

# THE STRUCTURE OF THE MASTER MASON'S DEGREE

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The third degree or Master Mason's Degree of the freemason order is the culmination of the Blue Lodge system. The first degree concerning the governing of the passions, the second degree the adoring of the mind. The Master Mason's Degree is considering the spiritual development and the great truth that there's life after death.

The real goal of the masonic degree system is a kind of masonic transformation whereby a man is transformed from the inside out, pursuing the right things in life as a matter of habit even Aristotle sought this type of transformation.

This degree is the climax of the teachings of the Blue Lodge. It is the culmination of all that has been taught to candidates in the two proceeding ceremonies. At this point, the candidate has symbolically balanced his inner natures and shaped them into a proper relationship with a higher, more spiritual parts, of himself.<sup>1</sup>

His physical nature has been purified and developed to a higher degree so that he's ready to take on these Sublime Degree of Master Mason. Being raised to the Sublime Degree is the appropriate terminology. Sublime is defined as being exalted or elevated so as to aspire awe and wonder. The degree portrays the removal of everything that keeps us from rising to that state of improvement from which we are able to absorb the great lessons of this degree.

One of the primary goals of the third degree is to symbolize the great doctrine of immortality which it accomplishes in a very dramatic fashion. One of the greatest lessons to a man from this degree is that having been faithful to his trust, he must at last die in order to obtain the ultimate rewards of this fidelity. His own self must die and a new one reborn as he prepares himself for the future. Each reexamination of this degree by a brother mason yields new meaning concerning these important lessons.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Virginia, a lecture on the Master Mason Degree, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhriyiNztt0>

<sup>2</sup>Michael Johnstone, *The Freemasons*, Arcturus, 2005, pp 101–120

## RELATIONSHIP TO RELIGION

Freemasonry as the masons have stated in the ritual is not a religion, but it is essentially religious. It requires a belief in God but articulates no path to salvation, leaving that to the various religions themselves. However, Masonry was influenced and continues to be influenced by various religions and philosophies and first among these is Christianity.

Knowing that Freemasonry descends directly from the operative trade guilds, they built the mighty cathedrals in England and Scotland, it's no wonder that Christianity is the first among equals of religions relative to Masonry. They got the constitutions required adherence to Christianity as the regular faith of the country. This is only natural especially considering that the work at hand was the construction of Christian houses of worship.

Even today, the masons see the rituals and prayers in the Masonry set against a Judeo-Christian backdrop and in fact, the masons continue to honor the Christian heritage for examples by veneration of the Holy Saints John, the tradition of the Saint John's Day church service, and the highlight in the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

However, the constitutions of 1723 removed the explicit requirement to be a Christian and now simply reflect a basic form of theism or belief in God. Why is this? Because Freemasonry was born and flourished during the British Enlightenment.

They were significant religious and philosophic debate raging across England. It would appear that DeSaguliers and his comrades wanted to be the center of union in these times of debate not a place to cause controversy which would ruin the overall goal of brotherhood. One of the strongest religious and philosophic currents at that time was deism.

Deism is the belief that there is a grand architect and creator of the universe, that there is a God but after having created the universe, God moved onto other things and generally does not intervene in the affairs of man and this world.

Therefore, deists were very interested in the investigation of nature, natural philosophy again; being the handiwork of God, it would reveal something of his nature. However, they generally distrusted revelation as recorded in the Bible through the prophets believing that to be superstitious. Notable deists included the philosopher Voltaire, Lord Bolingbroke, and Thomas Paine who is the author of *Common Sense*.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>*Duncan's Masoic Ritual and Monitor*, by Malcom C. Duncan, [1866],

<sup>4</sup> "Continental Lodges", *Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, retrieved 30 November 2013

**Deism** was recorded into the belief system of various Enlightenment figures in different ways. For some, the influence was slight and they remained traditional Christians, using these ideas to further their intellectual curiosity. Others were more significantly influenced by the tenants of deism and it became for them a true religion, although deism itself never took hold as a traditional church.

The influence of deism spread from Europe to America, and the influence is found even in the founding fathers of America. American's founding fathers were clearly orthodox Christians such as Sam Adams and Patrick Henry. Others are Unitarian such as John Adams. But it is possible to find what might be describe as Christian deist. George Washington, James Madison, and James Monroe were Christians who had some strong deistic philosophical beliefs. Moreover, the masons find non-Christian deist. These we might see with Thomas Paine, Ethan Allen even Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson are bordering on that definition.

But while some of the Enlightenment figures and early Masonic leaders were influenced by deist, Masonry is not deism. However, there are deistic influences in the ritual especially in the middle chamber lecture on the subject of geometry. Deistic names for God include the Divine Watchmaker, Divine Providence, and so forth.

In addition to the interest in deistic principles, there was during the Renaissance Enlightenment, a great revival of interest in all things classical to include the ancient mysteries. The mysteries were religious cults of the ancient Greco-Roman world, dedicated to a particular God which restricted admission to those who have gone through secret initiation rites.

The Eleusinian Mysteries were generally considered to be the greatest of its kind. They were held annually by the cult of Demeter and Persephone based at Eleusis in ancient Greece. They began during the Mycenaean period, about 1700 BC, lasting all the way up to 392 AD where they were closed by the Roman Emperor Theodosius I. There is no evidence of a direct link between Masonry and the Mysteries. However, the creators of Speculative Masonry clearly borrowed some ritualistic practices from the Mysteries such as revelation of esoteric knowledge by degrees, purification of the initiate, circumambulation. These are all ritualistic touches that generate interest in the Masonic ritualistic system.

Before the Grand Lodge era, Masonry originally had one degree from making the Mason, Entered Apprentice. There's some evidence of a Fellowcraft ritual in Scotland. A two-degree system was put in place about 1720, later confirmed in the constitution of 1723. The third degree was added about 1725 where which we find the first evidence in the minutes from Lodge No. 83 in London 1732. The third degree was firmly implanted in Masonry by the time the constitution

of 1738 was finalized. It is generally believed that Dr. DeSaguliers and his associates played the central role in constructing the Master Mason Degree and the accompanied Hiram Legend.<sup>5</sup>

It's important note that these men were greatly influenced by the spirit of rationality, science, and natural philosophy so prevalent in the British Enlightenment but they were nonetheless Christians. In fact, DeSaguliers was an Anglican priest among his many other roles. James Anderson who compiled the constitutions in 1723 was in fact a Presbyterian minister.

Soitcanbe summarize that Freemasonry as it developed was influenced by many traditions to include the Operative Masonic tradition, the Mystery Schools, classical Greek ethics, Judeo-Christian ethics, deism, and late Renaissance traditions such as Neoplatonism and Alchemy. And yet despite these various influences, Masonry again favors no particular religion and is intended to bring good men of all religions, creeds, and countries together under one roof for the benefit of the individual and for society at large.

The main mission of religion being that to provide the path of salvation for its flock, in other words to save souls. When an institution like Masonry provides a degree that focuses on the spiritual side of man, it is not unreasonable or unexpected that religious leaders would want to understand what is being taught. Many religions upon examinations of the principles of Masonry find no fault with those principles and see no conflict with their religious teachings. However, some do find fault. Historically, the Catholic Church has been chief among them. The Catholic Church has stood against Freemasonry since 1738 and has expressed the forbidden membership. Freemasonry on the other hand has not forbidden Catholics to join. All good men with the belief in God are welcome.

A problem arises when the proponents of a particular faith are so zealous and religious and rigid about their system and plan for a man's life that they cannot countenance different approaches to the truth. Rather than seeing Masonry as a support for religion as well as for promoting civic virtue, they see it as encouraging error because it is accommodating of different views and belief systems. They seek to convert everyone to their understanding of the world and find us Masonry subversive to that mission because the masons are willing to join together with men from various religious traditions. Again, the mason have to reflect on the mission of Masonry which is to unite men in one common purpose in a solemn and serious way under one roof.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Tony Pope, "At a Perpetual Distance: Liberal and Adogmatic Grand Lodges", Presented to Waikato Lodge of Research No 445 at Rotorua, New Zealand, on 9 November 2004

<sup>6</sup>Campbell, Donald G.; *Committee on Ritual. "The Master Mason; Irregular and Clandestine Lodges". Handbook for Candidate's Coaches (excerpt). Grand Lodge F.&A.M. of California. Retrieved 2007-05-08.*

## THE SYMBOLISM OF THE MASTER MASON'S DEGREE

In this degree, the candidate is caused to play the role of Grand Master of Hiram Abiff as he's conducted around the Lodge which represents again the Sanctum Sanctorum of Solomon's Temple. This drama represents tragedy of the greatest magnitude. Bad things happening to good people. Justice is given to the ruffians who betrayed Hiram. Mercy is given to those who repented.

Master Mason's Degree symbolizes the triumph of life over death. It exemplifies the power and the powerlessness of evil. Even though man can be laid low by the horrible conspiracies of other yet the better part of man will live on despite the evil done to him. There's a reward for those who live life the right way even though it may not seem so at a given place and time.

Master Mason's Degree not only teaches the great truth the immortality of the soul, it also teaches the resurrection of the body. This is done by representing the Messiah, the line of the tribe of Judah, from the line of David and Solomon. The actual phrase "line of the tribe of Judah" appears only once in the Bible in the book of revelation where it refers to Jesus Christ.

It would seem that the original intent by the founders was to suggest Christ especially when contrasted with the immortality of the soul believed contained in the Jewish dispensation. But as with most Masonic symbolism, its interpretation is not prescribed and can be interpreted by the individual Mason who reflects on these great and serious principles in accordance with his own traditions. The lion has always been the symbol of might and royalty. In the middle ages, the lion become a symbol of resurrection as well. There were common tales that the lion cub as he was born, lay dead for three days until breathed upon by his father. This breath brought the cub back to life. Representations of roaring lion symbolizes the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day and so forth. The candidate is prepared for the Master Mason Degree and much the same way is prepared for the previous degrees. Mode of dress, entrance, and reception, all these things are by now very familiar to the candidate.

Looking at the working tools of a Master Mason, the masons see all the instruments of masonry. In the United States, the trial is used especially for this degree. Master Mason uses the trial to cement ties between Masons and to spread brotherly love. Again, the masons have talked about how the building of virtue and the spreading of brotherly love to unite us together as brethren is a fascinating metaphor against the operative building tradition.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Mark S. Dwor, "Some thoughts on the history of the Tracing Boards", *Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon*, 1999, retrieved 7 November 2013

<sup>8</sup>Robert L.D. Cooper, *Cracking the Freemason's Code*, Rider 2006, p. 60-79

## **THE CENTRAL LEGEND OF THE THIRD DEGREE**

The legend of Hiram Abiff. He was a skilled artificer, son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali. All this is recorded in the 1st book of Kings. He's coming to work on the great Temple of Jerusalem is mentioned in a letter written to King Solomon by Hiram, King of Tyre, recorded in II Chronicles. He was regarded as the father of the workman on the Temple. And one of the great lessons of the legend of Hiram Abiff is that a fidelity to one's highest ideals. The Hiram Abiff character is also similar to some of the Mystery School heroes.

For example, the drama of the Egyptian god Osiris began with his tragic death, the search for his body by Isis, its discovery and restoration. The Greek god Dionysus was attacked by the Titans. In the course of the fight, he went through many transformations but was finally overcome. In other words, this formula is ancient, has been used in many times and places.

There are similar parallels with respect to Hiram as a Son of the Widow. The Egyptian god Horus as the child of Isis and Osiris was also the Son of the Widow. Hermes Trismegistus was called the Stone Orphan. There are many, again, many examples of this type of symbolism across history.

The three Grand masters mentioned in the masonic ritual are Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abiff. This is just one of many triads in Masonic ritual. And it is important to note that in a number of religions deity is regarded in three aspects to include Christianity. The secrets known only to those Grand Masters represent Divine Truth, which is known only to them through Deity. Once these secrets were obtained, a man could reap the rewards of a well-spent life and travel to the unknown country toward which all of us are traveling. This is yet another device to stimulate the thinking and serve as a vehicle for further reflection.

This takes us to the concept of traveling in foreign countries. The goal of the ancient operative brethren was to become masters so they might possess those secrets, make a travel to foreign countries and build as they like working on different projects. The term "foreign countries" is used symbolically in Speculative Masonry and is not necessarily meant to refer to a geographic location. Freemasonry itself is a foreign country to every new member. To fully appreciate and enjoy the privileges of membership, one must become familiar with its territory. The mason do this by learning the language, customs, and histories of the craft. This is a most rewarding experience of self-improvement that extends across his entire life.

There are many symbolic explanations for the appearance of these ruffians in the ritual. Their attempt to obtain the secrets that are not rightfully theirs and the dire consequences of their actions symbolic of many things. Trying to obtain special knowledge by some means other than a reward for faithfulness makes the culprit both a thief and a murderer. Each of us is reminded

that rewards must be earned rather than obtained by violence or devious means. The masons learn that hard work and perseverance are keys to success and that violence is never an acceptable form of conduct except in self-defense. The ruffians are also symbolic of the enemies the masons have within ourselves, the own ignorance, passions, and attitudes, which the masons have come here to control and subdue.<sup>910</sup>

## THE LOST WORD

The literal Master Mason word allowed masons to work at various projects all over Britain. However, the symbolic word can be taken to allude to the divine name of God pronounced only once a year by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish Temple.

The ongoing search for the true lost word of Masonry symbolizes and emphasizes common aspects of man's universal search for truth across time and space in particular divine truth.

Once the true Master Mason word was lost, a substitute was provided which can be taken to symbolize that the masons cannot fully understand divine truth in this life. This search has gone on throughout history and around the world. This search is one of the things that promote in Masonry such an investigation to the many fields of study, history, philosophy, and religion. And this again is symbolic of traveling in foreign countries.

Some of the other symbols the masons will now talk about, the setting maul. It was a wooden instrument used by operative masons to set polished stone firmly into a wall. Maul has been shown to be a symbol of destruction from prehistoric times and is shown many times in mythology. One of the best known is that of Thor, God of Thunder, who is shown as a powerful man armed with a mighty hammer. As Masons, the masons recognize it as a symbol of that event or condition that removes us from this earthly life.

**The sprig of Acacia** which the masons know so well. The Hebrews would plant a sprig of acacia at the head of a grave for two purposes: to mark the location of the grave and to show their belief in immortality. Because of its evergreen nature, they believed it to be an emblem of both immortality and innocence. The true acacia is a thorny plant which abounds in the Middle East. Both Jews and Egyptians believed that because of its hardness, its evergreen nature and its durability, it signified immortality. It is believed that the acacia was used to construct most of the

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<sup>9</sup> Campbell, Donald G.; Committee on Ritual. "The Master Mason; Irregular and Clandestine Lodges". *Handbook for Candidate's Coaches (excerpt)*. Grand Lodge F.&A.M. of California. Retrieved 2007-05-08.

<sup>10</sup> "Words, Grips and Signs" H. L. Haywood, *Symbolical Masonry*, 1923, Chapter XVIII, *Sacred Texts* website, retrieved 9 January 2014

furniture and tabernacle in the Temple. Acacia has red and white flowers. It is a tradition in the Near East that the Crown of Thorns was acacia.<sup>11</sup>

## THE RAISING OF A CANDIDATE

Most people do not understand what being Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason means. This degree is the sublime climax of Symbolic Freemasonry. If the mason learn only that the living, dying and raising of a Master is a drama designed to teach the virtues of fidelity, faith, and fortitude, the mason have received only partial light and have seen nothing but a moral lesson. In fact the degree delves into the deepest recesses of man's nature. While it leads the initiate into the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple, it probes into the Holy of Holies in his heart. As a whole, the degree is symbolic of old age by the wisdom of which the masons may enjoy the happy reflections consequent on a well-spent and properly directed life and die in the hope of a glorious immortality. This degree seeks to answer the age-old question put forth by Job, "If a man die, shall he live again?" It teaches no creed, no dogma, no doctrine, no religion; only that there's immortality and the masons must live the lives the right way with this fact in mind.

There are many hieroglyphical emblems in the degree which are properly explained in the lecture of the degree to include The Three Pillars, The Three Steps of Life, The Pot of Incense, The Beehive, The Book of Constitutions, and so forth. These symbols and emblems are the key to stir the imagination and provide wonderful concepts to theorize upon about life and the passing of life as the masons go along.<sup>1213</sup>

## MASONIC RELIEF

Every mason has a right to apply for relief to his Lodge or the Grand Lodge if he finds himself in times of trouble and this is a great tradition in the craft. Relief is a voluntary function for both the Lodge and the individual. If the Lodge's financial condition will not allow to help, he can apply then to Grand Lodge for further help. This type of relief also extends to the widows and orphans of Master Masons. The masons have a long and strong tradition of supporting widows and orphans through the Masonic homes and all kinds of funds and other initiatives.

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<sup>11</sup>Campbell, Donald G.; *Committee on Ritual. "The Master Mason; Irregular and Clandestine Lodges". Handbook for Candidate's Coaches (excerpt). Grand Lodge F.&A.M. of California. Retrieved 2007-05-08.*

<sup>12</sup>"Masonic U.S. Recognition of French Grand Lodges in the 20th century", Paul M. Bessel. retrieved 8 November 2013

<sup>13</sup> Paul Bessel, "U.S. Recognition of French Grand Lodges in the 1900s", from *Heredom: The Transactions of the Scottish Rite Research Society*, vol 5, 1996, pp 221–244, Paul Bessel website, retrieved 12 November 2013



## **VISITING OTHER LODGES**

Another right of a master mason is Masonic Visitation - Visiting other Lodges is one of the greatest privileges of a Master Mason. The mason can find Lodges all over the country and all around the world. I myself have visited in many States and it's really one of the most interesting things the mason can do. I have recall on one time where I visited a Lodge in California. There was actually the Worshipful Master was a surfer and that was a great thing to behold really. So when the mason go to visit another Lodge, he will going to be examined by a committee of masons to make sure that the person are in fact a mason and the mason will have to prove himself with knowledge of the grips and signs of the degrees as well as have his dues cards and so forth.

## **BURIAL**

Another right of a Master Mason is a right of burial. This only applies to the Master Mason and is conducted only at the request of anther mason or some member of the family. The choice belongs to the family and not the Lodge and the service can be held in a church, Lodge room, funeral parlor, or grave site. It's a beautiful and solemn ceremony. There are other public and formal ceremonies that Masonry has such as laying the cornerstone of a public building. This tradition goes back many years as well and many of the finest buildings in the country especially in Washington, DC, the cornerstones were laid in Masonic ceremony such as with the Congress, such as the White House, and the Washington Monument. The masons have other public ceremonies as well such as the public installation of officers, the ceremony of consecrating, dedicating and constituting a new Lodge, and the presentation of Veterans' pins. All of these public ceremonies give us a wonderful opportunity to show the public what Masonry is all about.<sup>14</sup>

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A MASTER MASON**

The constant responsibility of a Master Mason is to preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied. By leading a good life, the Mason will bring credit to himself and honor to the Fraternity and this is the best means of carrying through the individual responsibilities to the Lodge. The masons would all do well to remember that brotherhood is the cornerstone in this Fraternity.

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<sup>14</sup>The Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Virginia, a lecture on the Master Mason Degree, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhriyiNztt0>

The masons should treat others with the same respect and consideration with which the masons would like to be treated. In all the actions, The masons should be an example of brotherly love and action and thus, not be too hasty to condemn others.

Lodge attendance. The masons do not have a mandatory attendance requirement as ancient Lodges did and the masons do not have a penalty for not attending. However, every Master Mason has obligation to be loyal to the Lodge which gave him Masonic Light and attend wherever he can. The masons use the term if within the length of his cable tow.<sup>15</sup>

## **BALLOTING**

Only members who are consider to be in good standing have a right to vote and only in the Lodge which they are a member. No member is permitted to retire from the Lodge to avoid casting his ballot. The white balls indicate an affirmative or favorable ballot and the black cube indicates a negative. If the mason do not know a moral reason why the petitioner should not be admitted to the Fraternity, the mason should accept the word of the Investigating Committee and the two vouchers and cast a favorable ballot on a petition for membership. If there is a moral failing of the petitioner that he is aware of, the time to raise that objection is before the ballot is taken. He has the right to speak to the Master privately and express his concern.

## **EXAMINING VISITORS**

This responsibility belongs to the Lodge itself and is dedicated by the Master to a committee of Brethren who are to satisfy themselves that the visitor is a Master Mason in good standing in a regular and recognized Lodge. The Master may call upon any member of the Lodge to serve on the committee. It should be remembered that the purpose of examination is to prove that a visitor is a Mason, and not to test the extent of his Masonic proficiency. Kindness and courtesy should be shown to all visitors at all times.

## **VOUCHERS ON PETITIONERS**

Before endorsing the petition of anyone for initiation into the Mysteries, the mason should know the applicant for a sufficient amount of time so that he can truly vouch for his moral character and reputation. The mason should know why he wants to become a Mason, what he expects, and what may be expected of him. The masons are not looking for people to join the craft who are coming here for mercenary motives such as to establish business ties. The masons truly want men to have good character or looking to improve themselves.

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<sup>15</sup> *Duncan's Masoic Ritual and Monitor*, by Malcom C. Duncan, [1866],

## **INVESTIGATING PETITIONERS**

This responsibility belongs to every member of the Lodge and should not be taken lightly. Serving on that Investigating Committee should be regarded as a mark of special trust by the Master of his Lodge. It is a solemn responsibility. The masons have to guard well the West Gate if the masons want to keep the high quality standard of membership in the Lodge.

## **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Twofold: the first is in the area of mandatory support, the payment of annual dues. The second is in the area of voluntary contributions to certain charities, distressed worthy other masons, and other Masonic organizations as the mason desire.<sup>16</sup>

## **LODGE MEMBERSHIP**

Although Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts are considered Masons in every sense of the word, one does not become a full member until after being raised. Termination of membership can occur in one of four ways - a demit, suspension, expulsion, or death.<sup>17</sup>

## **MASONIC LAW**

The basic law rests going back in time upon the Old Charges and the Constitutions of Masonry as these laws were compiled by the Reverend James Anderson, George Payne, John DeSaguliers in the 1720s. The law began with these and expanded at times as circumstances have required until the masons have the present system of Masonic jurisprudence. The original Book of Constitutions was divided in 6 chapters: the first chapter are concerned God and religion, then government and the civil magistrate, private qualities and duties

The Methodical Digest is divided into sections which deal with the Grand Lodge, the subordinate Lodges, the individual Masons. In that Methodic Digest, it will cover the subject of Masonic Charges. Masons are required to support the established Government, obey the civil law, keep inviolable the mysteries of the Order, preserve and obey the laws, resolutions and edicts of the Grand Lodge, and so forth. Willful failure to comply with any of these requirements is a Masonic Offense. Masonic charges may be brought in only one Lodge for the same offense and then through the process of accusation, investigation by a committee, which the Master will appoint, and the formulation and presentation of the charge itself at a stated communication of the Lodge.

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<sup>16</sup>The Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Virginia, a lecture on the Master Mason Degree, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZhriyiNztt0>

<sup>17</sup>Robert Morris's *Freemason's Monitor*, 1860.

A Trial Commission is then appointed and its judgment can be appealed to the Grand Master. If found guilty, a mason may be subject to reprimand, suspension, or expulsion from the Fraternity. Additional information on Masonic trials can be found in the Methodical Digest and in a Grand Lodge publication on Masonic Trials.<sup>18</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Freemasonry developed a unique philosophic system all its own, depicting life, death, and rebirth in dramatic form. It symbolizes the ongoing search for truth and uses drama, ritual, and symbolism to make more vivid the lessons that may assist us on the great journey of self-discovery and self-improvement.

The masons are still firmly rooted in the world of philosophy and not religion, although some masons disagree on whether the degree rituals are more of a mystical or rational nature, all would agree that they are no way attempting to provide the means of salvation, which is the primary mission of religion.

The masons simply stress those aspects of a man's spiritual aspirations and journeys that are common to all men, bringing them together in a solemn way under one roof. In the first two degrees, the lodge is a symbol of the world and the degree of Master Mason, the lodge is a representation of the sanctum sanctorum or holy of holies in Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, which itself was a symbol of heaven and the dwelling place of God on earth.

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<sup>18</sup>Campbell, Donald G.; Committee on Ritual. "The Master Mason; Irregular and Clandestine Lodges". *Handbook for Candidate's Coaches (excerpt)*. Grand Lodge F.&A.M. of California. Retrieved 2007-05-08.