

# Lead Article — Spring 2016

Two Artificial Spherical Bodies —  
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The pillars which appear in almost every lodge room throughout the country and which are brought into great prominence in the lecture of the second degree, are surmounted by large globes.

These globes, containing the various parts of the earth, and the particular celestial phenomena, are normally a source of confusion, not only to most of the newly initiated Masons, but as well to long time members of the fraternity.

Why, they usually ask, does the Masonic institution find it necessary to place these globes, which are definitely modern symbols, on top of these brazen pillars which they teach are intended to symbolize the two brazen pillars which stood on the great porch of King Solomon's Temple?

Not having received a satisfactory answer to this question they then usually follow this with a second question, "What was the original shape of these pillars?" This second question, which in itself contains the answer to the first, is the topic which we will endeavor to explain. Apparently, and this is mere conjecture, the shape of the pillars was originally the same shape as we find in our representations of the present day.

Pillars of the same type and shape were normally placed before both Phoenician and Egyptian temples. Pillars, of approximately the same design, were also erected in many other places. These are the pillars which we find reference to in Deut. XII, where we read that they were to be cast down and destroyed by the express command of the Lord.

These pillars, those which stood in front of the temples, and those which were erected in the high places, were undoubtedly phallic symbols. The reason for the

shape of them is therefore apparent. We look at our representations as phallic symbols.

Phallicism occupied a great part of the worship of the ancient peoples, much as it does the worship of the more primitive peoples of the present. Phallicism was well known, not only to the idolaters of the fertile crescent area, but also to the worshippers of the God of the Israelites. According to Mackenzie, in the Royal Masonic Encyclopedia, Jewish tradition states that the construction, dedication, and completion of the Temple were accompanied by devotions on the part of King Solomon to the Phallic rites.

In his very interesting and imaginative theoretical study, "Who was Hiram Abiff?", Brother J.S.M. Ward bluntly states that these pillars were definitely phallic symbols. If Brother Ward's statement can be relied upon, then this would tend to substantiate our theory that the shape of the pillars has not changed materially since the time of the actual building of the Temple. The modern ritualists have merely added their engravings to the faces of the two globes which they found readymade for their purposes.

One thing which would tend to demonstrate the probability of the accuracy of the above theory is the tendency of peoples who worship a masculine type of God to show their devotion to him by the erection of phallic symbols typifying the male principle. Not only masculine Gods but male heroes of a particular country are thus honored. A good modern example is that of the Washington monument, erected to one who has been called, "the father of his country." This imposing granite shaft is doubtless a Phallic symbol. Consequently the Jews, who worshipped a very masculine type of God, although not altogether exclusively would have used the representation of the masculine organ to symbolize their omnipotent male god. Of course, at the same time that the temple was being constructed, pillars of this same general type and configuration were being erected in the high places near Mount Moriah to assist in the worship of Baal and Astarte, the popular Caananite fertility deities. Thus, finding the general outline of the pillars necessary for their purposes, what symbol, if any, did the ancient builders, the progenitors of Freemasonry, give to these globes? First, the globes which appear atop the two brazen pillars are, in reality, merely an adaption of the chapters or chapiters which are referred to in the lectures of the symbolic lodge. Modern Freemasonry is in error in assuming that these chapters or chapiters were in actuality the capitals of the pillars and that the globes were merely placed on them.

The ritualistic work of many states proclaims, "The pillars were further surmounted by large pommels or globes." The word pommel is extremely significant in this context. Pommel is an architectural term thus defined by Parker (Glossary of Architecture, page 365) "Pommel denotes generally any ornament of

a globular form."

These pommels, the two atop the pillars, are mentioned in II Chronicles IV 13 and in I Kings VII:15 where the Biblical writers state that "The artificer made two chapters of molten brass to set upon the tops of the pillars."

The early Masonic students who composed the several lectures, as well as those persons who translated the scriptures were in fault in translating the Hebrew wording, thereby giving rise to the idea that these pommels were placed on top of the capital of the pillars rather than being an integral part of them. The Hebrew word caphitorim was erroneously translated as chapter or chapter. Rabbi Solomon, in his commentary, correctly translates this word as pommel signifying a large spherical body, or, in modern terms, a globe. The word caphtorim usually should be translated to indicate a large artificial pomegranate of a spherical shape. In his "Antiquities" Josephus has kept to the literal Hebrew and translates caphtorim as pommel or globe, rather than chapter. Even in translations of Josephus, where the word chapter is used to denote the pommel, it is noted that "there was cast with each of their chapters, lily work, that stood upon the pillar, and it was elevated five cubits, round about which there was network interwoven with small palms, made of brass, and covered the lilywork. To this also were hung 200 pomegranates in two rows." (The works of Flavius Josephus; Porter and Coates, translated from the Greek by William Whiston A.M. 1892). This would tend to indicate that if the pommels were the chapters that the ornamentation upon the pillars was placed upon the face of the globes, rather than under them as we use it now.

Lightfoot also agrees with the theory that the chapters were in reality spheres. He states, in speaking of the chapters, "it was a huge great oval, five cubits high and did not only sit upon the head of the pillars, but also flowered and spread them, being larger about a great deal, than the pillars themselves."

Even though these statements and theories were wholly true, the pommels of the pillars would have necessarily been plain spheres, rather than engraved maps such as we have today. Since the Hebrew concept of the earth was not that of a round globe, but rather that of an oblong square which we find symbolized in the tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, and the modern symbolic lodge of Freemasonry, there is no reason to theorize that actual spherical maps were placed on these pillars at the time of King Solomon. Rather, these ornaments could have possibly been used to symbolize many different concepts, among which might have been the Egyptian hieroglyphic for the earth. The Egyptian symbol for the earth was that of a winged globe from whence comes the expression we find in Isaiah, "Egypt, the land shadowed with wings." This, of course, does not mean that the ancient Egyptians had any conception of the actual shape of the earth. They, as did most of the ancient peoples, advanced

the idea of a flat earth, with four corners and definite limitations. But, since they used the hieroglyphic of a winged sphere to denote the earth, it is highly possible that one or both of these globular ornaments were intended to typify this concept.

Another theory which might be advanced and one which is also nearly impossible to verify, is that, since the Master workman who designed these pillars was a Phoenician or Tyrian, the shape of these pommels might have been intended to represent the Babylonian conception of the shape of the earth and the heavens.

In Enuma Elish, "The Babylonian Genesis," A. Heidel, University of Chicago Press 1951, the concept of heaven and earth is given as of circular shapes, although the entirety of heaven and earth is enclosed within a large crystal sphere. Many other peoples believed that a crystal sphere enclosed a flat earth, and that the stars, sun, and moon were also contained within this sphere.

In Mackey's National Freemason for December, 1873, an article by W.L. Fawcette states that these pillars are of Tyrian origin and symbolize the worship of the Sun and Moon, both supposedly of a spherical shape. Approximately this same theory is advanced in an article by Brother William B. Bragdon in the "Builder" for March, 1922.

In the "Builder, October, 1923, in an article entitled "The Pillars of Brass" by Brother Jerome B. Frisbee, the pillars are pictured reconstructed and the pommels are depicted as globes although plain and unadorned.

Mackey has also promulgated the same approximate theory, for in "An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences" it is stated that "the pillars of the porch of Solomon's Temple were copied from the pillars of the Egyptian Temples and the round chapters in themselves represented the terrestrial and celestial spheres without needing the maps engraved upon them which we use today."

These theories, which may or may not be correct, are fairly logical, considering that the concept of a spherical earth was first advanced by Aristotle in approximately 340 B.C. (The Students Oxford Aristotle, The Oxford University Press 1942, pages 347-348) and again by Claudius Ptolemy, approximately 129 B.C. (Ptolemy, The Almagest, Great Books of the Western World, Chicago 1952, Volume 16 Book I Sec. 1-8).

Since the earliest concepts of an earth with an actual spherical shape were proposed approximately 600 years later than the date of the building of Solomon's Temple which event occurred in roughly 960 B.C., we have no reason to assume that actual spherical maps could have possibly been an integral part of the pommels on the pillars of the temple.

If, however, the basic idea of these pillars and the symbolism of the two spheres representing the shape of the heavens and the earth was inherent in Masonry through the ages, it would have been a small task to have substituted actual illustrations of the celestial and terrestrial spheres for these symbolical representations.

These pillars and their surmountations have been a part of the teaching of Freemasonry as far back as the origins of the institution have been traced.

For example, in the appendix to J. Finlay Finlayson's "Symbols and Legends of Freemasonry" ( George Kenning and Sons, Kingsway, W.C.) he states that the facade of Notre Dame du Poitiers, which cathedral was founded in 1161, has two columns resembling Jachin and Boaz, and also that in the Cathedral at Wurmburg, circa early 13th century, there are also carvings of these two pillars.

In the Wilson manuscript of 1650, there is a reference to the two great pillars, one of brick, and the other of marble, which had the constitutions of Masonry engraved upon them, referring to the legend of Lamech, and since this was copied from a still earlier manuscript, we can see that the idea of pillars extends far back into operative Masonry. It is hereby apparent that the concept of these pillars and their symbolism was inherent in the operative are, that their origin as symbols parallels the origin of operative Masonry, and that when the metamorphosis of operative Masonry into speculative Masonry took place that the pillars were brought into speculative Masonry as two very important symbols.

Most probably we can designate William Preston as the man who substituted the actual globes for the ornamental spheres on top of the pillars.

In the Philalethes Magazine for December, 1963, Alex Horne of San Francisco quotes Oliver, "Dr. Geo. Oliver tells us that in the Eighteenth Century, the brethren used "a long table . . . down the centre of the room . . . On these tables were disposed a pair of 18 inch globes," etc. These tables were done away with at the Union of the Antient and Modern Grand Lodges in 1813 and it is possible that the globes were permanently transferred to the pillars at that time. (See the Book of the Lodge pp. 98-99)

Mackey's Encyclopedia says that the symbolic idea of the pillars was introduced into Masonry by Hutchinson; that Preston seized on the idea, enlarged it into his lectures and introduced the idea of the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud as a part of Masonry. Preston incorporated many of the older ideas into his lectures and attempted to infuse them, not always successfully, with modern concepts. However, the idea of placing the globes on the pillars to replace the chapters, meanwhile keeping closely to the original concepts, can most probably be credited to him as, The Texas Grand Lodge Magazine, (August, 1940) says that

"The placing of the actual globes in the place of the chapters was done by Preston in the latter half of the 18th century in an effort by himself and his contemporaries to transform the lodge into a school of learning."

Probably this statement can be taken at face value as many of the symbols of our lectures can be traced to Preston in his desire to develop the educational side of Freemasonry.

Thus, finding the pillars with their spherical ornaments and, wishing to more fully illustrate the concepts which they were intended to symbolize, he most probably placed these globes in the position formerly occupied by the pommels. However, looking at the spherical ornaments of the columns, and the ideas which they were supposed to promulgate, we can readily ascertain that, by placing actual globes in place of these globular chapters, we have not modernized the ancient concepts of Freemasonry, but have merely used the most available means to clarify the symbolism and to spread, "more light in Masonry."