

**A BRIEF APPLICATION
OF
THE YORK RITE
TO
DAILY LIFE**

Dear Companion:

This little booklet except "Modern Knights Templar" was written by our late Very Excellent Companion Sam B. Helm, Grand High Priest in 1924, and was given wide circulation during his administration. The sentiments expressed are just as true today as they were in 1924, for they are Eternal Truths. It is again being circulated through the cooperation of the York Rite Grand Bodies of Texas in the hope that it may "point the way" to the path that leads to the Light at the top of the mountain that is Freemasonry.

Sincerely and fraternally,

M:.E.: Grand High Priest
Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas

M:.I.: Grand Master
Grand Council of R &SM of Texas

R:.E.: Grand Commander
Grand Commandery KT of Texas

FOREWORD

No attempt is made herein to discuss Masonry, but a few thoughts are offered to direct the mind of the young Mason to the application of the York Rite to his everyday life. The York Rite is not like some fanciful story or whimsical poem which is enjoyed only at intervals, but it is staple and will bear the closest acquaintance, meaning far more with closer association and deeper study. With the hope that they may encourage Royal Arch Masons to study the deeper meaning of Masonry, these lines are written by the Grand High Priest of Texas.

Sam J. Helm

APRIL, 1924.

Masonry is the ocean of fraternity, and every Mason should strive to sail its broad expanse, because its profound solemnity and matchless beauty can never be appreciated by those who merely wade in the shallow waters at the shore. The tides of time have rolled mighty waves upon its bosom, and the storms of centuries have lashed the billows into foam upon its surface, but beneath there have remained, undisturbed and immutable, the principles of the Brotherhood of Man.

No Mason should deny himself the privilege of knowing at least the salient features of our fraternity, and we owe it to the ancient and honorable institution to learn enough of its teachings to grasp their deeper significance, so that we shall not be gigglers in the Master's Degree nor funmakers in the Royal Arch Degree. If the Masonic bodies of all rites and branches will, in the future, be as diligent and efficient in making Masons as they have been, in the past, in making members, our great fraternity will be a tremendous power for good, a power made possible by numbers and knowledge, but not only numbers alone. A uniform does not make a soldier and a button does not make a Mason.

When the beginner in Masonry first starts his inquiry into the principles of the fraternity, he should be advised of the necessity for bearing in mind at all times that the Temple, which plays so important a part in the Lodge, is a symbol of the Temple on High, and that this symbolism also applies to the King and to the master builder, as well as to all else in the Blue Lodge, or Symbolic, Degrees. He should also be advised to disregard the history of Masonry in the beginning of his studies, since great confusion is certain to result, and he will waste his time. Unfortunately, our most scholarly historians are pleased to begin their history of Masonry at a time when it had already grown great in influence and hoary with age, having brought down through the centuries the traditions which have fascinated the speculative Masons. Such a history of George Washington would date his birth at the time he was inaugurated President of the United States.

But the beginner does not need history; the Degrees themselves contain earmarks of antiquity which will be convincing enough for the beginner. Teach him that the ritualistic work is only an index to Masonry, merely enabling him to read the symbols. Masonry is a picture of human life, real life as it was yesterday and as it is today, of man struggling between the fallacies of the senses and the infallibility of divinity, going down to the grave without seeing his life-work bloom in full fruition, then rising to immortality through the merits of the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Man's mortal existence is a great subject, but Masonry deals with more than this, for it impregnates a part of each Degree with a little something which leads the mind of the thinker to something higher, to greater possibilities. One of the great lessons of the Fellowcraft's Degree is that a thorough, well-rounded education forces the thinker to recognize God; rationalistic in every sense, laying aside the Bible and teaching only the sciences and arts, yet leading to that important conclusion, and making his Degree the predicate for all that follows it in Masonry.

This profound system of thought, this marvelous cycle of symbolism, the beginning of which the Grand Lodge of Texas interprets in the York Rite, can be completed only in the York Rite. Unless a Mason proceeds further in the York Rite, he never sees the divine light which is

promised him; he stumbles through life with a substitute Word; he fails to recognize the priceless heritage for which he should work; he never learns of the greatest part that Masonry has played in history; he never knows the debt of gratitude which the world owes to our great fraternity.

York Rite Masonry is a book of many Chapters, each Chapter dependent upon those preceding it; the actual life of man and his rewards are the golden threads which run through the entire story. The following lines are written with the hope that they may be of assistance to members of our fraternity in interpreting the Degrees to the young Masons, so that they may enter into the real spirit of the ceremonies, grasping their deeper meaning and enjoying the splendid lessons which they teach to the thinking Mason.

THE MARK MASTER'S DEGREE

The Mark Master's Degree is a part of the Fellowcraft's and is founded on the ancient custom of requiring each workman to place his mark upon his work. It teaches many lessons and is historical as well as philosophical. It teaches that the world demands substantial service which should measure up to certain standards, must pass the squares of certain authorities, and must bear our mark if we would take credit for it. This is a worldly lesson, yet there creeps into it the idea that the work of a Greater Artist may be accepted by most of us, whereas the supposed high authorities will reject it until it is redeemed by the highest authority. Think back on the Fellowcraft's Degree and study its prophecy on the work of this Great Artist if you do not know the Fellowcraft's Degree, you have no foundation for Masonry.

Although supposed to do so, a Mark Master may not record his mark in the Lodge, but in daily life he has no option; it is recorded for him. The Book of Marks in the Lodge is the Book of Life in the world; in one, his mark is what he says it is; in the other, it is what the people say it is; in the Book of Marks on high, it is probably exactly what he has made it by thoughts, words and actions. In the commercial world, the value of the trademark is well understood. In humanity's clouded vision, where many a scar is mistaken for a stain, a man's reputation is his mark and it may be better or worse than he deserves. By his mark, the Mark Master shall be known and he should record it in the Keystone which binds the arch, the stone which is the work of a Greater Artist, and it is surrounded by two circular lines, enclosing a mystic sentence, which is translated in plain English as follows: "The Master Builder of God's house reserves this space for me to register my pledge of faith."

This Degree also teaches service and cooperation, and demonstrates that we can often assist a friend when we actually feel that we can not; even the pass-grip is a symbol of assistance and cooperation in getting up the steep places of life with the valuable qualities of character which go into our spiritual building. It also touches upon man's selfishness in claiming a greater reward than his fellow, overestimating the value of his own efforts and underestimating the other man's, but it shows that merit stands the test when referred to the wise and impartial judge.

A Mark Master is taught charity in the true sense of the word; charitable thinking is often more valuable than money. Common experience teaches us that men are prone to err and this Degree emphasizes that forgiveness, after suitable punishment, may enable a man to come again, regain what he has lost, perfect his life, and bring up good and square work, which is always acceptable.

THE PAST MASTER'S DEGREE

The Past Master's Degree is strictly a Blue Lodge Degree, and is frequently conferred upon the Master-elect of a Lodge in a convocation of Past Masters, none of whom are members of the Chapter. From time immemorial, it has been the custom that none, but those who had been elected to the East in a Lodge, could be exalted to the Royal Arch Degree; this custom debarred thousands of deserving Master Masons from the Chapter, or Capitular, Degrees. On this account, the Past Master's Degree is conferred in the Chapter and those who receive it become "virtual" Past Masters as distinguished from actual Past Masters.

After a Mason has heard the obligation and the ancient charges, rules and regulations, he gets an insight into Lodge procedure which he has never had before; he learns the "whys and wherefores" of certain practices, such as either opening or closing the Lodge in long form in order to give a part of the trial lecture; he also learns why Masters frequently make certain requirements that the written law does not demand. Correctly conferred, the Degree does much toward really qualifying a candidate to preside over a Lodge, and is a wonderful assistance to one who has had no experience in presiding or parliamentary practice. Care should be taken to see that this instruction is given.

It also teaches lessons of a moral and symbolic nature. It demonstrates that there is a correct method of teaching, which will drive home a lesson after other methods have failed. Schoolteachers should understand this principle, although they may not be Masons. It also teaches obedience to the law, something that a Master must recognize at all times, and it calls attention to the necessity for closely following set rules while striving to master a new vocation, science or art. A beginner in music, medicine or Masonry must give the strictest attention to certain rules and formulas if he would become a Master; having become a Master, he may vary from them, perhaps, but not as a beginner.

Masonry has a central theme which runs entirely through the York Rite, and the Past Master's Degree usually demonstrates that evil consequences may develop if we lose sight of a central thought. Some men possess splendid qualifications and are capable of excellent work, but they are in the clutches of some particular sin which prevents them from achieving success. "One thing thou lacketh," Jesus told the young ruler. The Past Master's Degree, like all other Degrees in the York Rite, deals with man in his actual life, and it teaches in a striking manner that a man may be well qualified in many particulars, and yet meet with failure because he overlooks or underestimates the importance of some one feature.

Whereas the Mark Master's Degree teaches that men have an individual responsibility although working in the masses, the Past Master's Degree brings out the thought that this responsibility increases in proportion to the power that is placed in one's hands, and that the truly great man, while occupying the highest place of power, bears this responsibility without forgetting for a moment that he is a brother to the lowliest. Although circumstances may lift a man to an exalted position, a haughty or arbitrary spirit is very unbecoming, since other circumstances may work his undoing and reduce him to the level of those about him.

THE MOST EXCELLENT MASTER'S DEGREE

The Most Excellent Master's Degree is still another picture of a man in actual life, but it is founded on one of the high lights in history. As it is conferred in Texas, the candidate never gets anything out of it, because he does not comprehend it; he stands off to one side and watches the proceeding, but it is meaningless to him. If he takes time to study it after receiving it, he discovers that it is a congratulatory Degree, a Degree of rejoicing, thanksgiving and praise. The materialist, the strictest rationalist, can apply every feature of it to his own views, but into the Mason's mind again creeps that spiritual touch, a symbolic hint of something finer than clay, something beyond the finite.

When we really understand this Degree, we find that it has been conferred on us many times, and that we have helped confer it on others long before we received it in the Lodge room. When the boy or girl masters the course in school and receives a diploma, it is the Most Excellent Master's Degree that is conferred upon them. In business, society or politics, a man may plan his work, follow it to a successful termination and look back upon it with thanksgiving and praise to those who have helped him, and receive the Most Excellent Master's Degree. When a man marries the woman he loves, he receives the Degree, and when these two build their first home, how strikingly they confer it upon themselves; however humble that home may be, however dim the lights within, a fire comes down from heaven and illuminates the souls of these two who have set the capstone and finished the house.

THE ROYAL ARCH DEGREE

The most important Degree in Masonry, regardless of Rite, is called the Royal Arch, but in reality this name should be applied only to York Rite Masonry in its entirety, since it alone is the stupendous Royal Arch, the rainbow of hope set in the heavens, with one end resting upon Eden and the other on the crumbled ruins of the world.

Into the Royal Arch Degree is compressed more information, more food for thought, than any other Degree, and its sheer greatness is shown by the variety of views of its votaries, each seeing it from his own angle, and its seriousness is impressed upon each in proportion to his natural ability and his knowledge of the Degree. Serious situations are not always so regarded by onlookers, whose ignorance of existing conditions prevent their appreciation of the seriousness; is one of the Great Nazarene's tense moments, the rabble laughed. The Royal Arch Degree is still another picture of man in actual life—and the rabble still laughs.

One of the lessons of this Degree is that the greatest of rewards is due to loyal service, especially service which is rendered at a sacrifice, for that shows the heart of the man; vicarious suffering is worthy of the noblest rewards. No matter whether one's abilities be great or small, his service is valuable and his reward should be proportion to his zeal and fidelity rather than according to the high or low plane in which the laborer toils. The reward given in this Degree should be studied from every angle by every Royal Arch Mason, and he should strive to master its full meaning; he can get a very clear and distinct idea of what Masonry really means to him by attempting to fix a value upon the Recovery; his whole idea of Masonry is involved in the value he places upon it.

The historical side of this Degree should appeal to every candidate, whether he is able to follow its symbolism and philosophy or not, and he is invested with secrets, or traditions, of which he may be justly proud, since he finds a heritage worthy of any man, learning that he is the successor of men who did more than any other in presenting the very foundation-stone on which our civilization rests, on which our nation must stand or fall on which Masonry is founded and must stand throughout the ages.

In the life of every man, there is a Babylonish captivity, but it is only the good man who hears the news of his release and hastens to offer his services in a noble and glorious undertaking without the hope of fee or reward; in the life of every man, there is a long and weary journey on which he passes the ruins of other lives, the blighted hopes and shattered ambitions which stand out like stupendous rows of columns and obelisks, and from which he should derive a serious lesson; but the good Mason is justified in believing that he can pass the rough and dangerous places in that straight and narrow path, refreshing himself in an occasional oasis, finding time and opportunity to render thanks for his protection and deliverance, and finally reach the goal where, by the signet of eternal truth, he may pass the thin veil which hangs between the finite and the infinite.

The greatness of the Royal Arch Degree can not be written nor can it all be told even behind tiled doors; perhaps, its whole story can never be told; it touches not only those in the Lodge room, city, state or nation, not only the world today, but it reaches back into the dim,

distant past and likewise projects itself into the future until the universe shall be dissolved and time shall be no more.

THE COUNCIL DEGREES

The Grand Council Royal and Select Masters of Texas, is the largest Council jurisdiction in the world. It controls three Degrees, but only two have ever been taught by the Committee on Work; these are the Royal Master's and the Select Master's.

After a Royal Arch Mason has devoted himself to thought on the Chapter Degrees , especially the last one, numerous questions present themselves to his mind, and he is unable to answer them; during the period in which he is pondering over these problems and trying so hard to solve them, he is "ripening" for the Council Degrees, for they explain the perplexing points of the Royal Arch Degree.

The Royal Master's Degree depicts a scene which took place before the events of the Master's Degree occurred, and the Great Artist of the Master Mason's Degree is the moving spirit of the Royal Master's Degree. On this account, the candidate wonders why the Council Degrees are conferred subsequent to the Chapter Degrees, but a little knowledge of the entire system will convince him that Texas confers the Council Degrees at the right place. If Masons were unwise enough to demand chronological sequence, the Council Degrees would necessarily be conferred before the Master Mason's Degree.

The Royal Master's Degree is a little gem and is perhaps the only Degree which makes the candidate wish they would turn right around and confer it on him again. It is in this Degree that the master builder delivers a discourse which is one of the most impressive and beautiful parts in all the ritualistic work of Masonry.

One passes the "circle of perfection" in the Select Master's Degree, which is one of great importance and relates a tradition that is always remembered by the candidates. When the important part of the Degree is reached, the candidate is given a seat and the team proceeds to do the work. A person must see and hear it several times in order to grasp its full significance, but when it is understood, the Select Master is in position to look back over the entire system of ancient-craft Masonry and view the perfect whole.

THE COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

There are no Degrees in the Commandery they are called "Orders" and there are three of them, namely: The Order of the Red Cross, the Order of Malta, and the Order of the Temple. It is a useless waste of time to attempt to trace a lineal kinship between them and the knightly Orders of the Crusades, but this could be done, perhaps, if the Masonic historian were as credulous of Medieval and Modern history as he is of all things pertaining to King Tut. However, this is wholly unnecessary, because the Orders speak for themselves, and the Order of the Temple is the very capsheaf of Masonry.

Around the altar of the Lodge, the Gentile and Jew, and Hindu and Mohammedan can fraternize in the Brotherhood of Man, acknowledging their dependence on the Most High and enjoying the blessed communion of "brethren who dwell together in unity." In the Chapter and Council, the Jew and Gentile enjoy a closer relationship, since their philosophy and their theology have stood the test of time, and there is a harmony which must be experienced to be understood. But only the Christian can conscientiously pass the portals of the Commandery, because two of these Orders are founded on the deeds and customs of the knights of old, who were devout Christians, and since 1760, only Royal Arch Masons who were Christians have been eligible to knighthood.

The Order of the Temple is veritably the Christian's paradise for reflection, for here he can interpret Masonry conformably to his religious belief. Jesus Christ has no place in the Lodge, Chapter or Council, and the Mason who tries to place Him there is a supreme egotist. If God, in His wisdom, saw fit to withhold the Christ from the world for four thousand years, it is not becoming in any Mason to deviate from the Divine Plan or attempt to improve upon it by forcing Jesus into Masonry until Masonry is prepared to receive Him. The Lodge, Chapter and Council deal historically with events under the Mosaic dispensation, and not until the Mason has reached the Commandery is he symbolically entitled to the Christ. As men of old looked forward with longing eyes to the time when the Star should appear in the East, so should every earnest Christian Mason look forward to his entrance into the Commandery where he is entitled to a realization of his fondest hopes.

The Knights of the Order of the Temple, or Knights Templar, can look back upon the whole plan of Masonry with a clearer view; it seems to be a more vitalized and a more sacred system than ever before. He recalls the marvelous parallel of the Old Testament and the Fellowcraft's Degree, both a thousand years old when Jesus was born, the Old Book prophesying that there would come One upon the Earth through Whom all men must enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Fellowcraft's Degree telling us of a man, half Jew and half Gentile, a master builder whose blood represented alike God's Chosen People and the Gentiles, who constructed the two large brazen pillars that were set up at the entrance porch and between which all men must pass into King Solomon's Temple, which was the symbol on Earth of the heavenly Temple. If the Christian's mind should be perplexed as to Whom this man typifies, all doubt disappears when this master builder, this paragon of fidelity and integrity, falls without sin or blame and is borne almost in the direction of Calvary, and is raised from the tomb by Him who symbolizes on Earth the Great King on His heavenly throne.

When the devout Christian, who is likewise a zealous Mason and Knight Templar, looks back upon Masonry in a contemplative mood, he seems to see the footprints of the Creator in every avenue, the Divine hand seems to have fashioned each setting, he beholds each scene illuminated by a new light, each Degree has a new and deeper meaning. The Christian Mason closes his York Rite career with the Order of the Temple, a ceremony so solemn, so beautiful and impressive, so tender in allusion, so sublime in thought, that he never forgets it, never regrets it, but enjoys it more and more as he advances in learning and experience; then, after a few years of earnest thought and patient study, he must guard against over zealousness, or his reflections will bring him perilously near the conclusion that Masonry is a divine science.

MODERN KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

The earliest reference to the conferring of the Order of the Temple is in St. Andrew's Royal Arch Chapter, then St. Andrew's Royal Arch Lodge, Boston, Massachusetts, August 28, 1769.

We next find that the Orders were conferred upon Paul Revere in St. Andrew's Lodge, Boston, Massachusetts, December 11, 1769. On May 14, 1770, St. Andrew's Lodge conferred the Orders upon General Joseph Warren.

At the time there were no Templar bodies, and the Templar ceremony was practiced under the sanction of the warrant of a Lodge. It was customary in those days for persons in possession of higher degrees to confer them on worthy Master Masons; for example, that of performing the ceremony of Knighting a Templar. Sometimes a diploma was granted.

After the close of the Revolutionary War, the higher degrees began to be conferred by regularly constituted bodies. Chapters and Commanderies were organized upon a permanent basis.

The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America was organized June 22, 1816. Its jurisdiction extends over 47 Grand (State) Commanderies, and subordinate Commanderies located in Delaware, Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Canal Zone, Alaska, Hawaii, Philippine Islands and China. It exchanges representatives with the Sovereign Great Priorities of Knights Templar of Canada, England and Wales, Scotland, Ireland and Helvetia (Switzerland).

The Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas was instituted in 1855. There are 89 Commanderies in this Grand Jurisdiction, and one working Under Dispensation. Constituent Commanderies are chartered by the Grand Commandery of the State, which in turn is chartered by the supreme authority over Templar Masonry, officially entitled "The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America."

Various interpretations based on historical evidence have been advanced to show that chivalric Freemasonry is the lineal descendant of the Ancient Templars. There may be some who doubt this, yet in tracing our genealogy to those Knights of old, we liken it to the sunken rivers found in many parts of the world, where we can trace their water after they disappear on

one side of a mountain, and discover where these same waters again appear and proceed onward to the sea.

The same flowing spirit which was manifested in the lives of the Ancient Templars, together with the fundamental principles of that Ancient Order, from their origin in the Twelfth Century until they disappeared beneath the obstructions placed in their path, we can now clearly trace in the Templar rituals of England and the United States.