

ANCIENT RELIGIOUS
TRADITIONS AND
SYMBOLS IN
FREEMASONRY

By

Horace Sykes

This compilation © gndntag store k

FOREWORD

Our early operative brethren had to go to the lodge or quarry and, at great cost in labor, take their building materials from the original sources. It was then necessary to transport them long distances to the places where they were to be used. But later on, as buildings, and sometimes cities, gave way to the ravages of time or were destroyed by enemy invaders, their remains, scattered about the landscape or lying in shapeless piles of rubble, became convenient sources of materials from which to draw for future use. this was especially true with regard to the sculptured or decorative materials which would require excessive labor and skill to reproduce. If such pieces were not carried away by the conquerors as prize loot, as they oftentimes were, they were eagerly sought after and greatly prized by the builders. In many instances, when used in later temples or cathedrals, such salvaged parts - objects of art and adornment - greatly enhanced their archaeological value and served to assist the archaeologist in piecing together history of the past and in interpreting the full meanings of the problems before him.

The student of research often finds himself in the same position as were these later builders. He finds that the ancient sources of original materials are quite worked out or are inaccessible to him, while near at hand, in the records and writing of other researchers and students, is much of the information he seeks. by finding a record here and there and a column of ancient truth somewhere else, he can incorporate them into the new structure of knowledge he is building; giving, of course, full credit to the original authors. By creative skill in their co-ordination and by reinterpretation, new and further historical truths may be brought to light to advance the knowledge of the past in its meanings to the present and future of history. Largely in this way research students must build and progress, and each add his contribution to the store of existing knowledge.

This paper begins with an earnest effort to describe a modern, basic concept of the Great Architect of the Universe as the foundation upon which all men can agree; not necessarily agree on the language of this discourse, for each reader must think and perceive in his own language and thought. but each reader is urged to think this basic concept through to his own conclusion, basing his thinking on the truth of the existence and reality of one ever

living God, so that all may build upon the same foundation and there be no division..

The next truth that this paper hopes to show, and that from the symbolical and traditional evidence in Masonry itself, is that from the beginnings of all stages of human enlightenment and knowledge man has looked up to some superior being as the focal point of his religious perception. It is further hoped that the thoughtful reader perceive that, as the three Craft degrees symbolize the three principal stages of human life -- youth, manhood and old-age -- in its development, both physically and spiritually, the institution of Freemasonry has passed through these stages of development. Finally, that in speculative Masonry, symbolizing the period of old-age, it attains to the highest of all spiritual traditions, which is, "That Temple not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," or the "Spiritual Temple" which also rests upon that basic foundation of eternal verity on which all men can agree and build, and in which all men are brothers.

Abundant help and inspiration have come to the author from the works of the distinguished writers named in the bibliography

appended to this work, and their assistance is gratefully
acknowledged. to them belong the greater credit.

THE GREAT ARCHITECT OF THE UNIVERSE

GOD, being the universal Principle and Intelligence that conceives, creates and maintains all that is created; which creation exists only at the present moment, eliminating the need of beginning or the possibility of ending, giving a comprehensible and complete meaning to the word “eternity,” is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. All sentient life recognizes a supreme, universal principle in proportion to the development of its intelligence, and man recognized and worshipped it in his most primitive stages of civilization. this cosmic concept not only brings God down to His creation, including man, but also lifts man up to his Creator, and the relationship is that simple and universal. Its everlasting truth and power exist in that universal simplicity.

Dr. James Anderson (1.) grasped the profound simplicity of this universal truth when, in 1738, he laid down the basic tenet of Masonry concerning religion, as follows:

“ ‘Tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them [Freemasons] to that religion to which all men agree, leaving their particular views to themselves.”

This means to lift us up directly to the Creator, recognizing Him as such, and thus establishing the relationship of the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, the most universal and basic concept in Freemasonry and religion. It is a concept irrevocable and everlasting, because it is God-given. In view of this universal truth, it matters not whether we think of Freemasonry as religion or as just Freemasonry, nor does it affect its great mission of promoting world fraternity and brotherhood.

It is an interesting fact that Masonry has drawn from, and continues to perpetuate, symbols and traditions from the ancient religions, even back to those of savagery; and also to observe that it has kept up with, or led the advancement of, moral concepts to the present day. The continued existence of those ancient traditions and symbols in its rituals and records is the strongest kind of evidence of the very ancient origin of Masonry; its unbroken descent through many peoples, races and tongues; its vitality in adjusting itself to an everlasting environment, and of its having

lived through all the vicissitudes and challenges that have opposed it.

It is the intention, in this paper, to consider only those traditions and symbols that are a part of symbolic Masonry and, therefore, to be found in the ancient craft lodges, for only through that channel have they come, in unbroken progression, from their ancient beginnings to the present time.

Tradition is really history in archaic form, and symbols are archaic calligraphy. They had their beginnings in fact, or reality, and always contain some kernel of truth. Their original meanings may be changed many times and what they commemorate may be lost and forgotten, but they persist and continue to thrive until they become sacred to the past. Men carry them forward from generation to generation, almost as a spiritual heritage, frequently not knowing their origin or true significance.

CORNERSTONE, OR FOUNDATION, CEREMONIES

The revered ceremony and symbolism of the pouring of corn, wine and oil on the newly laid cornerstone of a Masonic Temple was described more than one hundred years ago by the Rev. George Oliver (2.). He said:

“It may be useful in this place to add a few words on the custom of scattering corn, wine, oil and salt on the foundation, as the elements of consecration, which appears to have been a custom of great antiquity. corn, wine and oil, taken together, is a symbol of prosperity and abundance and refers, in this case, to the anticipated success of the Lodge where it has been used, in the promoting amongst its members the blessings of morality and virtue, and by resulting from brotherly love, relief and truth, that society in general may profit by an infusion of the principles of Masonry into every class, and inducing a better feeling into the whole mass...”

As Dr. Oliver implies, this ceremony may be a relic of a bygone age when there was a belief that all inanimate, objects possessed a spirit, or soul, the same as did human beings, and that the new building must have such a soul to dwell in its foundation and walls to enliven and strengthen them, and to propitiate the earth for sustaining the added weight; otherwise the building could not endure. They believed the soul, or spirit, must be furnished by the sacrifice of a living human being who was crushed to death under the cornerpost or cornerstone. Such was the ancient custom and, perhaps, the beginning of the tradition.

The human sacrifice was later superseded by an animal sacrifice, for which the goat was much used. This gave way to the mere placing of bones under the foundation, which was further changed to the substitution of small statuettes, or figurines, of humans or animals. The remains of such sacrifices have been found by archaeologists while excavating ancient ruins. There is evidence that vegetables, also, were used. Finally, we have the corn, wine and oil of our modern Masonic ceremonies, which has long since become a sacred tradition that must go on. But how few of those who perform it realize that it was first made sacred by the

sacrificing of human blood and life, so that the soul of the victim could enter and enliven the building?

G.W. Speth (3) writes:

“And now I think it must surely be unnecessary for me to explain why we bury coins of the realm under our foundation stones. Our forefathers, ages ago, buried a living human sacrifice in the same place to insure the stability of the structure; their sons substituted an animal; their sons again, a mere effigy or other symbol, and we, their children, still immure a substitute: coins bearing the effigy, impressed upon the noblest of metals, the pure red gold, of the one person to whom we are most loyal and whom we all most love, Our Gracious Queen. I do not assert that one in a hundred is conscious of what he is doing. If you ask him he will give you some different reason. but the fact remains that, unconsciously, we are following the custom of our fathers, and symbolically providing a soul for the structure. Men continue to do what their fathers did before them, though the reasons on which their fathers acted have long been forgotten.”

A Baring-Gould (4) says:

“The proverb says that there is a skeleton in every man’s house, and the proverb is a statement of what, at one time, was a fact. Every house had its skeleton, and what was more, every house was intended to have not only its skeleton, but its ghost.”

Jacob Grimm (5) gives this explanation:

“It was often thought necessary to immure live animals, and even men, in the foundations on which the structure was to be raised, as if they were a sacrifice offered to the earth who had to bear the load upon her. By this in-human rite they hoped to secure immovable stability or other advantages.”

There is evidence that the more ancient totemistic beliefs and practices preceded animism, but Masonry does not seem to have inherited any of them. No doubt they preceded the art of building permanent structures.

THE POINT WITHIN THE CIRCLE

After animism came the ancient religions of phallic worship, or reverence for the generative organs or principles; or Sabaism, or the worship of the stars, sun and moon.

From phallic worship Masonry has at least one important symbol, while from Sabaism there are several symbols and traditions. Which came first is not certain, or important, so the point within the circle, which Mackey says was of phallic origin, will be considered first. It is the writer's humble opinion, however, that phallicism was not its first significance to masonry, but a later adaptation. Its origin and first use, perhaps, proceeded from its practical necessity as the starting point in inscribing a circle. Ancient man, in making a circle, no doubt first drove a peg in the earth, then used a rod, vine or thong with which to inscribe a circular perimeter around it.

The ancient Chinese, according to their traditions, when they lived in tribes in the primeval forests of China, made meeting places in

circular forms by clearing away the forest in circular areas, and used that simple method to make them circular. These, perhaps, were their first temples. Nor has this simple, but efficient, method been improved, even to the present day; for the two points of the compass merely replace the two ends of what was used for a radius.

But, to come back to the ancient religious significance of the point within the circle, Albert G. Mackey (6) says:

“This is a symbol of great interest and importance, and brings us into close connection with the early symbolism of the solar orb and the universe, which was predominant in the ancient sun worship...

“But that this was not always its symbolic significance, we may collect the true history of its connection with the phallus of the Ancient Mysteries. The phallus, as I have already shown under the word, was, among the Egyptians, the symbol of fecundity, expressed by the male generative principle. It was communicated from the rites of Osiris to the religious festivals of Greece.”

It should be pointed out, that it is the point that bears this significance, and because it is shown within a circle. The circle

without the point has no such significance, but is a most important symbol in sun worship.

That brings us to the next order of ancient religious traditions and symbols, those connected with Sabaism. Mackey (7) says:

“The circle being a figure which returns into itself, and having therefore neither beginning nor end, has been adopted in the symbology of all countries and times as a symbol sometimes of the universe and sometimes of eternity.”

The circle, representing the disk of the sun with radiating lines representing rays and these rays ending with small representations of hands, was a symbol, in ancient Egypt, of the “one eternal creative, fructifying and life-sustaining force.” Of this, Savitri Devi (8) says:

“Shu, as an ordinary noun, we must consider as heat, or heat and light, for the word has these meanings. In the Pyramid Texts, Shu is the name of a god symbolizing the heat radiating from the body of Tem, or Tem-Ra, the creator of the solar disk in the indivisible trinity., Tem-Shu-Tefnut — father, son and daughter, the creator of the sun disk, the heat and the moisture; the principle of fertility and its indispensable agents. Whatever be therefore the

interpretation we give to the word, whether we like it as an ordinary, or as a proper noun, we have to admit that ‘the king deified the heat of the sun, or the heat and light,’ as Sir Wallis Budge himself says, and worshipped it as the one eternal, creative, fructifying and life-giving force.

“This permits us to assert, with Sir Flinders Petrie, that in the religion of the disk, the object of worship was ‘the radiant energy of the sun,’ of which heat and light are aspects.”

We have now connected the circle with perhaps the most important ancient religious symbol, the radiated circle or disk, which was the symbol of the world’s first monotheism, that of Amenhotep IV, or Akhnaton, who as Pharaoh of Egypt, 1375-1358 B.C., sacrificed a world empire and was doomed to oblivion by his priest-enemies in order to demonstrate the equality of all men, as being created by, therefore sons of, the one only god, Aten, whose symbol was the disk and whose creative principle was the radiant energy of the sun.

This should be particularly significant to all Freemasons, for there can be no other possible grounds for the brotherhood of all men

than the monotheistic concept, that they are the sons of the one and only God, the Great Architect of the Universe.

CEREMONY OF CIRCUMAMBULATION.

The ceremony of circumambulation, meaning movement in a circular manner, is closely related to the symbol of the circle. It is also related in its origin, for it goes back to the sun worship, symbolizing, according to the belief of the ancients, the movement of the sun around the earth. It was also used in the ceremonies of the ancient mysteries, most likely with the same significance. It is not surprising, therefore, to find it perpetuated in Freemasonry. Mackey (9) describes it as follows:

“Circumambulation is the name given by sacred archaeologists to that religious rite in the ancient initiations which consisted in a formal procession around the altar or other holy and consecrated object. The same rite exists in Freemasonry...

“The Rite of Circumambulation undoubtedly refers to the doctrine of sun-worship, because circumambulation was always around the sacred place, just as the sun was supposed to move around the earth; and although the dogma of sun-worship does not, of course,

exist in Freemasonry, we find an allusion to it in the Rite of Circumambulation, which it preserves, as well as in the position of the officers of a Lodge and in the symbol of a point within a circle.”

Dr. Oliver (10) has a somewhat different interpretation of its meaning, connecting it more directly with the manner of ancient sun worship. He writes:

“The ancients made it a constant practice to turn themselves round when they worshiped the gods. By this circular motion, says Plutarch, some imagine that they intended to imitate the motion of the earth. But I am rather of the opinion that the precept is grounded on another notion that, as all temples are built fronting the East, the people, at their entrance, turned their backs to the sun and, consequently, in order to face the sun, they were obliged to make a half-turn to the right and then, in order to place themselves before the deity, they completed the round in offering up their prayers.”

THE BLAZING STAR

The Blazing Star is one of the most conspicuous and essential emblems of a modern Masonic Lodge. But its use or meaning, if any, in ancient operative masonry, is not known, nor is there any certainty when it was first used, or from where derived. James Anderson does not mention it in his "The Constitutions of the Freemasons, 1723", but in his revised "New Book of Constitutions, 1738", he mentions the Blazing Star as a part of the furniture of a Lodge.

In a lecture by Dunckerley, which was adopted by the Grand Lodge of England, the Blazing Star was said to represent "The star that guided the wise men of Bethlehem, proclaiming to mankind the Nativity, and here conducting our spiritual progress to the Author of our redemption."

Preston associates the Blazing Star with "Moses receiving the tablets of the law on Mount Sinai and with God's constant watchfulness."

Webb, in his lectures, which have been generally adopted in the United States, follows the teaching of Dunckerley, as to it being the Star of Bethlehem which guided the wise men. Later this explanation was omitted from the lectures by the Baltimore convention in 1843, as being too Christian, and therefore sectarian.

In Hutchinson's system, the Blazing Star was considered a symbol of prudence, and so explained, and the Dunckerley explanation of its being the Star of Bethlehem was also adopted, but as a secondary symbol.

In the lectures, as revised by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Hemming and adopted by the United Grand Lodge of England, at the Union of 1813, is found the following definition: "The Blazing Star, of Glory, in the centre, refers to the sun, which lightens the earth with its refulgent rays, dispensing its blessings to mankind at large and giving life to all things here below."

It is interesting to point out, in the revision of Dr. hemming which now constitutes the basis of the authorized lectures of the United Grand Lodge of England, how very closely his explanation of the Blazing Star fits the monotheistic religion of the disk, or sun, as

conceived and taught by Akhnaton, in ancient Egypt. In fact, Hemming's language could almost pass for a translation from the Pyramid Texts.

It appears quite consistent to trace the Blazing Star to an origin in Sabaism, or star worship. There we can associate it with the worship of mars, which was anciently observed by most of the Semetic peoples of the East, under that and other names. As we now know, Mars is a planet and shines only by the reflected light of the sun. But this they did not know, so it and the other planets were called wandering stars, as distinguished from the fixed stars, and were considered worthy of special reverence.

A probable source of the Blazing Star, however, is the more ancient Egyptian worship of the Dog Star, Sirius, because by its heliacal rising, or emerging from the sun's rays, so as to become visible, it warned the people of the approaching danger of the periodical rising of the Nile River.

According to John Fellows, in his "Exposition of the Mysteries" the Dog Star, Sirius, the Anubis of the Egyptians, is the Blazing Star of Masonry. This would make it a symbol of one of the

Egyptian gods, although Oliver, who was inclined towards Christian interpretations, sees God symbolized in Masonry by the Blazing Star, as a herald of our salvation.

It appears that the original Masonic Blazing Star was one with five waving points, representing flame, which would seem to be the more appropriate emblem.

In view of all this, it seems that there is no symbol which has been so much of a football, to be kicked around, and out, and back in again, by the succession of lecture writers and revisers as has been the Blazing Star. Indeed, all of this has taken place in the period of modern Freemasonry, and we might therefore find greater satisfaction by adhering to ancient sources for its origin and explanation.

THE TRIANGLE RADIATED

the triangle radiated is another ancient symbol of the sun god, referring to its light and radiant energy. Its meaning in masonry has not been changed, but somewhat modified, to bring it into line with modern thought. It is described by Mackey (11.) As follows:

“The triangle placed within, and surrounded by, a circle of rays... is called, in Christian art, a glory. When this glory is distinct from the triangle and surrounds it in the form of a circle, it is then an emblem of God’s eternal glory. This is the usual form in religious uses. But when, as is most usual in the Masonic symbol, the rays emanate from the centre of the triangle and, as it were, enshroud it in their brilliance, it is symbolic of the Diving Light. The perverted idea of the Pagans referred these rays of light to their sun-god and their Sabian worship.”

“But the true Masonic idea of the glory is, that it symbolizes the Eternal Light of Wisdom, which surrounds the Supreme Architect as a sea of glory, and from Him, as a common centre, emanates to the universe of His creation.”

THE ALL-SEEING EYE

The monotheistic concept in Masonry of the Great Architect of the Universe is forcefully manifested in the symbolism of the All-Seeing Eye. This powerful symbol, which constantly searches the soul and looks into the heart of every Mason, is a reminder of the omnipresence of God, and of His omnipotence which sustains, regulates and coordinates everything, from the smallest atom of the universe to the largest and most distant galaxy of suns, in that perfect rhythm of celestial harmony.

That the organ of sight, the beholder of light, should have been chosen as the emblem of this powerful symbol is most natural. So far as is known, it was used most anciently by the Egyptians in their mysteries and hieroglyphic recordings. It was also known and used by the Hebrews.

Again referring to Mackey (12.) We find:

“The All-Seeing Eye. An important symbol of the Supreme Being, borrowed by the Freemasons from the nations of antiquity. Both the Hebrews and the Egyptians appear to have derived its use from

the natural inclination of figurative minds to select an organ as the symbol of the function which it is intended peculiarly to discharge... On the same principle the Egyptians represented Osiris, their chief deity, by the symbol of an open eye and placed this hieroglyphic of him in all their temples. His symbolic name, on the monuments, was represented by the eye accompanying a throne, to which was sometimes added an abbreviated figure of the god, and sometimes what has been called a hatchet, but which may as correctly be supposed to be a representation of a square.

“The All-Seeing Eye may then be considered as a symbol of God manifested in His omnipresence — His guardian and preserving character — to which Solomon alludes in the book of Proverbs, when he says (XV:3), ‘The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.’ It is a symbol of the Omnipotent Deity.”

THE FORTY-SEVENTH PROBLEM OF EUCLID

It may be surprising to many readers to learn that the Forty-seventh Problem of Euclid, for which Pythagoras is noted, did not originate with him, but did originate at a much earlier time, and from an ancient religious formula connected with the worship of Osiris and Isis and their offspring Horus. Of it, Mackey (13.) Says:

“The right-angle triangle is another form of the triangle, which deserves attention. Among the Egyptians, it was the symbol of universal nature; the base representing Osiris, or the male principle; the perpendicular, Isis, or the female principle and the hypotenuse, Horus, their son, or the product of the male and female principles.

“This symbol was received by Pythagoras from the Egyptians, during his long sojourn in that country, and with it he also learned the particular property it possessed, namely, that the sum of the squares of the two shorter sides is equal to the square of the longest side — symbolically expressed by the formula, that the product of Osiris and Isis is Horus. This figure has been adopted in

the third degree of masonry and will be there recognized as the
Forty-seventh Problem of Euclid.

THE ALTAR

Masonry has one heritage, in particular, traceable in part to the old Hebrew religion. This is the altar in various forms, sometimes adorned with horns, or spurs, on the four corners. In W.R. Fulbright's "Archaeology of Palestine", Plate 19, is shown six illustrations of house altars, with horns on corners, which were unearthed in the excavation of ancient Megiddo, in Palestine, from horizons between the tenth and ninth centuries, B.C. He describes them as cuboid limestone altars of incense, standing on four short legs and with shallow troughs on tops, the sides elaborately decorated with incised geometrical patterns and rude drawings of desert flora and fauna, including especially palm trees, camels, wild goats, antelope and wild asses. These may reasonably be considered to be actual specimens of the ancient alters which Mackey (14.) Describes as follows:

"In the Jewish Temple the altars of burnt offering and incense had each at the four corners horns of shittim wood. Among the Jews, as well as other ancient peoples, the altar was considered peculiarly holy and privileged; and hence, when a criminal, fleeing, took hold of the horns, he found an asylum and safety. As the Masonic altar

is a representation of the altar of the Solomonic member, it should be constructed with these horns.”

Elsewhere on the same subject Mackey (15.) Observes:

“Among the ancients, the altar was always invested with a peculiar sanctity. Altars were places of refuge, and the supplicants who fled to them were considered as having placed themselves under the protection of the deity to whom the altar was consecrated, and to do violence even to slaves and criminals at the altar, or to drag them from it, was regarded as an act of violence to the deity himself, and hence a sacrilegious crime...

“From all this, we see that the altar in Masonry is not merely a convenient article of furniture, intended, like a table, to hold a Bible. It is a sacred utensil of religion, intended, like the altars of the ancient temples, for religious uses, and thus identifying Masonry, by its necessary existence in our Lodges, as a religious institution. Its presence should also lead the contemplative Mason to view the ceremonies in which it is employed with solemn reverence, as being part of a really religious worship.”

THE YEAR OF MASONRY

It is not exactly clear just when or by whom the use of “Anno Lucis”, indicating the “Year of Masonry”, or the “Year of Light.” was begun, but the idea seems to have started when James Anderson dated his first Constitutions in this way. Mackey (16.) Gives this information concerning it:

“The Year of Masonry, sometimes used as synonymous with the Year of Light. In the eighteenth century it was in fact the more frequent expression. Year of Light (A.L.) Is the epoch used in Masonic documents of the symbolic degrees. This era is calculated from the creation of the world and is obtained by adding 4000 to the current year, on the supposition that Christ was born four thousand years after the creation of the world.”

THE LEGEND OF HIRAM ABIF

The symbolism of Hiram Abif originated with Masonic legend. Hiram played a major role in the symbology of the legend, not only as chief architect, and artificer of the work, but as the Masonic embodiment of that high moral standard towards which all men strive. In addition, his importance rises to its supreme height as a symbol of the first magnitude, in its interpretation, in speculative Masonry, where its significance seem to stem from the Christian religion and Hiram, in his death, burial and resurrection, becomes a symbol of the Redeemer of men. In support of this interpretation, Albert Pike (17) writes:

“The murder of Hiram, his burial, and his being raised again by the Master, are symbols, both of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Redeemer; and of the death and burial in sins of the natural man, and his being raised again to a new life, or born again, by the direct action of the Redeemer; after morality... had failed to raise him. That of the Lion of the House of Judah is the strong grip, never to be broken, with which Christ, of the royal line of that House, has clasped to himself the whole human race, and

embraces them in his wide armss as closely and affectionately as brethren embrace each other on the five points of fellowship.”

THE TWO SAINTS JOHN

Another tradition of Christian origin to be adopted by Freemasons, one that became of very great importance to them in establishing feast days, meeting days, and otherwise, was that of the two Saints John.

It is significant that the date on which the Grand Lodge of England was formed, in 1717, was the feast day of St. John the Baptist. This may have been a coincidence, yet can be thought of as by design and purpose, in order that the infant Grand Lodge might draw inspiration and strength from this courageous and godly personage. The annual feast of the new Grand Lodge was thereafter observed on that date until the year of 1725, when it was changed to St. John the Evangelist Day, perhaps because the latter came on a more convenient date for the annual election and other year-end business.

The tradition of these two patron saints is deeply woven into the fabric of speculative masonry and should wield an ever increasing

influence on its spiritual character and fraternal progress. Of the two Saints John, Mackey (18.) Says:

“St. John the Baptist. One of the patron saints of Freemasonry, and at one time, indeed, the only one, the name of St. John the Evangelist having been introduced subsequent to the sixteenth century. His festival occurs on the 24th of June, and is very generally celebrated by the Masonic Fraternity... It is interesting to note that the Grand Lodge of England was [formed] on St. John the Baptist’s [Day], 1717... and that the annual feast was kept on that day until 1725, when it was held for the first time on the festival of the Evangelist... Lawrie says that the Scottish Masons always kept the festival of the Baptist until 1737, when the Grand Lodge changed the time of the annual election to St. Andrew’s Day...

“St. John the Evangelist. One of the patron saints of Freemasonry, whose festival is celebrated on the twenty-seventh of December. His constant admonition, in his epistles, to the cultivation of brotherly love, and the mystical nature of his Apocalyptic visions, have been, perhaps, the principal reason for the veneration paid to him by the Craft.”

THE LETTER G

The conspicuous symbol, so prominent in Masonic furnishings and adornments, the capital letter G, is of uncertain origin and of a comparatively late date. It is given two widely varying interpretations, both highly important in their Masonic significance. The first interpretation inclines strongly to the operative science of the craft, while the other inclines towards the speculative side, or Freemasonry. Its usefulness and importance are not known to be measured by the comparatively short time it has been known, but rather, because it is one of the more conspicuous and compelling of the visual symbols and is highly stimulating to the imagination. It is because of these qualities, no doubt, that it is so extensively used, not only as Lodge room adornment, but also as personal jewelry insignia. Of its history and interpretations, Mackey (19.) Comments:

“There is an uncertainty as to the exact time when this symbol was first introduced into speculative Masonry. It was not derived, in its present form, from the operative masons of the Middle Ages, who bestowed upon Freemasonry so much of its symbolism, for it is not found among the architectural decorations of the old cathedrals...

“Hutchinson, who wrote as early as 1776, in his “Spirit of Masonry”, says: ‘It is now incumbent on me to demonstrate to you the great signification of the letter G, wherewith Lodges and the medals of Masons are ornamented.

“ ‘To apply its signification to the name of God only is depriving it of part of its Masonic import; although I have already shown that the symbols used in Lodges are impressive of the Divinity’s being the Great Object of Masonry, as Architect of the world.

“ ‘This significant letter denotes geometry which, to artificers, is the science by which all their labors are calculated and formed; and to Masons, contains the determination, definition and proof of the order, beauty and wonderful wisdom of the power of God in His creation.’ “

KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

The symbolism of King Solomon's Temple, in Freemasonry, is so completely established and well known that it need not be enlarged upon here. In fact, more than the volume of this entire paper could be written about the interpretations of each sign, symbol and tradition. For as succeeding generations of Masons, who have studied and lived their meanings through the exercise of their imaginations and experiences, have added something of their own to the already growing volume of meanings, ever expanding changes still go on; and thus, symbolism and tradition live on, increasing in vitality and adapting to, as well as conditioning to, the evolution of thought, customs and religions — and will continue to do so as long as man is constituted an imaginative and creative being.

The symbolism of King Solomon's Temple is embodied in the fact that it is, and has been, the source of inspiration for the origin of that highest of all spiritual traditions in the Craft — the tradition of “That spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” which all Freemasons are dedicated to build, both

in and of themselves. All Freemasons are constituted builders in a spiritual temple and labor to perfect and lay each day's ashlar more perfectly than the one before. It is this sacred tradition, put into practice, that ultimately lifts man towards God, his creator, thus giving the final divine purpose to life and making Freemasonry worthy of the seal of divine approval.

My brother, when you were raised to the sublime degree of a Master mason, when the last cable tow was removed and you were accepted to full brotherhood, as a Free and Accepted Mason, and competent craftsman and builder, did you enter and start labor on that spiritual temple? Did you make the foundation sacrifice that all good brothers have made before you? Symbolically speaking, did you place your bones and mortal parts under the foundation stones, in order that your immortal self and parts might enter into the walls of the spiritual temple and strengthen them? And did you take up your tools, as a Master Mason, and go forward as a master craftsman to help build and complete the structure, finishing each day's labor more perfectly than the last, shaping each stone with greater exactness and beauty, placing and cementing it with a high quality of brotherly love? These are the qualities of your

craftsmanship that will add more strength and greater beauty to your spiritual temple.

Rest assured that if you have worked assiduously in that way to improve your craftsmanship, when the last keystones have been placed in the arches of the domes, when the glittering spires have been completed and you shall have finally reached the top, then the Divine Grand Master will be there with level and square, to check the laying of the “cape-stone” (20.) And to put His seal of approval upon your masterpiece and to pay you the wages in full for your labors.

