

## **"THE ROYAL ARCH LECTURES"**

By V. Ex. Comp. H. L. THOMAS.

The Royal Arch was obviously an invention of the Speculative Mason. There is nothing in the working, or even in the legend, to indicate a descent from an operative source. It is clear that an attempt has been made to link the degree with operative working involved in the rebuilding of the Temple, but the all-important theme of the recovery of something that was lost as the natural sequel to the Third Degree of the Craft working transcends any operative derivation entirely. Added to this thought is the fact that the Irish legend, which has proceeded in parallel with our own, has no connection with operative work.

It is doubtful if we shall ever find the complete answer to the questions when, where and in what circumstances the Royal Arch Degree originated. The solution of these questions would materially assist us in the study of the Royal Arch ritual and particularly in regard to the Lectures. There are two main schools of thought in connection with the origin of the degree; either it was a new working introduced after the Third Degree came into being, or the original Third Degree was "mutilated" in the sense that the discovery of that which was lost became a separate degree.

In the light of subsequent developments in Craft Masonry it is doubtful if the "mutilation" theory is tenable. The "mutilation" could not have been brought into being without much disputation among the Speculative Masons of the time, especially when we consider the outcry caused by the transposition of words and signs of the First and Second Degrees by the Premier Grand Lodge.

The "Antients" were loud in their condemnation of the "Moderns" for their innovations, yet of the two Grand Lodges, the "Antients", who favored the retention of the "Old Institutions", supported the Royal Arch to a much greater extent than the "Moderns". Any interference with the working of the Third Degree would have been regarded much more seriously than the transposition of certain secrets.

It cannot be denied that the conclusion of the Third Degree, even in its early form, lent itself inevitably to the invention of a "completion" degree and that is probably what happened. As the degree is purely of speculative origin and it naturally follows on the ending of the Third Degree, its introduction can be placed in the 1730-40s. It was being worked in the early 1740s and perhaps in the late 1730s.

In any case we are left with the question of the place of origin. England,

Ireland, Scotland and France have all been credited with the honor of having been the location of the introduction of this degree which seems to have attained a great measure of popularity right from its emergence into accepted Speculative Freemasonry.

Whilst dealing with the origin and evolution of the degree we may consider its religious aspect. There is no doubt that in its early form and for probably more than half a century it had a Christian character, but the Christian crypt legend has been skillfully woven into Old Testament history to give a most interesting traditional history. The discerning student, however, will notice distinctly Christian elements still remaining in our present ritual.

There are a number of crypt legends, but the one most generally favored as the base for our own Royal Arch legend is that told in Walford's translation of the "Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgius", an extract from which is as follows:

"When Julian bade the city of Jerusalem to be rebuilt in order to refute openly the predictions of our Lord concerning it, he brought about exactly the opposite of what he intended. For his work was checked by many other prodigies from heaven; and especially, during the preparation of the foundations, one of the stones which was placed at the lowest part of the base, suddenly started from its place and opened the door of a certain cave hollowed out in the rock. Owing to its depth, it was difficult to see what was within the cave: so, persons were appointed to investigate the matter, who being anxious to find out the truth, let down one of their workmen by means of a rope. On being lowered down he found stagnant water reaching up to his knees; and, having gone round the place and felt the walls on every side, he found the cove to be a perfect square.

Then, in his return, as he stood near about the middle, he struck his foot against a column which stood rising slightly above the water. As soon as he touched the pillar, he found lying upon it a book wrapped up in a very fine and thin linen cloth; and as soon as he had lifted it up just as he had found it, he gave a signal to his companions to draw him up again. As soon as he regained the light, he showed them the book, which struck them all with astonishment, especially because it appeared so new and fresh, considering the place where it had been found. This book, which appeared such a mighty prodigy in the eyes of both heathens and Jews, as soon as it was opened shows the following words in large letters: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. In fact, the volume contained that entire Gospel which had been declared by the divine tongue of the (beloved) disciple and the Virgin."

The Julian referred to in this legend is the Emperor Julian, who gave the Jews permission to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem, but he died whilst the

preliminary work was in progress and the project was abandoned. The Holy Book that was discovered in the vault was not the Old Testament with its customary words: "In the beginning God created "it was the Gospel of St. John, a purely Christian text. To this day our Royal Arch ceremonies open with a New Testament quotation, and the whole of our work is full of Trinitarian ideas and symbolism, so that, despite its beautiful Old Testament background, a very strong Christian influences remains.

The Royal Arch ritual, in its early stages, contained many of the features present in our present- day working. The earliest evidence available shows that the candidate was hoodwinked and brought to discover a scroll which contained the words: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Sojourners enacted the story of the "discovery" and the remainder of the ceremony like the Craft working of the time, consisted of a catechism of some eighteen to twenty questions and answers.

For a period of about fifty years the ceremony appears to have remained largely in that form, but it was enlarged to provide for some eighty to one hundred questions with somewhat lengthy answers covering much of the material now found in our Royal Arch Lectures.

The Ineffable Name was not shared but the multi-language compound was shared. There were no Hebrew letters on the points of the Triangle and the Triple Tau had not appeared as such. Many changes had occurred by the time the degree had been worked for the first hundred years. The private Chapters appear to have been allowed to proceed with their own working and there was no move to adopt a standard form of ceremony.

After the union of the rival Grand Lodges in England in 1813 and the introduction of largely uniform Craft working, it was only to be expected that a similar move would have been effected in the Royal Arch. Nothing appears to have been done until the 1830s when a Committee was appointed by the Supreme Grand Chapter to inquire into the working generally. This Committee seems to have been led, and probably dominated, by the Rev. G.A. Browne, who was at one time Grand Chaplain of the United Grand Lodge. In November 1834, the Committee reported the result of their labors to Grand Chapter and, during the next year steps were taken to introduce uniform working. As the Rev. G.A. Browne was specially thanked for his "attention to the welfare and interest of the Order" it has been assumed that the Lectures, which appeared for the first time as recitals instead of catechisms, were mainly attributable to him. It is interesting to know that the revision of 1835 eliminated the ceremony of Passing the Veils.

The Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of New South Wales was established in 1889. At that time there were one Irish, eight English and nine Scottish Chapters working in New South Wales. Efforts to form a United Grand Chapter to comprise all Irish, English and Scottish Chapters were unsuccessful and the eight English Chapters combined to form the Supreme Grand Chapter under which we have our existence.

In such circumstances it is only to be expected that some form of English working would have been adopted by the Supreme Grand Chapter of New South Wales. This ritual belonged to the Alfred Chapter, No.340, English Constitution which was consecrated in 1882. It was probably the most important Chapter in the Province with a membership of more than usual distinction. One cannot say that the Lewis ritual of 1884 was an "original" Oxford ritual, but there is no evidence that an earlier printed ritual of the Oxford working existed. It is likely that whatever manuscript working the Alfred Chapter had become the basis for the eventual printed form. In the Oxford working the Se. are included in the Mystical Lecture.

### **The Historical Lecture:**

The Historical Lecture commences immediately with a reference to "three", and this introduces the "rule of three". The question arises whether this rule has numerical or governmental reference. "A Mason's Examination", an exposure of 1723, contains the following:

"If Master-Mason you would be,  
Observe you well the Rule of Three."

In the Graham Manuscript, compiled in 1726 or earlier, are a number of references to the "trible voice" and two of them especially may be quoted: "Bezalliell knew by inspiration that the secret titles and primitive pallies of the God head was preservative and agreed conditionally that they were not to discover it without another to themselves to make a trible voice", and now after (Bezalliell's) death the inhabitancies there did think that the secrets of masonry had been totally Lost because they were no more heard of for none knew the secrets thereof. Save those two princes and they were so sworn at their entering not to discover it without another to make a trible voice."

Both the numerical and the governmental ideas come together at the beginning of the Lecture. There were three epochs with three Grand Lodges and each was presided over by three Principals. Not only Royal Arch Masonry, but the Craft Masonry which preceded it refers constantly to "three". The early quotations made above could as well imply association with Royal Arch as with Craft Masonry.

The desire of the compilers of the Royal Arch ritual to associate all government with the "rule of three" has brought about some interesting groupings, even to the extent of bordering on most unlikely historical attachments. The three most prominent in the Historical Lecture are the associations of Moses, Aholiab, and Bezaleel; King Solomon, King Hiram and Hiram Abif; Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua. In the first case there is the possibility of the three being associated in a so-called Lodge; in the second case there is a distinct improbability and in the third an, impossibility but everything has been sacrificed to keep to the rule of three.

The dates of the openings of the three Grand Lodges are given in Anno Lucia chronology, meaning "in the year of light", that is since the creation of the world. In 1611 Bishop Ussher published his famous chronology in which he calculated the beginning of the world to have occurred 4004 years before the Christian era. This reckoning became popular and was adopted by Craft Masonry with a slight rounding off to substitute 4000 for 4004. In 1723 Dr. Anderson, in the first Book of Constitutions, used the figure 4000 to obtain the Year of Masonry. This system has continued to be used in English and our own Masonry. The three dates mentioned in the Historical Lecture are therefore 1487BC, 1008BC and 531BC respectively. Whether or not these dates are acceptable to historians is not important as they have reference from the traditional point of view only.

Like a historical novel the Traditional Lecture is founded on fact, but anachronisms occur. We are told early in our Masonic career that Masonry is veiled in allegory. Some students have objected to the expression "veiled in allegory" because the stories told in Masonry have just the opposite intention, that is, they make teachings plainer by the use of the story. It is interesting to compare the Historical Lecture with the Traditional History of the Excellent Masters Degree.

The First or Holy Lodge was opened by Moses, Aholiab and Bezaleel. It is recorded in Holy Writ that Aholiab and Bezaleel assisted Moses with the construction of the Tabernacle. There has been considerable doubt as to the exact location of the mountain on which the Almighty revealed Himself to Moses and where the Tables of the Law were delivered. It is believed by some students that there were originally two mountains, which later harmonizing tradition has combined. It has long been found difficult to suppose that the Sinaitic Peninsula could have been the scene of the wanderings of the immense body of Israelites as described and a careful study of Biblical narratives has raised questions which have not been adequately answered.

Although King Solomon built the Temple with the help of men and material supplied by Hiram the king, and Hiram the widow's son was responsible for the metal work, I am not aware of any Biblical authority to the effect that they were together at Jerusalem at any time.

Companions will notice the manner in which the explanation of events related to the piece of ground on Holy Mount Moriah resemble the explanation of the Craft Tracing Board of the reasons for our Lodges standing on holy ground. The Lodge which stood on holy ground in the Craft has become the Sacred Lodge of the Royal Arch. The Grand Lodge on holy ground in the Royal Arch has been given a different location.

From this Lecture one would believe that shortly after Cyrus, King of Persia, had overthrown the Babylonians, Zerubbabel, Haggai and Joshua led the Jews across the desert from Babylon to Jerusalem and that those three leaders ruled over the solemn Sanhedrim which governed the people in the latter city. In the course of their duties the Sanhedrim allotted the duties of the re-builders of the Temple. It would further appear that Ezra and Nehemiah were present at the time and assisted the leaders in their work. In actual fact there were a number of separate events associated with the return of the exiles and their subsequent activities. The rebuilding of the Temple and the rebuilding of the walls of the city were separate events in history.

When Cyrus, in 538 BC, granted the Jews permission to return to Jerusalem, about 42,000 of them took part in the first movement. They had some 7,000 slaves and 8,000 beasts of burden. The only other transport could have been the small, two-wheeled carts known to have been used in other movements of people. The trek of such a large number of people across the desert must have been a colossal undertaking and took four months. Many Jews were content to remain in Babylon; some of them held high places in the community and others had been successful in the rich plains and in the wealthy city. Zerubbabel, the leader of those who went to Jerusalem, was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, the last direct heir to the House of David. He was the son of Shealtin, and bore the trace of his Babylonian birthplace in his name.

Next to him was Joshua (or Jeshua) the son of Josedech, the High Priest, who had been carried into exile with Zedekiah and shared his imprisonment. The leaders set up an altar on the place where King Solomon's Temple had stood. Their work of rebuilding the Temple was halted by opposition from the inhabitants of the locality and the Samaritans.

Twelve years were wasted until Darius came to the throne and allowed the work to be resumed. At the same time two prophets arose; Haggai, an old man who

had made the journey from Jerusalem to Babylon, and Zechariah, a much younger man. These made the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem and probably took more exiles with them. Haggai took over the role of encouraging the people to proceed with the work. He claimed the title which no other prophet had ever assumed before, "The Lord's Messenger". His practical outlook, together with Zechariah's visionary approach, had such an effect that the work was completed within five years and in 516BC the Temple was completed and dedicated.

About 458 BC Ezra, the Scribe went to Jerusalem from Babylon with more returning exiles. He found slackness in their religious duties among the inhabitants and commenced the work of reform. Nehemiah, cup bearer to King Artaxerxes, later asked permission of the king to make the journey to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls, and his request was granted. He set about the work with such zeal that in fifty- two days the walls were rebuilt. It is reported that none of the workers during that time even put off their clothes. Where our ritual refers to "with a trowel in their hands, and a sword by their side" it is to the rebuilding of the walls that this relates, not to the building of the Temple.

The Sanhedrim was not constituted until some hundreds of years later, but Bro. J.R. Clarks, in A.Q.C.75, says that at the time of the rebuilding of the Temple there was a collective body of Soferim (Scribes) who exercised many of the functions which later fell to the Sanhedrim. It will be noticed that the Historical Lecture speaks of "Grand Lodges" and "Lodges", not of "Grand Chapters" and "Chapters".

### **The Symbolical Lecture:**

We are informed that the form of every Royal Arch Chapter approaches, as nearly as circumstances will admit, to the true Catenarian Arch.

The word "Catenarian" is derived from the Latin word "catena" meaning "chain" and refers to the curve made by a chain when hanging by its two ends. In our electric railway we have the catenary wire that is the wire which hangs in a curve between its supports and carries the electric current. When inverted the curve forms an arch, but it is hardly correct to say that architecturally it is of an impenetrable nature and then proceed to show in the ceremony how the arch was penetrated. Whether it is the strongest of all architectural forms is open to question. B.E. Jones in the "Freemasons' Book of the Royal Arch", says that the catenarian arch is a philosopher's and mathematician's effort to produce an arch as near perfect as design and material could make it, one capable of supporting weight and having a minimum destructive (sideways) thrust on the arch supports. As far as is known the catenarian arch was not used in King Solomon's time, nor for a thousand years later, though the catenary was known.

Even if it had been used, the removal of the three arch stones, especially as described, would have been a difficult and precarious business.

We have to decide whether the Catenarian Arch is used in a Royal Arch Chapter in a vertical or horizontal sense. Does the roof of the Chapter form a vault made up of several Catenarian Arches or is its ground plan such that one end is in the form of a Catenarian Arch? I have an old ritual in which appears a Royal Arch Tracing Board. The eastern side of the Board shows the three Principals and the five Banners behind them in a horizontal Catenary Arch form. At the foot of the Tracing Board is a vault in which the roof is made by semi-circular or Roman arches. Whether used in a vertical or horizontal sense the symbolism applies. We are not told; however, what a true Catenarian Arch means as the actual form of the arch depends on the length of the chain.

Traditionally the Sanhedrim assembled in the form of a horizontal arch at the top portion where the principal officers were seated as depicted in the Tracing Board I have mentioned above. It will be noticed that in our ritual the form of the Chapter provides for a slight catenary curve in the east.

Despite the insistence of the architectural idea, it may be mentioned that a number of Masonic students have expressed the opinion that the word "Arch" in Royal Arch originally had nothing to do with architecture, but was used as an adjective with the meaning of "chief" in the sense that the word is used in "archbishop", "archduke" and "arch conspirator". The use of the words "excellent" and "super excellent" in early Royal Arch times supports that idea. Bernard Jones in "The Freemasons' Book of the Royal Arch" is of the opinion that the architectural interpretation is the more likely, having regard to the close association of the degree working with the arch stones and the vaulted crypt.

This Lecture also introduces the rule of three in the sense that there were three keystones represented by the three Principals; three Lesser and three Greater Lights; the three Dispensations referring to the Patriarchal, Prophetical or Judicial, and the Monarchial forms through which the Hebrew nation successively passed; the Creating, Sustaining and Destroying Power of the Almighty, and, finally, the three Working Tools of the degree.

As the Royal Arch Degree was originally Christian it is reasonable to assume that the expression "the Law and the Prophets" is used in its New Testament context. In the Old Testament the division is into three main sections, namely, the Law, the Prophets and the Writings. The nearest to the expression "the Law and the Prophets" that can be found in the Old Testament is in the Book of Lamentations 2,9, which reads in part " the law is no more, her prophets also find no vision from the Lord". On the other hand, there are a number of

references to the expression in the New Testament. In Matthew 7, 12, we read: "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets".

This "Golden Rule" is so much identified with Masonry that it is not difficult to believe that even for this reason alone the Law and the Prophets find a place in Royal Arch ritual. We also find in Matthew 22, 36-40 the following: "Master, which is the great commandment in the law. Jesus said unto him. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets". We are reminded of the portion of the First Degree Final Charge which reads: "and do to him as you would that he, under similar circumstances, should do to you". One cannot escape the thought that both the Royal Arch and the Craft references may have come from the same New Testament source.

The first Royal Arch Chapter, for many years known as the Excellent Grand and Royal Chapter, and finally becoming the Grand Chapter in England, records its first meeting as having been held on June 12, 1765. In the minute book is a manifesto and list of regulations. One of these regulations reads:

"That all the companions wear aprons except those appointed to wear robes, and the aprons shall be all of one sort or fashion viz. White leather indented round with crimson ribbon and strings of the same with a T and H in gold properly displayed on the bib, with purple garters indented with pink." (The last six words, as well as the alterations in the line above, have been added afterwards.)

The emblem on the bib was a T over an H and referred to the words "Templum Hierosolymae". This has developed into the "Triple Tau" of our modern aprons. The change took place about the time of the union of the two Grand Chapters in the year 1817. It is not known if there was any significance in the fact that the T was originally in gold and the H in silver. The garters, indented with purple and pink, were the only portions of the regalia to have two colors.

The Charter of Compact, which is dated July 22, 1766, has the following provisions regarding regalia: "every Companion shall wear according to Ancient Custom an Apron indented with Crimson and the Badge T over H properly displayed thereon and also the indented Ribbon and Sash of the Order." The Charter of Compact was the instrument whereby the Excellent Grand and Royal Chapter became the first Royal Arch Grand Chapter of England. Even up to the end of the 18th century we find reference to the T over H when provision was made for this insignia to be embroidered on the bib in

spangles on a piece of purple satin.

In 1806 the book of by-laws was ordered to be printed and circulated by the English Grand Chapter. It made provision for the symbol to be displayed in the same manner and described it as T over H. In 1810 a jewel showed the beginning of the change in the T over H to the Triple Tau. The horizontal lines were much thinner than the perpendicular lines. In 1823 the regulations provided for the Triple Tau in its present form to be placed on the apron in a triangle of white, red or purple silk, depending on the rank of the wearer of the apron. (Grand Officers wore purple or garter, Principals and Officers of Chapters for the time being wore red and other Companions wore white.)

The Royal Arch Jewel is in the form of Interlaced Triangles, known also as the Shield of David or the Seal of Solomon. The triangular arrangement of the three Greater and the three Lesser Lights round the altar is a different affair altogether, but the angles of the Interlaced Triangles are stated to be equal to the six Lights. There is nothing in the ritual to suggest that the symbol has any esoteric meaning. It is not known how it found its way into Royal Arch Masonry although it was in use by 1766 as the Charter of Compact of that year has marginal drawings of the Jewel. As this matter has been dealt with recently by Comp. Sherwood, I do not wish to pursue it further.

The Bible is strangely silent regarding the form given to the Four Principal Banners as Standards and no details are supplied as to symbols or devices on them. The injunction given to Moses and Aaron was: "Every man of the children of Israel shall pitch by his own standard, with the ensign of their father's house." (Numbers 2, 2.)

The devices that we see depicted on the twelve Ensigns on the staves in our Royal Arch Chapter are derived from the pictorial inventiveness of the Old Testament commentators, who restricted themselves to variations on the themes inspired by the record of Jacob's so-called "blessings" on his sons. The motifs illustrate a remark made by Jacob about each of his sons at a period when the Jews were peacefully resident in Egypt before the period of oppression and bondage. There were later twelve tribes. Jacob had twelve sons. One of them, Joseph, was sold to a band of Egyptian traders. He reached a position of eminence in Egypt, and, some years later, following a reunion with his family, he was instrumental in assisting their peaceful settlement in the country. His two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, were adopted by their grandfather, Jacob, and became ancestors of separate tribes, each in his own right. The pictorial motif for these two sons of Joseph is derived either from Jacob's blessing on Joseph or Moses' blessing to the memory of Joseph. The blessings and motifs

are:

Reuben	unstable as water	waves
Simeon	instrument of cruelty	sword
Judah	a lion's whelp	lion
Zebulun	a haven of ships	ship
Issacher	a strong ass	ass
Dan	an adder that biteth the heels of a horse	horse, rider with serpent
Gad	a troop	troop of horsemen
Asher	bread that shall be fat	cup or tree (fatness/plenty)
Naphtali	a hind	hind
Joseph	a fruitful bough (not one of the tribes)	See Manasseh, Ephraim
Benjamin	a wolf	wolf
Manasseh	a fruitful bough (from Joseph)	tree against a wall
Ephraim	a bullock (from Moses' blessing)	bullock

Levi was omitted as one of the twelve tribes as his descendants were responsible for priestly functions and camped near the Tabernacle in the center of the camp of the Israelites.

The discrepancy between the devices on the Principal Banners, apparently designed to represent the four camps, and those on the appropriate Ensigns for these particular tribes, seems to have been resolved by classifying the Principal Banners as Divisional Standards, each bearing a badge for a group of three tribes and stationed in the camp of the Israelites at a cardinal point of the compass - Judah in the east with Issacher and Zebulun, Reuben in the south with Simeon and Gad, Ephraim in the west with Manasseh and Benjamin, and Dan in the north with Asher and Naphtali.

Consideration of the devices on the Four Principal Banners brings us to an interesting conclusion. Ezekiel, in a vision, saw four living creatures, each having four faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. A parallel vision is recorded in Revelation where four separate beasts are described as a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle. These four symbolical creatures have long been adopted in Christian art to represent the four Evangelists St. Matthew, a man; St. Mark, a lion; St. Luke, an ox; and St. John, an eagle.

In Numbers 2, the standards of the camps headed by Judah, Reuben, Ephraim and Dan are referred to but there is no mention whatsoever of the form of the standards, or the devices on them, or that they were any different from the tribal ensigns of the principal tribe in each of the groups of three.

The constituent parts of Ezekiel's cherubic forms would have provided only

faces, but his vision occurred 600 years after the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness. The separate beings recorded in the vision of St. John in Revelation are in a period 1,300 years after the wanderings.

In the Symbolical Lecture the devices are not pointed out in the logical left to right order as they appear in our Chapter; Ox, Man, Lion and Eagle but are given in a form of precedence that follows the order in which the Gospels appear in the New Testament Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; Man, Lion, Oz and Eagle.

I cannot here deal with the Bearings or Devices upon the three Scepters. The V. of the S.L., the Square and the Compasses are dealt with fully in Craft Masonry. I have previously dealt with the Sword and Trowel in this paper.

The Working Tools, often now treated as a separate charge, is included in our ritual with the Symbolical Lecture. This portion of the Lecture demands particular attention as it summarizes in many respects one of the main principles of our Masonic teachings, both in the Craft and in the Royal Arch Degrees.

It may be desirable here to deal with the question of the absence of a Tracing Board in Royal Arch working. It seems that some sort of a floorcloth (the forerunner of the Tracing Board) must have been in use by the English Grand Chapter, for by 1784 it was necessary to have a new one, but we have no knowledge of the design of the floorcloth. Bro. Harris designed two Royal Arch Tracing Boards in 1836. They are pictorial representations of (a) the legend of the degree, and (b) the layout of the Chapter. His Tracing Boards do not appear to have found acceptance in the Royal Arch in the way that did his Craft designs. There is no place in the ritual for their use, and, in any case the layout of the Chapter itself is sufficient for our purposes of instruction. The second of the Harris Tracing Boards is the one which appears as a frontispiece in our ritual.

### **The Mystical Lecture:**

It has been said that the Royal Arch did very well without a Mystical Lecture for the first hundred years of its existence. It was the revising committee, previously referred to, who constructed this Lecture as we know it now. The Lecture, in our ritual, consists of four parts,

(a) a description of the Pedestal with its initials and the Triple Tau, (b) the Altar-plate with its Circle and Triangle, (c) the words on the Circle and Triangle, and (d) an explanation of the letters at the points of the Triangle.

Among the definitions of "Mystical" in the Shorter Oxford Dictionary are:

"Having a certain spiritual character or import by virtue of a connexion or union with God, transcending human comprehension" and "Spiritually allegorical or symbolical". Whether there is anything mystical in the senses mentioned is a matter of opinion.

The Pedestal referred to in this Lecture is a representation of the pedestal or column of pure virgin marble in the form of an Altar of Incense which is spoken of in the ceremony. This is based on the Altar described in Exodus 30, 1-2, "And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim wood shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof: four square shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof". The Altar was to stand before the Ark and on it Aaron was to burn incense (i.e. sweet smelling spices) a "perpetual incense before the Lord." For this purpose only, a small Altar was needed. It was made of wood, overlaid with pure gold. This Altar is not to be confused with the Altar of Sacrifice, which was much larger, being capable of holding animals to be burned.

The identification of the Triple Tau with the mark spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel appears to be an ingenious attempt to find a reason for the symbol in our degree working. In actual fact, as previously mentioned, it was a development from the earlier T over H. Here, probably, is a survival from earlier Christian working and the cross might have been, in the first place, the mark placed on the foreheads of candidates.

One would have thought that the description of the top of the Pedestal would have included the Square, Circle, Triangle and Point within a Circle. It may be that the compilers of the ritual have left the Square as having been adequately dealt with in Craft Masonry. Much has been said about the Square and Triangle and the symbolism attached to them when taken together and I do not wish to add to it. The symbols of the Circle and Triangle were recently dealt with by Comp. Sherwood in his paper "The Pregnant Symbols" and I do not propose to repeat any of his explanations.

An article on the "Royal Arch Word which signifies 'Soul of Nature'" appears in A.Q.C., 77, and was written by E. Comp. R.A. Wells. It is too long a subject to be dealt with here, but the article is well recommended for study by Companions. The words given in the article confirms the view that our working is derived from the Oxford Ritual.

A significant absence from the top of the Pedestal is the Point within a Circle. It is quite possible that earlier this Point, identified with the Hebrew letter Yod, appeared in Royal Arch working, but, like the Square, has been dropped, as the Point within a Circle has been dealt with at some length in Craft working. (Do

these omissions give ground for the belief that the Royal Arch originally formed part of Craft working?). It is worth mentioning here that our Royal Arch honors are Point, Triangle, Circle.

The Ineffable Name upon the Circle demands more attention and explanation than I can give here. "Ineffable" means literally "that which cannot be uttered or expressed". Bro. Eric Ward, in A.Q.C., 75, says: "Contrary to popular belief, the English word Jehovah has no ancient existence. It proved a problem to Christian translators of the middle ages and has appeared in both English and European versions of the Old Testament since 1520. The original sacred Name, probably known to the Hebrews in the pre Exodus period (Ex.20,7, and Lev.24,11) but whose pronunciation was forbidden and in the course of time forgotten, was read by translators taking the consonants YHWH with the vowels corresponding to ADONAI = my Lord, a word which the Hebrews used in substitution for the original. These consonants, vocalized as Yahweh, Javeh or Johevah, thus became the symbol of the Deity and in the Hebrew from once more assumed (in the sight of most English-speaking people) a mystic significance akin to the ineffable. Thus symbolized it was used by Inigo Jones (1573-1652) for example, as the central feature in the design of an altar piece in Westminster Abbey, embodying a tablet displaying ten cherubim surrounding a glory upon which was written the Hebrew letters YHWH. This altar-piece was removed in 1856."

The Ineffable Name, the mystery surrounding it and its lost pronunciation, remind us that from time immemorial, man has striven to understand the Incomprehensible, and with this search has come the power of the Name. It has long been held that the possession or knowledge of the Name conferred upon a person, extraordinary powers but with these powers came responsibility and the exercise of the wrath of the Deity if the Name were wrongly uttered or used in a manner which was not in accordance with the unknown wishes of the unknown god. We find the Name revealed to the Israelites, but it was of so sacred a nature that its pronunciation was known only to the High Priest and was uttered only once in a year, on "the great day of the expiation of sins". Masonry has recognized the power of the Name for even in the first of the Craft Degrees we hear "where the name of God is invoked, we trust no danger can ensue". It naturally follows that in the Royal Arch Degree the Name shall be held in such reverence that it can be pronounced only in a certain manner.

The Hebrew letters on the three angles of the Triangle and their explanation have been the cause of considerable objection, especially from students with a knowledge of Hebrew. The Oxford Ritual of 1884 says: "The usual explanation of the Hebrew characters has been given in the text (the same explanation as we have in our ritual), but attention must be directed to the following remarks".

Then follows another explanation.

Comp. Harry Carr, a recognized authority, in reference to these Hebrew letters, says in A.Q.C.76: "Unfortunately, the defects are not easily recognized because, in this portion of the R.A. ritual, so much depends on a useful working knowledge of Hebrew. In addition to this language barrier, which affects the vast majority of our Brethren, there is also the inherent difficulty of discussing the subject adequately in print." He then goes on to say that the Oxford working is much shorter (than some other workings) at this point and contains fewer errors. It also has a long and interesting note, which indicates that the compilers were aware of the defects, though apparently powerless to remedy them."

Comp. Carr, later in his article, goes on to say: "The lessons that we draw from the letters on the T in this portion of the R.A. ritual are of the utmost importance, because they are designed to crystallize the spiritual meaning of the whole ceremony within a few simple words. We are at fault, both in the 'words' themselves and in the 'explanations' we give to them, and the following is an earnest attempt to furnish a simple and trustworthy explanation of pure Hebrew words, with an interpretation that is wholly in keeping with the teachings that lie at the very roots of our R.A. ceremonies:

'The characters at the angles of the triangle are of exceeding importance because the three words which we compose from them may be said to epitomize the Teachings of this Supreme Degree. They are the 1, 2, and 3 of the Hebrew, corresponding to the 1, 2, and 3 of the English alphabet. The 1 and the 2 together form the word 1-2, which means Father, and reminds us of our close and intimate relation to Him as His children.

The 1 and the 3 together form the word 1-3 which means God. This word, in the original Hebrew, is seldom used by itself, but normally in conjunction with those attributes which may help us to envisage His glory. So, for us, the word 1-3 means God, the Architect, the Almighty Creator, whose mercy and loving kindness are beyond human comprehension.

The 3 and the 2 together form the word 3-2, which means Heart or Spirit, and is used here to remind us of our duty towards Him, whom we are to serve 'with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our might". With all our heart, as His children; with all our soul, from a deep conviction of His infinite goodness and power; and with all our might, because our service to Him can never be complete in thought and words alone. Such, my newly exalted Comps, is the explanation we give"

E.Comp. R.A. Wells, Scribe E. of Domastic Chapter of Instruction, No.177,

suggests the following as an "interpretational" connection with the original three Hebrew letters and their "words": "In former times these characters in conjunction with the triangle have been explained as - Father Lord, Word Lord, Spirit Lord, according to the teachings of the First Epistle of St. John (chap.5, v.7): 'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. Such, my newly exalted Comp., is the explanation we give of etc.

Comp. Carr also states that the triangle, with Hebrew letters at its corners, had already appeared in alchemical and mystical studies long before its introduction into the Royal Arch. He gives two examples, but in both cases it has proved impossible to ascertain the purpose for which they were used or how they were interpreted, and there is no certainty that the letters used in them are the same as those commonly used in the R.A.