



THE CHRONOLOGY
OF THE
YORK RITE DEGREES
AND OTHER ORDERS
ACCORDING TO MASONIC TRADITION

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A well-travelled York Rite Mason would notice that all of the degrees he received and almost all the orders to which he has been admitted have their own individual stories and traditions derived from both history and biblical narratives. Unlike in the other rites of Masonry, the main stories of the degrees of the York Rite, including those of the other side degrees predicated by the Royal Arch degree, have managed to stay substantially intact since the time of their inception, and have likewise managed to stay true and loyal to the original themes of pure Ancient Masonry without contradictions to each other. No other set can claim to have an array of historically authentic degrees, indisputable on the “regularity” of their origins, with some even once worked and endorsed by Craft Lodges themselves.

However, these Masonic degrees and orders, though given one after another in specific sequence, are not necessarily arranged according to the chronological occurrences of the stories they portray, which is why the following list has been compiled. It organizes the stories and traditions, once and for all, that we may have a clearer and more orderly picture of the entire timeline of Masonic lore. It arranges the degrees, not according to the sequence by which they are conferred or to the seniority of their creation, but according to the time period of when their stories supposedly happened, hence focusing more on their historical references instead of their injected lessons.

This list does not include those degrees and orders which do not have any historical or legendary allusions, but includes those which complement the York Rite without necessarily being part of it. The indicated years are mere estimates, based mostly on Masonic tradition and on generally accepted Jewish dating and approximation. Note, however, that despite the dating, this list should never be regarded as historically factual.

Royal Ark Mariner (ca. 2407-2348 BCE) - Preparations for the Deluge commenced with the building of Noah's Ark. Noah himself commanded the Ark during the Great Flood in ca. 2349/2348 BCE until the waters finally subsided. The story was derived from the biblical Book of Genesis and was one of the themes upon which Noachite Masonry was based. The Royal Ark Mariner degree is currently conferred by the American Council of Allied Masonic Degrees and by the Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners of the Scottish and English Constitutions. Royal Ark Mariners date their Masonic Year as Anno Deluvii (A. Dil.) or "In the Year of the Deluge," adding 2348 to the Common Era.

* Note: An important biblical episode happened many years after the Great Flood when Phaleg, one of Noah's great grandsons, became the architect that planned the Tower of Babel (ca. 2200 BCE), as told in the Book of Genesis and as mentioned in the 21° Noachite or Prussian Knight of the Scottish Rite. The Tower of Babel was also associated to Nimrod, another of Noah's great grandsons, and that something called the Oath of Nimrod exists in one of the degrees of The Operatives.

Order of High Priesthood (ca. 2000-1913 BCE) - Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings and met with Melchizedek, the High Priest of Salem, to pay him tribute. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Genesis and Hebrews. The Holy Order of High Priesthood, previously known as the Order of Melchizedek, is an honorary degree currently conferred upon past or present Excellent High Priests of the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons (Capitular Masonry). It can also be found as the Holy Order of Grand High Priest in the English Allied Masonic Degrees. It dates its Masonic year as Anno Benedictionis (sometimes Anno Benefacio, A.B.) or "In the Year of the Blessing," commemorating the blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek, adding 1913 to the Common Era.

* Note: The above stories of Abraham and Melchizedek are also mentioned in the Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests.

Holy Royal Arch or Royal Arch Mason (ca. 1446 BCE) - Moses saw an apparition of a burning bush commanding him to return to Egypt in order to lead the people of Israel out of bondage, and likewise receiving from the said apparition its ineffable name. The story was derived from the biblical Book of Exodus whose imageries were used in one of the lectures of the Royal Arch degree.

* Note: Between this period was the era of Moses, Aaron, the Ten Commandments, the Ark of the Covenant, and the Tabernacle (ca. 1446-1407 BCE) as told in the biblical Books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and as mentioned in these Scottish Rite degrees: the 23° Chief of the Tabernacle, the 24° Prince of the Tabernacle, and the old version of the 25° Knight of the Brazen Serpent (Brass/Bronze Snake).

Order of the Scarlet Cord (ca. 1406-134 BCE) - The siege of Jericho was about to commence. Related stories, such as those derived from the biblical Book of Joshua, spanned hundreds of years and sub-divided into the six grades of the Order of the Scarlet Cord: the first grade, called Ostiarii or Doorkeeper, told of the story of Rahab and his hiding of Hebrew/Israelite spies from the King of Jericho (ca. 1406 BCE); the second, called Lectors or Readers, told of the story of Ruth, her

marriage to Boaz, and her son Obed, the grandfather of David (ca. 1140 BCE); the third, called Fellow or Healer & Exorcist, surrounded the resolve of the Maccabees to retain practice of their faith in the face of tyranny (ca. 175-134 BCE); the fourth, called Councillor, depicted the carrying of the Ark of the Covenant over the River Jordan and its entrance into Jericho (ca. 1406 BCE); the fifth, called Keeper of the Hidden Secret, accounted Nebuchadnezzar's attack on Jerusalem and the disappearance of the Ark of the Covenant (ca. 640-588 BCE); and the sixth, called Prince of Jerusalem, centered on the Maccabees' fight for independence (ca. 167-160 BCE). The grades of the Scarlet Cord are conferred by the Ancient and Masonic Order of the Scarlet Cord of the English Constitution, under the working units of Consistory, Council of Elders, Council of Entrusted, and Council of Princes. Under the Order of the Secret Monitor of the American Council of Allied Masonic Degrees, the Royal Order of the Masonic Knights of the Scarlet Cord is still a small constituent Conclave.

Fellowcraft (ca. 1090 BCE) - Joshua fought many battles and Jephtha invented a password unpronounceable by some Hebrew/Israelite dialects, particularly those of their enemies, the Ephraimites, utilizing such weakness to easily identify them in the event of their spying. These stories, among others in the degree, were derived from the biblical Books of Judges, Kings, and Chronicles. The Fellowcraft Mason degree is the second degree conferred in the Craft Lodge of pure Ancient Masonry.

Order of the Secret Monitor (ca. 1020-965 BCE) - David and Jonathan, son of King Saul (first King of Israel), became best friends and shared a special bond of friendship which exhibited self-sacrifice, friendly advice, mutual trust and care, warning in times of danger, and solace in times of sorrow. The story was derived from the biblical Book of Samuel which also told of how King Saul sought the life of David. David would later succeed Saul as the next King. The degrees of the Order of the Secret Monitor, or the Brotherhood of David and Jonathan, are currently conferred by the American Council of Allied Masonic Degrees, where the Order originally found footing, and by a separate Conclave of the English Constitution, where it developed and became more popular.

Master of Tyre, First Section (ca. 997-966 BCE) - After bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, David, already as King of Israel, wanted to build a permanent house for it, hence began the plans to build the Temple, which would later be undertaken by his son and successor, Solomon. Since the Hebrews/Israelites were not expert masons, Solomon would eventually enlist the aid of King Hiram of Tyre to hire Tyrian or Sidonian workmen and bring materials to Jerusalem for the planned construction. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Samuel and Chronicles. The degree of Master of Tyre is currently conferred by the Council of Allied Masonic Degrees.

Thrice Illustrious Master (ca. 974-970 BCE) - King David, being old, anointed his son, Solomon to become the next King, charging him to build the Temple. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles. The honorary degree of Thrice Illustrious Master, also

known as the Order of the Silver Trowel, is currently conferred upon past or present Illustrious Masters of the Council of Royal and Select Masters (Cryptic Masonry).

Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft (ca. 974-970 BCE) - Preparations for the construction of the Temple of King Solomon, or what would later be known as the First Temple, began and required hundreds of workers in the stonemason's craft. Since the Temple would take years to complete, apprentices were concurrently taught the craft along the way. The Entered Apprentice Mason and the Fellowcraft Mason degrees, the first and second conferred in the Craft Lodge of pure Ancient Masonry, may not have mentioned any Masonic tradition yet relating to the Temple, but such would eventually be in their concluding Master Mason degree.

Mark Man and Mark Master (ca. 970-966 BCE) - Work already started at the Temple site as stones were already being prepared and marked. Fellowcrafts were instructed to have their own individual marks upon their respective stonework for easier identification and as a necessity for them before being advanced. Hence, the Mark Master degree, not the Master Mason degree, is supposed to be the next natural progression and advancement of a Fellowcraft and is even considered the completion of the Fellowcraft degree. Fellowcrafts were also instructed on the proper ways of receiving wages, using a technique to detect impostors. The Mark Master degree is currently conferred by the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, by the Lodge of the Mark Master Masons of the English Constitution, and by the Lodge of Mark Master Masons held within a Royal Arch Chapter of the Scottish Constitution. Under the Scottish Constitution, the Mark degree can also be conferred in their Craft Lodge, using the same ritual. Also note that in the Scottish ritual, it can be found that the Chief Architect of the Temple was clearly still alive (his murder would not occur until the Master Mason degree) and came looking for the missing Keystone, an important element in completing its principal Arch.

Select Master (ca. 969-968 BCE) - During construction, a Secret Vault beneath the Temple was likewise being built in order to hide and keep things of great importance that are known only to a select few. These included the Word itself. Its whereabouts and existence were known only to the Grand Masters and those who carried out the work. Access to the Secret Vault was by way of a tunnel from the Palace to a point immediately beneath the Holy of Holies. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles. The Select Master degree is currently conferred by the Council of Royal and Select Masters.

Grand Tilers of Solomon (ca. 969 BCE) - The vaulted chamber beneath the Temple, where secret conferences concerning the progress of the construction were to be conducted, was approached by a long arched passage with a door at the end. It was, however, unwittingly breached. As with the degree of Select Master above, the story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles. The degree of Grand Tilers of Solomon, or Masons Elect of Twenty Seven, is currently conferred by the Council of Allied Masonic Degrees.

Royal Master, First Section (ca. 968-955 BCE, although traditionally 1000 BCE) - The Word was discretely deposited in the Secret Vault (refer to Select Master), known only to a few. The Chief Architect of the Temple entrusted its whereabouts to a trusted Fellowcraft so that, in the event of his untimely death before the completion of the Temple, the Word may still be recovered. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles. The Royal Master degree is currently conferred by the Council of Royal and Select Masters that date its Masonic Year as Anno Depositionis (A.D. or A. Dep.) or "In the Year of the Deposit," adding 1000 to the Common Era.

Master of Tyre, Second Section (ca. 968-951 BCE) - Still during the time of the Temple's construction, some craftsmen overhead a conspiracy to obtain the Secrets of a Master Mason from the Chief Architect. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles.

Master Mason (ca. 968-951 BCE) - The Temple was still unfinished when one of its three Grand Masters, the Chief Architect himself, was murdered by three Fellowcrafts for his refusal to reveal the Secrets of a Master Mason. As a result, the Word was lost, or at least was believed to have been lost. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles. The Master Mason is conferred as the third degree in the Craft Lodge. Together with the Royal Arch degree, it is also considered the last and highest degree in pure Ancient Masonry.

Royal Master, Second Section (ca. 968-951 BCE) - With the death of the Chief Architect, the two remaining Grand Masters, King Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre, were reluctant to communicate the Word even amongst themselves because of the broken link it created. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles.

* Note: Within the Lodge of Perfection of the Scottish Rite are degrees containing supplemental and even unrelated anecdotes which supposedly happened after the murder of the Chief Architect. Also contained are the Elu degrees which told of an alternate story pertaining to the capture, trial, and execution of the murderers. These degrees are: the 4° Secret Master, where guardians were appointed for the Holy of Holies; the 5° Perfect Master, recounting the funeral of the Chief Architect; the 6° Confidential Secretary, where an alleged eavesdropper was accused; the 7° Provost and Judge, where judges were appointed to administer order, pending the cessation of work during the period of mourning over the death of the Chief Architect; the 8° Intendant of the Building, where superintendents were appointed upon the resumption of work; the Elu degrees, 9°, 10°, and 11°, where the murderers of the Chief Architect were hunted, caught, and executed; the 12° Master Architect, where advanced instructions were given to improve skill; and finally the 13° Royal Arch of Solomon and 14° Perfect Elu, which represent the Scottish Rite equivalent of the Royal Arch degree, although in a different context and timeframe. Whereas in the Royal Arch Mason degree, the Word would be discovered during the building of the Second Temple (as it was deposited in the Secret Vault beneath the Holy of Holies during the time of the building of the First Temple), in the Scottish Rite, however, the Word was discovered during the time of Solomon's construction of the First Temple, and upon the site of the ancient Temple of Enoch. It was supposedly hidden there by Enoch himself before the Great Flood.

Mark Master (ca. 967-951 BCE) - A search was made by the Fellowcrafts for that one remaining thing needed in order to complete the Temple - the Keystone of the principal Arch supposedly wrought by the Chief Architect himself when he was still alive. The story, as told near the end of

the Mark Master degree, was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles, although contained elements taken from the Book of Ezekiel.

Most Excellent Master (ca. 959-950 BCE) - The Temple of Solomon has been completed and dedicated. The Ark of the Covenant was transferred from its temporary Tabernacle previously housed by King David to its new home in the Holy of Holies. The pageantry was derived from the biblical Books of Kings and Chronicles. The Most Excellent Master degree is currently conferred by the Chapter of Royal Arch Masons and was meant partly to fill the gaps of the storyline between the Master Mason and the Royal Arch degrees. The degree also exists in the Council of Royal and Select Masters of the English Constitution.

Master of Tyre, Third Section (ca. 959-950 BCE) - As a side story after the dedication of the Temple mentioned above in the Most Excellent Master degree, the Tyrian craftsmen have returned safely to their families and homeland, proud of having taken an important part in the erection of a magnificent edifice in Jerusalem. They then created an Order called Master of Tyre in memory of their murdered fellow Tyrian, the Chief Architect of the Temple of Solomon.

* Note: The Tyrians, Phoenicians, or Sidonians were always ready to aid and assist the Hebrews/Israelites in their holy enterprises such as the building of the Temple of Solomon. Their relationship went as far back as before the Great Flood, when they felled cedars for Noah's Ark and likewise for the Ark of the Covenant. This is mentioned in the 22° Knight of the Royal Axe or Prince Libanus (Lebanon) of the Scottish Rite.

Architect, Grand Architect, and Superintendent (ca. 959-950 BCE) - Back in Jerusalem, work continued in the Temple even after its completion and dedication. Positions of important tasks were delegated to tried and proven craftsmen. Among these positions were Architect, Grand Architect, and Superintendent. This trilogy of degrees, currently conferred in consecutive order by the Council of Allied Masonic Degrees, can also be found in their older versions in the Early Grand Rite of Scotland, in the Adonhiramite Rite, and in some other rites of the French and German grades.

* Note: The following is the series of events leading from the Master Mason degree, where the Word was lost, to the Royal Arch degree, where the Word would be discovered. It entails, primarily, that era in Jewish history called the Babylonian Captivity. Among those who accept a tradition (Jeremiah 29:10) that the said exile lasted 70 years, some choose the years 608-538 BCE, others 586-516/515 BCE when the Second Temple was supposedly completed and dedicated.

Super Excellent Master (ca. 588-586 BCE) - King Zedekiah of Judah rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. As punishment, Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuzaradan, the Captain of the Guard of Nebuchadnezzar. As the city fell, the Temple was pillaged and its treasures were plundered. The people were then exiled and carried off into what became known as the Babylonian Captivity. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Kings, Chronicles, Jeremiah, and Lamentations. The honor degree of Super Excellent Master, though not a Cryptic degree, is under the authority of Cryptic Masonry by the Council of Royal and Select Masters.

Knight of the Sword (ca. 538-536 BCE) - Zerubbabel sought permission from King Cyrus to return to Jerusalem, thus initiating the release of the people of Israel, now commonly referred to as the Jews, from Babylonian Captivity. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai. The Knight of the Sword degree, also called the Red Cross of Daniel or the Babylonian Pass, is conferred by the Council of the Order of Knight Masons as its first degree.

Excellent Master (ca. 538-520 BCE) - The descendants of the children of the Babylonian Captivity made the trip to Jerusalem - to the site of the Temple - and were given instructions on how to be recognized and admitted as craftsmen in its rebuilding. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai, the same sources as the Red Cross degrees or degrees of captivity of Knight Masonry (Knight of the Sword, Knight of the East, and Knight of the East and West), encompassing the same themes and circumstances, and serving as the link between the Master Mason degree and the Royal Arch. The Excellent Master degree, considered the ceremony of the "Passing of the Veils," is currently conferred upon Mark Masters by the American Council of Allied Masonic Degrees and by the Royal Arch Chapter of the Scottish Constitution.

Knight of the East (ca. 530-520 BCE) - Zerubbabel traveled to Persia to seek the aid, permission, and protection of King Darius in rebuilding the Temple - what would become known as the Second Temple. The story was derived from the Book of Esdras of the Apocrypha and largely compiled from the biblical Books of Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai. The Knight of the East degree, also called the Jordan Pass, is conferred by the Council of Knight Masons as its second degree.

Knight of the East and West (ca. 530-515 BCE) - Zerubbabel returned to Jerusalem after his travel from Persia, where he sought the help of King Darius, who confirmed the decree of King Cyrus before him. Being a continuation of the above Knight of the East degree, the story was derived from the biblical Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Haggai. In addition, the story mentioned that the Second Temple was about to be completed. The Knight of the East and West degree, also called the Royal Order, is conferred by the Council of Knight Masons as its third degree. The degrees of captivity of Knight Masonry (Knight of the Sword, Knight of the East, and Knight of the East and West) are also worked in the Lodge & Council of the Scottish Constitution, under their Council of Red Cross Knights. Knight Masons or Red Cross Knights date their Masonic Year as Anno Reductionis (A.R.) or "In the Year of the Return," adding 530 to the Common Era.

* Note: At this point, it is important to call attention to the similarities of the above three degrees of Knight Masonry (Knight of the Sword, Knight of the East, and Knight of the East and West), or Red Cross degrees, to those of the Chapter of Rose Croix in the Scottish Rite, which bear similar and parallel names, characters, themes, timeline, symbolisms, and biblical basis. These degrees are the 15° Knight of the East or of the Sword, the 16° Prince of Jerusalem, and the 17° Knight of the East and West. It is also important to mention that the term "Rose Croix" or "Rosy Cross" also meant "Red Cross." Still on the same timeline of Zerubbabel is the 20° Master of the Symbolic Lodge (although the degree was later revised in the Southern Jurisdiction, replacing Zerubbabel with Zarathustra, along with many other major changes).

Red Cross of Babylon (ca. 530-520 BCE) - The above Red Cross degrees of Knight Masonry are also singularly conferred by the English Allied Masonic Degrees as a distinct degree unto itself, called the Red Cross of Babylon, which does not exist in the American Council of Allied Masonic Degrees. Supplemental story was told about how the Hebrews, now called the Jews, found themselves under continuous harassment and found it necessary to keep weapons close at hand while at work. After years that the Temple site stood open and deserted, labor was resumed only when Darius came to power and aided Zerubbabel. The story also told of the eventual restoration of treasures (ca. 525 BCE) after their discovery, as would eventually be elaborated in the Royal Arch degree.

Illustrious Order of the Red Cross (ca. 530-515 BCE) - Still during the time of the Babylonian Captivity is a reiteration of some of the episodes above, such as Zerubbabel forming an alliance of friendship with King Darius, gaining mutual trust, and leading to his return to Jerusalem for the building of the Second Temple. The story, as it was also told in above degree of Knight of the East, was derived from the Books of Esdras and Ezra, and introduced the riddle of which was stronger, whether wine, women, or the king. It is important to note that, although nothing about these themes is remotely connected to Christ or to Christianity, the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross is the first of the three Orders (not to be confused as degrees) of Knighthood under the Commandery of Knights Templar which is supposed to be a strictly Christian Masonic organization. Studies show that elements of this Order were practiced in Ancient Lodges before the final form of the Master Mason degree came to use. This Red Cross order is sometimes considered a compressed version of the above Red Cross or Knight Masonry degrees.

* Note: The above themes of the Babylonian Captivity are also mentioned in the degree of Scottish Master of St. Andrew of the Chevaliers Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte (CBCS), along with those of the Second Temple, going further by exemplifying the intentional search for the lost Word within the tomb of the Chief Architect of that First Temple.

Holy Royal Arch or Royal Arch Mason (ca. 534-517 BCE) - Backtracking a little, during the middle of the labors described above in the building of the Second Temple, important discoveries were made and the Word was recovered. The story was derived from the biblical Books of Ezrah, Nehemiah, and Haggai, and was set out to restore the genuine secrets of a Master Mason, from whose explanation was conveyed the true nature of the Divine. Hence, the Royal Arch degree is regarded as the culmination of the Master Mason degree and the perfection and completion of Masonry itself. The historical lecture also stretches to the time of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. The Royal Arch degree is currently conferred by the York Rite Chapter of Royal Arch Masons and by the corresponding Royal Arch Chapters of the other Masonic constitutions. Royal Arch Masons date their Masonic year as Anno Inventionis (A.I.) or "In the Year of the Discovery," adding 530 to the Common Era.

* Note: This point marks the conclusion of all the legends and traditions of Masonry. Notice the wide array of degrees and orders related to the Babylonian Captivity and the rebuilding of the Second Temple, probably given

more emphasis than the First Temple itself. The reason for such is to attempt to fill in the gaps between the time when the Word was lost (in the Master Mason degree) and the time when it was discovered (in the Royal Arch degree). Such attempt by the different Masonic rites and orders only attests to the great importance they bestow upon what they consider the supreme and most sublime degree - the Royal Arch degree. Everything else that follows is already considered outside of Masonic tradition and more focused instead on the development of speculative Masonry as an organization. Notice in these succeeding degrees and orders their highly Christian inspiration and origin, which explains why most of them have the Trinitarian Christian prerequisite. It has nothing to do with exclusivity or religious preference. It was just incidental that speculative Masonry was inspired by the Christian religion itself or, at least, by the circumstantial legends and histories of the kingdoms and nations that practiced it.

Rose Croix (ca. 30-36 CE) - Christ was crucified, and his Passion and earlier teachings suddenly inspired an entirely new concept of moral living. His crucifixion and the image of his Cross also gave birth to different esoteric traditions, such as the concept and symbolism of the Rose Croix. The Rose Croix degree was, at one time, the “ne plus ultra” or the final degree of the English Knights Templar encampment, but was later discontinued because it was also already part of the Supreme Council 33° (Scottish Rite in England, but was called Ancient and Accepted Rite) and so was passed over to its authority as the 18° Knight Rose Croix.

Knight of the Holy Sepulchre (ca. 30-36 CE) - Stories of the risen Christ started to spread. Those particularly concerned with the three days that intervened between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection are told in the Order of the Holy Sepulchre (not to be confused with the Catholic order of the same name) which is currently one of the appendant bodies of the Order of the Red Cross of Constantine. Note that under the Red Cross of Constantine of the English Constitution, the Knight of the Holy Sepulchre is its second degree.

Knight of St. Paul (ca. 62 CE) - On his journey to Rome, Paul was bit by a snake in the island of Malta and survived without signs of poisoning. His experiences at the hands of the natives of the island strengthened his resolve. The story was derived from the biblical Book of Acts of the Apostles. Currently, the attributes of the Knight of St. Paul or the Mediterranean Pass are invested as a Pass-degree to the Order of Malta, the second of the three Orders of Knighthood under the Commandery of Knights Templar.

Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests (ca. 70-96 CE) - The Book of Revelation was allegedly written by John the Divine, supposedly revealing the future of the followers and enemies of Christ. Its concept of the Seven Seals is utilized in the Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests, an honorary and invitational organization for past and present Eminent Commanders of the Commandery of Knights Templar. In the English Constitution, candidates for the honor should be both Royal Arch Masons and Knights Templar, as well as Past Masters in the Craft Lodge. There, the order was originally called the Holy Royal Arch Templar Priests or Order of Holy Wisdom, with only a single degree worked, although according to some researches, there were actually two separate degrees. In 2015 the degree of the Order of Holy Wisdom was introduced as a separate degree. Although the Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priest is worked as a single degree, it is

actually the final among several others that are conferred by name only. These degrees are: Funeral Master, Master of the Blue or Knight of Solomon, Most Excellent Master, Excellent Mason and Master of the Veils, Sublime Master or Jacob's Wrestle, Knight of Patmos or Philippi, Knight of Redemption, Knight of Death or Elysium, Knight of the Holy Grade, Knight of the Christian Mark, Knight of Bethany, Knight of the Royal Prussian Blue, Knight of Eleusis, Knight of Palestine, Knight of St. John the Baptist, Knight of the Cross, Knight of the Black Cross, Fugitive Mark, Architect, Order of the Scarlet Cord or Knight of Rahab, Knight of the Three Kings or The Balance, Knight of the North, Knight of the South, Knight of the White Cross, Knight of the White Cross of Torpichen, Knight of the Suspended Cross of Babylon, Knight of the Red Cross of Jerusalem, Knight of the Red Cross or Roseae Crucis, Knight of the Triple Cross, Grand Cross of St. John, and Made Free from Harodim.

* Note: The above concept of the Seven Seals also appears in the 17° Knight of the East and West of the Scottish Rite. Other themes from the Book of Revelation, particularly those pertaining to Babylon and the celestial Jerusalem, are also exemplified in the 19° Grand Pontiff of the Scottish Rite.

Order of St. Lawrence the Martyr (ca. 258 CE) - For protecting the riches of the Christian Church, the Deacon Lawrence was tortured by burning under a slow fire until death. The degree of the Order of St. Lawrence the Martyr was said to be an old Operative ritual intended to distinguish genuine stonemasons from the speculatives. The Council of Allied Masonic Degrees currently confers the degree of St. Lawrence the Martyr upon its newly-received members, and therefore considers it as the first and initiatory degree prior to conferring the other degrees under its authority.

Red Cross of Constantine (ca. 312-313 CE) - After dreaming of a Cross in the sky that said "By this Sign you shall conquer," Constantine converted to Christianity and became the first Western Emperor to adhere to the Christian religion. He also instituted a special standard and created what is claimed to be the oldest institution of Christian Knighthood. The Masonic and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine is currently an invitational organization whose degrees are conferred upon Royal Arch Masons who are Trinitarian Christians. The degree of Knight of the Red Cross of Constantine develops around the secret doctrine associated with the Labarum, the banner of victory, and mentions the Roman College of Architects. The Order of the Red Cross of Constantine dates its Masonic Year as Anno Ordinis (A.O.) or "In the Year of the Order," subtracting 313 from the Common Era. Such was to commemorate its founding in 313 CE and the official recognition of the Christian religion by Constantine in 312 CE.

Knight of Constantinople (ca. 320-337 CE) - Emperor Constantine (The Great), to whom was named the capital city of Constantinople that was instrumental in the advancement of Christianity in Europe, was said to have conferred a degree upon both the nobility and the laborers alike in order to curb the pride and arrogance of the former. The Knight of Constantinople degree is currently conferred by the Council of Allied Masonic Degrees. Though it is also worked in the

Allied Masonic Degrees of the English Constitution, a separate working of the degree, in what is called a Plymouth Council, also exists but imposes a strictly Christian prerequisite.

Knight of the Holy Sepulchre (ca. 326-1099 CE) - After stories of the risen Christ started to spread around 33 CE, veneration for sacred relics and sacred places, i.e. those connected to the life of Christ, became popular. An example would be the supposed discovery of the True Cross by Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine. By the year 325-326 CE, Emperor Constantine ordered the building of a Church on the site where Christ supposedly had been buried before the resurrection. Hundreds of years later, after frequent destructions, Knights would take on the task to guard that sacred place in Jerusalem, called the Holy Sepulchre, against those who oppose the Christian faith, referring to the Saracens. The Knight of the Holy Sepulchre is currently one of the appendant bodies of the Order of the Red Cross of Constantine, considered its second degree in the English Constitution.

* Note: In 381 CE, the First Council of Constantinople formally ratified the Trinitarian Christian belief, which previously existed as early as 110 CE. The concept of Trinitarian Christianity is mentioned in the 26° Prince of Mercy or Scottish Trinitarian of the Scottish Rite, which actually centered more on the life of early Christians, during the years of their persecution, when they developed initiations, classes (like degrees), and veiled mysteries. This era of Late Antiquity also supposedly gave birth to Hermeticism which inspired much of the Western Esoteric Traditions, with examples of their belief systems found in the 27° Knight of the Sun or Prince Adept of the Scottish Rite.

Knight of St. John the Evangelist (ca. 361-363 CE) - During the time of Emperor Julian the Apostate, the manuscript of the Gospel of John was discovered in the ruins of the ancient Temple, then already known as Herod's Temple. The story is elaborated as Knights are rewarded for the discovery by being admitted into the Order of St. John the Evangelist in a short ceremony, often together with the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. The Knight of St. John the Evangelist is currently one of the appendant bodies of the Order of the Red Cross of Constantine, considered its third degree in the English Constitution.

Knight of York (ca. 925-926 CE) - King Athelstan, the first "King of all England," came to power and was said to have called a General Assembly at York in order to create a set of rules and principles by which craftsmen might regulate and govern themselves in proper conduct. They were then granted a Charter, marking the beginning of organized Masonry as a legal entity. The York Charter and General Assembly have since become predominant factors in the establishment of Masonry. All these are suggested and implied in the Regius Manuscript of 1390 CE. The degree of Knight of York, Secret Prince of the White Rose, is currently conferred by the York Rite College, an invitational organization for those who hold memberships in all the York Rite bodies, i.e. the Lodge, the Chapter, the Council, and the Commandery/Preceptory, intent on building cooperation between and amongst the said bodies.

Order of Athelstan (ca. 925-939 CE) - The central legend of the above degree of Knight of York, where King Athelstan was said to have summoned Masons to the York Assembly for instructions

on Masonic ritual and symbolism, following the historic development of Masonry over the centuries, is identical to that of the Masonic Order of Athelstan, an invitational organization for Royal Arch Masons of Chapters in full amity with the United Grand Lodge of England, and is focused on the study of Masonic history.

Knights of Malta (ca. 1070-1128 CE) - The Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem was formed during the First Crusade as a military aid and service to sick Christian pilgrims traveling in the Holy Land. After the fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and Acre in 1291 CE, the Crusaders were driven out of the Holy Land by the Saracens. The Hospitalers became the Knights of Rhodes in 1309 CE and the Knights of Malta in 1530 CE. The Priory of Knights of Malta (a mere adopted name and should not be confused with the Catholic order of the same name, who are actually the real and historical Knights of Malta descended from the Hospitalers), the second of the three Orders of Knighthood under the Commandery of Knights Templar, admit candidates as Knights Hospitaller of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes, and Malta, who vow to fight against those who oppose the Gospel of Christ. Since the name "Knights of Malta" did not yet exist during the First Crusade, and the Order, as it appears in the Commandery, tells about finding their own place in the island of Malta, then its correct timeline should actually be in 1530 CE.

Knight Crusader of the Cross (ca. 1099 CE) - After the successful siege of Jerusalem during the Crusades, Godfrey de Bouillon became the first ruler of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, utilizing the Jerusalem Cross, also called the Crusader Cross, as a distinct symbol of the new Crusader state. This is elaborated in the Knight Crusader of the Cross, conferred as an honorary degree upon past or present Eminent Commanders of the Commandery of Knights Templar.

Knight of St. John the Evangelist (ca. 1099-1100 CE) - The Crusaders had been unable to expel the Saracens from the Holy Land, so Godfrey de Bouillon veiled the mysteries of Christianity under emblems in order to maintain their devotions in secret, protecting themselves against traitors and pretenders. The Temple of Solomon was used as an emblem of the Christian Church. Different degrees with different signs and tokens were invented to test candidates and to identify each other, and such were given without explanation as a failsafe against Saracens, cowans, and intruders. Knights are currently admitted in the Order of the St. John the Evangelist in a short ceremony, often together with the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, as the second appendant order within the Red Cross of Constantine (or its third degree in the English Constitution). It is here where the true mystery of the death of the Chief Architect of the First Temple (in the Master Mason degree) is realized to be symbolic of the death and passion of Christ the Messiah.

* Note: A separate stream of legend, far removed from the Masonic traditions being discussed herein, deserves mention. It supposedly occurred around this time (ca. 1014 CE), involved Celtic and Viking legendry and even traces origins as far back as 1697 BCE. The stories are elaborated in what is known as the Royal Order of the Red Branch of Eri (Ireland), whose degrees are currently conferred by honor within the Allied Masonic Degrees and within the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA).

Knights Templar (ca. 1118-1187 CE) - Aspirants for Knighthood into the Order of the Temple made pilgrimages lasting years of hardships and battles. Currently, candidates to this third and last Order of Knighthood under the Commandery of Knights Templar are dubbed Knights of the Valiant and Magnanimous Order of the Temple. Although this American version of Masonic Templarism makes no reference to the formation of the original Knights Templar of the Crusades in 1118 CE, it nevertheless dates its Masonic Year as Anno Ordinis (A.O.) or "In the Year of the Order," subtracting 1118 from the Common Era. If we are to affix its apparent timeline based on the story it portrays, which is that of a pilgrim knight who wished to visit the Holy Sepulchre, then that would be after the Crusades. However, its equivalent counterparts, the Priory of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Order of the Temple of the English Constitution and the Great Priory of Scotland of the Scottish Constitution do resemble the pilgrimages and vows of a Crusader Knight, hence pegging the period of the order during that era instead of after it.

* Note: In 1813 CE, the Duke of Sussex would officially de-Christianize the rituals of Craft Masonry in England, thereby ostracizing the degrees and orders beyond the Craft which still maintained their inherently Christian themes, and thus consequently dismantling the cohesiveness of Masonic systems native to individual Provinces. One such system that survived in Bristol was called the Rite of Baldwyn or Rite of Seven Degrees, which encompassed all of the Craft degrees, including the Royal Arch degree, and those of the Knighthood orders of Malta and the Temple, including the legends and Masonic traditions they all portrayed. These Seven Degrees are: I° Craft Masonry (Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason), II° Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch, III° Knights of the Nine Elected Masters, IV° Ancient Order of Scots Knights Grand Architect (Order of Scots Knights Grand Architect and Order of Scots Knights of Kilwinning), V° Knights of the East, the Sword and Eagle, VI° Knights of St John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and Malta including Knights Templar, and VII° Knights of the Rose Croix of Mount Carmel.

Order of St. Thomas of Acon (ca. 1191 CE) - During the Third Crusade, an Order was formed for the purpose of burying Christian Knights who fell in battle in the Holy Land, and likewise for raising funds to redeem the ransomed captives of the Saracens. It became so successful that it was able to erect a church dedicated to St. Thomas and also provide replacement soldiers when needed, prompting King Richard I (the Lionheart) of England to accord it with the status of an Order of Chivalry. The Commemorative Order of St. Thomas of Acon is currently an invitational organization for members of a Commandery/Preceptory of Knights Templar that is in amity with the Priory of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Order of the Temple of the English Constitution.

* Note: The above themes of the Order of St. Thomas of Acon pertaining to the siege of Acre are elaborated in the 28° Knight Commander of the Temple of the Scottish Rite, with the story continuing all the way to the dissolution of the Templars in 1312 CE.

Royal Order of Scotland (ca. 1224-1320 CE) - An Order of Heredom was said to have been re-established in Icolmkill, and afterwards in Kilwinning. Years later, at the Battle of Bannockburn, Robert the Bruce was said to have received assistance from a body of Knights, possibly Templars. As a reward, he then conferred upon them knighthoods that had civil ranks attached. These stories are told in the Royal Order of Scotland which considers the King of Scots to be its

hereditary Grand Master, which is why a vacant seat is always reserved for him in the East during the meetings of its Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodges. The Royal Order of Scotland currently extends its membership by invitation and confers its degrees upon Trinitarian Christian Masons. Although by its Constitution and Laws, the only qualification is to be a Master Mason of five years, many Provincial Grand Lodges have set their bar significantly higher for admission. Some require members to be at least 18° or 32° Scottish Rite Masons, Holy Royal Arch Masons, or members in any of the other Christian Masonic Orders such as the Knights Templar and the Red Cross of Constantine.

* Note: The above themes of the Royal Order of Scotland are repeated in the 29° Scottish Knight of St. Andrew of the Scottish Rite, which also provides the missing details surrounding that period, such as the arrest of the Knights Templar in France in 1307 CE and the execution of their Grand Master in 1314 CE. The story continued in the remaining degrees of the Scottish Rite: the 30° Knight Kadosh, where the Knights Templar survived after the death of their Grand Master; the 31° Inspector Inquisitor, where fugitive Knights Templar were tested of their legitimacy; and, skipping forward, the 32° Master of the Royal Secret, where another Crusade to retake the Holy Land from the Saracens was allegedly planned around 1759 CE under the leadership of Frederick the Great of Prussia. Although such legends concerning the Knights Templar beginning in 1118 CE are considered general knowledge amongst regular Masons, there exists another separate Masonic tradition. Allegedly in 1111 CE, the nine noblemen who would eventually become the founders of the Knights Templar first formed a group to protect Christian pilgrims going to the Holy Land against the Saracens and to likewise defend the Christian religion, calling themselves the Knights of the Holy City. They were given asylum within the walls of the old Temple of Solomon and, in 1118 CE, they were called the Knights of the Temple or the Knights Templar. Years passed and they became extremely rich and powerful, until they were consequently betrayed and finally abolished. Secret tradition then came about that the Templar Order had perpetuated itself underground, adopting the symbols and emblems of Masonry, becoming the “high degrees” of the different Masonic rites and orders. One such order, descended from the Rite of Strict Observance, was organized in 1778 CE in an effort to preserve the purity of its sources; to struggle against Jesuitical infiltration; to rid itself of the alchemists of the period; and to forbid political discussions. It declared its renunciation of the privileges and temporal claims of the old Order of the Temple, and instead adopted the title its founders used before they acquired worldly possessions - the Knights of the Holy City. Thus was born the Chevaliers Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte (CBCS), or the Holy Order of Knights Beneficent of the Holy City, currently the world’s oldest continuously operating Christian Chivalric Masonic Order. Its degrees are conferred by the Grand Prieuré Indépendant d’Helvetie of Switzerland. Its membership is by invitation and restricted to Christian Masons who profess a belief in the Christian religion. In the U.S., although a chartered Grand Priory of America existed, the conferring of its degrees made conflicts with the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar, the general governing body of Masonic Templarism in the York Rite, due to the obvious major difference in belief systems. Negotiations, reorganizations, re-chartering, and re-recognitions have already been attempted. The Knights Beneficent of the Holy City is currently the least known Masonic body because of the rarity of its membership.

The Operatives (ca. 1350-1677 CE) - European trade guilds of craftsmen, originally organized as a way of protecting their common interests, started to flourish and eventually came to a position of prominence in society. The cathedral builders contracted by the Catholic Church had their own craft guilds which consisted mostly of Christian Operative stonemasons who, in the coming years, would eventually be overtaken with the influx of non-operative masons within their lodges. While not claiming any direct lineage to the original Operative Masons, the Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviers, Plaisterers and Bricklayers calls itself “The

Operatives” to ensure that modern speculative Masons would not forget their Operative roots. Its degrees entail numerous stories from different time periods within the Masonic tradition, such as those of Nimrod, Solomon, Adonhram, King Hiram of Tyre, and the Chief Architect of the First Temple, mentioning such terms as “Lodge of Menatzchim” and “Lodge of Harodim.” The Society, which claims to fill a notable gap in the Masonic structure, is open to all Master Masons who are also both Mark Masters and Royal Arch Masons.

Societas Rosicruciana (ca. 1604-1616 CE) - Under the backdrop of the Protestant Christian Reformation, the Fraternity of the Rosy Cross was said to have been secretly established in the interest of freedom to pursue knowledge through study and experimentation (such as alchemy). It was followed by the publication of their three Manifestos, containing their allegories and codes of law, i.e., (1) to heal the sick without charge, (2) to adopt to the customs of the country where they stayed, (3) to regularly meet every year, (4) to find a successor in the event of death, (5) to adopt the letters “R.C.” as their seal, mark, and character, and (6) to keep secret the Fraternity’s existence for a period of 100 years. Note that no provable record of the existence of such a Fraternity has ever been credibly found, although it was during the time when Rosicrucianism started to fade when modern speculative Masonry started to grow, possibly borrowing some of the ideals of Rosicrucianism. The Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia (SRIA), formed in 1866 CE as inspired by the original Rosicrucian principles, currently confers its initiatory grades upon Trinitarian Christian Masons who have been invited to its Society. Its American counterpart is called the Societas Rosicruciana In Civitatibus Foederatis. (SRICF).

* Note: In terms of rituals and symbolisms, striking parallels can be found between the Societas Rosicruciana and the other Masonic bodies that bear the symbol of the Rosy Cross, such as the 18° Knight Rose Croix of the Scottish Rite and the Heredom and Knight of the Rosy Cross degrees of the Royal Order of Scotland, even sharing similar passwords, phraseologies, and adoption of personal characteristic names, thus hinting of a possible commonality.

Thus ends the list of traditions and histories utilized by Masonry to convey its secrets upon its members. Note that the purpose of the above is to organize, not the Masonic degrees themselves, but the stories contained in the said degrees, so that those who wish to study and compare the histories and traditions adopted by the different rites and orders of Masonry may simply refer to this list without having to go through the individual degrees themselves, as some of them are either honorary or invitational, hence not accessible to everyone. Let it be clear, however, that although this list reveals the existence of a great number of Masonic side degrees and orders, pure Ancient Masonry still only consists of the first three Craft degrees, including the Royal Arch degree and no more.

Note that this list is in no way meant to overshadow the speculative or philosophical aspect of Masonry by giving emphasis to the incidental stories contained in its rituals, which are but conduits in communicating its lessons. It does, however, remind the York Rite Mason to be proud of his legitimate heritage and lineage of historically authentic Masonic degrees that teach not just the lessons of Masonry, but the history and legendry of how Masonry itself came about. After all, a

true study of Masonry entails a factual and academic study of its degrees and what they actually contain, instead of the incredible yet unfounded interpretations of Masonic over-thinkers who put their own meanings where none was intended.

Acknowledgement

*Special thanks to M.E.C. Cameron Sloan and
E.C. Noel Nodalo for their additional inputs.*

*The first edition of the above article appeared in
The Mark magazine of the York Rite of the Philippines.*