

ROYAL ARCH PRESENTATION IN A LODGE

Worshipful Bro..... my I first of all start by thanking you for allowing me to give this presentation on the Royal Arch Chapter in your Lodge. I hope that the Brethren present who are not members of a Royal Arch Chapter find it informative and consider joining at some future date. As for those Brethren who are already Royal Arch Masons I hope you also find it interesting and possibly gain some further knowledge.

Brethren the layout of the temple this evening and the regalia worn by the brethren will no doubt look different to you . In a few minutes I will explain their significance, but firstly, I need to spend a few moments on the history of the Royal Arch Chapter together with its link to the Craft to set the scene.

I have no doubt that you will have heard a lot about the Ancients and the moderns and the Union of the Two Grand Lodges in 1813. Prior to this date the first recorded reference of a Chapter was in Ireland in the early 1740's. With the first reference in England being made in an Ancients Lodge in 1752. The Ancients Grand Lodge was formed one year earlier in 1751 and they conferred the Royal Arch in their Lodges as a fourth degree, as they considered their warrants entitled them to confirm any degree whatsoever. On the other hand the Moderns Grand Lodge did not acknowledge the Royal Arch in any way.

The role of the Royal Arch was one of the major differences between the Ancients and the Moderns Grand Lodges, so that at the Union in 1813 much thought had to be given in solving this problem. With two such opposing views, complete acceptance by the Ancients, and total non-recognition by the Moderns. The solution was to form a separate body, initially known as, United Grand Chapter, which was soon changed to Supreme Grand Chapter, which is still the authority today. The Ancients were

satisfied by the acceptance of the Royal Arch as a part of “Pure Ancient Masonry”, whilst the Moderns were satisfied by the workings of the Royal Arch being removed from the Lodges into Chapters.

These close links between the Craft and the Royal Arch and more particularly the third degree ceremony are still evident today. Firstly the Book of Constitution for the Craft contains the Royal Arch Regulations, depicted in black around the edges of the pages. This I have no doubt you will have noticed when you read them after receiving a copy at your Initiation. On page one you should also have read that the Craft consist of three degrees, Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason including the Supreme Order of the Royal Arch. In a Chapter the Book of Constitution is placed here on the floor of the temple. The Grand Master His Royal Highness the Duke of Kent is The Most Excellent, The First Grand Principal of the Royal Arch and until recently the Provincial Grand Master was the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent of the Royal Arch.

I have no doubt that you will have also heard the expression that the Royal Arch; “*Is the completion of the Third Degree*”. This statement is not true, both the Third Degree and the Exaltation to a Royal Arch Chapter are complete ceremonies in themselves, what the Royal Arch does is to complete ones journey through Pure and Ancient Freemasonry.

Brethren in a Craft Lodge we have Three Principal Officers, The Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens in the East, South and West of the Lodge. They represent the three Grand Masters who presided at the building of the King Solomon’s temple. Namely Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre and Hiram Abiff, some times refereed to as Hiram the Widows son. King Solomon’s temple was then and as Master Masons you will be aware was destroyed shortly after the death of King Hiram Abiff.

The Royal Arch on the other hand concentrates on the building of the second temple, of which I will explain more, later. It also has Three Principal Officers who sit side by side in the east as in council, in the chapter known as a sanhidren. The Principals represent Zerubbabel, who was a direct descendant of King David, Haggai the Prophet, and Joshua the High Priest.

The Worshipful Master and Wardens effectively take the chairs of the Three Principals. Worshipful Master as First Principal sitting in the centre as Zerubbabel the Senior Warden as Second Principal on the Masters right and finally the Junior Warden as the Third Principal.

Brethren in my Craft Lodge when a Master Mason is invested with his apron we have a piece of ritual which describes its distinguishing features. The first paragraph goes as follows:-

“ This apron like the two you have already received is made of lamb skin and is a emblem of purity and the bond of friendship and peace. It is adorned in Blue in allusion to the regal slender which King Solomon bestowed upon the craft, for we are told our ancient brethren, like the brethren of present day never clothed themselves except in royal colours, of Red, Blue Scarlet or Purple”.

This short piece of ritual leaves us with a question. Where are these royal colours of red, blue scarlet or purple The answer brethren is here, in the Royal Arch, as you can see in the form of robes worn by the three principals. Red for Zerubbabel, purple for Haggai, finally Blue for Joshua.

The blue worn by the third principal is the blue of a Master Mason the red worn by the first principal is the royal colour of the Royal Arch. The artists amongst us will already know that if you mix red and blue together the result is purple. The robe worn by the second principal is therefore the union of the Craft and the Royal Arch.

In the craft the principal officers have gavels as emblems of power. In the Chapter they have sceptres, a sceptre surmounted by a Crown for Zerubbable as you would expect for the descendant of King David, with an eye for Haggai the prophet and of course a mitre for Joshua the High Priest.

The Chapter has two Scribes or secretaries. Ezra, who records the transaction of the Chapter, in the same way as your lodge secretary. The other is called Nehemiah who assists Scribe Ezra, but sits by the door to guard the temple in a similar manner to the inner guard, as Nehemiah was responsible for security at the building of the second temple. However, in this Chapter he sits in the South for which reason I can not explain.

I said a few moments ago that the Royal Arch concentrates on the building of the second temple, this being the case we need some workmen. For this we have three Master Mason, who occupy three chairs in the West. They are called Sojourners. The S.D. occupies the chair in the centre as Principle Sojourner. The J.D. to his right as the Senior Assistant Sojourner another Master Mason then occupies the last chair as the Junior Assistant Sojourner.

Finally there are two other Officers in a Chapter namely the Janitor, in the Craft known as the Outer Guard and the Director of Ceremonies.

I have now explained the officers in the chapter but what about the furniture. It will not come as a surprise to those who are not members of the Royal Arch to learn that we have an Arch within the Chapter, which is placed as you can see in the West a short distance in front of the three Sojourners. On the front is an inscription in Latin which is the answer to one of the questions asked of you during your initiation “what is the predominant wish of you heart” your answer FIATLUX “let there be light”

In your Craft Lodge you have a Black and White flooring also shown on the first degree tracing board which represents the floor of the temple, and is for the high

priest to walk upon. The Royal Arch also has a Black and White flooring, it looks different the reason for which will become evident later.

As it is the flooring of the temple you would not be surprised to find an Alter, in the Royal Arch called a Pedestal or Column. With the initials of the three Grand Masters engraved on the front SKI, HKT and HA together with a mystical symbol and the top covered by a veil. Also on the flooring is the Volume of the Sacred Law, which would be opened when the Chapter is opened in the same way as the craft. Placed upon the Volume of the Sacred Law is the Square and Compasses from the Craft laid as in the 3rd degree.

I said earlier Brethren that the three Sojourners in the West are to be the workmen, if this is to be the case then you will require some working implements. In the Royal Arch these take the form of a Pick, Crow and a Shovel which are laid out on the flooring in the form of a triangle. These implements like the working tools in the three degrees of the Craft and have an operative meaning, which is made clear when a Brother joins a Chapter.

Brethren when a Brother joins the Royal Arch he passes through a ceremony known as an Exaltation. He would find the Chapter generally laid out as you see it now but there is of course a very fine dividing line between giving too much away and spoiling the pleasure and surprise every candidate experiences at his Exaltation. This Chapter layout is therefore not complete, as we have removed some very important features so as not to spoil that pleasure and surprise every candidate experiences. However, there is sufficient to show how much more colourful a Chapter is compared to the Craft Lodge.

When a Brother is Exalted into the Royal Arch he would have to take an Obligation on the Volume of the Sacred Law, somewhat similar to those of the former degrees, as each degree in Freemasonry must be kept separate and distinct. As the craft and

the Royal Arch are closely linked, in advancing to take the Obligation the Candidate acknowledges the three degrees of the craft.

When a Master Masons Lodge is closed this can be done in two ways, by authority or in due form. When closing in due form you are advised that the genuine secrets of a Master Mason were lost by the untimely death of our Grand Master Hiram Abiff who lost his life shortly after the completion of the temple at Jerusalem.

These secrets remained lost for a period of 5 hundred years and the ceremony of the Royal Arch depicts how they were rediscovered.

The drama of the ritual is set in Jerusalem shortly after the return of the Jewish people from their Babylonian Captivity, when Zerubbabel is preparing to rebuild the Temple and the City to its former glory. The Chapter represents the Grand Sanhedrin, whose deliberations are interrupted by the late arrival of three Sojourners, also from Babylon, who asks to be permitted to assist in the rebuilding work. They are sent to clear the ground, of Solomon's former Temple hence the working implements, to receive the foundations of the new Temple. Whilst clearing the ground they come across a rock in the form of an Arch. Beneath the rock they find a hidden vault, hence the Chapter carpet is of a concave design to simulate the depth of that vault. It was in this vault that the long lost secrets were rediscovered which had been placed there when the original Temple was built.

The Three Sojourners report their discovery to the Sanhedrin and are rewarded by being constituted Companions of the Chapter. On being rewarded the Three Sojourners are invested with their Royal Arch Regalia which consists of an Apron a Sash and a Jewel.

Let us now look closely at the Chapter apron and consider its links to the Craft. It has the two lengths of ribbon, which represent the two grand pillars at the porch way or entrance to King Solomon's temple but in this instance white for purity. The Craft

apron has three rosettes in a triangular position, which represent the three Grand Masters. Whereas the Royal Arch has a Triangle which houses the mystical symbol of the Royal Arch. Both aprons have five points one at each corner and one at the peak or cap and the same seven strands on the lengths of ribbon.

The colours of the two lengths of ribbon on the Apron and the ribbon on the Jewel vary according to the companions rank within the Chapter, white for a Companion, red for a Principal or Past Principal. Whilst the Provincial and Supreme Grand Chapter Officers have blue ribbons on their aprons and multi-coloured red, blue and purple on the ribbon on the Jewel. On the reverse of this jewel the wording although being in Latin refers to Brethren and not Companions and should always be worn in a Craft lodge and to the right of all other jewels and therefore nearest to the heart.

Meetings of Royal Arch Chapters are called convocations and are generally much more relaxed and much friendlier than Craft meetings, and yet they maintain exactly the same high degree of dignity, discipline, and decorum. Nobody seems able to put their finger on exactly why this should be, perhaps because members of the Royal Arch tend to be drawn from the more dedicated masons.

From this presentation I hope that you can see and understand why the Royal Arch is indissolubly linked to the Craft and why becoming a Royal Arch Mason completes ones journey through Pure Ancient Masonry.

Brethren it has not been my intention this evening to persuade anyone to become Royal Arch Masons, but to give you a taste of the Order. You now have some basis on which to make up your own minds as to whether you think you would like to join us. I must warn you however that we are all very enthusiastic Royal Arch Masons and our enthusiasm is infectious.

There are over 80 Chapter in this province with the 2 Chapters
Meeting in this building and 15 in area 2 listed in the year book. Should you require
any further details ask your Chapter Representative in your Craft Lodge who will be
only too please to help or any Brother wearing a Chapter Jewel.

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There is an Opening Address that is given in some Chapters, the final paragraphs of
this address being.

*The order we profess is of the highest dignity and honour, it being the summit and
perfection of all Freemasonry. It impresses on the mind a belief in the existence of a
Deity who is without beginning of days or ending of years, and reminds us of the
reverence due to His Holy Name. If everything wise, everything virtuous, and
everything praiseworthy were united, the result would be characteristic of Royal
Arch Masonry. It's end is the promotion of virtue, and it's solemn business the
communication of the Holy Name of that great awful Being who alone can exalt us to
joys imperishable in their nature, and eternal in their duration.*

These last few words beautifully sum up the Royal Arch.

Brethren should you have any questions I will be pleased to answers them, if I can.

When to join

Where Baildon Baildon Monday, Moravia Thursday
 Bingley Charity Tuesday, Binglea Monday
 Keighley Judea Tuesday
 Spring Bank Sincerity Wednesday, Pentalpha Wednesday
 Ionic Wednesday, Faith Friday Lunchtime,

Costs

If there are no more questions I would like to finish by asking E Comp
..... to give the Valedictory or Closing Address, normally given
immediately after the Chapter is closed but not this evening as we have held this back
for you to hear. In a small way it is like the Ancient Charge given to a Candidate on
his Initiation. However, the closing address is always given weather there is a
candidate or not.

Listen closely to the words, they tell you a lot about this lovely Order.

E Comp.

(Front) Obverse

“Nil nisi clavis deest” “Nothing is wanting but the key”

“Si talia jungere possis sit tibi scire satis”

“If thou canst understand what follows thou knowest enough”

Reverse