, yet in America, with probably one exception, it is conferred upon all those who have attained the degree of Mark Master. In English lodges the degree is known as that of Installed Master. There is no Past Master degree in English, Scottish or Irish chapters. The degree deals primarily with administration, retaining some of the old instruction once given to those who were actually chosen to preside.



The gavel is very properly used as the emblem of this degree because it has very generally been accepted as an emblem of power. The gavel is used in all deliberative bodies today, more as a means of calling for order, than of demonstrating the power vested in its user. The degree teaches the value of *Harmony* and *Justice*.

The Degree of Most Excellent Master. This is by far the most spectacular degree in all Freemasonry. It is the only degree which brings forcibly to our attention the completion and dedication of King Solomon's Temple, the very idea upon which all Masonic symbolism has been based. In 1922 the degree was conferred in Convention Hall in Kansas City, Missouri. The class numbered one thousand candidates. There was a men's chorus of two hundred voices, an orchestra of fifty pieces, and a processional made up of five hundred. It was estimated that nine thousand Royal Arch Masons were in attendance. This serves to demonstrate the immense possibilities and value of the degree. The degree is built around the emblem of the keystone of the great lesson conveyed is the necessity for things *Spiritual*.



The Degree of Royal Arch Mason. The climax of Ancient Craft Masonry and Masonic symbolism, it is a complete story of Jewish history during some of its darkest hours. While based upon the subject of love of Home and Country, yet its lessons are those of *Service* and *Fortitude*. It teaches the ultimate triumph of Truth over all forms of superstition and error, proper respect for the Deity and his works, and the worship of the one true God, under whatsoever name he may be worshiped.

The apron of a Royal Arch Mason is that of the lodge Mason, with the exception that the border has become red, symbolizing the fervency and zeal which should actuate Man in his service to God and to Humanity.



The Degree of Royal Master: Believed by many to include in its ceremonies one of the most beautiful sections of Masonic ritual to be found in any degree. It fully explains many of the symbols of Freemasonry and conveys in a dramatic way an incident which occurred during the building of the Temple. It teaches the great lesson of right living and the building here on earth of that superstructure necessary for the erection of our spiritual temple.



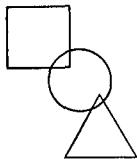
The Holy Vessels are the proper symbols for this degree, for they were the work of one of the most skilled artisans of the day. They teach the necessity of having perfect bodies and minds to house man's immortal soul.

The Degree of Select Master. The second in the series of three dramatic degrees conferred by the Council. The degree ends with the great tradition which runs all through Freemasonry, and constitutes an explanation satisfactory in all details as to certain traditional happenings, a knowledge of which is necessary for a proper understanding of the Story of Freemasonry. It teaches a wonderful lesson—that of overlooking the failings of those who through ignorance or curiosity may often overstep the bounds of propriety.



The Ark of the Covenant is the proper symbol of this degree. Its traditions, use, and symbolism are fully explained to the recipient of the degree, and those who do receive the degree are truly *Select Masters*.

The Degree of Super Excellent Master. Referred to by many as the most dramatic and impressive of all the degrees of Freemasonry. Whether you agree or not, there is no question as to its historical and Masonic value, teaching a great lesson in Fidelity. While the scene of the degree is laid many centuries ago, the lessons portrayed are just as essential in the present age. The degree requires the largest cast of characters of any of the degrees, and ends with a climax never to be forgotten. It teaches that while men may continue to build, the only permanent temple is that spiritual temple which each erects within himself.

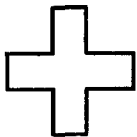


The degree has its emblems, which are the Square, the Circle, and the Triangle, the symbolism of which is fully explained to the initiate. The degree constitutes the perfect drama, exemplifying one of the most tragic events in the history of the Jewish people.

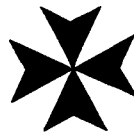
The Order of the Red Cross. The Order has no connection with the American Red Cross. It is a degree—termed Order in this series—connecting the Capitular system of degrees (the Chapter) with the Chivalric, or Templar system. It continues the story of the Jewish people, from their darkest hour to the time of the Rebuilding of the Temple. The lesson taught is that of Truth, which often crushed to earth will rise again,

for in the end it is might and will prevail over all forms of error and superstition.

The Red Cross is truly the emblem of this illustrious Order, for each of its four arms have important symbolic allusions. The degree encourages the search for truth, and emphasizes the importance of Liberty and Justice, with a right to worship Deity under whatever name he may be called.



The Order of Malta. The Order is strictly Christian in origin and character, and while there are no restrictions as to who may receive it, yet one who did not believe in the practice of Christian principles would be embarrassed in petitioning for the Order. For its locale is laid among scenes and characters referred to in the New Testament and it constitutes a Masonic interpretation along Christian lines of the New Dispensation. The Order receives its name from the Island of Malta, whose name has been in the headlines from the period of the Crusades until the present day. A Priory of Knights of Malta still exists on this ancient Isle.



The Maltese Cross is the proper emblem for this Order, for it was officially conferred upon the membership during the Crusades, and the modern Order in remembrance have perpetuated the symbol as standing for all that was true and holy.

The Order of the Temple. Often referred to as *Knight Templar*, and the climax of the Christian Orders of Knighthood. It still retains in its ritual some of the ancient ceremonies of the original order. Like the Order of Malta, it is founded upon the principles enunciated in the New Testament, teaching that Love is the great characteristic of those who would aspire to immortality, Love which suffers long and is kind, Love which overcomes all hate and all difficulties and which will eventually in a time, we hope not too far distant, make of all mankind—Brothers. The Order receives its name from those Crusaders who were sworn to protect pilgrims and uphold the Cross, and who became the first Christian protectors of Jerusalem, their exploits thrilling all Christendom for ages.



The true emblem of a Knight Templar is the Passion Cross. The Cross has ever been the symbol of sacrifice. Freemasons are taught that only that is worthwhile which is gained through sacrifice. Nothing was ever gained by avoiding pain or sacrifice. Life itself is only acquired through sacrifice. Eternal life requires a continuation of sacrifice.

Why Not Petition Today?

If you plan to advance in Masonry, why not petition now and begin to receive at once the satisfaction of membership in the fraternity. The fee for the degrees is nominal. Dues are small. The advantages of membership are large.

Ask any York Rite Freemason for a blank petition.

Written by
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for
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in Missouri
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the General Grand Chapter Educational
Bureau, Box 529, Trenton, Mo , at five
cents each