

THE ROYAL ARCH JEWEL

By: E.Comp. A.D. Matthews PPDepGSwdB

Issue 4:- 14th October 2011

INTRODUCTION

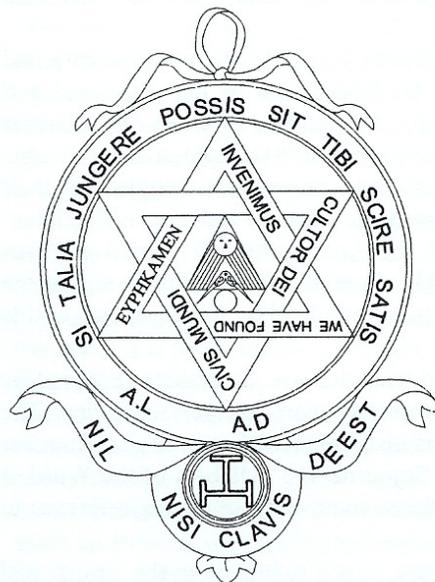
At his Exaltation a Royal Arch Mason is rewarded with the jewel of the order as “a mark of our entire approbation” It is an essential part of the clothing of every Companion and Rule No. 85 of the Royal Arch Regulations directs that it shall be worn on the left breast, taking precedence over all other Masonic jewels. It is to be worn not only within Royal Arch chapters, but also in Craft Lodges as a visible sign of the indissoluble link between the Royal Arch and Craft masonry.

The jewel is of gold and comprises two interlaced equilateral triangles, circumscribed by two concentric circles. The ribbon of the jewel is tri-coloured for Grand Superintendents and Grand Officers (including Provincial Grand Officers and of London Grand Rank), crimson for those Companions who have been installed as Principals and white for all Companions who have not been installed.

The jewel is particularly important because it symbolises, in a condensed form, what Freemasonry teaches and as such, is well worth studying.



Figure 1 - The Royal Arch Jewel



Obverse



Reverse

An explanation of the Royal Arch Jewel is given in Aldersgate Ritual by E.Comp. Shepherd-Jones, OBE, PAGSoj. A paper by Christopher Powell also provides an excellent explanation of the jewel and its history¹⁰. I have drawn on both explanations, in this paper but also try to develop the themes and add further explanation.

GENERAL DESIGN AND SYMBOLISM OF THE JEWEL

The design of the Jewel of the Royal Arch mason and comprises two interlaced equilateral triangles or hexalpha, constituting the symbol known as the Shield of David or the Seal of Solomon, set within two concentric circles of gold, with the sun in the centre. The inner circle denotes the Deity and His Omnipresence and the outer circle Eternity. Hence, by this jewel, the Royal Arch Mason professes his separation from the unholy and profane, his reverence for God, and his belief in the future and eternal life.

The current design originates from the Premier Grand Lodge (the Moderns), from 1766 or earlier. The design of the Antients' jewel, showing an arch with the keystone removed, under which was an altar standing on a tessellated pavement, became redundant after the Union.¹⁰

Below the concentric circles and a scroll is what appears to be a triple Tau . The Tau is the mark mentioned by Ezekiel (ix, 4), to distinguish the innocent and those who returned unhurt from battle. However the original on the jewel comprised the letter **T** placed above the letter **H**, signifying *Templum Die in Hierosolym*, the Temple of God in Jerusalem, whereby the wearer acknowledges himself as a servant of the true God, who had there established His worship, and to whose service that glorious temple was erected. The Royal Arch symbol, therefore, reminds us of our constant duty to worship and serve the T.A.L.G.M.H.

The hermetic **T** was a most ancient hieroglyphical representation of the Deity and consequently the triple tau  adopted as the emblem of Royal Arch Masonry in 1832 denotes His triunessence. In geometric value it contains eight right angles, two on each of the exterior lines and two at the point of union in the centre.

Words are inscribed within the concentric circles, on the sides of the two equilateral triangles and on the scroll. I shall describe these words later in this paper.

The equilateral triangle was much revered by ancient nations as containing the greatest and most abstruse mysteries, and as a symbol of God, denoting a Triad of Intelligence, a Triad of Deity and a Triune God. Moreover, the Tetragrammaton, or incommunicable name was written by the Jews in a triangular form. The initial letter denoted the thought, the idea of God, a ray of light too transcendent to be contemplated by mortal eye. This name of God, the Tetragrammaton, could not be more aptly placed than in the symbol, or triangle, itself. So that while this sacred emblem was deservedly revered by the Jews, both it and the double triangle itself are adopted as Royal Arch symbols.

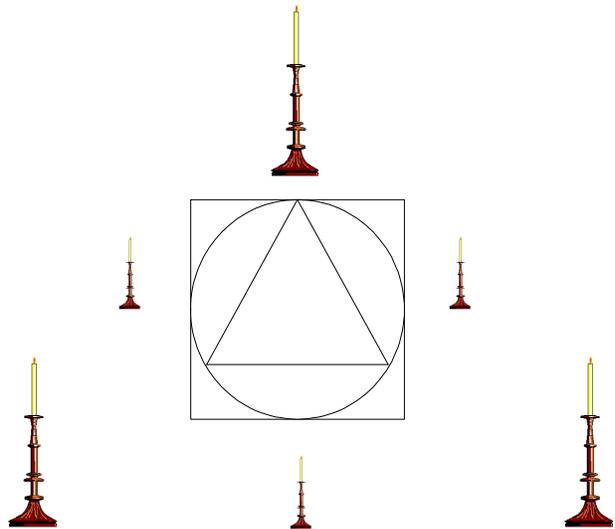
The interlaced equilateral triangles adopted as a Royal Arch symbol portrays the duality of Masonry with its comprehensive teaching and represents the dynamic interweaving of heaven and earth; the visible and invisible. It represents the twofold nature of man, spiritual and material. This is exemplified at the opening and closing of every Royal Arch Chapter when the Principals, themselves standing in the form of a triangle, make a triangle with their left hands on which the Volume of Sacred Law is placed, and another triangle with their right hands placed on the Volume of Sacred Law, thus connecting the material with the spiritual.

Before the Union, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Freemasonry was essentially Christian, both in character and in ritual and the Royal Arch was especially so, for the Royal Arch is wholly spiritual.

The interlaced triangles were an emblem adopted by the early Christians for One who was the perfect man and perfect divine. The three Taus, whose union forms the triple Tau, was a reference to the Trinity.

The important symbolism of the Interlaced Triangles relates to the system of threes: - three principles, three sojourners, three lesser lights and three greater lights interlaced around the double cube altar, three sets of three syllable words and many others, some of them having reference to the Trinity. In other words, the interlaced triangles represent the basis of Royal Arch symbolism, the triangle.

Figure 2 - The Lesser and Greater Lights



These interlaced triangles are further represented by the positions of the three lesser and three greater lights around the altar of a Royal Arch Chapter.

The symbology of these lights is explained in an old Royal Arch manuscript thus:

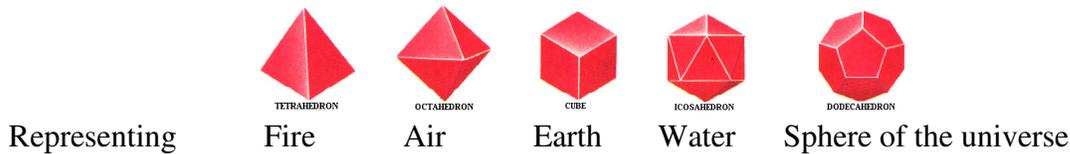
“The three Lesser represent that moral and religious light to be drawn from the law and the prophets; the three Greater represent the great mystery of the Trinity, which every prudent three will rather make the subject of his private meditation than his public converse.”

Some rituals add that the four equilateral triangles formed by the interlaced triangles are “emblematical of the four point or division of Masonry, viz., Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason and Holy Royal Arch.”

With regard to the arrangement of the three lesser and three greater lights, formed in two interlaced triangles, a previous version of the Address of the Second Chair quoted:

“It also serves to illustrate the jewel worn by the Comps. (points to jewel), which by its intersections, forms a given number of angles; these may be taken in five several combinations and when reduced to their amount in right angles, will be found equal to the five regular Platonic bodies, which represent the four elements and the sphere of the universe.”

Figure 3 - The Five Regular Platonic Bodies



These are called regular bodies because all the sides in any one of the bodies are exactly equal to the other sides.

Using the Tau as a key it is possible to resolve the triangles created on the jewel into an equivalent number of equilateral triangles having the sum of their angles numerically equivalent to 8, 16, 24, 40 and 72 right angles, representing respectively:

Fire: the Tetrahedron, having 4 equal and equilateral triangles with the equivalent of 8 right angles and one triple Tau.

Air: the Octahedron, having 8 equal and equilateral triangles with the equivalent of 16 right angles and two triple Tau.

Earth: the Cube, having 6 equal squares with 24 right angles and three triple Tau.

Water: the Icosahedron, having 20 equal and equilateral triangles with the equivalent of 40 right angles and five triple Tau.

Sphere of the Universe: the Dodecahedron, having 12 equal and equilateral pentagons with the equivalent of 72 right angles and nine triple Tau.

Having worked through the derivation of the above angular resolutions my personal impression is that the proof is very contrived and it is difficult to see a realistic connection between the geometry of the jewel and the equivalent number of right angles contained within the platonic bodies. However, the important significance of the two interlaced triangles is that they symbolise the whole of God's creation, represented by the five regular platonic bodies.

OBVERSE OF THE JEWEL

Returning to the jewel itself, at the bottom of the obverse is a scroll bearing the words: "Nil nisi clavis deest", "**Nothing is wanting but the key**". The inscription between the two concentric circles is: "Si talia jungere possis sit tibi scire satis," meaning "**If thou canst understand what follows thou knowest enough.**" implying that we would then understand the meaning of the Holy Royal Arch.

Then we come to what forms the crux of the Jewel. On the interlaced triangles we have again a double triad.

The triangle with the apex pointing upwards is the spiritual triangle and the inscription on the base is '**We have found**', which is repeated in Greek, "Eypfkamen" and again in Latin "Invenimus," on the sides of the triangle.

On the material triangle, i.e. the triangle with the apex pointing downwards, the base is left blank and on the two sides is "Cultor Dei, Civis Mundi," loosely translated as "**The worship of God, O citizen of the world**"

Connecting the inscription "Invenimus" on the spiritual triangle with "Cultor Dei, Civis Mundi" on the on the material triangle we have a loose translation of the sentence thus formed as "**We have found the worship of God, O citizen of the world**". Shepherd-Jones, however, disagrees with this loose translation, preferring literal translations of "Cultor" as "worshiper" or "reverencer," rather than "worship."

We thus have two separate inscriptions:

"We have found"

and **"Worshiper (or Reverencer) of God, O citizen of the world,"**

with a vacant space on the material triangle.

When you received your Grand Chapter Certificate there was a vacant space which you were required to fill with your signature, as you did also on the Grand Lodge Certificate. Similarly when you received the Royal Arch Jewel this vacant space on the material triangle should be completed with your name. When this has been inserted then the triad on that triangle will be completed and will read: "John Smith; Cultor Dei; Civis Mundi."

or

“John Smith worshiper of God, O citizen of the world.

By this endorsement the holder of the Jewel makes a statement that he is a worshiper of God, as a citizen of the world. At the same time he subscribes to the wording on the spiritual triangle; “We have found.” These were the words of the three Sojourners when they discovered the lost word in the hidden vault, “Eurekamen inveimus! We have found (it)!” But the Jewel does not tell us what is found, the key is still wanting.

Also within the two concentric circles is the inscription “ • AL AD • ” which refers to Anno Lucis (AL) and Anno Domini (AD). Anno Lucis (AL) is Latin for “*The Year of Light*,” expressing a year that is 4,000 beyond Anno Domini (AD) “*The year of Our Lord*”. James Anderson, in his 1723 “Constitutions”, refers to the 4,000 year-advanced “Anno Lucis” as “The Year of Masonry”. These two dates are recorded on Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter Certificates and here on the Royal Arch Jewel. However, there is not sufficient space on the obverse of the jewel to insert the actual date of exaltation. When we examine the reverse of the jewel we will see that there is a place to insert the date there.

As a digression, I have seen an alternative explanation, emanating from North America, postulating that the two stops in the inscription are intended to make a reader pause and to then consider that the letters actually spell “A LAD.” (The lad being the Royal Arch Mason wearing the jewel). Personally, I discount this, but it is not unusual to see references to North American Masons being “A LAD”.

Within the interlaced triangles on the Jewel there is another triangle, with the sun in the centre, its rays issuing forth at every point. This is not the sun of the Craft, where it is described as a glorious luminary of nature. On the Jewel it is a sun within a triangle, indicating that within the Holy Royal Arch it is regarded as an emblem of the Deity.

Here also we find the perfect emblem of the science of Agriculture pointed out by a pair of compasses issuing from the centre of the sun, and suspending a globe, denoting the earth, and thereby portraying both animal and vegetable creation of the Deity and admonishing us to be careful to perform every operation in its proper season, so that we do not lose the fruits of our labour.

At the bottom of the Jewel, outside the two concentric circles is a small circle, again an emblem of the Deity and of eternity, whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere, denoting His omnipresence and perfection. Within that circle is the Triple Tau , which before the Union referred to the Trinity, but is now stated in the Mystical Lecture as alluding to the Deity.

The Triple Tau signifying T.H. *Templum Hierosolym* the Temple of Jerusalem has, since 1832, been regarded as the part of the badge of a Royal Arch Mason, whereby the wearer acknowledges himself a servant of the true God; who had there established His worship,

and to whose service that glorious Temple was erected. The Royal Arch symbol therefore may aptly recall to our minds our constant duty to offer worship to The Great Elohim; The Most High: The Everlasting: The Almighty God.

Every Companion has three Triple Taus on his Royal Arch clothing; on the Jewel, the sash and the apron, three times three. We can all remember our initiation into Masonry when we were admitted into the Lodge on three k...s given by the Tyler. Those three k...s indicated: "Ask and it shall be given unto you"; "Seek and ye shall find", (to which I shall refer again later), "Knock and it shall be opened unto you"; and those k...s were repeated by us on the shoulder of the Junior Warden and again on the shoulder of the Senior Warden, three times three, forecasting the Holy Royal Arch and its triple triads

The Triple Tau in the Holy Royal Arch. represents the completion of the candidate's spiritual journey in Masonry. His three regular steps in the Craft, each in the form of a Tau, are each separated, even when on a Master's apron. He is brought to the union of those Taus in the Royal Arch and thus led to the Deity.

REVERSE OF THE JEWEL

Let us now consider the remaining inscription on the reverse of the Jewel. Between the two concentric circles we again have a double triad.

Engraved in Latin within the two concentric circles is a double triad:

"Deo, Regi, Fratribus; Honor, Fidelitas, Benevolentia."

These two triads are read conjointly and a literal translation is:

"Deo, Honor" = **To God, honour.**

"Regi, Fidelitas" = **To the King, fidelity.**

"Fratribus, Benevolentia" = **To the Brethren, love.**

This is a version of a quotation found in the First Epistle of St. Peter, Chapter 2, and Verse 17:

"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King."

The inscription is also a translation into Latin of part of the Regius Poem, the most cherished manuscript in possession of Grand Lodge, dating back to the 14th century. The actual lines of the poem, which have been Latinised on the Jewel, are:

"That whoso will con this craft and come to estate
He must love God and holy church algate, (*Deo Honor*)
And to his liege Lord the King
To be true to him over alle thing, (*Regi Fidelitas*)
And thy fellows thou love also

For that the craft will that thou do.” (*Fratribus Benevolentia*)

The remaining inscription on the reverse of the Jewel is on the interlaced triangles and is again a double triad. On the first triangle is “**Concord, Truth, Peace**” and since they are on a triangle pointing upwards they are aspects of God. The First Degree Lecture points out that “**Truth**” is a divine attribute and that “*all his laws are concord*”. “**Peace**” is the “Peace of God that passes all understanding.” This focuses our minds in the knowledge and love of God who is central to the Order of the Royal Arch and the reason why it is called The *Holy* Royal Arch.

On the second triangle the words “**Wisdom, Strength, Beauty**” are inscribed. These refer to the Great Pillars which are said to support a Freemason’s Lodge and are moralised in the First Degree Lecture as:

*“Wisdom to conduct us in all our undertakings. Strength to support us under all difficulties and Beauty to adorn the inward man.”*¹¹

They are further illustrated in the same lecture as:

*“The Universe is the Temple of the Deity whom we serve; Wisdom Strength and Beauty are about His throne as pillars of His works, for His Wisdom is infinite, His Strength omnipotent and Beauty shines through all of the creation in symmetry and order.”*¹¹

At the bottom of the reverse of the jewel is a scroll bearing the word “**Exalted.**” Alongside this on the opposite side of the scroll it is usual to add the date of the exaltation of the wearer, to accompany the name engraved on the obverse side.

RIBBON OF THE JEWEL

For a Companion, the ribbon on which the jewel hangs is white, denoting light. This refers to the lines that the newly exalted Companion reads from the scroll discovered in the vault:

‘and God said, “Let there be light and there was light”’

and from St. John’s Gospel:

“In Him was light, and the light was of men.”

The ribbon of the Principals is of crimson, denoting fire and recalls the story of Moses and the burning bush, encountered at the first veil in the eighteenth century Royal Arch Exaltation Ceremony.

The tri-coloured ribbon for other Excellent Companions is dark blue, scarlet and light blue, denoting the colours of the Temple Veil. For as it says in the Book of Exodus, Chapter 26, verse 31:

“And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple and scarlet and fine twined linen of cunning work.....”

The ceremony of Passing the Veils entered Royal Arch Ritual during the eighteenth century, around the time that the jewel was designed, but is sadly no longer practised in England and Wales, except in Bristol. It is, however, still worked in Scotland, Ireland and the U.S.A. as the Excellent Master Degree, as a preparation for exaltation. In England and Wales the tri-coloured ribbon is all that remains of the degree of Excellent Master.¹⁰

THE ROYAL ARCH ALLEGORY

Our ceremony concerns the rebuilding of King Solomon’s temple and a search for the “Lost Word;” that word lost by the untimely death of our Master Hiram Abif, illustrated by the Third Degree Ceremony in the Craft.

The principal allegory within Masonry is “the search for the Word”, not the S.A.M.N., but the “Word” that has come down to us through the countless ages and always carrying the same meaning – “The Will or Law of God”.

Indeed, this is why we should continue the practice of opening the Volume of Sacred Law in our Lodges at the prologue to the Gospel according to St. John, as was the invariable custom in former times.

St. John Ch.1 vs1: *“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”*

On the obverse of the jewel we had the inscription:

“Nothing is wanting but the key”

But what is the key?

In the eighteenth century a key was a well known Masonic symbol explained in the First Degree Lecture.¹¹ The First Degree Lecture explains the purpose of a key is to unlock a Mason’s invaluable secrets from his heart, hanging by:

“The thread of life, in the passage of utterance”

Connected with the heart as:

“...an index of the mind, it should utter nothing but what the heart truly dictates.”

and composed of:

“No metal, it is the tongue of good report.”

Remember that the design of the jewel was coincident with the ritual being delivered in catechism form. Much of this has now been lost from our normal practice, but is still covered in the formal lectures which are only seldom delivered these days.

It essential, therefore that “the tongue of good report” should indicate that we have put all of our Masonic knowledge into practice in our conduct through life and that we have followed the will of God.¹⁰

Here is the key and the Companion who thinks that he has found the key in the discovery of the Mason Word, T.S.A.M.N.O.T.T.A.L.G.M.H. would do well to remember that the greatest teacher of all said that it is not sufficient to say “Lord! Lord!” but to do the will of God.

Here we have the great allegory of Freemasonry, for the search for the Mason Word means not only the search for the WORD, but more importantly the Will of God and for us to try and fulfil the Will of God.

A plain clue to the meaning of the search was also previously given in the old prayer for the candidate at his exaltation. Instead of

“and may he ever remember that the object of our institution is the welfare of our fellow creatures”,

the words used were

“ever remembering that the object and intent of our institution is obedience to Thy Sacred Laws.”

Here is the key to the allegory which commenced with the second of the three k...s by which we gained admittance into a Masonic Lodge, “Seek and ye shall find,”

The Companion who has found the Word should certainly have his name inserted on the Jewel in the vacant space on the triangle. He should also be able to appreciate the meaning of the inscription between the concentric circles, **“If thou canst understand this thou knowest enough,”** for the Word, the will of God, comprises all the tenets, precepts, and principles of Freemasonry, everything that Masonry teaches.

Happy is the Mason that findeth the Word and getteth understanding. It is the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness.

I am sure Companions that you will agree that the Royal Arch Jewel shows; once again, that the Holy Royal Arch is the climax of Freemasonry.

Masonry is ancient but “In the beginning was the Word” and in it is strength.

References

1. The Jewel of the Order: E.Comp. Shepherd-Jones OBE, PAGSoj, from Aldersgate Ritual.
2. A Short Royal Arch Miscellany: E.Comp. Shepherd-Jones OBE, PAGSoj.
3. The Companion's Jewel of the Royal Arch: Gran Loggia Regolare d'Italia
4. The Royal Arch Jewel: Irish Masonic Jewels
5. The Lectures of the Holy Royal Arch, Lecture II: The University of Bradford
6. Royal Arch Jewel: Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences: Albert C. Mackay M.D.
7. The Symbolism of the Royal Arch Jewel – II: R.E.Comp. Arthur A. Page
8. Freemasons' Book of the Royal Arch: Edward E. Jones, revised by Harry Carr
9. Royal Arch Complete Workings – pre 2002
10. The Royal Arch Jewel – An Explanation. Christopher Powell. (Norman B. Spencer Prize for 2009). Quatuor Correspondence Circle Ltd. 2010.
11. The Lectures of the Three Degrees in Craft Masonry, Third Edition 2000. Ian Allan Lewis Masonic.

A.D. Matthews