The Development of R.A.M. Degrees

Adapted by REC Norman McEvoy from a paper presented by REC. SIR FREDERICK HALSEY

In a recent address delivered in London, Sir Frederick Halsey, D. G. M. of England, and Grand Second Principal of the Grand Chapter, interestingly referred to the development of the Capitular degrees as follows:

"We tell our Exaltees that they are not to consider that they have received a Fourth Degree in Freemasonry, but that they have only completed the Third.
When we look out on Freemasonry of the present day we see that there are a great number of Masonic degrees practiced - outside degrees, as we sometimes term them.

"The Royal Arch differs from them in being recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England.
But at one time the Royal Arch was the Fourth Degree in Freemasonry, and the number four still recurs in the ceremony.
The Third Degree and the Royal Arch are, however, intimately connected. Two hundred and six years ago, when the Grand Lodge was formed, (1717) I think I am correct in saying that neither of them had any existence as distinct ceremonies.

"The square, the level, the plumb rule, themselves, which are the tools of a F. C. are also the jewels worn by the W. M. and his wardens, and seem to suggest to us that the Second Degree was at one time the highest in Freemasonry - and Masonic history confirms this.

"It was not until some time after the Grand Lodge of England was formed in 1717, that we find the least trace of the Third or Master Mason Degree. And not a few lodges in Scotland refused for forty years after their Grand Lodge was formed to have anything to do with the Third Degree

"France, on the other hand, after its Grand Lodge was formed, accepted the Third Degree at once, and proceeded further and the idea of higher degrees for the aristocrats of France was developed.
About the year 1740 certain Excellent Masters, as we may call them, who wore sprigs of acacia on their aprons, took upon themselves the duty of inspecting the lodges to see that the work was correctly done and free from abuses.

"This was the seed from which the various higher degrees were developed and in the confusing of two French words accessois (additions or embellishments to Degrees already existing) and ecossais, (the creation of additional Degrees) this development was fathered on to Scotland, which, as a matter of fact, knew nothing about these degrees, and when they did, objected strongly to them.

"The Scottish Knight became the Fourth Degree, the Knight of the Eagle, the Fifth; the Knight Templar, the Sixth; and the Sublime Illustrious Knight, the Seventh. The Second Knight's Degree was founded on the tradition that three Scottish Crusaders, while they were in the Holy Land, and that, during their tenure there, it is was said they had to hold a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other to ward off the Saracens.

'Those who belong to the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Thirty-three Degrees will know how the Master Mason's Degree was eventually divided into ten degrees.

"The idea, however, of the Royal Arch as a completion of the Third Degree proved popular.

England had then three Sovereign Grand Lodges: the Modern Grand Lodge of 1717; the Ancient Grand Lodge of 1751; and the Old York Lodge, which for some years claimed jurisdiction in the north of England.

"Each of these Grand Lodges allowed Royal Arch Chapters to be formed between the years 1750 and 1770, and they were eventually attached to Craft Lodges.

After 1770 the 'Ancients' and the 'Moderns' both formed Grand Chapters.

In 1817 these two Grand Chapters were taken under the wing of the Craft and all the higher degrees were left severally alone.

"The Grand Lodge of Scotland, which with great caution accepted the Third Degree, has never, I believe, recognized the Royal Arch in the same manner as England.

That degree and others are granted under the jurisdiction of the **Grand Chapter of Scotland**, which has not that intimate connection with Grand Lodge, which we find in England and Germany, after twenty-five years of higher degrees in the eighteenth century, reverted to the three Craft degrees only.

Two attempts were made to introduce the Royal Arch, within their Grand Lodge, but without success.

"What, then, shall we say, are the purposes of Royal Arch Masonry? We may look at the matter in this way: The Third Degree leaves us with a mysterious veil over the prospect of futurity.

The Royal Arch lifts that veil and brings us face to face with eternal realities, the throne of the Great I Am, and assures that there is indeed an eternal left beyond the grave, where we shall get to know the Mysterious Name of the True and Living God Most High.

"The Royal Arch, therefore, is the completion of the Third Degree, and as far as I can see, it includes all the essential teachings which are the subject of the higher degrees.
It is that which calls itself, the **Supreme Degree in Freemasonry."**

Comment
I find it fascinating to note that this paper was written in 1926 and its message is as real today as it was at that time. Why not share this information with brethren whom you know would benefit from exaltation.

Just has this shared with me from the UGLE list serve (United Grand Lodge of England)

Brethren,
I'd like to share with you a unique experience.

On Monday, the 23rd, Holy Land RA Chapter No 10 worked the Mark Master degree in the quarries below the old city of Jerusalem. I was the WMMM and we had delegations from Scotland, Finland, Hungary, Switzerland, the Dist. Mark GL's in Germany and Italy as well as from Greece. I was also the proud father of one of the 8 candidates to be advanced. A word of clarification is necessary here: Israeli RA Supreme Grand Chapter was consecrated by the SGRAC of Scotland in 1969. It was done at the request of RA Chapters already working under SC in Israel under a Scottish District G.RA Chapter erected in 1958. Hence the Israeli system resembles the Scottish one and Mark Masons are advanced in a RA Chapter; there is no Mark Grand Lodge.
These quarries in Jerusalem were closed and forgotten from the 16th century until 1854, when they were accidentally re-discovered. There is documentation of a very brief Masonic meeting in 1868, in which Sir Charles Warren also participated. Two years later a lodge under Canadian Constitution was consecrated there.

For many years it was claimed that these quarries served the hewers of KS's Temple. This is now known to be incorrect. However, Masonic stone gavels were made from its stone after 1920. One of these is in the possession of my mother-lodge. It was donated to a PM of ours by Brig. Kisch back in the 30's.
Kisch was later killed when trying to disarm a field mine in the desert in North Africa in the second WW.
On Monday, when I arrived at the cave I was approached by an archeologist who found half of such a stone-head of a Masonic gavel, with a clear (broken) combination of S&C and "Jerusalem" inscribed on the bottom side. He found that piece just 2 hours before a Masonic meeting was to start, and these are very rare indeed in the last 40 years. Obviously all around me were excited and so was I. The archeologist guessed it to be around 180 years old and they wanted my confirmation. I had to explain why this cannot be true and why most probably it is from the 1920's and not earlier, I'm now trying to help the archeologists date the relic properly.
Not only was it a festive working in a place connected to KST at least by a Masonic legend, but on that very day a Masonic tool was found in the cave there. I thought you'd be interested.
Yours Aye,
Dan Doron

Comment Last night this third page was only 1/3 rd filled and I was looking for something suitable to complete the page. This morning I opened my email are here it is. Thank you GOD.

Request

I am constantly looking for suitable papers on Royal Arch Masonry which could be shared in this forum.

May I ask, it any of you know of such a source, or have personal papers that may consider sharing, that you consider sharing that information with me. It would be greatly appreciated.

Have a wonderful day & God Bless

Norm