The Commandery of Knights Templar

The Council of Cryptic Masons

The Chapter of Royal Arch Masons

The Symbolic Lodge

SOVEREIGN MASONIC BODIES: DISTINCT AND SEPARATE

CONISTS OF FOUR

THE YORK RITE

FREE MASONRY

OF YORK RITE

INTERESTED IN

SHOULD BE

A MASTER MASON

WHY YOU

WHAT DOES YORK RITE MASONRY OFFER?

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WHAT DOES YORK RITE MASONRY OFFER?
1. SYMBOLIC MASONRY

The symbolic degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason, as conferred in the United States, are degrees of the York Rite.

York Masonry is the oldest and best known of all Masonic Rites. It takes its name from York, England, where the earliest known record of Masonry exists, dating from about A.D. 923. Masonry's first written record is centered around York, the seat of the Ancient York Grand Lodge. In 1813, this Grand Lodge merged with another group called the Modern Grand Lodge, to form the United Grand Lodge of England. This is the basis upon which our present system of Symbolic Lodge Masonry is built.

You, as a Master Mason, have received the first three degrees of the York Rite. Having begun your Masonic work in the York Rite, it is natural that you should want to continue with it.

According to Masonic legend, every man raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason received "substitute secrets", as the "true secrets" were lost. It may prove a surprise to the average man, believing his work is completed, to be told that the secrets pertaining to the ceremony will not be given to him! This is unfortunate, but the veil is lifted in the degree of the Royal Arch, and in that degree only. Hence, no man actually becomes a Master Mason until he is exalted to that holy order.

Some would have the newly raised Master Mason believe that he can receive the secrets and word in a degree other than the Royal Arch. This is not true, historically or otherwise. The mother Grand Lodge of England was so emphatic regarding the necessity of the Royal Arch degree that many years ago, it set forth this as Paragraph One (1) of its Laws and Regulations.

*By the solemn act of the union between the two Grand Lodges of Freemasons of England in December, 1813, it was declared and pronounced that Pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees and no more, viz: those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft, and the Master Mason, INCLUDING THE SUPREME ORDER OF THE HOLY ROYAL ARCH.*

On the North American Continent, there are additional degrees in the system, supplementing the work of the Lodge, Chapter, and Council, and the Orders conferred in the Commandery have been arranged into a system or Rite referred to as the American, Canadian, or York Rite of Freemasonry. It is American in structure, as it is a democratic organization in which every member has a voice and a right to be heard.

2. ROYAL ARCH MASONRY

The various local Chapters operate under the jurisdiction of the "Grand Chapter" of each state, which in turn is governed by the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International. The General Grand Chapter constitutes the largest Masonic Body in the world.

The Chapter confers four degrees (Capitular Degrees), giving a complete story of Masonic symbolism, in the following order:

- Mark Master
- Past Master (Virtual)
- Most Excellent Master
- Royal Arch

The Mark Master degree is perhaps the oldest Masonic degree, and is one of the most highly respected. It teaches practical lessons for everyday living. This degree supplements the Fellowcraft Degree.

The Past Master degree teaches the candidate the important duties and responsibilities of the Oriental Chair, and is qualification for advancement.

It is commonly known that the symbolism of Freemasonry surrounds the building of the Temple. In symbolic Freemasonry, the Temple is never completed. In the Most Excellent Master degree, we are taught the lessons of the completion and dedication of the Temple.

In the degree of the Royal Arch, the epitome of Masonic symbolism is found. It has been said "the Royal Arch is the root, heart and marrow of Masonry, without knowledge of which the Masonic character cannot be complete".

The Royal Arch degree is the completion of the whole system of Freemasonry. Having begun regular advancement through the Symbolic Lodge, it is the duty of each Master Mason to complete the degree series. He who has sought further Masonic education should return to the Symbolic Lodge, retrace his steps and advance through the Rite until he can receive the climax of Masonic symbolism, as taught in the Royal Arch.

Only those who have attained the Royal Arch may be said to have completed their Masonic Work.

3. CRYPTIC MASONRY

The Councils of Cryptic Masons operate under the jurisdiction of the Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of each state and most Grand Councils operate under the General Grand Council of the United States. They confer the following three degrees:

- Royal Master
- Select Master
- Super Excellent Master

Without the Royal and Select Master degrees, neither the Master Mason degree nor the Royal Arch degree is complete. These two degrees account for the concealment and preservation of the treasures revealed in the Royal Arch.

The Super Excellent Master is an honorary degree, qualifications for which are fulfilled by virtue of being in good standing in a Council. This degree is the most dramatic and spectacular of all Masonic systems.