

THE INVESTITURE



The investiture of the candidate, and his two companions with the white robe clearly indicates that they have been received into Heaven. We have only to call to mind certain phrases in the bible concerning those who are clothed in white raiment to perceive this fact. It should be noted, however, that the whole investiture is in the hands of Z., therein differing from what takes place in the Craft, where it is the S.W., who represents the Soul, who invests the candidate.. The S.W. did it in the Craft degrees, which deal with life on earth, because while in the flesh progress must be registered by the Soul, but here it is the Spirit who performs this task. After the sublime symbolism of the white robes of Heaven it must be confessed we return to earth somewhat abruptly when the candidate, is invested with the RA. apron and sash. The meaning of the colours of this regalia are fairly adequately explained in the ceremony and need not be dealt with here, but we might mention that the border consists of triangles, a clear reference to the triune nature of the Supreme Being and of Man, as represented by the two colours.

The regalia has, however, on closer investigation something which truly indicates that it is part of "The livery of Heaven," for within a triangle, where the sash is joined, is a triple tau, which is the sign of the saved. It has, moreover, another esoteric meaning. It will be remembered that in the Craft our manner of approaching made a tau cross in each degree, which, as indicated in my Masonic Handbooks, teaches us that we must trample under foot our animal passions, for the tau cross is an emblem of the creative power in man, and therefore of his animal passions. It was for this reason that the old mediaeval theologians when pointing to a picture of the crucifixion would say that Christ was crucified on the cross of our passions. But the tau cross has a higher side as well as a lower, for it denotes the creative power in God, and thus the triple tau is a fit emblem of the creative power of the Trinity.

As depicted on our sash the triple tau denotes the perfect man who has united the creative power of body, soul and spirit within the triangle of the Divine and has dedicated them to the Holy Trinity.

The Apron

The present form of the RA. Apron is comparatively recent and no doubt came into existence some time after 1818. As far back as we can trace the RA. before that date the main characteristic of its Apron was a picture of a big arch supported on two column, with the keystone specially indicated in some way. The earliest apron, whose exact date is uncertain, but which must be very early 18th Century work, is one to be seen in the library of Grand Lodge and also illustrated in "Masonic Emblems and Jewels," by W. Hammond. Fig. 16in. black and white.

It is formed of an entire leather skin, and the flap is merely the skin of the neck of the animal. The thongs which fasten the apron round the body were attached to the fore legs of the animal. Such an apron would reach down almost to the ankle, and this one is ornamented, very roughly, with pink ribbon which forms the following design. (1) An arch with keystone, resting on two pillars which stand on a flight of steps. (2) Within the arch a circle, within which is a smaller circle, and inside that an equilateral triangle.

The most interesting feature about this peculiar inner design is that the outer and inner circles are joined by three perpendicular lines, which are placed at irregular intervals, and which when measured up are found to fall into three segments in the following proportion:- 3, 4, and 5. The significance of this will not be clear to an ordinary speculative mason, but to those who are members of an Operative Lodge the discovery will be most illuminating. A few Operative Lodges still survive in England, and although many features of their ritual are similar to those in use among the Speculative', there are also some remarkable differences, some of which appear to have been retained by the Operatives whilst they have become lost to the Speculative.

In the Middle Ages there were two great groups of masons; the Freemasons, who were descended from the Commacine Masons and from whom subsequently modern speculative freemasonry evolved, and the Guild masons, who were much humbler folk than were the Freemasons. The Freemasons, as their name implies, were free to work in any part of the country, and their speciality was ecclesiastical buildings, whereas the Guild masons were restricted to the particular town in which their Lodge met. They could neither travel from it nor work outside it. The Operative Lodges which survive to-day appear to be descendants of these Guild masons. They have no Grand Lodge but each Lodge is entirely independent and is ruled by three Grand Master mason. The first, representing King Solomon, holds a rod or wand five feet high. The second, who represents King Hiram, holds a rod four feet high, and the third, who represents H.A.B., and once a year enacts the story of his great predecessor and namesake, holds a rod three feet high. The use of these three rods was an ancient Operative secret, for by means of them a right angled triangle could be made, and it was to acquire this secret that the conspirators laid their plans. We thus see that the peculiar emblem on this old RA. Apron indicates that there was a similar Operative secret connected with the circle, for if straightened out these segments of the circumference would form the three rods. The equilateral triangle within the inner circle clearly indicates the triune nature of the Supreme Being, while the proportions 3, 4, 5, together make up the well known mystical and astrological 12, i.e., the number of the Signs of the Zodiac, which as we have already seen plays such an important part in the RA. ritual. Thus this emblem inside the arch represents in Geometrical symbolism the principal features discovered in the RA. V...t as described in the ritual, or in other words the triangle on the altar surrounded by a frieze on which were the twelve signs of the Zodiac, as we still find described in the Scotch form of the RA.

The arch, right through the 18th century, continued to be the characteristic emblem of RA. masonry. For example, an old Apron of the Ancients now in Grand Lodge library and illustrated on plate 8 in colour, opposite page 40 in "Masonic Emblems and Jewels," by Hammond, shows the Arch with the capstone removed, and the three Principals, who are clad in what is supposed to be the Jewish costume for a King, a Priest and a Prophet. This apron contains symbols of other degrees, including the Mark, the Cryptic and the Royal Ark Mariner. Even as late as 1813 the Arch was used to adorn RA. aprons, as is shown by a third example in Grand Lodge library. (Illustration No. 235 in black and white in the above book.) In this example the keystone has not been removed. A feature of interest in this apron is the presence of a rod around which is entwined a snake. This has been sometimes explained as Aaron's rod which budded, but the snake indicates that it is really Moses' rod which became a serpent when he threw it down before Pharaoh. Its presence on an apron of 1813 is important, as this incident is connected in a peculiar way with the Passing of the Veils, once an integral part of the RA. ceremony, which still exists in Scotland and America.

Another apron shows the three Principals in full regalia as Prophet, Priest and King, and the three Sojs. clad in white surplices and college mortar boards, all beneath a broken arch. The edging round this apron is dark blue, light blue and red, arranged as they still are on Grand Chapter clothing.

These various aprons are of great interest as indicating further incidents in the ceremony and show that despite the fact that many alterations were made between 1813 and 1840 the main lines of our ceremony are really old. It must be confessed that in many ways these old aprons are more interesting than the one we have now adopted.

The Jewel

The present RA. jewel is a fine piece of symbolism, but it also dates from after the Union. In Grand Lodge library there is quite a large collection of old RA. jewels of the 18th century, the chief motif in which is the Arch itself, and this is the form of the jewel still used in Scotland.

Our own jewel has two triangles within a circle, the latter being the emblem of the Infinite. The triangle with its point downwards represents the Preservative aspect of God, while the other triangle represents fire, and the destructive aspect. The point or eye at the centre is the creative aspect, an aspect which is stressed by the fact that usually the point has been expanded into a Sun. The Sun or point is placed in the middle of a small triangle which itself is of course the emblem of the triune nature of the Supreme Being, and from the Sun depends a pair of compasses between whose legs is a ball, representing the earth. The triple tau which is at the bottom of the jewel has already been adequately explained earlier in the book in connection with the sash. It may be fitly regarded as an emblem of the triune nature of man, refined and spiritualised.

The double triangle with the small one at the centre produce three lesser, three greater and a central triangle, corresponding with the lights and the triangle on the altar, thus constituting seven in all. The three lesser represent the triune nature of man, and their bases are formed by the sides of the triangle of water, the Preserver's triangle, whose point is downwards, but the three greater are based, not on the sides of the triangle of fire, but on those of the central one, the triangle of the sun. These represent the triune nature of God in Manifestation.

The inner triangle proclaims the essential unity of God and His triune nature when un-manifested. The sides of these triangles, after omitting duplications, amount to fifteen, and the full significance of the Jewel from the Hindoo standpoint becomes clear. The Hindoo's use this symbol; placing in the centre the figure of Surya, the Sun, but use a human form instead of the symbol seen in our jewel.

According to their philosophy there are fifteen planes of existence, the lowest being life on earth, and the highest union with God. Their sacred number is seven, for the following reason:- The Supreme Source of All is Paramatma, whose emblem is a circle to indicate His eternal and all- embracing character, while His essential unity is represented by the point at the centre, which in our jewel is represented by the sun. In order to manifest Himself the point becomes two lines (Our compasses); two persons, male and female; Nara and Nari; - and from them Viraji, the Word, the Son of God, is born. By this they mean Man who contains the Divine Spark within him, and who on our jewel is represented by the terrestrial globe. These form the initial and as yet un-manifested triad - the inner triangle. In order to manifest Himself in the material world, Nara becomes Brahma, or the Eastern triangle; Viraji becomes Vishnu, or the Southern triangle;- in our jewel the one which points downwards,- while Nari becomes Shiva, the Destroyer;- the Western triangle.

It will be noticed that the side of the central triangle which represents Viraji forms the base of the triangle of Him when manifested as Vishnu. The three lesser triangles whose bases are formed by portions of the triangles of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are planes of existence outside, yet still attached to God in manifestation.

Thus our jewel is indeed a key to a high philosophy concerning the nature of God, and has moreover a striking similarity to the teaching of the Kabala with its ten Sephiroth. These are represented by the nine sides of the Divine Triangles and the point at the centre, which by the Kabalist is called Kether, the Crown. Among them Nari is called Shekinah, and Viraji, Messias, the King.

I must warn my Companions, however, that the modern RA. jewel is often carelessly made, and the central triangle is at times difficult to trace, but in the description of the jewel in the ritual there are diagrams which render it perfectly clear. The double triangle within the circle was sacred to many other races besides the Jews and Hindoo's, and has been discovered depicted on the ruins of temples in Egypt, Babylonia, Mexico and Rome.

Although we have accounted for the four great triangles what of the three lesser ones? These represent Man; particularly in the stages of spiritual evolution represented by the three degrees of the Craft, or if we prefer it, by the three most important incidents in his career, - birth, life and death. Let us then examine these three lesser triangles somewhat closely, for we shall find that the sides mark the path of the candidate through the Craft degrees.

He starts from the N. W. corner in darkness, the pre-natal darkness of physical and also of spiritual birth. According to the old rituals he brought with him a P.W., which is no longer given in English Lodges, but in Ireland is the "T. of G. R.". He is entrusted with the s...s at the N.E. corner, i.e., the point where the Divine triangle of the Creator touches that of the EA.

When he wishes to pass the chair of Brahma, represented by the Master, the latter gives him a new P.W., here depicted by the continuation of the N.E. side of the triangle of the aspiring soul, which like a spark of fire goes ever upwards.

He obtains the S . . .s of the 2°, at the S. E. corner of this triangle, but before he can pass the Master, who here represents Vishnu, the Lord of Life, he receives yet another P.W..

In the 3° he receives certain substituted s..s, and, according to tradition, the place in which a M.M. should sit in Lodge is the S.W.. If later he desires to pass on once more to a higher degree, be it IM or RA., the Master, representing Shiva, will not let him pass until he has entrusted him once more with a P.W. and a P.G. to permit him to pass the intersections of the lines the crossing of which brings him once more to the N. W..

Thus by a careful study of our RA. jewel we perceive that it depicts the manner in which the candidate is led from Light to still more Light. From the N. W. corner of the RA. he passes on to the circle which he circumambulates at the beginning of the RA. ceremony, and having completed the circle plunges straight down into the centre, through the crown of the vault (the point of the inner triangle which is directly under the N., the place of darkness), until he reaches the true centre.

Before closing this chapter let me draw the attention of my readers to the fact that the globe between the arms of the compasses is divided by the base of the Divine triangle, thus emphasising the fact that not only is man part material and part spiritual, but that part of his true nature is never manifested while he is in the flesh.

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