

THE FIRST DEGREE
AN EXAMINATION OF THE MASONIC RITUAL
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INTRODUCTION.

By Wor. Bro. J.S.M. Ward, M.A., F.S.S.

(Author of Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods.)

IT is with great pleasure that I have accepted Major Sanderson's invitation to write an Introduction to his book, for I consider it one of the most valuable contributions of recent times from the standpoint of the Anthropological School of Masonic Research.

Major Sanderson has for many years been a careful student of the customs and initiatory rites of the Natives of Africa, among whom he has lived, and his official duties as Chief Sanitation Officer in Nyasaland has placed him in a privileged position and enabled him to obtain the confidence of the Native Races in a way which is almost impossible for any casual traveller, or even for an ordinary white civilian.

How completely he has gained the confidence of the Native Races is shown by the fact that he has been made Master of Ceremonies in their Rites, a unique privilege never before bestowed on any white man.

Major Sanderson likewise holds most of the important degrees in Freemasonry, and thus it is that he was well qualified to undertake a careful study of our rituals from the standpoint of Anthropology. The work which follows aims at showing whence many important parts of the ritual have developed, and undoubtedly Major Sanderson has produced evidence which should satisfy the most careful student as to the source and origin of certain important incidents in the ceremonies.

Major Sanderson would be the last to claim that he had been successful in discovering the origin of every point, but he has, on the other hand, clearly indicated the line of research which should be followed. He has helped to set up definite canons of evidence which, unlike those of the authentic school, remain valid even when we have got beyond written evidence.

Until recently the average Masonic student has concentrated his attention on 18th Century Masonic history, because he knew of no other evidence, for the antiquity of our Order, than Historical documents. As, however, written documents are a clear breach of the original Ob... of the members of the Order, it is not surprising to find that hardly any exist previous to 1717. In fact, during the very years when masonry must have been of the greatest practical importance there are but few historical documents. Furthermore, the 18th Century is a far from inspiring period in English history, and it is natural that such material as we have is for the most part dull and uninteresting. But modern historical students have realized that the written history of man represents but a tiny fraction of his real history, and that the key to recent historical events can often only be found in a period of time anterior to written documents. The methods of the Anthropologist, the Student of Folk-lore and of Comparative religions, enable us to re-discover the life and history of our pre-historic ancestors, and the same methods are yielding equally valuable results in Masonic research.

I therefore recommend to every reading Mason this little volume, and more especially to the young Mason, who will find therein the explanation of just those points on which he often seeks help and enlightenment in vain.

J. S. M. WARD. June, 1923.

I. – AN EXAMINATION OF THE MASONIC RITUAL.

FOREWORD.

I REMEMBER that when I had just been initiated my state of mind could only be described as chaotic; the incidents of the ceremony were only half remembered and not at all understood, while I was conscious of a certain feeling of disappointment, though I could not have said why. I could not have put into words quite what I had expected, but I recollect thinking that the solemnity of the obligation I had taken was disproportionate to the secrets which had been imparted to me. I have since met many Freemasons who have confessed to a similar feeling, and it is with the object of helping newly initiated brethren over this difficult period that I have written this book.

The classical definition of Freemasonry is that it is “a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols.” Let us first consider this. We have here three propositions, of which the first and last are not difficult, the initiate will remember the Charge given after his return to the Lodge which taught him that Freemasonry is “a system of morality.” He will also recollect that certain symbolic meanings were given to the Working Tools, [1] - the GA as conscience, the CA as education, and so on these are examples of Masonic symbolism others not so obvious will be explained in the course of this book.

The point to which I want to call particular attention is the phrase “veiled in allegory.” The dictionary defines allegory as “a figurative representation, in which something else is intended to what is actually exhibited.” This is, as a definition, literally and absolutely true of our Masonic ceremonies; they have two distinct meanings, an exoteric or obvious one, which is often symbolical, and an esoteric or mystical meaning. When you ask a riddle do you give the answer at the same time? Neither is the key to the Masonic allegory, i.e., its esoteric meaning, given to all and sundry. The point which must be appreciated is that there is more, much more, in the Masonic ritual than appears on the surface ; there is, therefore, no reason for any feeling of disappointment.

II. – A NOTE ON MASONIC ORIGINS.

It is now generally accepted that the essentials of Freemasonry have been handed down from time immemorial, and it is therefore obvious that we should look round to see if anything similar to it exists in other parts of the world; we can then compare one with the other and learn much as to the meaning of each. When we come to consider the third degree we shall be better able to discuss this subject, and for the present the reader should preserve an open mind.

He must, however, appreciate that if we find points of similarity between Freemasonry and other systems, even though we find identical ceremonies occurring in each, it does not necessarily follow that the one is “descended” from the other: such resemblances or identity are more often due to a common origin. If, for instance, we find points of

1 The newly initiated Freemason will readily understand that it is inexpedient to write everything in full: he is advised to ask an older Mason to decipher any abbreviations that he cannot make out for himself.

resemblance between the Brahman ritual and Freemasonry it does not imply that the Craft came to us from India, but it is certainly suggestive that both were derived from some ancient rite, possibly in Egypt, possibly in Asia. Similarly when we find some of our signs or even parts of our rites in the initiation ceremonies of primitive peoples - and I have found such myself in the heart of Africa - it is at least suggestive that Freemasonry had its origin in similar primitive rites ages ago.

That this was actually the case is my belief, but I would warn the reader that it is not held by all masons. He should not, therefore, blindly accept my conclusions as orthodox, but rather regard them as speculations made with the specific purpose of stimulating enquiry. Let me assure him of one thing, however, - he can trust the facts from which my speculations have been made; every one has been carefully verified and he will find no difficulty in distinguishing between fact and theory. Given the facts everybody can make his own deductions. As the result of several years' research I can supply parallels to most of our customs from other parts of the world, some of them culled from the work of other Masonic students but more from that of ethnologists and from my own experiences - but I do not make any dogmatic statements as to the meaning of such parallels.

III. – PREPARATION.

The reader will remember that before he was admitted to the Lodge he had to be prepared in a certain way: i.e., he was divested of all metallic substances, and blindfolded (or hoodwinked); his right arm., left breast, and knee were made bare, his r.h. sl.d., and a cable tow placed about his neck.

Let us take each of these points seriatim:-

(A) DIVESTED OF ALL METALLIC SUBSTANCES.

The reason given for this in the Lecture is threefold, - that no weapons should be brought into the Lodge, that it should remind the initiate of the virtue of charity, and lastly that no metal tools were used in building K.S.T.. We find on further enquiry, however, that all over the world and in all ages there has been a feeling that metal was impure and savoured of the black art (²), and it probably dates from the close of the stone age. It is one of those superstitions which have persisted in so remarkable a manner (like, for instance, that of “touching wood”), and it is invariably specified in old wives' spells whether metal must be used or not used; it is probably connected with the injunction to be sure and touch metal when the new moon is first seen. In a tribe in Central Africa among whom I have lived (the Wa Yao) no metal must be worn during the ceremony of purification, nor on many other similar occasions both in this tribe and others (³). The ban said to have been put on metals during the building of K.S.T. is, of course, the same superstition, but it is doubtful if it is the source of the Masonic custom: as we shall see, many of our customs can be traced to Magic.

2 Frazer, Sir J. A., “Taboo, and the Perils of the Soul,” pp. 167, 205sq., 225sq.; “Balder the Beautiful,” 11., 78, 81.

3 Sanderson, Meredith, “Ceremonial Purification,” Man.

The importance attached to this point in the preparation of the candidate is made evident by the statement of the W.M. during the ceremony that, in case of its omission the rite of initiation would have to be repeated, i.e., the wearing of metal would render the candidate ceremonially unclean and his initiation null and void.

(B) HOODWINKED.

The candidate is described as “a poor candidate in a state of darkness,” which is figurative of being in a state of darkest ignorance, in preparation for receiving the light of revelation. This symbolism is common to all the ancient mysteries, and to many primitive ceremonies of initiation the world over.

The term hoodwink is correctly used in the ritual in its original meaning, though now of course it is rarely used except in a figurative sense, and survives only in falconry.

(C) RIGHT ARM, LEFT BREAST, AND KNEE MADE BARE

I would suggest that the obligation was formerly taken on the Cubic Stone, or Altar, so conspicuous in some lodges and in some higher degrees, and that the V.S.L. is comparatively speaking an innovation. Swearing at, and on, the altar survived as a custom to quite recent times, and the Bible, which had a place on the altar, was, after the introduction of printing, substituted as being more convenient for everyday use.

A cubic stone is found in all “heathen” temples and we have many historical accounts of its use for taking oaths; for instance, MacDonal, Lord of the Isles, took a solemn oath with uplifted hands and bended knees on the Black Stone of Iona ⁽⁴⁾; to this day the King of England is crowned on such a stone placed under the coronation chair in Westminster Abbey; a Brahman on initiation is made to tread on a stone with his right foot when taking the obligation, ⁽⁵⁾ and so on.

Among savages an oath taken on a rock is regarded as inviolable, and Frazer suggests that there is an association of ideas in the strength and stability of a stone, these properties being communicated to the oath ⁽⁶⁾.

If my hypothesis be correct we can understand why the arm and knee of the candidate are made bare, - it was essential that nothing be interposed between the skin and the stone, for the same reason that one removes a glove before shaking hands. It will be noted that the knee made bare is that on which the candidate kneels when taking the obligation.

The breast is, of course, bared so as to enable the p ... d to be applied thereto on admission to the Lodge, and (nowadays) the c ... s during the obligation, as well as for evidence of sex. There can be little doubt that formerly if the candidate were not entirely naked he was nearly so, as in the ancient mysteries and other initiatory rites to be described later ⁽⁷⁾. The phrase “neither naked nor clothed” occurs in the lecture in describing the preparation of the candidate, but it is impossible to say how old this is.

4 Frazer, “The Magic Art,” I., 160 sq.

5 *ibid.*

6 *ibid.*

7 Part III., Foreword.

(D) NEITHER BAREFOOT NOR SHOD.

As stated in the Lecture, the shoe was in the East removed as a pledge of fidelity, but merely at the time of sealing a bargain, [⁸] not throughout the period of bargaining (⁹). So also both shoes were removed on entering a holy place lest it be defiled, but neither of these customs supplies a satisfactory reason for the practise of going through the whole ceremony with one foot slipshod.

Now it used to be the custom in Scotland for the bridegroom to loosen one shoe-tie at the church door and leave it so during the marriage ceremony (¹⁰). One writer (¹¹) mentions that in Skye in 1772 he observed with astonishment that at a wedding “the bridegroom put all the powers of magic to defiance, for he was married with both shoes tied with their latchet.”

In ancient Greece and Rome also it was customary to remove one shoe altogether when in any great danger, or when performing certain solemn rites. Thus the Plataeans when escaping from the Spartans went through the enemy’s lines wearing one shoe only, and other tribes of ancient Rome observed the same custom when going into war. Perseus in one legend is said to have worn only one shoe when he cut off the Gorgon’s head, and in a scene, taken from the Grecian ritual of purification and painted on a vase, the subject is represented as wearing one shoe only. Dido when performing certain rites before the altar had one foot bare, and so on (¹²).

I would suggest that the custom of having one foot slipshod and that of having one shoe removed altogether are one and the same, and that it is from this superstition that the Masonic custom is derived.

The custom indicates sincerity to an oath, whether the pledge is absolute (as in Masonry or during marriage) or whether it is conditional, as, for instance, where a vow is taken to perform some service if preserved from some “difficulty or danger.”

(E) A CABLE TOW PLACED ABOUT HIS NECK.

The cable tow appears in the most ancient pictures in the temples and tombs of Egypt and South America, the persons wearing it (and others) being in attitudes identical with some of our Masonic signs. It is the equivalent of the African “slave-stick” and indicates that the candidate enters the Lodge in a humble spirit, being the slave to false doctrines which will be cured by the knowledge bestowed by the mysteries. It will be remembered that on an historic occasion the burghers of Calais observed this custom.

The reason for its use given by the W.M. after the obligation is purely secondary and incidental; in some other degrees the cable tow is applied to parts of the body other than the neck.

8 Apparently among the Hebrews this custom had special reference to the custom of marrying the wife of a deceased brother, cf. Dent. XXV. 7-10.

9 Ruth, IV., 1-17.

10 Rogers, “Social Life in Scotland,” III., 232.

11 Pennant, Thos., “A Tour in Scotland,” 1769, in John Pinkerton’s “Voyages and Travels,” III., 325

12 “Taboo,” 311 sqq..

IV. – ADMISSION OF THE CANDIDATE.

The critical student of the ritual cannot fail to be struck with the parade made of applying the point to the breast of the candidate. The reason given for this custom in the Lecture is that it is intended “to intimate” to the candidate that he is “about to engage in something serious and solemn, likewise to distinguish the sex.” The first is a very lame explanation, and the second can obviously refer only to the bareness of the breast.

In the Scotch ritual, where more stress is laid on this part of the ceremony than in the English, the reason given for the practice is that it is of the nature of a warning against the betrayal of Masonic secrets.

In the ancient mysteries the candidate was put through the most searching tests of his courage and self-control; Pythagoras, it is said, nearly lost his life while being initiated, so severe was the treatment to which he was subjected⁽¹³⁾. Similar ordeals have to be undergone by initiates in the pseudo-Masonic ceremonies of savages, and there can, I think, be little doubt that this custom of piercing the candidate with the point is a relic of this ancient practice.

Many of these ordeals are still practised in the ceremonies of the Netherlands Constitution.

Immediately after his admission the candidate kneels during prayer and as he does so the deacons cross their wands above him, forming an inverted V. This custom may not be without significance, as a similar usage, that of requiring the candidate to stoop, appears in a higher degree. Now the door of the Lodge in ancient Egypt was triangular⁽¹⁴⁾, which is at least suggestive, and I think the reason for this may be found in some of the initiatory rites of primitive peoples. The triangle, though later the symbol of the Trinity, was originally that of the maternal Productive element in Nature, and in many of these rites the candidate has to go through the pantomime of a new birth”, sometimes actually creeping through such a triangle. [15] Similarly an African tribe among whom I have lived have a rite of purification during which they have to pass under a low arch, made of two crossed poles tied together at their intersection. The intention is undoubtedly to rid the devotee of clinging evil and an identical ceremony is performed in Armenia, British Columbia, Borneo, the South Sea Islands, and elsewhere⁽¹⁶⁾. It is possible that in this widespread custom we may find the parallel, if not the origin, of the apparently unimportant act of crossing the deacons’ wands over the candidate.

[3] Note that the Masonic Ritual itself describes the ceremony of initiation as “an emblematical representation of the entry of all men on this their mortal existence.”

V. – THE CEREMONY OF INITIATION.

Perambulation : Steps : Lights.

13 Fellows, J., “Mysteries of Freemasonry,” p. 147.

14 Churchward, A., “Signs and Symbols of Primordial Man,” p. 423.

15 “The Magic Art,” 1., 76.

16 “Balder the Beautiful,” 11., 172 sqq..

(A) PERAMBULATION OF THE CANDIDATE.

In lodges under the English, Constitution it is customary for the candidate to be taken round the Lodge only once and to go through the form of passing only two doorways (at the pedestals of the two wardens). In the old Scotch ritual three perambulations are made and the candidate passes three doorways, tyled by the wardens and the W.M. respectively, and this is correct according to ancient precedent.

Formerly the Lodge was divided into three, or, more correctly, there were three Lodges, - the E.A's, the F.C's, and the M.M's, presided over by the J.W., S.W., and W.M. respectively, This was also the case in the ancient mysteries, a plan which still survives in the 18d and to a certain extent in the R.A.. We shall have occasion to refer to this point again.

It may be said that the candidate should not be required to pass three doorways within the Lodge seeing that he has already passed one on admittance to the Lodge. To make this view tenable he should be received at the door by the J.W, and during or rather after the perambulation he should be passed by the S.W. and W.M. Strictly speaking, however, at initiation the candidate should pass only the JW., in the 2nd degree both wardens, and on being received he should pass all three principal officers.

(B) THE STEPS.

The Lecture states that the form of these steps is meant to inculcate “upright lives and well-squared actions,” but this can obviously refer only to the position of the feet No reason is given in any ritual that I know of, for the form of the steps. Possibly they are intended to be symbolical of the erratic progress of those still in the darkness of ignorance. Their number is, of course, attributable to the Masonic progression of 3, 5 and 7, though it would more correctly be associated with the third degree.

LEFT FOOT FIRST.

Churchward states ⁽¹⁷⁾ that this custom was designed to perpetuate the mythical fight between the Egyptian god Horus and the serpent Apep, - an allegory of the dawn defeating the night (or according to some authorities, the mists of the morning), of the triumph of Good over Evil, Knowledge over Ignorance: the myth is, of course, the same as that of St. George and the Dragon. Wherever depicted, whether on the monuments or in the vignettes to the Book of the Dead, the god has his left foot advanced, sometimes planted on the serpent, as Bro. Churchward points out.

The custom is, however, much more widespread than this. In the first place this attitude is not confined to Horus in ancient Egypt but in all the vignettes in the Book of the Dead in which the deceased is represented as attacking any of the beasts which sought to bar his progress, he invariably has his left foot advanced. The importance of this lies in the fact that the candidate in the Egyptian mysteries enacted the vicissitudes of the soul after death, and as it is now very generally admitted that Freemasonry owes a great deal to these mysteries we have here an excellent explanation of this custom.

17 “Signs and Symbols,” p. 244.

Now it is significant that all over the world the left is regarded as offensive in a double sense, that is, its use is harmful to others. In many countries under native law damages can be claimed from a man who has given anything to another with the left hand; witness also the word sinister. Here we have the reason that the left foot is put forward in attacking evil powers.

Further we have the negative evidence that on certain specified occasions the right foot must be first put forward. A Muslim, for instance, enters both house and mosque right foot first to show that he comes in peace. In the island of Lombok (near Java) a woman on going to the barn to get rice for household use must enter with the right foot first⁽¹⁸⁾; neglect of this would so offend (or injure) the spirit of the rice that the next year's crop would inevitably be a failure. In British Columbia the Indians during a period of taboo prescribed after the ceremonial eating of human flesh, must enter the house with the right foot first to avoid further outrage on the spirit of the victim, - a delicate attention which we will hope is appreciated.⁽¹⁹⁾

(C) “... YOUR LEFT WILL BE EMPLOYED IN SUPPORTING A PAIR OF COMPASSES.”

(uncertain – rhm)

This custom is not observed in some lodges. In the Scotch ritual the left hand is placed under the V.S.L., the right being on it as in the English, and this position of the hands is used as a sign. That the English Constitution has lost a landmark in omitting this sign is evident from one of the illustrations in Bro. Ward's scholarly work “Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods”,⁽²⁰⁾ where the Buddha is shown giving this sign. In Scotland it is known as the “due guard or (better) Dieu garde.

The Lecture states that the compasses are applied to the breast as “an emblem of torture” to the body and a warning against the betrayal of Masonic secrets, - the same reason be it noted that the Scotch ritual gives for the similar application of the point on entrance. I think it probable that this use of the compasses is of modern interpolation, and that the breast was applied to the Cubic Stone when taking the obligation.

(D) “WHAT ... IS THE PREDOMINANT WISH OF YOUR HEART?” “LIGHT.”

This point in the ceremony formed one of the most dramatic incidents in the mysteries of Eleusis⁽²¹⁾. That in Freemasonry it was also considered important is evident from the custom observed when light is restored, especially in some Lodges, but more might be made of it. Besides the symbolic passing from the Darkness of Ignorance to the Light of Knowledge; this part of the ceremony probably formerly had reference to the beneficent power of the sun.

18 Frazer, “Spirits of the Corn and the Wild,” I., 203.

19 “Taboo,” p. 189.

20 Op. cit., p. 142.

21 “Mysteries of Freemasonry,” p. 160.

(E) THE SUN, MOON, AND MASTER OF THE LODGE.

This identification of the three lesser lights forms a sad mixture of metaphor and the third point is pure bathos. The compilers of the Lecture evidently realized this and did their best to make it appear plausible, though without much success.

I think it probable that formerly the names of three deities were mentioned as ruling over the three seasons (see Note on the Three Principal Officers, Part 1. X. (5), and that in the course of time their names became so corrupted as to make the whole simile unintelligible.

VI. – THE CEREMONY OF INITIATION (CONTINUED):

Signs, Grip, and Word.

(A) THE SIGN.

That this sign has come down to us from very remote antiquity is evident from the fact that it is at the present day used as a pledge of sincerity not only by European street urchins, but by natives in Central Africa. Among the latter it is usually, in some tribes always, accompanied by a peculiar flick of the fingers extraordinarily like a sign of a higher degree, and in my opinion identical therewith.

As mentioned above ⁽²²⁾, in the Scotch ritual the position of the hand in taking the obligation is used as a sign in this degree ; it is immediately followed by that taught in the English lodges, of which it thus forms part.

(B) THE GRIP

This was formerly described as a penal sign on the grounds that amputation of the finger was practised as a punishment for certain crimes of the middle ages. That this was not the origin of the grip but that it once had a religious significance is evident from an ancient custom of sacrificing this member to the gods. We find a similar custom among some tribes of North American Indians among whom it was not uncommon for a man to cut off the Hand as a sacrifice to the Great Spirit ⁽²³⁾. Moreover it is said ⁽²⁴⁾ that the matricide Orestes succeeded in appeasing the Furies by biting off one of his fingers.

In the Scotch ritual this grip is distinguished as the G.G. because there are three others leading up to it. The first of these is called the S.p or C.n, and is given by s.d..g the thumb and f. down the i.f. of the b.'s r.h. from the k. to the tip; g..p.g the last mentioned between f. and t. is called the J.t of F..b.n. The middle j.t is now g..p.d in a similar manner, this being the J.t of Enq. ; finally the f. and t. are slipped up to the position of the G.G., which movement is called the P. from D. to L.. Evidently because this procedure is too elaborate not to be evident to onlookers, the l.h. is used to conceal it, which action is called c..g the m.'s w. . k.

22 Supra, V., 3.

23 "Taboo," p. 161; "The Dying God," p. 219.

24 Pausanias, VIII., 34, 3.

I consider that brethren of the English Constitution ought to be informed of this procedure in order to enable them to give proof in a Scotch Lodge when called upon. I am informed that it is also observed in Irish Lodges.

(C) THE WORD.

In the first place I would call attention to the reiteration of the word S. in the ritual, in the w. of the 1d, in the name of one of the p.r.s (W., S. and B.y), and in the word L.. s. It is evident that a word having this meaning was formerly of no little importance in Freemasonry and that we may expect to find it associated with a p.r.

The explanation can be found in ancient Egypt and in Syria. Pre-eminent in Egyptian religion was the tat (or ded) pillar, the annual erection of which formed one of the most important festivals of the year. It was regarded as a most powerful talisman and miniatures of it were almost universally worn during life, and were carved on the coffin or placed on the breast of the dead.

In mythology two tat pillars stood at the entrance to Ament (²⁵) (the abode of the dead), and formed the gateway through which the sun and moon passed at setting, as well as the spirits of the dead. Hence, the Mysteries being a representation of the passage of the soul through Amenta, they stood at the door of the Egyptian Lodge. The tat pillar was the symbol of Osiris and its peculiar shape is due to a conception of it in later Egypt as his backbone. This is proved by a passage in the Book of the Dead (²⁶) which consists of a spell to be said on a tat inlaid on the coffin, "Here is thy back-bone, thou still-heart (i.e., the dead identified with the dead Osiris), "here is thy spine." In the myth of Osiris' death, also, a pillar was made of the acacia which grew around his coffin; the idea that the tat was originally a "nilometer" is now quite discredited. There is very little doubt that the pillar was a symbol of the phallus of the god which was lost after his dismemberment, and the annual ceremony of "setting up the tat" was originally phallic in meaning.

Now the word tat in ancient Egyptian means Strength, and there is no doubt that there is the very closest connection between the symbology of Egypt and Syria; that is how it comes about that the same pillars, having the same significance, are found in the biblical account of the building of K.S.T.. Additional proof that the Masonic pillars are identical with the tat pillars of Egypt will be given later (²⁷). Meantime we can consider how a pillar came to be associated with the word S..

The frequency with which a pillar is found as a religious emblem all over the world proves that its origin lies very far back in the history of man's development. The massebah pillar of the old Canaanitish sanctuaries was undoubtedly phallic in meaning; compare Jeremiah 11, 27, "Saying to a stock, thou art my father, and to a stone, thou hast brought me forth" (or "begotten me," - marginal note). The stock, or asherah, was the wooden counterpart of the stone massebah pillar. The hold their worship had on the people is evident from the frequency of the denunciations against it in the Old Testament (²⁸). A pole or pillar,

25 Vignette to Papyrus of Ani, Brit. Mus..

26 Op. cit., Chap. 156.

27 Part II., 11., 6.

28 Deut. XVI., 22; 1 Kings, XIV., 23; 2 Kings, XVIII., 4 and XXIII., 14; Micah, V., 13 sq..

sometimes duplicated, plays a more or less prominent part in nearly all the initiation ceremonies of savages, where it also has a phallic meaning.

We can now trace the origin of this symbol as part of the Egyptian religion. The God of Vegetation is supposed to lose his strength in the autumn when the first signs of death in his realm appear, and as strength is always intimately associated with procreative power in the minds of all primitive peoples, a myth arises to the effect that at this season the god has lost the phallus. From this idea arose the custom of the devotees of the god mutilating themselves ⁽²⁹⁾, partly no doubt from a desire to resemble him, but mostly with the object of assisting his rejuvenation (i.e., the return of spring) ⁽³⁰⁾. This was a common practice in ancient times throughout Greece and the great Empires of the East, ⁽³¹⁾ and is considered by some to be the origin of the rite of circumcision. We can now understand the development of the myth already alluded to, that Osiris lost his phallus, and why the setting up of the tat pillar was so important a ceremony, - the lost member must be replaced before the fields could become fertile. The licence which prevailed at this festival among the people had originally a similar object, - by the rules of Imitative Magic the crops would thereby be rendered more reproductive. It may be mentioned in passing that this was the origin of the Carnival still celebrated annually on the Continent, ⁽³²⁾ and of the May-day festival in England; the May-pole is identical with the Masonic pillar.

VII. – THE CEREMONY OF INITIATION (CONTINUED)

The Badge : Foundation Stone : Gauge.

(A) THE BADGE OF AN E. A. F..

From statues and paintings in the Egyptian Temples we find that the apron was then triangular in shape, being worn with the ape upwards. ⁽³³⁾ The triangle was originally, as mentioned already, the symbol of the productive spirit in Nature, but later it became identified with the Trinity.

(B) THE NORTH-EAST CORNER.

The great Masonic festival is held on Midsummer Day when the sun, at the northern solstice, reaches the zenith of its prolific power and is at its greatest altitude. In all ages this day has for this reason been a festival, and the reason that Masonic lodges were formerly dedicated to St. John is that since Christian times Midsummer-day has been observed as the feast of this saint.

In all northern latitudes the sun at this period rises in the North-East, and it was in this quarter that, in Egyptian mythology, the sun first rose on the day it was created. ⁽³⁴⁾ These

29 Frazer, "Adonis, Attis, and Osiris," I., 264 sq.; "The Magic Art," II., 145.

30 "Adonis, Attis, and Osiris," I., 283.

31 Ibid., I., 269.

32 "The Dying God," p. 253.

33 Churchward, "Arcana," p. 51.

34 Bryant, "Plagues of Egypt," p. 86.

are all reasons for laying a foundation stone in the North-East and for placing the newly-initiated Freemason there.

Though not strictly speaking germane to our subject, it may be of interest to mention here that the act of laying a particular stone at the foundation of a building is derived from a custom of remote antiquity. It is directly connected with the ancient practice of killing one or more men when commencing a building of any importance; these were either crushed to death or were built into the wall while yet alive, the idea being that their spirits should add to the strength and stability of the structure.

This custom was observed until quite recently in Burma and Siam ⁽³⁵⁾, but nearer Europe magic has now been called in to supply the necessary spirit. Thus in Bulgaria all that is necessary is to take the measure of a man's shadow with a piece of string and place it, the string, and therefore with it the shadow, under a heavy stone built into the wall; within forty days the former owner of the shadow will be dead and his spirit under the stone. Another way is to entice the victim to the building and there manoeuvre him into such a position that a large stone can be laid upon his shadow; the result is the same. ⁽³⁶⁾ It is stated on unimpeachable authority ⁽³⁷⁾ that until quite recently there were in Romania specialists whose business it was to supply architects with the necessary shadows.

The custom of placing wine, oil and money under the foundation stone, together with a ration of corn, no doubt arose from the laudable desire to make the abode of the unfortunate ghost as comfortable as possible.

(C) THE 24-INCH GAUGE.

As Bro. Churchward has pointed out ⁽³⁸⁾ the 24-inch gauge is the representative of the Egyptian cubit, which when used as a hieroglyph has the phonetic value of Maat meaning primarily "that which is straight," and hence "justice," "straight dealing." This ancient symbolic meaning of the gauge might well be restored to the craft.

VIII. – THE FIRST TRACING BOARD.

(A) THE FORM OF THE LODGE.

The old Masonic term describing the form of the Lodge is "an oblong square," - a quaint conception having no geometrical sanction. It is, however, preferable to that substituted in some rituals, - a "parallelopiped," even though the latter be more correct.

Churchward states ⁽³⁹⁾ that the Egyptian Lodge was built in the form of a double square, end to end, because it represented Heaven and Earth, each being a square; but that the primary formation was a circle.

35 "Taboo," p. 90.

36 Ibid., p. 89.

37 Gerard, "The Land Beyond the Forest," 17 sq..

38 "Signs and Symbols," p. 305.

39 "Arcana," p. 43.

(B) THREE GREAT PILLARS.

These pillars are of course analogous to the three principal officers, and, like them, are placed in the East, West and South - a fact to which attention should be drawn in the ritual.

The names given to them (Wisdom, Strength and Beauty) are of course attributes of the G.A.O.T.U., and are identical in many different religions. Thus Plato speaks of the Trinity as consisting of Agathos, the Intelligence that drew the plan of the World, Logos, or the Word, the Energy which executed it, and Psyche, the productive Spirit which gives a finish and Beauty to the whole creation ⁽⁴⁰⁾. So the Oracle of Serapis spoke, "First God, then the Word, and Spirit all united in One." ⁽⁴¹⁾

The three pillars also occur in Hindu mythology and have the same names of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, representing the Triad, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. ⁽⁴²⁾ In Egypt the attributes of the Trinity were the same.

(C) THE LADDER.

The Masonic Ladder is represented as having many staves or rounds; on the Trestle Board 20 are shown, two being marked with the conventional (modern) symbols of Faith and Hope, the wine-glass at the top presumably symbolizing Charity. All this is quite wrong. The ladder should have seven rounds as in the old ritual, and in the higher degrees of Freemasonry, as well as in the ancient Mysteries and in every great Religion throughout the world. It is expressly stated in the ritual that the ladder is the means by which good Freemasons reach Heaven, but this is no reason for calling it "Jacob's ladder," which is obviously a modern interpolation, resulting from the 18th century desire to find biblical precedent for every Masonic landmark.

"In the cave of Mithra (India) there was a ladder of seven steps by means of which souls ascended and descended;" ⁽⁴³⁾ in Indian theology there are seven gates on the way to Heaven (cf. Jacob's remark, "This is the gate of Heaven" ⁽⁴⁴⁾); in Egypt and ancient Mexico there were seven steps to the Mount of Heaven; in the 153rd Chapter of the Book of the Dead we read, "N." (i.e., the soul of the dead man) "appears on the ladder which was made for him by his father Ra." In the South Sea Islands at the beginning of the rainy season a ladder of seven rungs is put up to enable the sun to come and fertilize the earth. ⁽⁴⁵⁾ The same thing is found everywhere.

It should be noted that the V.S.L. is represented as resting on a pedestal marked with the circle and the parallel lines : this is the altar of the Scotch and Irish Constitutions, the prototype of which was the Cubic Stone.

40 Plato, "In Timaeo,"

41 Fontenelle, "History Oracles," p. 9.

42 "Mysteries of Freemasonry," p. 237.

43 Bailey, "Ancient Astronomy."

44 Gen., XXVIII., 17.

45 "The Magic Art," II., 99.

(D) SEVEN STARS.

These are the Seven Glorious Ones of Egyptian mythology, identified by different authorities as either the Great or the Lesser Bear. They are identical with the Seven Stars of the Bible ⁽⁴⁶⁾ and are common to all religions. Renouf, referring to these Seven Glorious Ones, or Divine Masters as they were sometimes called, says, ⁽⁴⁷⁾ that they “ were the inventors and patrons of all Arts and Sciences and they assisted Thoth in composition and in the measurement of the earth . . . “ He compares them with the Seven Rishis of later Sanscrit literature and identifies them with the Great Bear. The parallel to the “seven Liberal Arts and Sciences“ of the Masonic ritual (Second Lecture) is very striking. With reference to what follows (Part III.) it should be noted that the stars of the Pleiades visible to the naked eye are seven in number.

(E) THE MOSAIC PAVEMENT.

The philosophical meaning given to the pavement is fully expounded in the Lecture and nothing need be added.

Fellows in his “Mysteries of Freemasonry” ⁽⁴⁸⁾ gives an ingenious derivation of the word “mosaic” which may be of interest in this connection. He derives the word from Moses (Mose, Musa or Museus) an Egyptian word meaning “saved, or disengaged from the waters,” which word was used to designate the nine months of the year during which Egypt was freed from the inundation. The variegated appearance of the land at the early part of this season, caused by the fields of grain regularly intersected by the irrigation canals, was reproduced in the temples by the tessellated pavement and the same word was naturally used to describe it. The author also shows that the nine Muses of Grecian mythology were originally the public signs put up (in Egypt) on the first day of each of these months as a kind of public calendar, whence they derived their collective name.

(F) THE BLAZING STAR.

A glance at the Trestle Board at once shows that the statement regarding the Blazing Star in the Lecture, - that it typifies the sun, is incorrect, for both Sun and Star are there depicted.

The star is, of course, Sothis or Sirius, the Dog-star. This brilliant star appeared at dawn in the East at the summer solstice in ancient Egypt, and from it the sacred year was dated. In the Book of the Dead, Chapter 174, it is referred to as “Sothis, the first one, the great Walker who brings Ra through the sky”; it is variously alluded to as the abode of Horus and of Isis, but is also personified as Thaut or Anpu, “The Barker,” because its rising at dawn gave warning of the imminent approach of the inundation. Hence the term “Dog-Star” which has persisted to the present day the anthropomorphic representation of Anpu was given the head of a jackal, In Amenta Anpu was the guide of the souls of the dead and presided over the weighing of the heart.

46 Amos, V., 8 ; Rev., 16, 20.

47 Renouf, “Life Work,” IV., 141. 44. Op. cit., pp. 60, 269.

48 Op. cit., pp. 60, 269.

In Babylon the goddess Ishtar (the Esther of the Old Testament) was associated with this star⁽⁴⁹⁾ and it was also worshipped at its rising throughout the Aegean.⁽⁵⁰⁾ The South African bushman associates the cold months of June and July with Sirius and tries to warm it up a little by pointing burning brands at it.⁽⁵¹⁾

We see that the deification of Sirius is not by any means confined to Egypt, but the association of the terms “Peace” and “Salvation” in all rituals, and “Prudence” in some, with the Masonic Star proves unmistakably that it is to Egypt that we owe this symbol; these words could relate only to the benefits conferred by the inundation, and to the necessity of moving to the higher ground until it had subsided.

(G) THE POINT WITHIN A CIRCLE.

This as a religious symbol is found all over the world and everywhere has the same significance, - the Creator. In Egypt it was the hieroglyphic of Ra, - God as manifested in the Sun, - while the circle with a single tangent means Eternity.

In China this emblem has with it two snakes, one on the North and the other on the South, corresponding to our lines. They explain these as symbolic of the Wisdom and Strength of the Creator, and the circle, of Eternity. The Syrians said that the jod within a circle symbolises “the Creator surrounded by Eternity, of which He is the Author, the Support and the Ornament,”⁽⁵²⁾ a strikingly exact analogy to the Wisdom, Strength and Beauty of the Masonic Pillars.

It has been suggested, and I think very credibly, that the point symbolizes the Polestar, and the Circle, the stars which revolve round it, never setting, and Renouf identifies the Polestar with the coffin of Osiris. If this is correct it would support Bro. Churchward’s contention that the worship of the Pole-stars preceded that of the Sun.⁽⁵³⁾

The reference of the parallel lines to Moses and Solomon is obviously a modern interpolation.

IX. – THE LECTURE.

The greater part of the Lecture is merely a recapitulation of the Ritual and most of the points requiring explanation have, therefore, already been dealt with. There are two, however, which occur only in the Lecture and on which a few words are necessary.

(A) Q. “WHENCE COME YOU?” A. “THE WEST... TO THE EAST... TO SEEK A MASTER.”

The key to this is to be found in the Egyptian Mysteries. As already mentioned,⁽⁵⁴⁾ these were a dramatic representation of the passage of the soul through Amenta. The soul on its release passed between the pillars in the West and entered Amenta in search of Osiris, the

49 Zimmern, Prof. H., quoted by Frazer, “The Scapegoat,” p. 359.

50 “Adonis Attis and Osiris,” II., 35 sqq.

51 Bleek, “Specimens of Bushman Folklore,” X 104, p. 339

52 “Mysteries of Freemasonry,” p. 237.

53 “Signs and Symbols,” p. 3, etc.;

54 Supra, VI, 3.

judge of the Dead, who was to be found in the East; Amenta being pictured as a sort of tunnel under the earth through which the Sun passed during the night to reappear in the East. just so the candidate enters the Lodge (=Amenta) by the door in the West and proceeds to the East to be instructed by the W.M..

(B) Q. “HOW BLOWS THE WIND IN MASONRY?” A. “FAVOURABLY, DUE EAST OR WEST.”

This is explained in the Lecture as having reference to the wind which enabled the Israelites to escape from the Egyptians at the crossing of the Red Sea, and some Masons have taken exception to the words “or West” on the grounds that there is no mention of a West wind in the biblical account of Exodus. The West wind is, however, mentioned in this connection in Psalm LXXVII, 16, and in Josephus, Antiquities, XVI, 3.

As usual, however, we find the true origin of this expression in the Egyptian Mysteries. A phrase occurring in the 15th Chapter of the Book of the Dead supplies the clue, “Ra springs forth with a fair wind.” The Sun was pictured in a boat wafted across the sky by Easterly breezes; he returned through Amenta, moving along a river from West to East during the night. Elaborate details were imagined regarding this boat as it also conveyed the souls of the dead, and the initiate in the mysteries having to enact the adventures of such a soul, the reference to the wind in Freemasonry at once becomes intelligible.

X. – THE OPENING OF THE LODGE. FIRST DEGREE.

(A) THE TYLER.

This officer owes his title to his duty of protecting the Lodge from intrusion. The word tyle, like tile, is derived from the Old English word tigel, or tygel, meaning “cover,” and hence “protect.”

The duty of the Tyler is “to keep off all cowans and intruders.” The word cowan is cognate with the legal word covin, “a deceitful agreement,” and with the slang cove. Its proper meaning is “imposter.”

A word concerning the proper pronunciation of which there has been a good deal of speculation, peculiar to Masonry, may conveniently be mentioned here. It is hele. This is derived from the Old English word helan, “to conceal” or “cover,” and preserves its original meaning. It should be pronounced heel.

(B) THE GAVEL.

just as in modern times the chairman of a meeting, like the auctioneer, is armed with a gavel as the symbol of his authority, so in ancient times, as Bro. Churchward points out, ⁽⁵⁵⁾ this emblem signified power and is identical with the stone axe of prehistoric days. As a double axe it is world-wide as the emblem of might, and in Egyptian hieroglyphics the single axe means “overpowering,” “having the mastery,” ⁽⁵⁶⁾ phonetically netter. As the double axe it is found inscribed on the Cubic Stone of the Grecian temples, and as the

55 “Arcana,” 136 sqq.

56 Renouf, “Life Work,” II, 285.

single instrument, on the same stones in Druidical (? pre-Druidical) remains, as, for example, in Devonshire, where in at least one instance it is accompanied by pure Egyptian hieroglyphics. ⁽⁵⁷⁾

The gavel may similarly be double or single, and in some lodges the single form is used by the Wardens, the double being reserved for the W.M. as the supreme authority. The analogy to the “hammer” of Thor, the Scandinavian deity, should be noted.

(C) “WHAT IS THE FIRST CARE OF EVERY MASON?” J. W. “TO SEE THE LODGE PROPERLY TYLED.” W.M. “DIRECT THAT DUTY TO BE DONE.”

Note that the W.M. does not address his order directly to the I.G., but through the J.W.. As already mentioned, ⁽⁵⁸⁾ in the Ancient Mysteries the Lodge was divided into three separate rooms, as in the 18d. Each was allotted to one of the Three Principal Officers, the prototype of the J.W. being in charge of the first, or E.A. Lodge. It is, therefore, his duty particularly to see that the door of the lodge for which he is responsible is “properly tyled.”

(D) “ARE YOU CONFIDENT THAT NONE BUT FREEMASONS ARE PRESENT?”

This question occurs in some rituals and should, of course, be addressed to the J.W., who is responsible that none but “genuine and true Freemasons” obtain admittance.

(E) THE THREE PRINCIPAL OFFICERS.

In the Hindu mysteries there are three presiding Brahmans, the Chief Brahman stationed in the East representing Brahma, the Creator, typified by the Rising Sun; the second in the South as Vishnu the Preserver, typified by the Meridian Sun, and the third in the West as Shiva, the judge or Destroyer, the Setting Sun... These are the Gods of the Hindu Trinity, which is undoubtedly identical with that of Ancient Egypt. The original Egyptian Trinity was Horus, Shu and Set, but later these were replaced by Osiris, Isis and Horus (the Younger), - Man, Woman, and Child.

Every great religion had its Trinity with one exception, Islam being unique in being truly monotheistic, though even there the frequent references in the Quran to the “Spirit of God” and “The Holy Spirit” might be claimed by over-literal theologians as evidence to the contrary.

Thus we find a Trinity in the religious cults of the following peoples: - The Zoroastrians the ancient Arabs, the Greeks and Latins, the Syrians, Chaldeans, Chinese, Peruvians, Scandinavians, Phoenicians, Kalmuks, and South American Indians. The primitive conception seems to have been the Spirit of Life, the Maternal Productive or Preservative Element, and the Male, Destructive or Fiery Element.

The positions of the three Principals in the East, West and South correspond in the Solar Cult to the Sun at dawn, sunset and the meridian respectively, i.e., a daily cycle. In the earlier Nature cult, however, the cycle was an annual one, and in this, I would suggest, the prototypes of the W.M. and Wardens represented the Seasons, of which the Egyptians, like

⁵⁷ Churchward, “Signs and Symbols,” p. 30.

⁵⁸ Supra, V, 1.

the modern savage, recognized only three, each corresponding to a phase of agriculture. This hypothesis and a suggested identification of these Officers with certain Stars will be more fully discussed later, ⁽⁵⁹⁾ but for the present enough has been said to show that the Three Principal Officers represent the Trinity.

(F) SEVEN OFFICERS IN ALL.

The number seven has been peculiarly sacred from time immemorial and all over the world peculiar virtues are attributed to it; it was called by the Ancient Egyptians the “Perfect or Sacred number” (cf. the T.B. “. . . seven . . . Masons, without which number no Lodge is perfect.”) Whatever the origin of the peculiar sanctity attached to the number seven, ⁽⁶⁰⁾ it was later attributed to its being the sum of 3 and 4, - three, or a triangle denoting the Trinity, or Heaven, and four, or a square, representing the Earth. The combination of the square and the triangle is the pyramid, the geometrical expression of the sum of 3 and 4, heaven and earth, and hence the Universe. The pyramid combines in one figure the four principles of Geometry in the philosophy of Pythagoras, - Point = 1 (i.e., the apex), Line = 2 Points (edge), Superficies = 3 Points (surface), and Solid = 4 Points.

(G) THE DUTIES OF THE DEACONS.

The going to and fro implied in the words “carry all messages... etc.” is a relic of the former division of the Lodge into three to which reference has already been made. ⁽⁶¹⁾ I think it probable that the J.D. acted as I.G. to the F.C. Lodge presided over by the S.W., and the S.D. in a similar capacity to the M.M.’s Lodge in charge of the W.M.. Thus the S.D. had “to bear all messages and commands from the W.M. to the S.W.” in the chair of the F.C. Lodge, and if the message had to be transmitted to the J.W. in the E.A. Lodge, it was the duty of the J.D. to take it on “ from the S.W. to the J.W., and to see the same punctually obeyed.” The J.D. then returns to the F.C. Lodge with his report that the W.M.’s orders have been carried out, and the S.D. having had “to await the return of the J.D.,” takes the message back to the W.M..

The true meaning of the word deacon is, of course, “a servant,” and among the Greeks the term was applied to those who served the tables, - i.e., to those whom we now call Stewards.

End of PART I.

59 Ward, “Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods.”

60 See VIII, 4, supra.

61 Supra, V. 1 ; X, 3.