

Master Mason Handbook

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Introduction

The Master Mason degree is the crown of the Ancient Craft lodge. It is the culmination of all that has been taught and revealed to the candidate in the two preceding degrees. As he began his Masonic journey, the candidate was initiated into a new philosophical life in the Entered Apprentice degree. After working to subdue his passions and learning silence and obedience, the candidate was passed to the degree of Fellow Craft. After having symbolically mastered the intellectual and philosophical arts and sciences and crossed the threshold from the outer to the inner, from the material to the spiritual, he became ready to be raised to the **Sublime** degree of Master Mason.

Regardless of the candidate's pace through the degrees, he should always review his personal progress and take action to improve himself in Masonry. He should not be satisfied with only taking the degrees and then consider himself to be a Master Mason. Very few are truly Masters of the Craft, and it is important to maintain a meaningful deference for this exalted status. The designation of Master Mason is always before every Mason in the journey toward the Light as the ideal of the fraternity.

Being raised to the Sublime degree refers to being exalted or elevated. It also means to undergo sublimation that, like distillation, requires a volatilization of a substance that rises and re-forms at a higher level. The significance of this degree is the portrayal of the removal of everything that keeps us from rising to that state where the soul communes with the Divine. It also represents a symbolic rebirth into the spiritual world, the true abode of the soul.

Master Mason Degree

SYMBOLISM OF THE DEGREE

The candidate enters the lodge of Master Masons in darkness. While he has not witnessed the Light of this degree before, he is now in a state of equilibrium and is prepared to walk on sacred ground. The initiate is given full use of every working tool, but the one tool exalted above the others from this point on is the one that symbolizes the spreading of Brotherly Love.

After ceremonies in the first section, which seem quite familiar, the candidate now partakes of the central mystery of the Masonic Order. In this degree, the lodge becomes a representation of the Sanctum Sanctorum, or Holy of Holies, within King Solomon's Temple of Jerusalem. Participating in this rite is a matter of forging a link with the innermost aspects of the fraternity.

THE WORKING TOOLS

The working tools of a Master Mason are "all the instruments of Masonry." In the United States, the trowel is especially assigned to this degree. The Master Mason uses the trowel to cement ties between Masons, and to spread Brotherly Love. Although all the tools are available to the Master Mason, it is the trowel with which he must now work.

THE HIRAMIC LEGEND AND REBIRTH

The historical Hiram Abiff that is recorded in the Bible was a skilled artificer and the son of a widow of the Tribe of Naphtali. The earlier accounts of Hiram are recorded in I Kings 7:13–14. His coming to work on the temple at Jerusalem is mentioned in a letter written to King Solomon by Hiram, the King of Tyre, and recorded in II Chronicles 2:13–14. The word Abiff is variously translated, but can mean “his father,” and the name is often explained as “Hiram, my father.” In a certain sense, he was regarded as the father of the workmen on the temple. His role in the Hiramic legend of Masonic tradition, however, is far more than simply that of a skilled architect.

The Hiramic legend has at its heart the slaying and symbolic restoration of an ideal of purity and order. Because the legend of the Grand Master Hiram Abiff is consistent with the teachings and rites of the Ancient Mystery Schools, the participant of the Masonic rite communes with the archetypal forces that are the foundation of human spiritual tradition.

Initiation into the Ancient Mysteries was not simply a means of attaining intellectual knowledge, or “learning” (*mathein* in ancient Greek). Aristotle wrote that it was actually the “experience” (*pathein*), and not knowledge learned, that allowed the initiate to comprehend the secret meaning of the mysteries.

This enlightening, transformative experience has generally been termed rebirth, or *renatus* in Latin, and appears to be the central theme of the most important rituals of almost all the Ancient Mystery Schools as well as modern initiatic organizations.

At Eleusis, the teaching on rebirth was revealed through the symbolism of Kore’s descent into the underworld, her ascension from it, and the subsequent return of fertility. In the cults of Osiris, Dionysus, Attis, and Adonis, the main rite is their violent death and rebirth. In Mithraism, we find representations of Mithras slaying a bull whose blood turns into grain. In Christianity, the unjust crucifixion of Christ leads to the ultimate redemption of mankind. And within Freemasonry we learn of the murder of our beloved Grand Master Hiram Abiff by three impatient craftsmen and his subsequent raising.

According to many enlightened thinkers, the three strikes to our Grand Master’s body symbolize the same vices that combined together to slay Christ. Namely, the corruption of the church, the oppression of the state, and the ignorance of the mob. Whether or not the blows are indeed symbolic of the same social vices that had combined to take the earthly life of Christ is probably a matter of opinion, but what is clear is that the ruffians had not been able to “subdue their passions” and were thus driven by them to commit the terrible act. Because the Fellow Crafts allowed themselves to be governed by their passions, they murdered the qualities of a master within themselves. It is for us, therefore, to learn to subdue our passions so that the master within each of us may be raised. In this sense, one of the lessons of the legend of Hiram Abiff is that of undying fidelity to the highest ideals and the ultimately victorious nature of such convictions.

Masonic tradition informs us that the master's murder leads to the loss of the word, leaving it to be discovered in future ages. This may suggest that mankind is yet to receive its salvation as a whole, while at the same time revealing the path to individual enlightenment within the allegory of the legend. But however one may wish to interpret the Hiram legend, it is clear that the death and raising of Hiram presents some kind of teaching on rebirth. It only follows then that the doctrine of rebirth is something every dedicated Mason should become familiar with.

But before proceeding to rebirth, it may first be necessary to understand what causes the death in the first place. It appears that all the violent deaths—of Osiris, of Christ, of Hiram—have something in common. They symbolize vice, ignorance, and chaos, inevitably slaying the pure self and thereby making rebirth necessary for salvation. These legends reveal the nature of our circumstances and enlighten us to the trials that we must overcome. Only through the death of one's imperfect self, the leaving behind of the old, and acceptance of transcendent truth, can one truly be reborn into a new self, no longer tainted by the sins of one's past. In a certain sense, and depending on one's perspective or religious background, rebirth or regeneration is a process that is constantly occurring. With such an understanding, it is up to the initiate to ensure that he is improving himself on a daily basis by carefully watching and analyzing his behavior and motives.

It should be recognized that the doctrine of rebirth as a means of regaining one's purity or rediscovering one's true self has had great influence on the Christian doctrine of original sin. Christianity teaches that because of the fall following the transgression of Adam, all humanity has inherited a state of sin, with rebirth in Christ the Savior and in the life of the spirit as the only way to salvation. Within Islam, on the other hand, the doctrine of original sin is rejected because Allah accepted the repentance of Adam after the fall (Qurân 2:36–37) and thereby showed that each man is responsible only for his own actions, though still subject to temptation and folly. While it seems unclear which understanding is closer to what was taught in the various Mystery Schools of the ancient world, it does seem clear that regardless of the tradition one looks at, most would agree that man is constantly subject to temptation and almost always gives in sooner or later.

A good source for Freemasons to examine in the quest to overcome vice and temptation and understand rebirth is cited in the Cooke Manuscript of the *Old Charges* to operative Masons in England (circa 1450). This manuscript regards Hermes Trismegistus as the principal patron of the Craft. Some writers have even speculated that the name Hiram Abiff actually comes from Hermes Ibis. While this is unlikely, this connection may have merit only if Hiram is considered to be a symbol of the knowledge professed by Hermes that has become lost for most of humanity due to the vices of men.

The main body of surviving Hermetic wisdom is called the *Corpus Hermeticum* and, incidentally, book 13 of the *Corpus* is entitled *On Rebirth*. The text is in the form of a dialogue between Hermes Trismegistus and his son Tat. Tat begins by asking his father to reveal the teaching on rebirth, by saying that he is now “ready to become a stranger to the world,” as this was the condition that Hermes had previously set forth. Hermes then explains that all things come from God, and are one with God, and it is His will only that determines who shall achieve rebirth. The dialogue continues with Hermes teaching Tat that it is only through mastery of self and transcending of the senses that the Divine intellect, or *Nous*, can be discovered.

SON OF THE WIDOW

Regarding Hiram as the “Son of the Widow,” it should be noted that the Egyptian god Horus, as the child of Isis and Osiris, was also the son of a widow. Hermes Trismegistus was called the stone “orphan.” The Manichaeans were called “children of the widow.” Etymologically, the word individual is also related to the word widow. *Vidua*, Latin for widow, derives from the verb *videre*, meaning “to part.”

THE WAGES OF A MASTER MASON

Our ancient, operative Brethren performed manual labor and received wages which would contribute to their physical welfare. These nominal wages were corn (wheat), wine, and oil. The wages of a **speculative** Mason, however, must come from within, as he is concerned more with moral, rather than physical, labor. The rewards of love, compassion, friendship, and brotherhood are the wages of a Master Mason. Not everyone works hard enough to earn them, however, which is why the Senior Warden in the opening of the lodge declares: “To pay the Craft their wages, if any be due”

THE THREE GRAND MASTERS

The Three Grand Masters mentioned in our rituals concerning the building of the Temple are: Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abiff. Traditionally, Divinity has been thought of in three aspects. The secrets known only to these Three Grand Masters typify Divine truth, which was known only to God, and was not to be communicated to man until he had completed his own spiritual temple. Once these secrets were attained, a man could reap the rewards of a well-spent life, and travel to the unknown country toward which all of us are traveling.

TRAVELING IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

The goal of our ancient operative Brethren was to become masters, so they might possess those secrets which would enable them to practice the art of the architect, no matter where they traveled, even in foreign countries.

The term “foreign countries” is used symbolically in speculative Masonry, and is not meant to refer to a certain geographical location. Freemasonry itself is a foreign country to those not initiated into its rites. To fully appreciate and enjoy the privileges of the Craft, the new initiate must become familiar with the territory of Freemasonry by learning its language, customs, and history.

Once raised, Freemasons must continue their journey into the depths of the Craft and continue to search for Light and truth wherever it may be found.

The term “foreign countries” may also be a metaphor for the spiritual worlds. The ancients concerned themselves with vast spiritual worlds, and their method of gaining admission through various spiritual spheres was through secret passwords, grips, signs, and sometimes angelic names, and holy words.

LOW TWELVE

In ancient symbolism, the number 12 denoted completion. This sign arose from the 12 signs of the zodiac being a complete circle and the 12 edges of the cube being a symbol of the earth. The number twelve signified fulfillment of a deed, and was therefore an emblem of human action and life. High Twelve corresponds to noon, with the sun at its zenith, while Low Twelve denotes midnight, the blackest time of the night.

THE LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH

The lion is an ancient symbol of royalty. Due to its majesty and power it has long been considered the “king” of beasts. Its likeness is commonly found on the thrones and palaces of rulers. It was also associated with the sun because of its mane.

The lion was the sign of the Tribe of Judah, because this was the royal tribe of the Hebrew nation. All kings of Judah were called the “Lion of the Tribe of Judah” and this was, therefore, one of the titles of King Solomon.

The Mithraic god Aion had a human body with a lion’s head. Because of its association with the sun and its correspondence to the zodiacal sign of Leo, the lion is also considered a symbol of alchemical fire.

In the Middle Ages, the lion was also understood as a symbol of resurrection. There were common tales that the lion cub when born lay dead for three days until breathed upon by its father and restored to life. Representations of roaring lions symbolized the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day.

THE LOST WORD

The search for “that which was lost” is not necessarily for a particular word. Our search is a symbol for our feeling of loss or self-imposed exile from the Divine. The search is ultimately for Divine truth.

The book of Genesis gives us a clue to the power of speech. In it, we learn that the first act of creation occurred when “God said.” The utterance of the Word is also closely connected with the idea of Light, and therefore, knowledge. Having the power of speech is perhaps the noblest attribute of man, because he can communicate his thoughts to his fellows. Thus, the Word has been carried down through the ages as being synonymous with every manifestation of Divine power and truth. We must always search diligently for truth, and never permit prejudice, passions, or conflicts of interest to hinder us in our search. We must keep our minds open to receiving truth from any source.

In the Craft lodges, there is a substitute for the true Word. Each initiate must ultimately seek out and find the true Word for himself, through his own individual efforts. Some Masonic scholars speculate that the names of the three ruffians provide a hint at the lost Word. Indeed, there is an allusion to the sacred syllable of the Vedic texts found in these names. Either way, the true Word is a symbol, or manifestation, of that higher order that maintains the world.

THE SETTING MAUL

This was a wooden instrument used by operative masons to set polished stones firmly into a wall. The maul has been understood as a symbol of destruction from prehistoric times, and is portrayed often in mythology in this capacity. One of the best known is that of Thor, God of Thunder, a powerful figure armed with a mighty hammer.

THE SPRIG OF ACACIA

The acacia is a thorny plant, with red and white flowers, that abounds in the Middle East. Both Jews and Egyptians believed that because of its hardiness, its evergreen nature, and its durability, it signified immortality. Hebrew people used to plant a sprig of acacia at the head of a grave to mark the location of the grave and to show their belief in immortality. Because of its evergreen nature, they believed it to be an emblem of both immortality and innocence. In Egypt, acacia also symbolized rebirth and was an emblem of Neith.

It is believed that the acacia was used to construct most of the furniture and the tabernacle in the Temple. It is a tradition in the Near East that the Crown of Thorns was made from acacia.

KABBALISTIC ALLUSIONS OF THE THIRD DEGREE

Traditional Jewish mysticism known as Kabbala, and particularly its use of Gematria, often provides interesting clues to the interpretation of passages of Scripture. Since much of our ritual is derived from Scripture, many Masonic scholars see various Kabbalistic allusions throughout the rituals of Freemasonry.

For example, using the Kabbalistic discipline of Gematria, the Hebrew spelling of Hiram Abiff equals the number 273. The Hebrew term for “hidden light” and the phrase found in Psalms 118:22, “the stone refused by the builders,” each add up to 273. Some students of Gematria view crossing languages in this pursuit as acceptable (so long as the languages employed follow the same traditional letter-numbering system of the ancient world). An example of this approach may include the Greek word *athanasia*, which means “immortality,” and also adds up to 273. From the standpoint of Gematria, this would be a significant correlation.

HIEROGLYPHICAL EMBLEMS

In The Three Pillars we have the Three Great Supports of Masonry—wisdom, strength, and beauty. The Three Steps remind us of how youth, manhood, and old age are each an entity in itself, each possessing its own duties and problems, and each calling for its own philosophy. The pot of incense teaches that to be pure and blameless in our inner lives is more acceptable to God than anything else, because that which a man really is, is of vastly greater importance than that which he appears to be. It is also a symbol of prayer and meditation. The beehive recommends the virtue of industry and teaches us that we should never rest while our fellow creatures are in need of assistance. Bees have often been regarded as symbols of messengers from the heavens.

The *Book of Constitutions* guarded by The Tiler's Sword is the emblem of law and order, and reminds us that our moral and spiritual character is grounded in law and morality as much as is government and nature. It teaches that no man can live a satisfactory life who lives lawlessly. The Sword Pointing to a Naked Heart symbolizes that one of the most rigorous of these laws is justice, and that if a man be unjust in his heart, the inevitable results of injustice will find him out.

The All Seeing Eye shows that we live and move and have our being in God; that we are constantly in His presence, wherever or whatever we are doing. The single Eye is found in many countries from Egypt to India: The Eye of Horus, the Eye of Shiva, and so on.

The Anchor and Ark represent the sense of security and stability of a life grounded in truth and faith, without which sense there can be no happiness. The Forty-Seventh Problem of Euclid, or the Pythagorean Theorem, is a very important symbol in Freemasonry. It is the Sacred King of the scalene (limping) triangles, and its properties have implications in many different areas. Plutarch wrote that the Egyptians attributed the holy family of Osiris, Isis, and Horus to this specific triangle: Osiris the vertical (3), Isis the horizontal (4), and Horus the diagonal (5). After Osiris is killed, Horus becomes the Son of the Widow.

In the Hourglass, we have the emblem of the fleeting quality of life. The Scythe reminds us that the passing of time will end our lives as well as our work, and if ever we are to become what we ought to be, we must be faithful, work diligently, and not delay.

Duties and Rights of a Master Mason

The constant duty of a Master Mason is "to preserve the reputation of the fraternity unsullied." Leading a good life is the best means of carrying through individual responsibility to one's lodge and the Craft. The conduct of each Master Mason is his own responsibility, and he must always strive to choose the course which will bring credit to himself and honor to the fraternity.

In his actions toward his fellow brothers, Master Masons must always practice Brotherly Love. If your brother should slip, offer your hand to him without judgement or harsh criticism, and remember that if tempted in the same way, you yourself may have fallen.

LODGE ATTENDANCE

There is no mandatory attendance requirement as in ancient lodges and no penalty for not attending. However, every Master Mason has an obligation to be loyal to the lodge which gave him Masonic Light and all the benefits which come with his membership. You should attend your lodge as often as possible and join in the fellowship that is an important part of Freemasonry.

MASONIC RELIEF

Masonic Relief may be applied for by any Master Mason—either to his own lodge, or to an individual Master Mason. In every case, the individual asked has the right to determine the worthiness of the request and whether such aid can be granted without material injury to his family. Relief is a voluntary function of both the lodge and the individual. If the lodge's financial condition will not allow it to help, he can apply to the Grand Lodge for help. In order to be eligible for Masonic Relief, the brother must not have been suspended in the past five years, and there can be no charges pending against him at the time of application. The widow or orphan of a Master Mason, who was a member of the lodge at the time of his death, is entitled to consideration if they apply for assistance. The same conditions as to worthiness and the ability and willingness of the lodge apply in these cases.

MASONIC VISITATION

Visitation of other lodges is one of the greatest privileges of being a Master Mason. Before you can sit in another lodge, you must prove yourself to be a Mason **in good standing** and have permission from the Master of the lodge. In order to attend another lodge, it is important to learn the memory work and modes of recognition in each degree, and have your paid-up dues card with you. You can gain admission to another lodge in one of two ways—examination or avouchment by a brother who has sat in lodge with you previously.

THE RIGHT OF BURIAL

The Masonic funeral service is conducted only at the request of a brother or member of his immediate family. The choice belongs to the family, not to the lodge. This service can be held in a church, the lodge room, funeral parlor, or grave site. It is a beautiful and solemn ceremony and, like Masonry itself, does not conflict with a man's personal religious beliefs.

BALLOTING

Only members in good standing have a right to vote. No member present can be excused from balloting on any petitioner before the lodge. No member will be permitted to retire from the lodge to avoid casting his **ballot**. In California, the white ball indicates an affirmative, or favorable, ballot, and the black cube indicates a negative, or unfavorable, ballot. If there is no reason to believe otherwise, the report of the investigating committee is usually accepted, and a favorable ballot is cast on a petition for membership.

If there is an objection to an applicant, it should be raised before the ballot is taken. Every Freemason has the right to speak to the Master privately and express any concerns or objections he may have about the applicant. If there is some legitimate reason to indicate why the petitioner is unworthy, for strictly Masonic—not personal—reasons, a black cube may be cast to protect the lodge from an undesirable member. As you approach the ballot box, examine your motives and be sure that the ballot you are about to cast will do justice to the candidate and Freemasonry. The right to secrecy of the ballot is guaranteed by Masonic law, and custom allows each member to have full freedom in balloting on petitioners. No brother should disclose how he voted and no brother should inquire into how another brother voted on a particular candidate.

DEFINITIONS OF NON-AGE, DOTAGE, AND FOOL

In the jurisdiction of California, non-age refers in this degree to one who is not yet 18 years of age. **Dotage** is a condition associated with old age, and is marked by juvenile desires, loss of memory, and failure of judgement. Being old does not bar someone from seeking membership, but it is required that he be mentally alert and healthy. A fool is a grown man without good sense. Legally, he may be of age, but mentally he is incapable of the kind of understanding required to be successful in Freemasonry.

EXAMINING VISITORS

This responsibility belongs to the lodge and is delegated by the Worshipful Master to a committee of Brethren who are to satisfy themselves that the visitor is a Master Mason in good standing in a *regular* and *recognized* lodge. The Worshipful Master may call upon any member of the lodge to serve on the examining committee. Kindness and courtesy should be shown to all visitors at all times.

VOUCHERS ON PETITIONERS

Before endorsing the petition of anyone for initiation into the Masonic Order, it is necessary to determine the applicant's motives for initiation, his expectations, and the quality of his character. A man must be of good moral character and show himself to be capable and desirous of intellectual and philosophical growth.

Signing the petition of a man who wishes to become a Freemason is a significant responsibility, and by doing so you are committing to assist him as he grows in Freemasonry.

INVESTIGATING PETITIONERS

This responsibility belongs to every member of the lodge and should not be taken lightly. Serving on an investigating committee should be regarded as a mark of special trust by the Master of your lodge. It is a solemn responsibility. Only those who can be counted on to make a complete and impartial inquiry into the petitioner's character and determine his worthiness to become a Freemason should be selected. The members of the investigating committee are known only to the petitioner and to the Worshipful Master who appointed them.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Your financial responsibilities are twofold. First is the mandatory payment of annual dues. Second are voluntary support contributions to certain charities, distressed worthy brothers, and other Masonic organizations, as you desire. By paying dues, each brother carries his share of the expenses to run the lodge. Regarding voluntary financial support, he must determine the extent of his participation, measuring the need against his ability. Any member failing to pay his dues for a period of more than twelve months is subject to suspension.

There is no reason a brother should be suspended for nonpayment of dues. Not being able to pay dues can be handled easily and without embarrassment. No lodge desires to suspend a brother who is unable to continue payment of dues. A distressed brother should inform the Worshipful Master or the Secretary of his situation. One of these officers will take care of the situation so no record is shown on the books and no debt is accumulated. This is not Masonic charity, but, rather, Brotherly Love. In most cases, the other Brethren in the lodge know nothing about his situation.

LODGE MEMBERSHIP

Although Entered Apprentices are considered full Masons, in California one does not become a member of a lodge until after being raised. Termination of membership can occur in one of four ways: **dimit**, suspension, expulsion, or death. One can apply for a dimit (or transfer to another lodge) if his dues are currently paid up and he is otherwise in good standing. One can also hold plural or dual membership in multiple lodges. This sometimes occurs when one lodge raises a candidate who then moves to another area and wants to become active in a new lodge. One must be a member of a lodge in order to become an officer there. Plural membership refers to being a member of more than one lodge in this jurisdiction (California), while dual membership refers to being simultaneously a member in this jurisdiction and in a lodge of another jurisdiction. The Secretary of each lodge should have access to the necessary paperwork.

A Mason can be suspended for nonpayment of dues or “un-Masonic conduct.” If suspended for nonpayment of dues, it is possible to apply for reinstatement. At any time, back dues for the year of nonpayment plus the current year must be paid. If suspended for un-Masonic conduct, it is possible to be reinstated by following certain procedures. If convicted of un-Masonic conduct by trial, the trial board may direct expulsion from the Masonic Order. The verdict can be appealed to the Grand Lodge. A Mason suspended or expelled from a lodge may lose his membership in all Masonic organizations.

ENTERING OR RETIRING FROM AN OPEN LODGE

Courtesy dictates that Freemasons should always arrive before a meeting is scheduled to begin. This also allows sharing of fellowship, meeting any visitors who may be arriving, and so on.

If you arrive after a meeting has begun, you should clothe yourself properly, inform the Tiler, and ask to be admitted. The Tiler will inform the Junior Deacon, who will then request permission from the Master that you be admitted. The Junior Deacon will notify you when it is appropriate to enter and of the degree in which work is taking place. When permitted to enter, proceed west of the altar, give the due guard and sign of the degree, and take a seat.

Retiring from an open lodge is accomplished in much the same way. Move west of the altar, give the appropriate due guard and sign, and then leave.

DEPORTMENT WHILE IN THE LODGE

Your deportment while the lodge is open should be governed by good taste and propriety. You should not engage in private conversations, nor through any other action disrupt the business of the lodge. Discussions in the lodge are always a healthy sign and promote the interest of the lodge, if properly conducted. If you wish to speak, rise and, after being recognized, give the due guard and sign, and then make your remarks. Always address the Worshipful Master, even if you are responding to a direct question from another brother. When finished, you may then be seated. Religion, partisan politics, and any other subject which might disrupt the peace and harmony of the lodge should not be discussed in lodge. Voting on routine matters is usually conducted through a voice ballot.

Proficiency

After attaining the Sublime status of Master Mason, every Mason in California must be able to answer certain questions and reach a required level of proficiency in the work of the Master Mason degree.

The questions may be answered in written form, though it is highly encouraged to read the answers in open lodge in the form of a brief presentation.

- I. What is rebirth and how is the concept understood in traditional or initiatic societies? Please describe in your answer some historical and symbolic aspects of initiatic rites dealing with rebirth.
- II. What is the role of Freemasonry and initiatic traditions in human society? Please provide historical examples in your answer if appropriate.
- III. What do you view as the most significant aspect of experiencing the Master Mason degree? Please explain what you think the experience is meant to convey and how you benefited from it.

Grand Lodge Structure and Administration

THE GRAND LODGE OF CALIFORNIA

The Grand Lodge of California is composed of seven elective and 21 appointive Grand Lodge officers, Past Grand officers, the Masters and Wardens of each lodge in the state, and the Past Masters of all lodges in this jurisdiction. The seven elected officers are the Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, Senior Grand Warden, Junior Grand Warden, Grand Treasurer, Grand Secretary, and Grand Lecturer.

The Masonic law is codified in a document called the California Masonic Code (CMC). Every member of a lodge and every Masonic organization in this jurisdiction must adhere to the rules and regulations of the CMC. Failure to do so may be grounds for disciplinary action. Every California Freemason is encouraged to become familiar with this document.

Each year during the Annual Communication (late September or early October), the members of Grand Lodge meet at the California Masonic Memorial Temple in San Francisco and conduct the business of the Grand Lodge. During Annual Communication, resolutions are presented and voted on by the Grand Lodge. Each member of Grand Lodge has one vote, except the Grand Tiler, who has no vote, and Past Masters of each lodge, who have one collective vote for their whole lodge. Thus, each lodge in this jurisdiction has four votes total: one for the Master, one for each of the Wardens, and one for its Past Masters as a group. All Master Masons in good standing are permitted to attend these sessions but may not vote unless they are members of Grand Lodge.

Resolutions introduced by California Masons before the Grand Lodge must receive a 5/6 affirmative vote for adoption. Legislation receiving less than 5/6 but greater than a majority of the ballots is carried over to the next year's session, where it must receive a 2/3 affirmative vote for passage. Resolutions receiving less than 1/2 fail. The Grand Master is permitted to make Recommendations and Decisions, which are special kinds of legislation. Legislation which passes is adopted as part of the California Masonic Code (CMC). Every year, the results of the Annual Communication are recorded in the Grand Lodge Proceedings.

The California Grand Lodge manages two total care homes in Union City and Covina for aged Brethren and their widows. The Masonic Home in Covina also cares for disadvantaged children, both those who are related to a Mason and those who are not.

THE GRAND MASTER

The Grand Master of Masons of California is elected for a one-year term by the members of the Grand Lodge. Almost without exception, he has served the prior three years as Junior Grand Warden, Senior Grand Warden, and then Deputy Grand Master. The Grand Master is the chief executive officer of this jurisdiction, and his powers and responsibilities are wide and varied. In brief, he may grant dispensations, convene and preside over any lodge, arrest the charter or dispensation of any lodge, suspend the Master of any lodge from the exercise of his powers and duties, and officiate at the laying of cornerstones. The Grand Master also acts on behalf of the Grand Lodge when it is not in session.

During his term, the Grand Master is sometimes called upon to interpret the California Masonic Code. He may consult with the Jurisprudence Committee on the matter, but the final determination is his to make. This interpretation of the CMC is called a Grand Master Decision. At the following Annual Communication, all Grand Master Decisions are voted on by the Grand Lodge. They must receive a simple majority vote for passage. The Grand Master may also offer his Recommendations to the Grand Lodge. These are treated like any normal resolution brought before the Grand Lodge, except that the Recommendation of a Grand Master often carries notable influence.

The Executive Committee consists of the Grand Master, the Deputy Grand Master, and the Senior and Junior Grand Wardens. In the absence of the Grand Master, one of these other officers presides on his behalf.

THE GRAND SECRETARY

The Grand Secretary is the chief administrative officer of the Grand Lodge. He has many responsibilities, most especially managing the staff and day-to-day operations of the Grand Lodge office. He is also responsible for serving as Secretary for various Grand Lodge Boards and Committees, recording all transactions of the Grand Lodge proper to be written, maintaining important documents and papers of the Grand Lodge, and conducting the correspondence of the Grand Lodge. He also receives Resolutions, Decisions, and Recommendations presented to the Grand Lodge for Annual Communication, maintains membership statistics, and more.

THE GRAND LECTURER AND RITUAL COMMITTEE

In matters of ritual, this jurisdiction is divided into five geographical Divisions, each of which is under the supervision of an Assistant Grand Lecturer, who is appointed each year by the Grand Master. These five Assistant Grand Lecturers receive instruction in the ritual and report to the Grand Lecturer, who is an elective Grand Lodge officer.

Each of these Divisions is further subdivided into Districts, which are overseen by an Inspector. Each Inspector is usually accountable for about four lodges. The Inspector oversees the ritual work and is also the representative of the Grand Master within the District. He is authorized to ensure that the administration of each lodge in his District is handled properly. Within each lodge, an Officers' Coach, appointed by the Inspector, sees that the ritual work of that lodge is done properly.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The Grand Lodge maintains a number of boards and committees, each of which has a specific responsibility within the overall structure of the Grand Lodge. Boards and standing committees are mandated by the California Masonic Code. The Grand Master may also convene any number of special committees at his pleasure. All members of Grand Lodge boards and committees are appointed by the Grand Master and are usually Past Masters, but a limited number of Master Masons may be appointed as well. Members may serve for only nine years, with five of those as President or Chairman, unless the Grand Master feels that circumstances warrant a longer term.

Every Grand Lodge presides over one Masonic jurisdiction. It is the supreme Masonic authority within that jurisdiction. Its authority extends not just to the lodges under its control, but also to each of the Appendant and Concordant Bodies within its confines.

Jurisdictions vary in size and composition. In countries around the world that have Freemasonry, there is a single Grand Lodge for the entire country. The United States and some other countries have multiple Grand Lodges, but each has a certain exclusive territory in which it operates. Still other places have multiple Grand Lodges acting within the same territory, each responsible for its own lodges. Currently, there are 51 mainstream Grand Lodges in this country—all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

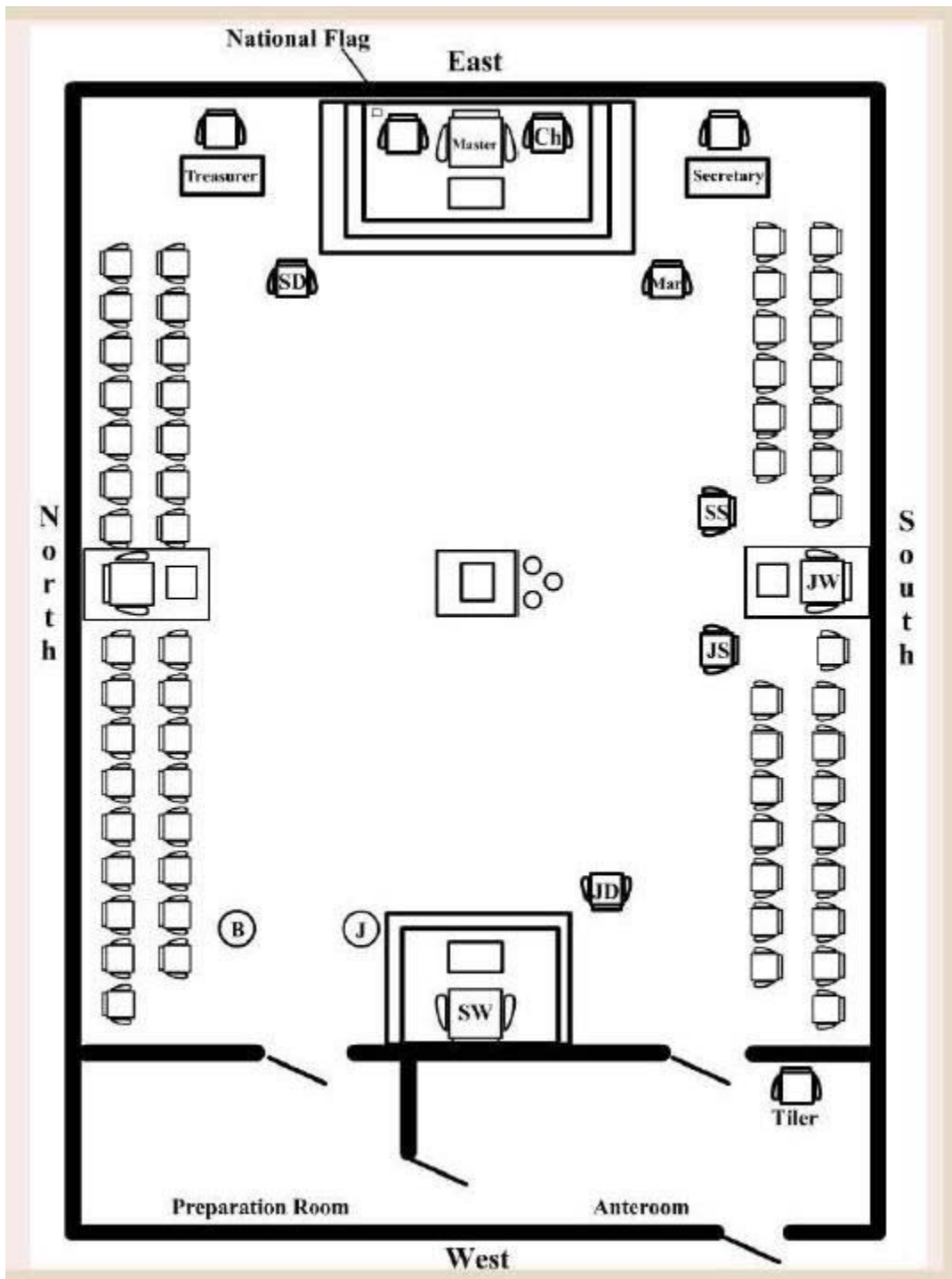
A Grand Lodge serves as the administrative center for a Masonic jurisdiction. It sets policies and procedures, ensures that rules and regulations are being followed, maintains the esoteric work according to the ancient usages, charters new lodges, provides information and assistance to its **constituent lodges**, and so on.

Constituent lodges are responsible for paying *per capita* to the Grand Lodge for its upkeep and maintenance. This money comes from the annual dues of the membership of each of the lodges. Each lodge must also adhere to all of the rules and regulations adopted by the Grand Lodge. However, the authority of the Grand Lodge is derived from the lodges. Individual lodges can exist without a Grand Lodge, but a Grand Lodge cannot exist without lodges.

Officers of a Masonic Lodge

There are five elected officers of a Masonic lodge: the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Treasurer, and Secretary. The Master appoints the Chaplain, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon, Marshal, Senior Steward, Junior Steward, Tiler, and Organist. The Master, Wardens, and Senior Deacon must be proficient in the work of their respective positions, and the District Inspector must certify their proficiency. Any qualified member may be elected by the lodge to hold office.

Graphic illustrating lodge room and officers' stations



Regularity and Recognition

One of the most complicated areas of Masonic jurisprudence, or law, relates to the standards a Grand Lodge must follow in order to be considered *regular*. Each Grand Lodge has its own set of standards, and since there is no central governing authority within Freemasonry, determining *regularity* is difficult and subjective. Space does not permit a comprehensive list of all the issues associated with standards of *regularity*, but some examples include: acceptance of candidates irrespective of their personal religious beliefs; the Holy Bible, square, and compass displayed upon the altar at all times; the acceptance of men only; the Hiram legend as an integral part of the third degree; and so on.

In the late nineteenth century, Masonic historian Albert G. Mackey published a list of 25 ancient landmarks of Freemasonry. A landmark is supposed to be an integral part of the Craft and can never be changed. Mackey's list has served as the basis of *regularity* since its publication, but confusion arises because each Grand Lodge determines its own set of landmarks. Some jurisdictions use all 25 landmarks as presented by Mackey. Others have a shorter list. Still others, like California, refer to the ancient landmarks but do not define them.

Regularity is, therefore, a subjective term. It depends on the perspective of the one making the determination, and a Grand Lodge may be considered *regular* by one jurisdiction and *irregular* by another.

In contrast to *regularity*, the concept of *recognition* is purely objective. *Recognition* refers to the state of amity between two Masonic Grand Lodges. The relationship is similar to that between nation-states, and since each Grand Lodge is sovereign, it decides for itself which Grand Lodges it will *recognize* and which it will not.

When two Grand Lodges share *recognition*, their members are permitted to visit one another and, in most cases, hold membership in lodges of both jurisdictions if they so desire. The only Brethren permitted to visit our lodges are those from Masonic jurisdictions *recognized* by the Grand Lodge of California. It is the responsibility of the Master, or his designee, to make this determination and to ensure that all visiting Masons are from a lodge under a *recognized* Grand Lodge.

The book *List of Lodges Masonic* is published annually and includes a comprehensive list of every Grand Lodge and their constituent lodges *recognized* by the Grand Lodge of California. Every lodge Secretary should have a copy of this book in his office.

WOMEN AND FREEMASONRY

When Masonry was operative, the masons were all men, and as the Craft became a fraternity its membership continued to be male. This practice has continued down through the years.

Some Masonic organizations do admit women, but they are not *recognized* by the Grand Lodge of California. In California, women are included in the family of *recognized* Freemasonry through concordant Bodies, such as the Order of the Eastern Star, the Order of Amaranth, and others.

PRINCE HALL MASONRY

In 1783, a free black man named Prince Hall was made a Mason in Massachusetts by a traveling Irish military lodge. Hall wished to form a lodge but was denied dispensation by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. He sent his petition to the Grand Lodge of England, and after 12 years, he received a charter for African Lodge No. 459 on their rolls.

This lodge eventually led to the first “Prince Hall” Grand Lodge. Since that time, Prince Hall Grand Lodges have spread across this country, much like mainstream Grand Lodges. For 200 years, these Grand Lodges were *unrecognized* and considered *irregular*. It is only very recently that Prince Hall Masonry has started to be accepted by the mainstream.

It should be understood that the separation between Prince Hall Masonry and mainstream Masonry was not entirely one-sided. Prince Hall Masons are justifiably proud of their Masonic heritage, and there was some concern on their part that recognition would lead to problems for their jurisdictions. However, there can be no doubt that racism played a large part in the gulf between mainstream Freemasonry and Prince Hall Freemasonry.

In 1989, the United Grand Lodge of England extended recognition to the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. Connecticut and Massachusetts soon followed with recognition of their own. Since that time, many Prince Hall and mainstream Grand Lodges have extended recognition to one another. As of 2005, 32 of 51 mainstream Grand Lodges were in fraternal accord with their Prince Hall counterparts.

The Grand Lodge of California recognized the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of California and Hawaii, Inc. at its 1995 Annual Communication. We are now permitted to visit their lodges, and they are permitted to visit ours, without restriction. Dual membership is not permitted, however, because Prince Hall Masonic Code expressly prohibits their members from joining lodges outside their jurisdiction. The Grand Lodge of California is also in fraternal accord with the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Oregon, Hawaii, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

Appendant and Concordant Bodies

After being raised, a Master Mason may choose to join any number of Masonic appendant Bodies. The two most common appendant Orders are known as the Scottish Rite and the York Rite.

SCOTTISH RITE

The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR) is an additional system of degrees dating to the 20th century which are designed to add further Light to one’s Ancient Craft lodge experience. The Scottish Rite is divided into four interrelated Bodies, each of which deals with the recovery and meaning of the true Word of a Master Mason. The Scottish Rite system progresses through 33 degrees, but it is accepted that the highest degree in Masonry is the third degree. Thus, the Scottish Rite degrees are properly called additional degrees, rather than higher degrees.

YORK RITE

The York Rite is a confederation of three independent Masonic Bodies: the Royal Arch Chapter, the Cryptic Council, and the Knights Templar Commandery. The Royal Arch deals with the recovery and meaning of the true Word of a Master Mason. The chapter confers four degrees. The degree of Royal Arch Mason is often described as the most spiritual and mystical of all the degrees of Freemasonry. The Royal Arch is also known as a “gateway” degree, and membership entitles one to join certain smaller rites and Orders, such as the Allied Masonic Degrees, Knights Masons USA, Red Cross of Constantine, and so on. The Cryptic Council confers three degrees which help explain how the true secrets of a Master Mason were safeguarded until the time when future ages should discover the Light. The Knights Templar Commandery is the third Body of the York Rite. It is Christian in character and content, and describes the passage of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem during the Crusades.

SHRINE

Master Masons are also eligible to join the Ancient Arabic Order, Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, more commonly known as the Shrine, a benevolent and social organization. The Shrine is particularly well known for the many hospitals it maintains for the care of children. This care is offered to all children in need at no cost to them or their families. It is supported entirely from the donations of members of that Body.

OTHERS

There are other rites, degrees, and organizations one may join upon becoming a Master Mason, depending on one’s interests in charity, fellowship, or further Light in Masonry.

California has four research lodges, each of which is dedicated to promoting scholarly Masonic study and discussion. The Philalethes Society is an international organization of Masonic research and offers members a quarterly publication, *The Philalethes* magazine, which includes Masonic information from around the world.

The Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis (the Masonic Rosicrucian Society of the United States) is an invitational Body open to Master Masons. It is considered to be more esoterically inclined.

The Allied Masonic Degrees is another invitational Body open to Royal Arch Masons. It is a collection of various degrees and the members often engage in scholarly research and discussion.

The Order of the Eastern Star, Order of the Amaranth, and the White Shrine of Jerusalem are popular concordant Bodies which admit both men and women. Often, they provide the chance for a husband and wife to share in the fraternal experience together.

There are also three Masonic youth orders in California, which include boys and girls (and young men and young women) in the family of Freemasonry: The International Order of DeMolay for Boys, the International Order of Job’s Daughters, and the International Order of Rainbow for Girls.

Each of these appendant and concordant Bodies is an important part of the larger family of Freemasonry in California, and each must obey the rules and regulations of the Grand Lodge.

Recommended Reading

New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry
By Arthur E. Waite (Wings 1994)
ISBN 0517191482

The Secret Teachings of All Ages
By Manly P. Hall (J. P. Tarcher 2003)
ISBN 1585422509

Rosicrucian Enlightenment
By Frances A. Yates (Routledge 2001)
ISBN 0415267692

Symbols of Freemasonry
By Daniel Beresniak (Barnes and Noble 2003)
ISBN 2843232015

Freemasonry on Both Sides of the Atlantic
Edited By Weisburger, McLeod and Morris (East European Monographs 2002)
ASIN 0880339926

Masonic Jurisprudence
By Roscoe Pound (Kessinger Publishing 1997)
ISBN 1564590488

The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry
By James S. Curl (Overlook Press 2002)
ISBN 1585671606

Glossary

Approbation - approval, commendation, or praise; a formal or official act of approval.

Brute - creation animals at their birth; anything non-human in its infancy.

Ballot - a secret vote by balls and cubes or in writing.

Clandestine - not recognized by the Grand Lodge of California.

Cleaves - comes apart from; separates into distinct parts; divides; to part or split specially along a natural line or division.

Constituent Lodge - chartered by, or under dispensation from, a Grand Lodge.

Dimit - a document, bearing the seal of a lodge and attested to by the Secretary, terminating membership.

Dotage - a decline of mental faculties associated with old age; a state or period of senile decay marked by decline of mental poise and alertness.

Emulation - ambitious rivalry; ambition or desire to equal or excel others in achievement.

Fiat - an authoritative decree, sanction, or order; a command or act of will that creates something without, or as if without, further effort; an arbitrary decree or order.

Fraternal Intercourse - activities that promote fraternalism in constituent lodges or Masonic youth orders and which are not prohibited by this code.

Hecatomb - 100 oxen or cattle (in ancient Greece a public sacrifice of 100 oxen to the gods in thanks for some great discovery, event, or victory).

Imbrue - stain; soak; drench.

In Good Standing - when dues are current.

Injunction - a warning, order, direction, or instruction.

Masonic Association - a group of Masons with common employment or profession and with a membership of not less than 25 Master Masons of this jurisdiction; in good standing.

Masonic Clothing - white aprons.

Masonic Intercourse - any communication involving the esoteric or secret portion of the Ritual.

Masonic Organizations - any group, chapter, order, club, association, or organization requiring Masonic affiliation as a prerequisite to membership, except Masonic lodges.

Masonic Regalia - aprons, jewels, implements, and hats appropriate to one's station or office.

Notice - a call issued by the Secretary, by order of the lodge or Master, or by other competent authority to attend or perform as specified.

Seraph - an order of angels; one of the 6-winged angels standing in the presence of God.

Speculative - theoretical rather than practical; involving, or based on, intellectual questioning and curiosity; marked by meditating or pondering on a subject.

Sublime - lofty, grand, or exalted in thought, expression, or manner; of outstanding spiritual, intellectual, or moral worth; tending to inspire awe.

Summons - an imperative order issued by the Master, and attested to by the Secretary or by other competent authority, to appear as specified; a trial summons is one issued for the purpose of answering Masonic charges.

Zeal - enthusiasm; diligence; eagerness and great interest in pursuit of something.