

THE CRYPTIC FREEMASON

THE ORIGIN OF THE CRYPTIC DEGREES

MONITORS

PART 7 BY RICHARD A. EPPLER, EDITOR

In the early and mid nineteenth century, the use of Monitors - books that taught the Masonic ritual in general, and the lectures in particular - was another way in which Masonry and its rituals spread across the growing United States.

Around 1795 a printer in Albany, NY by the name of Thomas Smith Webb obtained from England a copy of William Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry* and of the then well-known expose *Jachin and Boaz*. With these he and a few of his friends rearranged and elaborated the succession of the several degrees and orders of the Lodge, Chapter, and Commandery, especially those of the Chapter, into the sequence and format currently used with only minor variations by almost all jurisdictions in the United States (Pennsylvania excepted). Brother Webb then published his monitor.

Moving to Providence, RI shortly thereafter, Brother Webb opened a school where he taught his version of the ritual to the several traveling lecturers, as was discussed in the Summer 2011 issue. The "favorite pupil and successor" of Thomas Smith Webb was Jeremy Ladd Cross. After several years as a traveling lecturer, Cross in 1818 began planning a Monitor patterned after Webb's, but with pictures. Settling in New Haven, CT he worked with the engraver Amos Doolittle in drafting designs for the emblems to be included in his monitor

Dr. Albert G. Mackey, the great Masonic authority and scholar of the mid nineteenth century says of the Monitor put out by Cross that it was, "in nearly all its parts, a mere transcript of the Monitor of Webb, the first edition of which was published in 1797. Webb, it is true, took the same liberty with Preston, from whose Monitor *Illustrations of Masonry* he borrowed largely. The engraving of the emblems constituted, however, an entirely new and original feature in the Hieroglyphic Chart, and as furnishing aids to the memory, rendered the book of Cross at once very popular; so much so, indeed, that, for a long time it almost superseded that of Webb."

The first edition of the *True Masonic Chart or Hieroglyphic Monitor* came off the press in 1819, but proved such a success that Cross himself put out as many as twelve editions, while with the expiration or sale of the copyright and death of the originator, many more appeared with modifications by the numerous "co-authors".

The principal addition to the text of the *True Masonic Chart or Hieroglyphic Monitor* was the inclusion of a discussion of the two Cryptic Degrees Royal Master and Select Master. What follows is Cross's description of those degrees.



ROYAL MASTER'S DEGREE

This degree cannot legally be conferred on any but Royal Arch Masons, who have taken all the preceding degrees; and is a preparatory degree to that of the 'Select Master's'. Although it is short, yet it contains some valuable information, and is intimately connected with the degree of Select Master. It also enables us with ease and facility to examine the privileges of others to this degree; while at the same time, proves ourselves.

The following passages of Scripture, etc., are considered to be appropriate to this degree.

1 KINGS VII. 48-50, AND 40.

And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the Lord: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shew-bread was; and the candlesticks of pure gold; five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle; with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold; and the bowls, and the snuffers, and basins, and the spoons, and the censers, of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place,

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and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the Temple. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work, that he had made King Solomon, for the house of the Lord.

REV. XXII. 12-14.

And behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

1 KINGS VI. 27.

And he set the cherubims within the inner house; and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims, so that the wing of the one touched the one wall; and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall; and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house.

VARIATION on EXODUS 25

The Ark, called the glory of Israel, which was seated in the middle of the holy place, under the wings of the cherubims, was a small chest or coffer, three feet nine inches long, two feet three inches wide, and three feet three inches high. It was made of wood, excepting only the mercy seat, but overlaid with gold both inside and out. It had a ledge of gold surrounding it at the top, into which the cover, called the mercy seat, was let in. The mercy seat was of solid gold, the thickness of an hand's breadth: at the two ends of it were two cherubims, looking inwards towards each other, with their wings expanded; which embracing the whole circumference of the mercy seat, they met on each side, in the middle; all of which the Rabbins say was made out of the same mass, without any soldering of parts.

Here the Shekinah or Divine Presence rested, and was visible in the appearance of a cloud over it. From hence the Bathkoll issued, and gave answers when God was consulted. And hence it is, that God is said in the Scripture, to dwell between the cherubims; that is, between the cherubims on the mercy seat,

because there was the seat or throne of the visible appearance of his glory among them.

SELECT MASTER'S DEGREE

This degree is the summit and perfection of ancient Masonry; and without which the history of the Royal Arch Degree cannot be complete. It rationally accounts for the concealment and preservation of those essentials of the craft, which were brought to light at the erection of the second Temple; and which lay concealed from the Masonic eye for four hundred and seventy years.

Many particulars relative to those few, who were selected for their superior skill, to complete an important part of King Solomon's Temple, are explained.

And here too is exemplified an instance of *justice* and *mercy* by our ancient patron, towards one of the craft, who was led to disobey his commands, by an over *zealous* attachment for the institution. It ends with a description of a particular circumstance, which characterizes this degree.

The following Psalm is read at opening:

PSALM LXXXVII.

His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon, to them that know me. Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah. As well the singers, as the players on instruments, shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

The following passages of Scripture are introduced and explained:

1 KINGS IV. 1, 5 AND 6.

So king Solomon was king over all Israel. Azariah, the son of Nathan, was over the officers; and Zabud,

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the son of Nathan, was principal officer, and the king's friend; and Ahishar was over the household; and Adoniram, the son of Abda, was over the tribute.

1 KINGS V. 17, 18.

And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

1 KINGS VIII. 13, 14.

And King Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow's son, of the tribe of Naphtali; and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker of brass; and he was filled with wisdom and understanding, and cunning, to work all works in brass.

EZEKIEL XXVII 9.

The ancients of Gebal, and the wise men thereof, were in thee thy calkers: all the ships of the sea, with their mariners, were in thee, to occupy thy merchandise.

DEUTERONOMY XXXI. 24-26.

And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

EXODUS XVI. 33, 34.

And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony to be kept.

NUMBERS XVII. 10.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token.

NUMBERS VII. 89.

And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation, to speak with him, then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat, that was upon the ark of the testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him.

EXODUS XXV. 40.

And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was sheaved thee in the mount.

CHARGE TO A SELECT MASTER

Companion—

Having attained to this degree, you have passed the *circle of perfection* in ancient Masonry. In the capacity of Select Master, you must be sensible that your obligations are increased in proportion to your privileges. Let it be your constant care to prove yourself worthy of the confidence reposed in you, and of the high honor conferred upon you, in admitting you to this Select Degree. Let uprightness and integrity attend your steps; let Justice and Mercy mark your conduct; let fervency and zeal stimulate you in the discharge of the various duties incumbent upon you; but suffer not an idle or impertinent curiosity to lead you astray, or betray you into danger. Be deaf to every insinuation which would have a tendency to weaken your resolution, or tempt you to an act of disobedience. Be voluntarily dumb and blind, when the exercise of those faculties would endanger the peace of your mind, or the probity of your conduct: and let silence and secrecy, those cardinal virtues of a Select Master, on all necessary occasions, be scrupulously observed. By a steady adherence to the important instructions contained in this degree, you will merit the approbation of the select number with whom you are associated, and will enjoy the high satisfaction of having acted well your part in the important enterprise in which you are engaged; and after having wrought your regular hours, may you be admitted to participate in all the privileges of a Select Master.



General Grand Council of
Cryptic Masons International
PO Box 332, Meridian, ID 83680-0332

Address Service Requested

GENERAL GRAND ELECTED OFFICERS 2011-2014

General Grand Master

George C. Sellars
25159 S. Magdalena, Harrison Twp., MI 48045
gsellarsggci@aol.com
586-791-3009

Deputy General Grand Master

Lawrence (Larry) O. Weaver
19433 S. Prospector Ter., Oregon City, OR 95045
dggm@ggccmi.org

General Grand Principal Conductor of the Work

Milton S. (Sid) Roberts
3736 Pleasant Hill Road Kelso, WA 98626-9721
ggpcw@ggccmi.org

General Grand Treasurer

Charles L. Hollinger
125 Angelo Road SE, Palm Bay, FL 32909-3654
ggt@ggccmi.org
517-676-2172

General Grand Recorder

David A. Grindle
PO Box 332, Meridian, ID 83680-0332
208-870-8397
ggr@ggccmi.org

~ Notice ~

I hope you are enjoying the contents of the magazine. If you have any suggestions for topics you would like to read, and/or who you would like to hear from, please let me know.

I also encourage you to submit articles for inclusion in future issues. In particular, I am looking for articles from the Southern or Western jurisdictions where I have fewer personal contacts.

Dr. Richard A. Eppler, editor
400 Cedar Lane
Cheshire, CT 06410-2222
203-271-2211
EpplerAsc@aol.com

Send Address Changes, Subscriptions, Etc. to
General Grand Recorder
David A. Grindle
PO Box 332, Meridian, ID 83680-0332
ggr@ggccmi.org

Cryptic Masonic Supplier
Lapel Pins & More, Inc.
c/o Sid Leluan
2202 N. Country Club Rd
Tucson, AZ 85716