

# **ORATIONS**

## **Grand York Rite of California**

### **May 2011**

*Orations*

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Golden State Research Chapter

Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

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Dedicated to

Most Excellent Companion

**WILLIAM N. WINE**

Grand High Priest, 2005-06  
Royal Arch Masons of California

For his fervency and zeal as a prime mover in establishing and convening the Golden State Chapter of Research at the Sacramento Grand Sessions of the California Grand York Rite in 2004.

That Kind Messenger came for Bill on March 25th, 2011, at the tender age of 61 years, 7 months and 21 days. Almighty Father, into Thy hands we commend the soul of our Beloved Brother!

## PREFACE

The orations given in this small booklet are jewels from the 2010-2011 York Rite Year just completed. Right Worshipful John Cooper, Junior Grand Warden for our California Grand Lodge, assented to the request of Most Excellent Teddy G. Hammack to address our Companions during the Grand Chapter luncheon. My theme for Capitular Year 2011-2012 is: "We're on the right track – Keep Moving!" This is based on the quote attributed to Will Rogers: "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you don't keep moving." Brother Cooper has portrayed well in his talk what will happen near the end of our new century *if* we don't keep moving and building on the growth successes of the last few years -- we will simply vanish when the last Royal Arch Mason dies.

The talk by Rev. Boles was given at the first, hopefully annual, West Coast Easter Observance. I trust you will find his remarks inspiring, and all of the talks worth your time to read and contemplate.

J. William "Bill" Allen, Jr., Grand High Priest  
Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California

## **PROLOGUE**

It is with great pride that the Golden State Research Chapter (GSRC) publishes this second compilation of orations and talks given during Grand Sessions. All five messages herein speak both of matters of concern in our daily lives as well of timeless principles governing our relationship to the Almighty, the Great Artificer of the Universe, the Supreme High Priest of Heaven and Earth. They were all given at the York Rite Grand Sessions in May of 2011, and demonstrate what a rich experience attending those sessions can be. The GSRC is hopeful that this little booklet will extend the scope of brothers and companions who may be benefitted by these wonderful messages.

Should you wish to consider affiliating with the GSRC, please see the website located on the back cover.

Richard A. Wilson  
High Priest, GSRC  
August, 2011

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **GRAND ORATIONS, 2011**

This compilation of remarks were delivered at the California York Rite Grand Sessions in May, 2011. In addition to the Grand Orations for the Grand Chapter and Grand Council, we have included the Grand Chapter luncheon remarks delivered by Rt. Worshipful John Cooper; the Easter Sermon presented at the Grand Commandery West Coast Easter Observance in April prior to Grand Sessions; and a research paper presented at the Golden State Chapter of Research annual convocation. Most Illustrious Paul Mc Cleary, serving as the Grand Chapter Orator, delivered “After the Mark Master Degree” on Tuesday, the 24<sup>th</sup> at the 157th Annual Convocation of The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of California. John Cooper delivered “The Last Royal Arch Mason” during lunch on Tuesday, the 24<sup>th</sup>. Excellent Companion Ed Sadler, serving as the Grand Council Orator, delivered his Oration on Wednesday, the 25<sup>th</sup> at the 150th Annual Assembly of Cryptic Masons of California. Sir Knight Thomas Boles, serving as Grand Prelate, delivered “April Sky” at the Vesper Services at the West Coast Easter Observance at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles on April 24th. Most Excellent Phil Hardiman delivered his paper at the annual convocation of the Golden State Chapter of

Research, as a commentary on the Royal Ark Mariner Degree, conferred at the AMD In-gathering on Saturday, May 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Paul Eugene McCleary** is a 51+ year Master Mason having been raised in Millington Lodge # 671, Millington, Tennessee as a courtesy to Marshall Lodge # 133, Marshall, Illinois July 21, 1961. He has affiliated with Santa Maria Lodge # 580 in Ramona, California in 1973, and served as Master 1979 & 1984. He has also affiliated with Consuelo Lodge # 325 in Escondido, North County Daylight Lodge # 843 in Escondido, and Millington Lodge # 671 Millington, Tennessee.

He was exalted in Marshall Chapter # 70, Marshall, Illinois 1962; affiliated with Tyre Chapter # 130 Escondido, California 1971; served as High Priest 1977; affiliated with Triangle Chapter # 155, Oceanside, California; affiliated with Darius-San Diego Chapter # 61, San Diego, California; and affiliated with Imperial Valley Chapter # 109 in Imperial, California. He has served as Inspector 36th Royal Arch District 1978 – 1984 and 2004-2005. And he has served as Deputy Grand Lecturer Department Four for the Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons of California 2006-2009. He was greeted in San Diego Council # 23 1971; affiliated with Helix Council # 58 1975; and served as Recorder and later as Illustrious Master 1984. He was appointed as Grand Steward in 1993, and as Grand Master of the

Grand Council Cryptic Masons of California 1998-1999.

He received the BBA and MBA from National University, San Diego, California. He joined the US Navy in June 1949, serving in all Aviation Electronics enlisted rates up to and including Chief Petty Officer. He retired after 24 years as Lieutenant Commander in 1973. He then served as a Reliability and Maintainability Engineer for Hughes Aircraft Company, and retired from SAI Technology Company, San Diego, San Diego, California January 1994 as VP of Program Management.

When **John L. Cooper III** left his career in education to become Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of California 20 years ago, Freemasonry became his new classroom. Advocating the idea that a Mason should learn throughout his entire life, Cooper became a champion of applied Freemasonry. During his tenure, Cooper made many significant contributions to Masonry in California, from developing the education components of Masonic Formation to launching the Annual Symposium to establishing a robust administrative infrastructure. He served as Grand Orator for the Grand Council in 2009-2010.

**Ed Sadler** is a member of Vitruvius Lodge #145 F.&A.M. and belongs to the York Rite bodies of Sonoma County. He received his Bachelor's

Degree in Organizational Behavior and a Master's Degree in Business Organization Development from the University of San Francisco's College of Professional Studies. He has worked in Healthcare Materials Management for nearly 20 years as well as been a business owner, locksmith, and food kitchen volunteer. He served the Grand Lodge of Cryptic Masons for the State of California, as Grand Orator in 2010-11.

**Rev. Thomas M. Boles** graduated with honors from Trinity Theological Seminary with his BT, DMin and D.D. degrees, also his MAT Degree from Fuller Theological Seminary and his PhD. in Biblical Studies at Newburgh Theological Seminary. Dr. Boles has also received from Trinity Seminary a Lifetime Membership in the Omicron Psi Honor Society for academic achievement. Dr. Boles is a minister at E.W. Presbyterian Church in Whittier, CA., and Pastor of the Midnight Mission Church in Los Angeles. He is a Navy veteran of World War II, having served in the South Pacific Theater

He has served the Grand Lodge of Masons in California as Grand Orator and Grand Chaplain, and is recipient of the Hiram Award. He has been conferred the 33<sup>o</sup> Grand Cross from the Scottish Rite Freemasons S.J., Washington, D.C., and the Meritorious Service Award, Purple Cross York Rite College; Master of Wisdom Lodge #202 F&AM, Potentate of Al Malaikah Shrine Temple, Director

General of the Shrine of North America, Director and Treasurer of the Shrine Hospital in Los Angeles, Puissant Sovereign of the Knights of the Red Cross of Constantine and Sovereign Master Allied Masonic Degrees and Personal Representative of the Santa Ana Valley Scottish Rite. He currently is serving as Grand Prelate for the Grand Commandery of California.

**Phil Hardiman** has served as presiding officer for the three Sacramento York Rite bodies. He has also served as Master of Washington Lodge #20 (1985, 2001) and Drytown Lodge #174 (1998), where he now serves as Secretary. He is Past Sovereign Master of Camellia Council #98, AMD, and currently Senior Warden of Poseidon Royal Ark Mariner Lodge, moored to Siminoff Council #485, AMD. He served the Grand Chapter as Grand High Priest in 2009-2010.

## I

### **AFTER THE MARK MASTER DEGREE** **by Most Illustrious Paul E. McCleary**

Two years ago when I spoke to this gathering concerning our Officers commitment to their chapters, I referred to their responsibilities in the administration and leadership of their chapters. Today I want to address all Royal Arch Members concerning our responsibilities in sustaining our membership in each of our chapters. If this sounds like a membership pitch, it is. We have spent a lot of time and resources to bring in new members, yet we continually show losses throughout the state. Yes some chapters have held on, and some have shown gains. But overall we continue to see losses statewide. We tried giving the Mark Master Degree to all interested Master Masons, in hope that they would take the rest of the Royal Arch degrees. I am sure that we did have some success with this program, but it doesn't go far enough.

I maintain that the best membership program that we can institute, statewide, is '**quality ritual**'. The candidate must walk away from the Mark Master

degree saying,” Wow what a great degree and what a great Masonic story, I want to hear the rest of the story of King Solomon’s Temple”.

Our most effective salesman is the member who just received his degree and can’t wait to tell his Blue Lodge Brothers of his experience. The serious Blue Lodge Mason wants to know more of the complete story of King Solomon’s Temple. We owe him the best presentation of this story that we can put together.

I have witnessed several Royal Arch Festivals that were very well presented and showed the results of considerable planning and preparation. I have also witnessed several festivals that left me wondering how we expected a candidate to be motivated to continue with any further York Rite degrees; or at least, be motivated to even attend any Royal Arch activities. The quality of our ritual is most important; and we must make it so, if we expect to recover the reputation that we had just a few years ago. I would like to see the chapters return to setting the ritual standards high and tell the story of King Solomon’s Temple as it should be told.

Don’t misunderstand me, there are some chapters that are presenting superb ritual, and well executed festivals. Their membership numbers reflect the results of their efforts. I am speaking of the festivals where it was evident that practices were not

conducted, and very little planning went into the preparation for the execution of the degrees. My message today is to the Chapter Leadership, the District Inspectors, and the Ritual Staff. In order to reverse our membership trends, we must make the quality of our ritual the best that it can be.

The Mark Master Degree Program needs to be promoted, expanded, and advanced throughout the state to be effective. There must be continuity of purpose for it to succeed. If it is a good program, it needs to be advertised and promoted in our local areas. Degree teams must be trained to do their very best every time they step into a chapter to perform. As a wise Old Admiral once said “Careful preparation is the greatest safeguard against failure”.

As Officers, Ritualists, and Members we must accept the responsibility that we owe to Royal Arch Masonry; and make our candidates thankful that they took the time to become Royal Arch Masons. Our reward will be their compliments, their enthusiasm, and their participation in our future activities.

## II

### **THE LAST ROYAL ARCH MASON** **By Rt. Worshipful John L. Cooper, III**

The *California Freemason* magazine carried an article in its Summer issue on the last Royal Arch Mason in California, who died last month at the age of 102. Brother Hiram Mason had carried on the tradition of his family, a long line of Master Masons reaching back to the early twentieth century. He was born in 1989, and followed his family tradition by applying for the degrees of Masonry just after he graduated from college in the year 2010. He was Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on September 10, 2010, and Exalted a Royal Arch Mason the next year. He died this year – 2091 – at age 102.

A two years ago, the *California Freemason* magazine interviewed Brother Mason on the occasion of his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The magazine was interested in how Freemasonry was different in 2010 when he became a Mason, and what Freemasonry had meant to him in the long years since he became a Master Mason. The Summer,

2091, issue of the *California Freemason* magazine which carried the notice of his death, reprinted some excerpts from their earlier article on Bro. Mason. Let me share some of the remarks which were in an interview format:

Interviewer Bro. Mason, now that you are 100 years old, and have been a Master Mason for almost eighty years, what led you to become a Mason in the first place (no pun intended!)?

Bro. Mason The men in my family were all Masons, and I wanted to follow in their footsteps. That was somewhat unusual at the time. Almost no men of my generation had fathers or grandfathers who were Masons. You see, we had passed through a long period of time before 2010 when no one was much interested in becoming a Mason. I remember my father and grandfather telling me that they did not know of anyone other than themselves who were Masons – except those they met in the lodge. Beginning around 1970, the fraternity started a steep decline in numbers, and very few of the men of the two generations before had any interest in Freemasonry.

Interviewer And that changed?

Bro. Mason Yes. Starting around the year 2000, men discovered Freemasonry once more. They began applying for the degrees of Masonry in droves, and by the time that I became a Mason in 2010, many men of my generation were Masons, or were in the process of becoming Masons.

Interviewer What had changed?

Bro. Mason The “old timers” of my day (remember that I was a young man at the time) told me that in the “good old days” members weren’t interested much in Freemasonry itself. I remember some of the older men in my lodge talking about how no one even talked about Freemasonry in lodge when they were young. If you can believe it, all the previous generation of Masons seemed to be interested in was going to a stated meeting to argue about things for three hours, after a terrible dinner served on paper plates in a noisy dining room. And when I would ask them to explain what our

degrees meant, they would give me a blank stare – as if I’d asked the dumbest question in the world! How would they know what the degrees meant? And what difference did it make anyway? I must admit, if it hadn’t been for my friends who were interested in finding out what all this “Masonry” stuff meant, I might have quit paying my dues the first year I was a Mason!

Interviewer But you didn’t quit?

Bro. Mason No. I didn’t quit. My friends and I decided that if the old Masons in our lodge didn’t know anything about Freemasonry, then we’d find out about it on our own. We formed a group to read the books in the lodge library, and found tons of information about Freemasonry on the Internet. We just read a lot, discussed a lot, and formed our own opinions about what Freemasonry meant. And it was fun! I can tell you, it was fun!

Interviewer What kinds of things did you discover about Freemasonry?

Bro. Mason All kinds of things. We found out about its tremendous history, of course. It was no surprise to find out that men such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin had been devoted Masons. Freemasonry had so much to teach them, as well as us, about how to shape our lives to make them more useful to ourselves, our families, and our community. We discovered the mystique of Freemasonry – how it went about making good men better – by giving Masons the tools to improve their lives, and thus to improve the world around them. It was fascinating!

Interviewer Did you become Master of your lodge?

Bro. Mason You bet I did! I couldn't wait to learn the degrees and to help my lodge bring new Masons into the fraternity. And soon I was appointed to the line, and eventually became Master of my lodge.

Interviewer What was required of you to become Master in those days?

Bro. Mason Well, the usual stuff. We had to

know how to confer the degrees, of course – and we learned the ritual as perfectly as we could. But we also had to know how to run a lodge – how to be a leader. And, then, we had to know about Freemasonry. We studied hard to learn as much as we could about this great organization, because as Master of the lodge, I was expected to be the “Master Teacher,” if you want to think of it like that. Of course I didn’t know everything about Freemasonry. We had some pretty bright Masons in my lodge, some of whom were real “Masonic scholars,” if you want to call them that. But as Master, I was expected to be a real leader in understanding Freemasonry, and helping our members figure out how to make it an important part of their lives. We used to call it “practical Masonry” in those days – and I still think it’s the most important thing for a Mason to know. He has to know why he is a Mason, and why Masonry makes a difference in his life. All that is more important than all the “book learning” you can pile up!

Interviewer    You joined some of the other

organizations in Freemasonry then?

Bro. Mason Yes – I joined both the Scottish Rite and the York Rite. In 2010 I took the first step toward becoming a York Rite Mason when I petitioned for the degrees in the Royal Arch. I had a bit of a difficult time finding a Royal Arch chapter to join because no one in my lodge belonged to the York Rite. Most of our members didn't join the Scottish Rite or the York Rite in those days. It was so exciting being Mason in our lodge that we didn't see the need to go anywhere else to learn about Freemasonry. But I was interested in the Royal Arch because I had read about it in a book, and I eventually found out how to join.

Interviewer You don't sound terribly excited about becoming a Royal Arch Mason.

Bro. Mason I was disappointed, I must admit. I was used to Masons in my lodge being excited about Freemasonry, eager to join in conferring the degrees, and wanting to learn about Freemasonry all the time. We talked

about Freemasonry, about how we could make it a real part of our lives, and we liked being with each other in lodge. I didn't find that in the Royal Arch chapter.

Interviewer Tell me more.

Bro. Mason Well, for starters, I found out that the Royal Arch chapter couldn't confer any of the degrees. We had to go to something that they called a "festival" to get the degrees. And because no one from my chapter was at this "festival", except the High Priest, and a couple of other Past High Priests, I didn't know anyone there. The ritual was OK – most of them seemed to have worked on the degrees enough so that they could confer them satisfactorily – but there were so many of them that by the end of the day everyone was too tired to talk about the meaning of what we had seen that day. In fact, at the end of the day everything was so jumbled in my mind that I couldn't tell one of the degrees from the other.

Interviewer So these Masons didn't know much about the degrees that they were

conferring?

Bro. Mason    Apparently not. I tried to talk to some of them about what was being conferred during the breaks, and over lunch, but no one seemed to want to talk about Masonic things. After thinking it over, it's my opinion that they didn't know anything about what they were doing, and so they didn't want to discuss it.

Interviewer    That must have been discouraging.

Bro. Mason    Well, yes, it was. I had a hard time figuring out why these Masons were spending so much time learning to confer these degrees if they weren't interested in them. They did tell me that I should come back to see the degrees again, but as I'd had to drive 120 miles to get the degrees in the first place, that didn't seem to be very practical. And, then, they only conferred the degrees once a year – if that. In the years that followed I found out that many of these “festivals” (as they called them) were cancelled because there were no candidates. So I couldn't see the degrees again even if I had wanted

to.

Interviewer Did you attend your Royal Arch chapter?

Bro. Mason I tried. As I mentioned, no one in my lodge was a Royal Arch Mason, and in any case, the chapter I joined met in the neighboring town, about twenty miles away. I went a few times, but they didn't even seem to be able to open or close the chapter very often. They tried to read the ritual, but even then, they got terribly confused, and eventually just gave up and declared the chapter open. They never conferred any degrees, and never talked about them in that chapter. I paid my dues, but after a year or so, I just quit going.

Interviewer Did they call you to find out why you didn't come back?

Bro. Mason No. I don't think they ever knew I was a member. But I continued to pay my dues all those years because I felt it was my obligation as a Mason to do so. I sent them my money, but I never heard back from them, except to get the trestleboard once in awhile.

After a few years I even stopped getting that. I think the chapter went out of business, and consolidated with some other Royal Arch chapter. But they still found me to ask me for my dues, and I always paid. Want to see my dues receipt?

Interviewer Thank you, Bro. Mason, but I believe you. It is my understanding that you are the last living Royal Arch Mason in California.

Bro. Mason I guess so. I heard that all the chapters died out, and that the state organization – I think they call it the Grand Chapter – just folded up years ago. I get my request for dues from some organization back East called the General Grand Chapter. I guess they took over responsibility for all the remaining Royal Arch Masons in California, and that's where I pay my dues. They charge me \$5.00 a year, which is OK with me. I'm still a Royal Arch Mason!

Interviewer That's a strange story. Freemasonry is flourishing in California. It is my understanding that we have had more than two hundred new lodges

founded since you became a Mason in 2010, and that there are now close to 300,000 Master Masons in California. But you are the last Royal Arch Mason. What happened?

Bro. Mason You know, I've thought a lot about that over the years since I became a Royal Arch Mason back in 2011. Freemasonry was on the upswing in 2011, and has continued to grow strongly all through the twenty-first century. Lodges are where Freemasonry is flourishing, and most Masons spend time there because they get a lot of Masonry in their lodge. We don't have many of what we used to call the "concordant and appendant bodies" around anymore because there doesn't seem to be the need for them. That's not because they didn't have interesting things to teach about Freemasonry. I remember the degrees of the York Rite as being particularly interesting to me. But I didn't get involved because there was nothing to get involved with. And after awhile, there weren't any more members of these "concordant and appendant" bodies around to make a difference.

So they just disappeared.

Interviewer Could it have turned out differently?

Bro. Mason Well, I don't know. The Masons involved in the York Rite in those days just didn't seem to get it. They were of the older generation, of course, the generation of Mason for whom Freemasonry wasn't really all that important. I don't want to imply that they weren't loyal and good Masons – they were – but they just didn't seem to understand that men of my generation wanted to know about Freemasonry – to study it, to learn about it, to talk about it. And they didn't seem to understand that we had all that in our lodges, and didn't have to go somewhere else to get it. And, then, all they seemed to be interested in was finding enough Masons to confer the degrees. They didn't care about making their chapters, councils, and commanderies a place where we could learn to become better Masons. So I guess that it was inevitable that these organizations would just die.

Interviewer Are you sorry to be the last Royal

## Arch Mason in California?

Bro. Mason Yes. When I was a young man – a young Mason – back in 2011, I was really eager to discover all that I could about Freemasonry. I thought that I would find something exciting in the York Rite, and I still think in a way that I did. Those degrees really add to your understanding of Freemasonry. But the organizations that ran the York Rite just didn't seem to be able to attract younger Masons in my day – and after awhile, they just became irrelevant to Freemasonry, and disappeared. That's a shame. But I don't know what I could have done about it. They had the chance to do something about it, but didn't. Maybe if they had, I wouldn't be the last Royal Arch Mason in California.

Bro. (and Companion) Mason died this year – the last Royal Arch Mason in California. We don't know if the story would have turned out differently if Royal Arch Masons in 2011 had known what would happen by 2091. Maybe they did, but didn't know what to do about it. Maybe they cared a lot about Royal Arch Masonry, but were so locked into

the way of doing their Masonry that they couldn't get out of the trap for themselves. Maybe Royal Arch Masonry had to go away before it could be reborn. I understand that there is some interest in establishing Royal Arch chapters once more in California, and if that happens, Bro. Mason might not truly be the last Royal Arch Mason. But for now, it looks as if it is all over. The death of Bro. Mason closes out a part of Masonic history in California. If only the Royal Arch Masons in 2011 had known – but that was then, and this is now.

### III

#### CRYPTIC MASON ORATION

By Edward W. Sadler

My Grand Companions in the line, my companions in the Cryptic Council, my York Rite brethren and ladies, and wonderful guests. It is with a profound sense of honor and appreciation that I stand before you in this capacity. One in which I can be both a cheerleader for the Cryptic Council as well as an advocate to its causes and claims. It is also an opportunity to recognize Martin and Jacki McKeay for all of the hard work and traveling they put in this past term spreading the affection of the Masonic fraternity and expounding the extraordinary advancements the Grand Council's chosen charity. My name is Ed Sadler and this past term I have had the privilege of representing our organization as the Grand Orator during the time that the Grand Council of California celebrated its 150th Anniversary.

Our Illustrious Grand Master, Worshipful Companion Martin McKeay embodies and represents many of our order's values and ideals.

The length of his cable tow is always beyond sight when it comes to answering his call to service. His fidelity to his principles are equally as limitless when one attempts to measure such a thing. So, why is this the case with our Most Illustrious Grand Master? There are naturally many reasons for the outpouring of friendship and brotherly love which Illustrious Martin exudes. One important reason is the influence his father had on him during his formative years and into adulthood. He was a father very similar to many other caring father's but with this one major distinction; he was the Right Illustrious Grand Master for Cryptic Masonry in the year:1977. Illustrious Companion Robert J. McKeay's memorable installation ceremony occurred onboard the Queen Mary in the same year the organization changed its name to what it is today, the Council of Cryptic Masons. Fast forward the clock of time some 33 years, and poof ... Companion Robert McKeay's son has followed in his fathers footsteps and has had the honor to represent the Cryptic Council in the State of California in the same capacity. For the record, this is the only time a son has followed his father into that Grand and Glorious Chair.

A little while ago, I spoke with my friend, Brother Martin, and asked him what he thought was important and necessary to touch on in this Oration I was preparing for today. He seriously pondered the request and then said with authority, "Focus on

reminding our companions on what qualities could and should be brought out with all of them when they commit themselves to Masonry and especially to the California Grand York Rite? - Whatever you say Ed, don't be boring and put us to sleep!"... Okay, okay, so he didn't really say the last part... Although that was definitely implied! The next step in my preparation, was for me to understand what an oration truly is supposed to be. I looked up the definition on-line at the Merriam-Webster dictionary website and this is what it said: oration- an elaborate discourse delivered in a formal and dignified manner. ...Oh...oh! I am generally not a formal or dignified kind of guy. I seem to interject passion rather than dignity, and am usually much more casual than formal. In fact, formality is a distant and nebulous concept for me. With that said, I will press on in my style to deliver this oration in as passionate and casual a way as I can. So, hang on to your chairs !

Any and all organized and well thought endeavors require a roadmap for proper preparation, guidance and organization which subsequently will allow for expedience and thoroughness of thought expression. Once this method is utilized, we quickly arrive at the point in the speech where the dreaded theme gets introduced! In defining a theme we learn that it is a broad idea, message, or moral of a story. The message may be about life, society, or human nature. Themes often explore timeless and universal

ideas and are almost always implied rather than stated explicitly. On the surface, at least for this oration, the theme should incorporate self-development through meaningful participation and its application can be applied in any group or social setting and result in a productive and positive outcome. But that is only on the surface for when you dig deeper and pull back the veneer, the outward glossy parts of things, you come to the core of the matter. And what is that core or nucleus which I am referring to? ... Stay tuned...

To fully understand the value of the Cryptic Council in our lives and its place in Masonry we must reach back and reflect a little bit on the historic perspective of the Craft. The contemporary English Mason W. Kurk Macnulty in his wonderful book The Way of the Craftsman, explains that modern Freemasonry evolved in the late 1500s or early 1600s towards the end of the English Renaissance during a period of the most profound social change when western civilization entered the Renaissance as an otherworldly society with a religious orientation, and emerged from it as a pragmatic society with a materialistic orientation. Out of this time, sprang Humanistic thought which focused on the individual person because of his ability to learn. This frame of thinking valued the free will of human beings and viewed that man was considered the measure of all things. From this school of thought, we entered the Age of Reason

where Freemasonry was enabled to develop and flourish. From the late 1600s through the early 1800s, Masons structured its ceremonies, created the concordant bodies, and incorporated many additional degrees. From this period of explosive growth and development in our Craft, came the specific degrees and purpose of the Cryptic Council.

The Cryptic Council Degrees are also called the "Degrees of Preservation" because they focus our attention on that which was preserved at the time of the building of King Solomon's Temple for the benefit of future generations such as ours. Cryptic Masonry centers itself around the story of the preservation, loss and recovery of the Word. The Word represents man's search for life's purpose and the nature of God. The Cryptic Council progression of the "Solomonic" Degrees leads us through much of what we call the York Rite. In many jurisdictions, the Cryptic Council is designated as the "Soul" of Masonry because of what it stands for and the symbolism it contains. What a truly unique and flattering accolade for our order.

What other things make the Cryptic Degrees unique? Well, they continue, and more importantly, complete the Masonic story of King Solomon's Temple. They cover a period beginning just prior to your Master Mason Degree in the Lodge to a time immediately leading up to the start of your Royal Arch Degree in the Chapter. In the three Council degrees you learn the profound and lasting

influence you may not even be aware of and for that reason you are to remain true to your Masonic character and principles not only while in the company of Masons but while abroad in the world.

Even the purple blazer you wear is steeped in symbolism and meaning. The color purple symbolically denotes a position of high honor, rank, or status, as we use it in the conferral of our ancient craft degrees. Across cultures, purple is an emblem of royal grief and death with the additional ideas of royal position, justice, and temperance conveyed through history and literature.

So, we know that the Cryptic Council is steeped in tradition, provides a wonderful bridge from the other Masonic orders and blankets itself in the color purple for equally impressive reasons. But what are some concrete services and benefits our California order provides? Well, let's start with our focused Charity, the Cryptic Masons Medical Research Foundation, or the C.M.M.R.F. This foundation makes research possible which can relieve the effects of atherosclerosis through vascular biology. It also provides all Cryptic Masons an opportunity to turn Masonic philosophy into a living practice-making doers out of all of us. Currently the Foundation is working with medical researchers to find agents to prevent atherosclerosis or more commonly known as hardening of the arteries. This work places thousands of dollars annually into the

needed research to stop our nation's largest killers, atherosclerosis and heart disease.

We are once again reminded about what our organization is, its place and role in a historic context and how we manifest our charitable tendencies to our fellow creatures.

But what of the theme for this talk. Where do we arrive when we pull back the earlier stated veneer of our earthly endeavors and practices? ....where not there quite yet.... I ask for a little more patience. There is an old Buddhist saying: the three great poisons of life are greed, anger, and ignorance... Turn them around and become generous, compassionate, and wise. We can easily compare these concepts with the Masonic principle tenants of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. After all, to be good and true is the great aim we have in view. These statements hint at the strict Moral code we infuse into our day to day living. In his writing, The Genesis of Freemasonry, Dr. David Harrison states that the power of ritual and the secret symbolism which accompanies the rites of passage are expressed more deeply with each passing degree, the initiate being constantly reminded of moral codes. These moral codes are adopted and then transferred by the candidate to all of the important people in his sphere of influence to include family members, friends, and in some cases professional acquaintances. With this in mind, it

comes as no surprise that we are all gathered under this roof today in unity with a common purpose. Allen E. Roberts states in his book The Mystic Tie that there's something about Freemasonry that brings men closer together. Something that makes our hearts swell with pride when one of our Brothers achieves a goal, wins an award, is praised for doing something good. There's something that causes us to weep with a Brother when disaster strikes. There's something that makes us want to help those less fortunate regardless of who they are. We have compassion for others, we try to acknowledge charity as the greatest of gifts, we sacrifice where we can for the common good, we obey the laws under whose protection we live, we strive to be good citizens and role models. In other words, we try to be Masonic each and every day.

With that said, have I finally touched on the theme of this speech? Well sort of. Everything I have said and described is an attempt to remind you all of the building blocks of character and honor and virtue which are resident in your self and soul. I did nothing more than remind each of you that deep in your psyche or consciousness you already possess these truly Masonic qualities or ornaments which uniquely qualify you to take the journey forward to apply and exercise those magical virtues within you.

Hence, we now finally arrive at our theme ... To now apply your Masonic training and education

outwardly in life by facing and experiencing your individual Hero's Journey. According to Joseph Campbell in his 1949 work The Hero with a Thousand Faces he describes The Hero's Journey as an approach or pattern where you as a hero venture forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

The Hero's Journey begins as a Call to adventure where you know that something is going to change. It is a metaphor for the process that underlies all growth, learning, and self discovery. (In Masonry it is the process of joining the various organizations.)

Once you accept the Call to adventure, you physically cross the threshold and take your first step into the unknown. (In Masonry it is taking the degrees.) In the next step of the journey, you must overcome challenges and temptations through a series of tasks, tests, and ordeals. These trials are usually grouped in threes. (In Masonry, it is represented by the content of the degrees, the proficiencies, Educational Questions, etc.) To help you through these harrowing ordeals, a mentor is provided to assist and guide you with direction, interpretation, and support. This mentor for many of us is as I'm sure you are aware by now the overarching influence and structure of Free Masonry.

In his book, Will I Be the Hero of My Own Life? Swami Chetanananda, the founder and spiritual director of The Movement Center based in Portland, Oregon states that the real heroes, are people who learn to release their egos and live without certainty. "Heroes are people who, in a real way, have confronted and changed their identities [by undergoing] some kind of intense difficulty...In the process, they find within themselves a sense of strength that allows them to shed who and what they were, thereby becoming a completely different kind of person."

The next step in the journey is perhaps the darkest, scariest, and most uncomfortable stage of the process. It is called the Abyss which is represented as a physical or metaphorical death. All moments and trials before are meant to "purify" the hero for this final moment. This is the reckoning and the revelation. Emerging from this stage is known as the Transformation and it is here when one usually receives the reward of the quest, often a new elixir of life and a gaining of "divine" or "hidden" knowledge.

The remaining steps of the Hero's Journey concern themselves with atonement and the return. Atonement allows the hero to realize and acknowledge the wrong doings and injuries committed in his earlier life. The Return is marked

by the application of the wisdom gained during the quest. The mentor or guide is also instrumental at this point in helping the Hero return to everyday life.

Reg Harris co-author of The Hero's Journey: A Guide to Literature and Life says that for a journey to be fully realized, it must have two stages: the engaged stage and the reflective stage. The engaged stage, when we are swept up by the experience itself, is what most of us think of as the journey: the call to adventure, the challenges, the transformation and return. But to truly process the adventure so that it will change our lives, we must decide what that adventure will mean, and that requires reflection.

Reflection begins the process of situating the adventure in the larger, on-going context of our lives. We do this, of course, by thinking about what has happened. Reflection can take several forms, including quiet contemplation to digest events, drawing mandalas, which are circles or representations of the unconscious self, to organize and relate experiences symbolically, writing in a journal to sort and stabilize understandings, or writing the adventure as a personal myth. Reflecting can also be interpersonal when we tell the story of our journey to others.

There you have it my esteemed friends a theme that has been presented to you as an actionable outline

with deliverables that you need to apply towards and achieve in your own meaningful ways. Go forth and return to your homes and lives with this flame of adventure burning deep within you. You all have your challenges to face, trials to endure, chances to take, and lessons to absorb. Cross your threshold and make the necessary efforts and sacrifices to come out on the other side transformed. It is only you alone that can make this transformation happen in your life. You have the organization around you, You have the tools around you, you have the friends around you, and most importantly you have your self-confidence and never say die attitude. Hearken back to the days of the Renaissance when Humanism swept the European continent. Be Humanistic in your beliefs and remember YOU are the measure of all things!

I will close with three quotes which have stayed with me for decades, one from Thomas Jefferson, another from an old Swedish Proverb and the final one from the wonderful writer Richard Bach.

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude.”

“Fear less, hope more, eat less, chew more, whine less, breathe more, talk less, say more, hate less, love more, and good things will be yours.

And finally;

“Argue for your limitations, and sure enough,  
they’re yours !”

Thank you my friends, for extending me your  
courtesy and attention this morning. God bless you  
all.

## IV

### APRIL SKY

by Rev. Thomas M. Boles, Grand Prelate

**John 20: 1-18 (also Luke 24:13-39)**

#### Opening prayer:

Almighty God, you have sent Jesus into the world to suffer, die, and rise again. We rejoice today in so great a salvation and in the transforming power of Christ's resurrection in our lives, so that we can walk in the power of the people, we pray for you to do your transforming work in each of our lives so that our lives, our work, our moments, and our days may be alive with the risen Christ.

\* \* \* \* \*

Several years ago, when Margaret Thatcher was prime minister of Britain, a terrorist's bomb exploded in the conference room where many of the government meetings were held. Margaret Thatcher survived this blast, but some of her cabinet members were killed. The following Sunday, Margaret Thatcher went to church as she always

did. But that particular Sunday seemed different. As Margaret Thatcher sang the hymns, listened to the message, saw the candles upon the altar and the sunshine streaming through the stained-glass windows, she began to weep. She wept because everything around her had been changed by the loss of her friends. The familiar had now become strange. The goodness and beauty of the world around her seemed almost too much to bear. She knew she would not only miss her friends, but also the wonderful times they had had together. And so the Iron Lady wept. If we can relate to Maggie Thatcher's grief, maybe we can relate to the grief of Jesus' disciples and His friends on that first Easter morning. If there is one proverb which describes the followers of Jesus in those days following his crucifixion, it has to be Proverb 29:18 which reads, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Though Jesus' followers may not have been physically dead after his crucifixion; both emotionally and spiritually, they were walking cadavers. **THEY HAD NO VISION.** On the morning we know as Easter, Mary Magdalene goes to Jesus' tomb, not in anticipation of his resurrection, **BUT TO COMPLETE HIS BURIAL.** Just like Maggie Thatcher after the death of her friends, Mary was crushed. Her closest friend, her mentor, her Lord was dead!

Some of you may be familiar with the haunting song of Marius in the Broadway musical, *LES MISERABLES*. He sings it after his friends have been killed in an ill-fated student rebellion:

There's a grief that can't be spoken, There's a pain goes on and on. Empty chairs at empty tables, and Now my friends are dead and gone.

Such was the pain of Jesus' followers after his crucifixion. On Easter afternoon on the road to Emmaus two of Jesus' followers speak of their dashed hopes by saying, "we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel." Notice the past tense. They HAD HOPED. Hope unrequited is a cruel emotion. They had hoped, but hope no more. Hope died when Jesus died, and who can blame the disciples for their depression? Not only was their friend dead, but if the Romans would kill Jesus, then why wouldn't they attack his followers? And even if they survived, they would certainly face contempt for wasting three years in following Jesus. They had hoped, but hope no more.

An anonymous poet penned the poem, "Hope." He wrote:

"He died! And with him perished all that men hold dear; Hope lay beside him in the sepulchre, Love grew corpse cold, and all things beautiful beside. Died when he died."

But then the poet adds, “He rose! And with him hope arose, and life and light. Men said, ‘not Christ but Death died yesternight.’ And joy and truth and all things virtuous /Rose when he rose!”

The good news of Easter is that IT DOESN'T END with women anointing a life-less body. IT DOESN'T END with disillusioned disciples retreating into their houses. And IT SHOULD NOT END with us giving up the search for joy and purpose. Easter ends with Mary testifying to her frightened and discouraged friends: “I have seen the Lord.” Easter ends with the disciples opening their eyes to Jesus as he breaks bread with them. And, if we keep the faith, Easter can mean more to us than chocolate bunnies, ham dinners and adding Turf-Builder to the lawn. IT CAN MEAN NEW LIFE. But, first, we need to place ourselves in the story and recall our own moments when we have thought, “I had hoped, but I hope no more.”

When Mary came to the tomb she was puzzled to find Jesus' body missing. She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!” After confirming her story, the two disciples return to their homes. Left alone, Mary's grief bursts forth in tears. She doesn't even recognize the risen Savior until he speaks her name. She turns toward him and

cries out in a moment of wondrous recognition, “Rabboni!”

Jesus’ resurrection is a positive answer to the question that a tortured man of faith named Job had raised centuries earlier. Just like the disciples, Job’s world had come crashing down. He lost his property, his health and even his family. In his pain he asked a question he could not answer, “IF A PERSON DIES, CAN HE LIVE AGAIN?” Well, The resurrection of Jesus is the answer to Job’s question. A PERSON CAN RISE FROM THE DEAD.

John Dunne writes of the impact of the resurrection upon humankind: “The Resurrection is an enormous answer to the problem of death. The idea is that the Christian goes with Christ through death to everlasting life. Death becomes an event, like birth, that is lived through.”

What a magnificent statement of faith. Death is merely another event in the ongoing process of life, something one lives through with Christ. The resurrection of Jesus reinforces these words from THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON: “The souls of the just are in God’s hands, and torment shall not touch them, they are at peace.”

Easter has as much impact upon life in this world as it does in life after death. That’s what the disciples

found on the first Easter afternoon. They were in low spirits because their spirits had been so high only a few days earlier. The time was Passover, always a hopeful season, for the themes of Passover are freedom and deliverance. Passover recalls how God delivered the Jews from slavery in Egypt, and the hope was that if God did it once, God could do it again. Jesus seems to nurse this nationalistic fervor. He enters the city of Jerusalem fanning the people's hope for a militaristic Messiah who will throw the Romans out. The people wave palm branches in joy. The choice of palm branches was no accident either, for palm branches were the symbol of the Hasmonean Dynasty, which had been the last time that the Jews had been a free people. By waving palm branches before Jesus, the people were expressing their willingness to allow Jesus to lead them in ousting the Romans! No wonder the disciples were excited; their turn had come, but now, less than a week later, the death of Jesus had shattered their hope. No wonder they said, "WE HAD HOPED," Where there is no vision, the people perish!

If we take that to be a truth, then its corollary must also be true: "Where there is vision there is life." We will see this become true for the disciples, but first I want to touch upon how it is revealed to be true in a wonderful motion picture that came out a few short years ago called, OCTOBER SKY.

*“OCTOBER SKY”* tells the true story of Homer Hickam, a teen-ager growing up in the mining town of Coalwood, West Virginia, in fact, just like my dad! Life in Coalwood is grim. Mining in itself is difficult, but now the coal is giving out. Homer has no interest in becoming a miner, but sees no way of getting out of Coalwood. The only boys from Coalwood who receive college educations are football players, and Homer is no football player.

But then comes a night in 1957 when Homer looks up into the October Sky and sees the Soviet satellite Sputnik passing over his town of Coalwood. **IT IS A VISION WHICH INSPIRES HOMER TO PURSUE A BETTER LIFE.** Enlisting the support of three other boys, Homer becomes obsessed with rocketry. A gifted teacher encourages them in their quest, and the boys become so proficient in rocketry that they win a national science competition. All four boys receive college educations, and Homer goes on to a career with NASA. The film works because it avoids mushy sentimentality and focuses upon the marvelous themes of **CHARACTER, HARD WORK, PERSEVERANCE AND YES, VISION.**

Mary Magdalene and the disciples of Jesus, who had no hope when Jesus died, received new hope that first Easter. We could say that it was their **APRIL SKY** experience. For Mary, it happened when the risen Christ called her name. For the two

disciples, it happened along the road to Emmaus. At first, like Mary, the two disciples are joined by Jesus but are prevented from recognizing him.

As they walk Jesus opens the scriptures and explains the necessity of the Messiah dying upon the Cross. As they near the village, the disciples prevail upon Jesus to stay with them as their guest. But, when Jesus sits down at the table, the guest becomes the host and presides over the meal. Taking bread, blessing it, then breaking it; Jesus is himself made known. The disciples know that their Redeemer lives and their hope is restored.

Hope is a fragile entity. The forces of evil are still much alive in this world. We see those forces in the tragedy of ethnic hatred, in the exploitation of the drug trade, in the violence that still stalks our streets and even invades our schools. If we give in to the forces of evil which enslave, dispossess and murder, then wrong will triumph. But there is another way. It is a vision of the risen Christ conquering death. It is a vision of Christ's people standing up against evil in the name of hope.

We would do well to remember the example of Elie Wiesel. Elie was a Jewish writer and thinker, is a survivor of the Nazi holocaust. For the last half-century Wiesel has been a spokesperson for justice, human rights and yes, hope. For several years after they married, Wiesel and his wife did not have

children fearing that the world could not be trusted with another Jewish child. But then they changed their mind. Their decision to have children was inspired by the STORY OF JOB. Elie Wiesel said that he was struck by the fact that after all the terrible things that happened to Job and his family, Job still decided to have more children. JOB REFUSED TO LET EVIL HAVE THE UPPER HAND. When we do the same, by rejecting the work of evil people whether they be down the street or across the sea, then we strike a blow for good. As long as evil is resisted, God's victory is sure.

It's just like the time when George H. Bush was Vice-President of the United States he represented our country at the funeral of Leonid Brezhnev. Bush noted the funeral's military precision and icy coldness. Since the Soviet Union was officially atheistic there were no prayers, no comforting hymns, and no mention of God. Mr. Bush was close to the casket when Mrs. Brezhnev came forward for her final good-bye. He related what he saw: "(Mrs. Brezhnev) walked up, took one last look at her husband and traced the DESIGN OF THE CROSS ON HER HUSBAND'S CHEST. In that single act," says Bush, "God had broken through the core of the Communist system."

God still breaks through the cores of systems which enslave. The stones of hatred and oppression, violence and genocide, despair and futility are still

rolled away. And when they do, surely heaven itself breaks out in its own HALLELUJAH CHORUS, “And he shall reign forever and ever!” And may this be a most blessed Easter for all of you! And I might add, May this also be an April Sky Easter to be remembered.

Closing Prayer:

Now go from this place in celebration because you have heard of God’s great plan of salvation for humankind. Go in joy because the living Jesus has redeemed you! Go in trust and hope because the Holy Spirit guides you. Go in remembrance because this is the day of resurrection. Christ has risen! Christ has risen indeed.

Amen

## V

### **NOAH AND HIS ARK A Symbolic Interpretation**

**by Most Excellent Phil Hardiman**

*“Noah – Son Japhet, of what was the Ark a type?  
Japhet – The church of God.”*

*“(The Ark is) emblematical of that divine Ark which  
safely wafts us over this tempestuous sea of troubles  
... “*

The references to the *Ark* in Masonic ritual clearly imply its symbolic nature, albeit with different usage and intent. But popular culture is imbued with several literal notions, which must be explored and understood, in order to make sense of Noah and his Ark: 1) That there was an actual, physical Ark; 2) that there was an event of world-wide inundation; 3) that there was a man named Noah, who lived 950 years.

It is not necessary to take these notions literally in order to derive value from the scriptural account of Noah and his Ark. However, it can be counterproductive *not* to appreciate its symbolic significance. Great literature always operates on several levels – in this case, at least on the external and the internal. The ‘external’ level is the literal and has value in drawing men to God. But it is counterproductive when it draws those men to waste time looking for remnants of the supposed ‘actual’ Ark rather than delving deeper into the internal or symbolic meaning of the scripture. The Royal Ark Mariner ritual regards the Ark as a “type of the church of God.” Taken together with the Ark as an hieroglyphical emblem of the Third Degree, we learn that the church, representing Faith and Love, can provide us the capacity to endure and overcome the figurative ‘sea of troubles,’ the inundation or tempest of trials and tribulations which “flesh is heir to.” Hence, the figurative or symbolic essence is much more interesting and valuable to us than the mere, speculative history about a physical Ark, and the animals, and the rainbow.

As with the physical Ark, the Flood, also, is problematic. Inundations have undoubtedly occurred over the millennia, as reported or recounted in many cultures and civilizations. Could some wise individual or individuals at those times

have prepared for certain catastrophes under inspiration by Deity? No doubt. But it seems more speculative than reasonable to suppose or imagine a 500 year old man doing so. If we take the story literally can we also assume that he had *only* three sons – and, if more than three, that his other children were doomed along with the rest of humanity? Probably not – and if not, we have an embedded clue as to how to interpret the story – viz., figuratively, not literally. And though there were certainly catastrophic inundations, must they have annihilated *all* living creatures above land, except the noted few?

And what are we to make of the great ages of the immediate descendants of Adam? Did Noah actually live to the ripe old age of 950 (Genesis 9:29)? Again, we have internal evidence that he did not. In Genesis 6:3 “...the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.” But in Genesis 9:28 we learn “...Noah lived after the flood 350 years.” And in the 11<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Genesis and beyond, we learn of Shem living 600 years (11:11), Arphaxad 438 years (11:13), Salah 433 years (11:15), Eber 464 years (11:17), Peleg 239 years (11:19), Terah 205 years (11:32), Abraham 175 years (25:7), and Jacob 147 years (47:28). So for many, many generations the span of man, set by the LORD at 120 years, was not enforced! Again, this is another clue that scripture

is not as it seems; that sometimes it must be taken figuratively *only* and not literally. But what can this confusing linguistic condition possibly symbolize?

Emanuel Swedenborg, the 18<sup>th</sup> Century theologian has offered a basis for interpretation: “While the mind cleaves to the literal sense alone, no one can possibly see that such things are contained within it. Thus in these first chapters of Genesis, nothing is discoverable from the sense of the letter other than that the creation of the world is treated of, and the garden of Eden which is called Paradise, and Adam as the first created man. Who supposes anything else? But it will be sufficiently established in the following pages that these matters contain arcana which have never yet been revealed; and in fact that the first chapter of Genesis in the internal sense treats in general of the new creation of man, or of his regeneration, and specifically of the Most Ancient Church; and this in such a manner that there is not the least expression which does not represent, signify, and enfold within it these things.” (Arcana Coelestia, n. 4)

So, though we do not discount the literal meaning, unless internal biblical evidence suggests we should (as with the span of man set at 120 years), we do focus on the *internal* signification of scripture, or its *symbolic* intent. In like manner, in our daily lives we emphasize our soul-life, but not at the expense of our external, physical life. In short, we can have

both – the literal and the symbolic, the external and the internal, the physical and the spiritual. But Swedenborg insists that the names in the genealogy of Genesis are symbols of churches. “Thus by Adam in paradise they perceive the Most Ancient Church, yet not that church, but the faith in the Lord of that church. By Noah they perceive the church that remained with the descendants of the Most Ancient Church, and that continued to the time of Abram. By Abraham they by no means perceive that individual, but a saving faith, which he represented; and so on.”

Swedenborg saw that this sequence of “churches” represented by the patriarchs of Genesis was in a continuing state of decline, from the celestial nature of the church of Adam, to the spiritual church of Noah being a sort of re-constituted church of Adam, replacing the progressively more worldly versions that intervened. In Swedenborg’s conception, then, there have been four major iterations of churches: Adam, the Most Ancient Church; Noah, the Ancient Church; Hebrew/Israeli; and the Christian. He does not provide much detail distinguishing these various churches, or the numerous gradations between them. But he does use Faith/Knowledge/Wisdom/Understanding, and Love/Charity as the two major elements of distinction, along with the ability of each inhabitant to perceive nature, heaven, hell, and deity, and to distinguish the material from the spiritual.

Hence, we should understand Noah not as an individual but as a symbol of a church, a certain set of doctrine and perceptual capability. Likewise, his sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Not that there did not live certain personages that gave rise to the ‘churches’ bearing their names. Nor that there were not specific and special events associated with the birth of those churches. In this context and with this understanding, we are able to plumb the depths of Scripture for spiritual understanding and not be manipulated by modern over-simplifications.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Russian philosopher Ouspensky gives a similar interpretation in “A New Model of the Universe,” where he treats the progressive decline of the Most Ancient Church, through a series of ‘churches,’ (or what might be called ‘periods’ of doctrinal decline), as the decline of civilization in general.

“*The Great Flood* is an allegory of the fall of civilization, of the destruction of culture. Such a fall must be accompanied by the annihilation of the greater part of the human race as a consequence of geological upheavals, of wars, of the migration of human masses, epidemics, revolutions, or similar causes. Very often all these causes coincide. The idea of the allegory is that at the moment of the apparent destruction of everything, that which is really valuable is saved according to a plan

previously prepared and thought out. A small group of men escapes from the general law and saves all the most important ideas and attainments of the given culture.

“The legend of Noah's Ark is a myth referring to esotericism. The building of the ‘Ark’ is the ‘School’ — the preparation of men for initiation, for transition to a new life, for new birth. "Noah's Ark", which is saved from the Flood, is the inner circle of humanity.

“The second meaning of the allegory refers to individual man. The flood is death, unavoidable, inexorable. But man can build within himself an ‘Ark’ and assemble in it *specimens* of everything that is valuable in him. In such a case these specimens will not perish. They will survive death and be born again. Just as mankind can be saved only through its connection with the inner circle, so an individual man can attain personal ‘salvation’ only by means of a link with the inner circle in himself, that is, by connecting himself with the higher forms of consciousness. This cannot be done without outside help, that is, without the help of the ‘inner circle’.”

And so this legend demonstrates its richness and depth, with interpretations on several levels – the rise and fall of churches; the fall of civilization; the life and death of individuals. Perhaps in its most

profound sense, it can be construed in much the same way as King Solomon's Temple, as Ouspensky suggests, as a representation of the Temple of his Life that each Mason is building.