

THE YORK RITE

- ★ BLUE LODGE
- ★ CHAPTER
- ★ COUNCIL
- ★ COMMANDERY

presents

THE FOURTEEN STEPS *of* MASONRY

The true Mason is ever seeking for more Light and Knowledge, and when he asks for this Light or Knowledge he is often told by well-meaning but mistaken brothers that "as a Master Mason he has received all there is in **Masonry**" and thus, while not being really satisfied, he believes, and the quest for Light ends.

The purpose of this article is to explain to the initiate and to the uninitiated, so far as may be done, the **symbolism** and connection between the fourteen degrees of the York Rite, and the necessity of taking all of them in the pursuit of "more light" in **Masonry**.

First, we should dismiss from our minds the idea of division or separation between the four sets of degrees that compose the York Rite. Such a separation is merely formal and for convenience sake, not essential.

THE YORK RITE IS A WHOLE. You cannot stop on the way, and claim to be a Mason.

These fourteen degrees are full of the most important and beautiful moral lessons ever imparted to man. They are entitled, each and all of them, to be respected and loved for themselves alone, and not as stepping stones to something else.

The following is a brief account of the York Rite degrees:

Symbolic Degrees . . Blue Lodge

The Entered Apprentice is a bearer of burdens, the Fellowcraft a skilled workman, and the Master Mason a director of the work.

THE ENTERED APPRENTICE is taught symbolically to labor upon the building of King Solomon's Temple, to subdue his passions, and improve himself in **Masonry**.

THE FELLOWCRAFT is carefully instructed in the principles of Geometry, and the Orders of Architecture.

THE MASTER MASON is taught the important lessons governing his conduct in the world and towards others.

Capitular Degrees . . Chapter

MARK MASTER. The work on the Temple is continued as in the preceding degrees of the Blue Lodge. The candidate represents one of the workmen whose custom it was to have their work inspected at the end of each week. He presents a piece of work whose value is not appreciated at first, but later becomes "the head of the Corner." An important lesson is then taught . . . that we should never claim for ourselves the property of another. The degree stresses the dignity of labor, that all must work and receive wages according to their deserts.

PAST MASTER. This degree begins the preparation for the Holy Royal Arch. The candidate is taught that he must first learn to obey before he can learn to rule, and that he must learn to govern himself before he can govern others.

MOST EXCELLENT MASTER. In this degree King Solomon's Temple is at last completed and dedicated with imposing ceremonies to the service of the Most High God. King Solomon offers a sublime invocation, and fire comes down from Heaven and consumes the burnt offerings and sacrifices. The brethren rejoice that their labor is ended, lay aside their aprons, are greeted as Most Excellent Masters, and receive their reward. This ends the cycle of degrees having to do with the erection of King Solomon's Temple.

HOLY ROYAL ARCH. The candidates, three in number, witness the burning bush where Moses was given the command to return to Egypt and lead forth the children of Israel from bondage, and where God imparted to him the Ineffable Name. They then witness the destruction of the beautiful Temple erected by King Solomon and carried away as captives to Babylon. After 70 years in bondage, they are permitted to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the House of the Lord. On arriving, they find themselves in the midst of ruins, make themselves known to the Grand Council. Joshua, Zerrubbabel and Haggai set to work to remove the rubbish of the old Temple in order to lay the foundations of the new. Amidst these ruins they make many valuable discoveries which had lain buried in darkness for ages, and which complete the knowledge gained in the Symbolic degrees.

Cryptic Degrees . . Council

ROYAL MASTER. In this degree Hiram Abif is alive again, and imparts to the candidate the sublime teachings of useful labor on earth and a worthy end of life. The tragedy of his untimely death is again brought forward, with the great loss suffered by the craft.

SELECT MASTER. In this degree we have dramatized one of the incidents that occurred during the building of the Temple. It is closely connected with the Holy Royal Arch degree, and in fact it affords the explanation needed for its perfect understanding. It is highly dramatic and of great interest.

SUPEREXCELLENT MASTER. This degree has no connection either in history or Symbolism with the Royal or Select Masters degrees. It refers to circumstances that occurred during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuzaradan, commander of the Army of the King of Babylon, and the ceremonies are intended to represent the final destruction of the Temple and the carrying away of the captive Jews to Babylon as exemplified in the Holy Royal Arch degree.

Chivalric Degrees . . Commandery

ORDER OF THE RED CROSS. Our story goes back to the period of the Holy Royal Arch. In the reign of King Darius, when the Jews were returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, a grand council was convened. Zerrubbabel participated in this council, represented by the candidate, and offered his services to travel to the Persian court and remind the King of his former promise to aid in the work. When Zerrubbabel's turn came he proclaimed **THE ALMIGHTY FORCE OF TRUTH.**

The King was so pleased that he granted Zerrubbabel's request and founded a new order upon **TRUTH.** This is a proper preparation for the Order of the Temple.

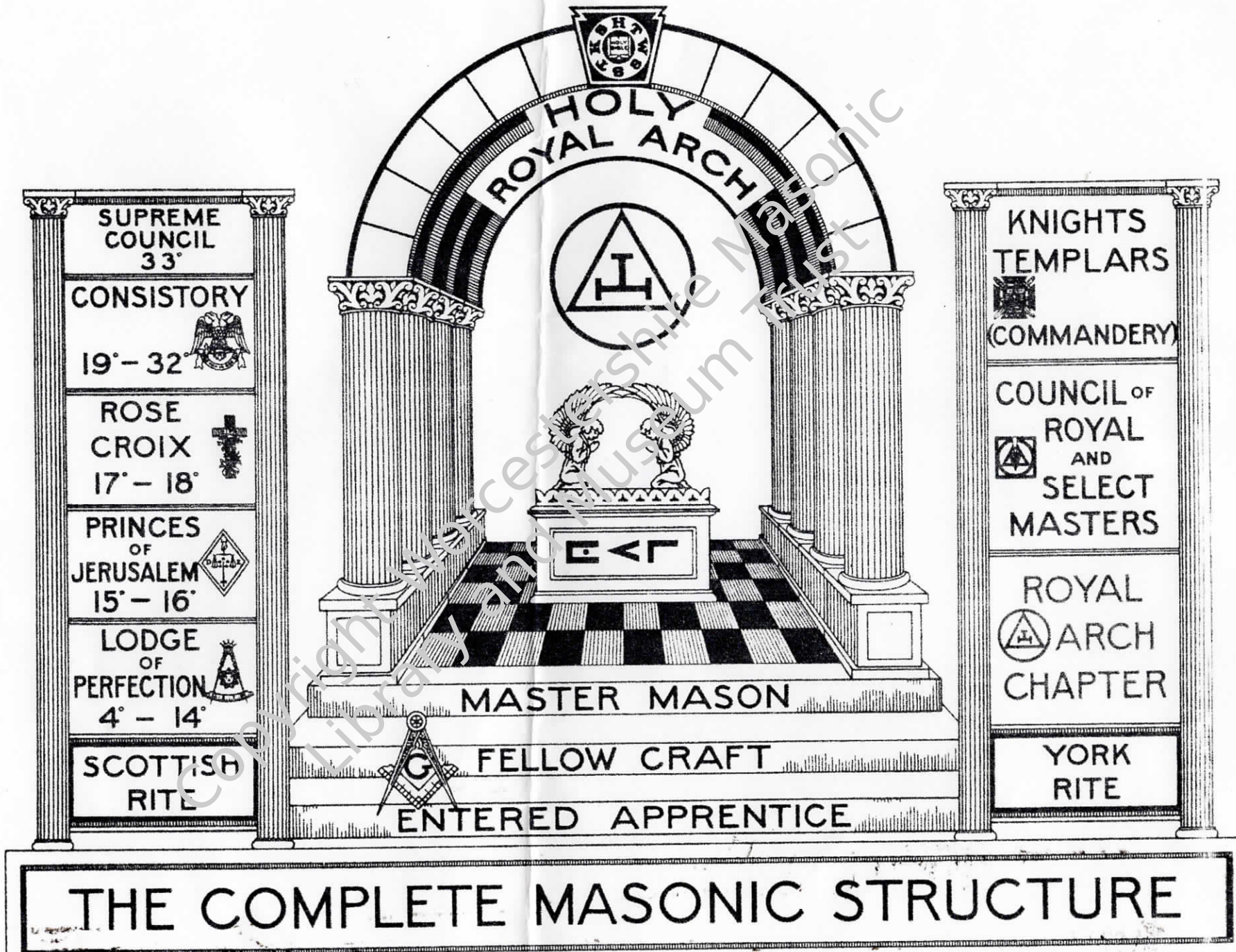
Here we bid farewell to all the degrees having to do with the building of King Solomon's Temple, its destruction and the rebuilding of the city and temple, and go forward to the period of the Crusades when the Orders of Knighthood were formed to recover the Holy Sepulcher and to protect the pilgrims who went to visit its sacred shrines.

KNIGHTS OF MALTA AND MEDITERRANEAN PASS. The members represent soldiers of the Cross, and the Order is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. The candidate humbly solicits to be admitted to the privilege of the Mediterranean Pass to enable him to safely undertake a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulcher, and also to be enrolled as a Knight of Malta.

The ceremonies of the Pass degree refer to the shipwreck of Saint Paul upon the island of Melita or Malta, and the viper that came out of the fire and clung to his hand, as related in the Acts of the Apostles.

ORDER OF TEMPLE. We now approach one of the grandest and most impressive degrees in all Masonry, the true capstone of the York Rite. The candidate represents a knight of the period that succeeded the Crusades, who had made a vow to visit the Holy Sepulcher, and seeks admission into the ranks of the Templars, the better to fulfill that vow. As a trial of his worthiness there is enjoined upon him seven years of preparation, beginning with an unarmed pilgrimage in the direction of the Holy Shrine. After having served six years of this preparation he is commanded to devote the remaining year of preparation to penance as a trial of faith and humility. Beautiful lessons of the death and ascension of our Blessed Saviour are inculcated, and the candidate is at last received into full fellowship, in the most solemn manner.

The ancient Order of the Temple was suppressed, its members dispersed, and the warlike spirit of the Order has passed away; but there remains a spirit of refined and moral Chivalry which enjoins the members to be ever ready to defend the weak, the innocent, the helpless and the oppressed, and at last to be greeted as Brethren, and received into the "widely extended arms of the blessed Emmanuel."



THE COMPLETE MASONIC STRUCTURE