

OUR AFFINITY WITH THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS  
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It is said that Freemasonry has existed "from time immemorial," and undoubtedly there are remarkable similarities to the ceremonies of the Ancient Mysteries. It is not suggested that our present-day rituals are a direct derivation from the exact forms used by the Ancient Egyptians, but the connection remains unbroken in that the high doctrines and mystical knowledge contained in our rituals have ever been used by the great Masters. Our Craft is continuing, in the truest possible form, the essentials of a great inherent faith, seeking to arouse and develop the vital and immortal principle, because the Raising of any and every candidate depends on it.

However, when our Ceremonies are practiced without knowledge and understanding, there is certainly doubt whether those who pass through these Ceremonies are truly Initiated. In fact, this is so, for generally we are only passing men into Freemasonry instead of passing Freemasonry into men.

The natural question arises: "When do we start to gain knowledge and understanding?."

When a man becomes a Freemason, whether he realises it or not, he has taken the first step, and if any part of all of our Ceremonies registers in his mind that is, beyond their moral evaluation then he should be led into research. The subsequent steps forward will always occur at the correct time, for it is a natural law that no progress can be made until the aspirant is properly prepared in his heart and humbly solicits to be admitted through the next door of understanding.

He must put an end to his imperfections, and be on his guard not to contravene the eternal laws of life. No mortal may play with divine forces, and the powers that may be acquired must not be used for personal achievement. When a man feels alien to his earthly environment, to the greed and avarice that surround him, to the pride and power seeking of his acquaintances, he is experiencing the first stages of the urge to implant his feet on the initial rung of the ladder of success the success of his search for that which is lost.

We in this Circle must not, however, think that because we have taken some steps we are truly Initiated, for we still have much work to do, and to this end it would be of value to make some comparisons with the initiation system of the Ancient Egyptians .

Few peoples can have been more fascinated, and even governed, by the mystical side of life than were the Ancient Egyptians. The mystery of death was for them as much cosmic as it was human. Their creed was one of resurrection and judgment. The whole of their progress, according to their "Book of the Dead," was marked by references to "going in" and "coming out," of "going in after coming out," and passing through gates, gateways, doors and stairways. These are all stages of spiritual growth which show how

the Candidate on his entrance into Light, is instructed in Wisdom, to be justified in the Tribunal of Truth, and rewarded with the Jewels of Immortality after having passed in judgment before the forty-two judges of the Dead, known as the Gods of the Horizon each Judge supreme in his particular province.

It would seem that they viewed the universe as an immense sarcophagus or coffin in which Osiris (Lord of the Mind; God of the Resurrection. Ed.) lay imprisoned and deprived of his divine powers, just as we today hold that our "vital and immortal principle," "the Kingdom of God" is imprisoned within our human bodies. There was also a judgment beyond the grave by a God, of whom we say in Freemasonry "will reward or punish, as we have obeyed or disregarded His Divine commands."

The whole of their ritual dealt with the entrance into Light and of living after Death, of a Passing over the Celestial Road having made the Passage through the Tomb across the Fields of Oahlu the Territory of Initiation to meet the Timeless One and so become yesterday, today and tomorrow, a dweller in Eternity.

Our affinity with the Ancient Egyptians is very noticeable in relation to their candidate awaiting the Great Light in the Hall of Wisdom when he is about to approach the Chamber of the King, the Chamber of the Open Tomb, for their "Book of the Dead (which is really a book of Life and After Death) says: "When he entereth through the Pylons, he shall walk up the Great Staircase into the House of the Hidden Place."

The Gateway of Tat and Tattu of the Egyptians led to the higher world of Amenti, the world where the Soul was blended with Immortal Spirit and thereafter established forever from the "seen" to the "unseen." This bears a striking resemblance to our Second Degree with its two great pillars (pylons), the winding staircase (the Great Staircase), and the middle chamber (the House of the Hidden Place).

The Egyptian oaths of fidelity incorporated penalties involving parts of the body, as does Freemasonry in its exoteric presentation. The ancient races of the East were so fearful of any part of the body becoming parted from the whole, that these age-old penalties which threatened this dire happening were of enormous import to them, and none would run the slightest risk of incurring such a penalty. To some extent these threats probably gave rise to the very elaborate ritual that arose in the Egyptian practice of embalming and carefully preserving the body for its great trials of the journey to its new life. The fear of mutilation is greatly emphasised in the "Book of the Dead," their ritual used on these occasions. After

removing certain parts of the body they were preserved in canopic jars with lids formed in the shapes of the Four Sons of Horus, i.e., the heads of an Ape, a Man, a Jackal and a Hawk, representing the four cardinal points of north, east, south and west. This may be compared with the penalties of the Second and Third Degrees.

The Ancient Egyptians actually had seven degrees (these seven degrees of the Egyptians, it is suggested, relate to the Seven Souls, or principles in man, which have a correspondence with the septenary scale identified in the major esoteric traditions ranging from the British Druids to the Karens of India. Ed.). Their initiates were very carefully selected, and each had to be recommended by one of the existing initiates. He was then sent to Heliopolis, thence Memphis, and finally to Thebes; was circumcised, subjected to a special diet, and obliged to spend several months in an underground place alone with his thoughts. He passed through what was termed the "Twelve Tortures," reminiscent of the Twelve Labours of Hercules which deal symbolically with the control of the human passions, which he likewise had to learn to govern, and he had never to lose the idea of his God. Then, as a symbol of the wanderings of the unpurified Soul, he had to ascend several ladders and wander in darkness in a cave with many doors, all of which were locked. After learning certain maxims carved on the pillars of Hermes, he was led into another cave where he was blindfolded and bound. After answering a series of questions he was made to kneel before the Hierophant to take a solemn oath of fidelity and secrecy. When the blindfold had been removed, further instruction was given, mainly in the art of healing, and then a password, Amun, meaning be cautious. He was then classed as a Pastophoris, an initiate of the First Degree.

There are great similarities here with the Masonic Initiation where the Candidate wanders in darkness as yet ignorant of the spiritual things that surround him. The obligation was followed by further instruction, testing by the Wardens, and the repetition of the warning to be cautious.

After the Egyptian first degree the neophyte, having proved himself after a year of study, underwent a severe fast, and was taken to a room where women tried to arouse his desires. If he resisted their advances and passed further trials the degree of Neocoris was conferred on him.

In the third degree the King himself participated by offering the Candidate a crown if he was not prepared to face the ensuing ordeals, and this had to be refused, whereupon the King pretended to smite the Candidate upon the head with an axe, which action laid the Candidate on the ground. He was then swathed in wrappings and taken to a vast subterranean chamber thickly furnished with mummies lying in state, and placed next to the coffin which apparently contained the mutilated blood-stained body of Osiris.

This hall was called the "Gates of Death," and it is of interest to note that in the Book of Job ch. 38, v.17, it states: "Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?", and there are further allusions in the V.S.L. to the "Gates of Death . "

Having conquered the trials of this degree the Candidate was then led into the "Hall of Spirits" to be judged by them. He was told: "Never to either desire or seek revenge; to be always ready to help a brother in danger, even unto the risk of his own life; to bury every dead body; to honour his parents above all; to respect

old age and protect those weaker than himself; and finally, always to bear in mind the hour of death and that of resurrection into a new and imperishable body." Purity and chastity were recommended, and adultery threatened with death. The Candidate was then termed Melanophoris, and the affinity of this degree with Freemasonry will readily be seen.

Also of interest is an old papyrus copied from the sarcophagus of a King which shows Anubis ministering to Osiris on his bier. At the head stands Isis with her left hand uplifted in an act of supplication. Her prayers are answered, for Anubis is raising Osiris with the Grip of the Lion from his figurative tomb to everlasting life symbolised by the Crux Ansata in the other hand of Anubis.

Every Master Mason must descend into the silence of the g . . . and pass through a figurative death to a higher life before he can learn of the genuine secrets, which, when properly understood, will take him into the mystic world of the seer where the bond of fellowship binds all together, where differences disappear and the pairs of opposites, symbolised by the two hands, join together in a world transcending earthly knowledge.

Masonically speaking, no matter how far westwards we may travel, we shall not find the genuine secrets of a Master Mason except at the centre of our own being. On the five points of fellowship we hear the words of the death of the builder, the Creator of Beautiful Form, and then only in a whisper, for they are only substitutions. The genuine secrets cannot even be whispered, for they are only found in the silence within each one of us, within our Centre, for there is only one Centre, but paradoxically the Centre is equally distant from and equally near to us all.

We cannot pierce the gloom which rests on the prospect of futurity unless we have a strong eternal Faith founded in Truth which, together with that vital and immortal divine principle within us, enables us to refuse the crown of material life, trampling the King of Terrors beneath our feet, and lifting our eyes to that Morning Star.

The Star was given to a follower of Horus after he had been led into Paradise. The Book of the Dead had given the deceased the knowledge of the Powers of the East, of which the Morning Star is one, and this Star became his guide through the Elysian Fields. In like manner, the Morning Star is only a herald of the true Light.

Deep within us all is that Light "the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It is not a symbol but a reality, and we have the inherent power to develop the ability to participate in and express this reality. From the darkness of the tomb appear the symbols of frail mortality, which in solemn silence speak to the heart with a power far beyond human eloquence. These symbols awaken feelings too lofty to be explained in mere words. They pose a problem that science cannot solve, and they conceal a secret which we will all eventually know but will be unable to reveal. In their dread presence the human soul hangs over the infinite abyss and gazes into the misty realms of eternity.

But the way lies before all of us, and we are all embarked on this long and lonely pilgrimage, all towards the one goal. As we realise the immensity of the Work we appreciate why we are told in our Third Degree ritual to "Be careful to perform your allotted task while it is yet day."

Returning to our Ancient Egyptian Initiate, after experiencing the Third Degree, he spent eighteen months studying in the Temple. He was then permitted to undergo the trials of the Fourth Degree, and armed with a sword and shield, had to defend himself against a group of assailants who wore hideous masks.

He was overpowered and dragged into another room where all the Initiates were assembled with the King, the head of the Order. After further trials he was given the name of the Great Lawgiver, "Iao," and became a Christophorus.

The Fifth Degree consisted of instruction in Alchemy and the important symbolism of "fire." A drama occurred during which Seth, as a horrible monster, was slain. Seth, he was taught, was the personification of fire, without which nothing in this world could be accomplished. He was therefore shown that he must learn how to use this fire by subduing its violence. After this degree the Candidate was given the rank of Balahate.

In the Sixth Degree he was led to what was called the Gates of Death, through which he passed into the room where he had previously endured the trials of the Third Degree, and which was full of mummies and coffins, the working place of the Parakistes and the Horoi who opened and embalmed corpses. He was told that some of the coffins contained the mortal remains of those Initiates who had betrayed their trust. Having been threatened with the same end if he should break his oath, he took another obligation and then passed through the Gate of the Gods, where he was taught a ritual dance representing the course of the planets. Further instruction followed in Astronomy. In this degree, as in the Third, the reference alluded to Osiris, whose death symbolised the short dark days of winter when the sun lost its power and warmth, having been slain by the powers of evil and darkness, all nature mourning the loss. The title given to the Aspirant after this sixth degree was that of Astronomer.

In the Seventh Degree the Candidate was led into a place called Maneras where he was initiated into the final mysteries and given a Tau cross which, at his death, would be laid upon his breast. He was now a Prophet or Hierophant. In the course of this final initiation, the Aspirant's soul was guided by the Hierophant through the lower regions of the astral world. If he came through this successfully he "had the right of releasing seven suffering souls." Then, clothed only in his radiant body, he soared into spiritual regions and received "The Word."

In those days, in any one country only one Initiate had the right to know this word, and the Hierophant who communicated it was deemed to have put an end to his earthly life. Symbolically, it was the transfer of "Life, spiritual and divine." This "Life" was

called the "Sa of Life" (Sa means "vital fluid," and the first principle (attained to at the seventh initiation) of man's sevenfold principles is the Ren, meaning Secret Name, derived from Celestial Waters presumably from Nu, wife of Tum and mother of Ra. Ed.). In this final initiation

there was performed the mystery of the death of Chrestos in the mortal body with its animal passions, and the subsequent resurrection of the spiritual man as an enlightened Christos, at the moment when the rays of the morning sun poured down on the entranced body of the Candidate, supposedly to recall him to life, or to his rebirth.

The central doctrine of the Ancient Egyptian lore was that the Divine Power dwelt in every man, even the lowest and most degraded, and they called that power the Hidden Light, which was a manifestation of the manifold power of God. The search for the Lost Word given to the Egyptian Aspirant in the Seventh Degree was more the search for this Hidden Light, Divine Power, or Truth.

Similarly, the search for this Word or Genuine Secrets in Freemasonry, is a search for this Great Force, an understanding of that Force, an appreciation of Divine Power and of Truth. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It is the Word of Creation; "Let there be Light, and there was Light. "

In the Egyptian notions, as in those of all other faiths founded on philosophy, man was not merely a union of soul and body, but a trinity of spirit, soul and body.

(Brother Ron was not very explicit at this point, possibly because he had already partially dealt with the principles involved, and perhaps with his wider knowledge of the subject he thought the principles sufficiently self-evident for the context of this Paper. To my limited understanding of the Egyptian system the spiritual, or subjective, part of Man was triadic, consisting of the Ren, or Secret Name, derived from Celestial Waters; the Sekhem, Power or Life, the Gift of the Sun; and the Khu, Angel, the Light in the Mind or Spiritual Intelligence. ("Ancient Evenings" by Norman Mailer). Bearing in mind that Pythagoras and Plato, to name but two Greek Initiates who studied under the Ancient Egyptians, it is not surprising that in the Platonic system the subjective realm of spirit was triadic also comprising Being (or causal), Life (or archetypal), and Intellect (or creative) in Masonic terminology The Most High, the Geometrician and the Architect. Ed.).

Their doctrine made man, in his objective nature, consist of a Ba (higher soul), Khaba or Khaibit (astral soul or shadow), and Ka (animal soul or life principle of the physical body). He also had an Akh (worldly intelligence), and a Khat (physical body) which was also called Sekhu when life had departed from it at death and the freed consciousness entered the Sah or Sahu, the body or vehicle of regeneration, during the complete separation brought about by the process of embalming.

The functions of this last principle (the Sah or Sahu), the

Egyptians believed, commenced only after the death of the body, when the soul after due purification continued to revisit the body in its mummified condition. Hence their reason for burial with worldly possessions, food, etc. This astral soul eventually became a God, absorbed into the Soul of the World, as they termed it. It became transformed into one of the creative deities, "the God of Phtah," the Creator of the World.

In the Egyptian Funeral Ritual, the good or purified soul, in conjunction with its higher spirit, was more or less the victim of the dark influence of the dragon Apophis. If the soul had

attained final knowledge of the heavenly and infernal mysteries, i.e. the gnosis, or complete reunion with the spirit, it would triumph over its enemies; if not, then the soul could not escape its "second death." This is mentioned in Revelations ch.21, v.8. as "Their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." This death was thought to be the gradual dissolution of the astral form into its primal elements.

The Egyptian philosophy propounded that a man who led a naturally pure and virtuous life would not suffer this second death, only a delay in the world of spirits, until he found himself sufficiently purified to be accepted by the Mighty Host. But, if he was otherwise, then his soul, as a half-animal principle, became paralysed and grew unconscious of its subjective half the Lord and in proportion to the sensuous development of the brain and nerves, sooner or later lost sight of its divine mission on earth.

(Somewhat like the fable of the vampire: the brain fed, lived and grew in strength at the expense of its spiritual parent). Then the already half-conscious soul, now fully intoxicated by the pleasures of earthly life, became senseless and beyond hope of redemption. It became powerless to discern the splendour of its higher spirit, to hear the warning voice of its guardian Angel, and its God. It aimed solely at the development and fuller comprehension of natural, earthly life, and thus could only discover the mysteries of physical nature. It ignored all that could not be demonstrated by either its organs of action or sensation. It was virtually dead, and was finally annihilated. The whole essence of the soul was absorbed into the vital system of the physical man.

Today, Brethren, we meet many who fall into this classification, indeed few do not, and if this Egyptian philosophy is correct, then we would be wise not to dwell too long in their company lest we be deterred from our task.

Perhaps, at this stage, we should now examine the names of the most important Egyptian Gods. The myth of Osiris was the great central legend of Egyptian mysticism. Horus was regarded as the regenerated spirit of man. Isis unveiled herself revealing the mysteries of human existence.

Osiris was the personification of the Logos. His shadow was called Seth by the Ancient Egyptians the Greek equivalent of the dark aspect in their pantheon of Gods called Typhon. Seth was termed the terrestrial and material envelope of Osiris who was the indwelling spirit. In the Egyptian Mysteries Osiris was the symbol

of the universe as an ideal, and Seth was the personification of the same universe in the material sense. Seth, in other words, represented the four lower principles of man constituting his personality, as with the lower rectangular part of the apron of the Craft, while Osiris was the symbol of the higher triad of man, as with the upper triangular flap of the apron. The square and the triangle being emblematically the conflicting principles both in the universe and man, Seth was therefore regarded as the obstacle, the opposition, the resistance, that hindered man in his spiritual development. The Book of the Dead charges this "friend of darkness" as being the one who "steals reason from the soul," which is probably justified as Seth personifies the passions which, many times, make man an unreasonable being.

In the Ancient Egyptian "traditional history," Seth kills his brother Osiris and cuts him into fourteen pieces. Seth then remained in darkness, sunk in evil. The murder of Osiris esoterically meant the destruction of spirituality in the human soul which became dominated

by its passions. The Egyptians viewed Seth as the god of evil, and of the storm, hurricane, and burning sand of the desert. The goat was considered an animal sacred to Seth and probably led to the goat-headed figures representing the Devil, and they often confessed their sins over this animal before driving it away into the desert. The word "scapegoat" was derived from this practice, but see also Lev. ch. 16, v.10.

Horus was called the "avenger" of his father Osiris, for as he grew older he waged an endless and ruthless fight against Seth. In this instance, Horus represents the human soul which, having attained a certain maturity, continually fights its lower nature. In this struggle Seth is said to tear out the eyes of Horus and Horus emasculates Seth. But as Seth is the "fire" which man cannot dispense with and which he must not destroy but learn to control, Thoth (Thrice-Greatest, also known as Tahuti) (translated into Greek as Hermes Trismegistus) personified Divine Intelligence, and was called Lord of Wisdom and Magic. Being endowed with complete knowledge and wisdom he was worshipped as the inventor and patron of all the arts and sciences (Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology. Ed.) - intervenes to give back vision to Horus and virility to Seth.

The Eye of Horus is what is now referred to as the "third eye," or the "eye of understanding," for with the knowledge that we must live with our passions comes the understanding that the opposites of the world and in ourselves, signified by the mosaic flooring of the Lodge, the blacks and whites within ourselves, have to be balanced and stabilised so that they may provide the necessary flux for the perfection of man. The Eye of Horus projected the "Sa of Life," which was regarded as being a luminous fluid, and was shown as ostrich feathers in the kingly head-dress and on the heads of some gods. This fluid was thought to enter into the Pharaohs, thus making them divine. Hence the Pharaohs enormous power over the people.

The Pharaoh was usually elected from among the priests and warriors

and was embraced during his enthronement by the reigning king or by the high priest. Two further priests purified him with the "water of life," and this ceremony was performed a number of times during his reign, for the aim of this ceremony was to "charge" the Pharaoh with the "Sa of Life." In many papyri of those days we find the words "Water is thrown upon you by the Eye of Horus," which probably meant that this Sa fluid was projected upon the Pharaoh by the Third Eye of the Priests. This would explain the bas-reliefs which show two Gods or Hierophants, one with the head of a hawk and the other with the head of an ibis, in the act of pouring a double stream of water (the water of life and rebirth) on to a person standing between them. In the streams of water are portrayed a series of small ansata crosses, further indicating that the streams were not meant to represent just water.

The Third Eye was understood to be connected to the top of the head, a centre of force recognised in the East as a chakra to which the electro-spiritual force (or Kundalini) rises up the spine from the chakra at its base. A pillar, called Djed or Dad, with its four capitals, was raised with the help of ropes during the crowning of the Pharaoh, and was probably the symbolic representation of this channel of the Serpent Fire or Kundalini in the axis of the backbone, with its erection into the vertical position representing the awakening of this force or power in the newly crowned Pharaoh, and the four capitals representing his rulership over the four elements of Air, Fire, Water and Earth.

The Pharaoh received two crowns, the White Crown (symbol of purity) of Upper Egypt or the South, and the Red Crown (symbol of earthly power) of Lower Egypt or the North. Together they formed the Pschent, which not only symbolised the union of the two countries, but also the presence of Deity in death as in life, on earth as in heaven. It was therefore the symbol of the union of two worlds, the visible and the invisible, and the symbol of the dual role of Pharaoh exercising his functions in both these worlds. Immediately after putting on the Pschent, the Pharaoh sat on a throne which was in the figure of Isis (the hieroglyph of the name Isis is a throne), and this had the allegory of sitting on the knees of the goddess in order to be treated as her son and to be "suckled" by her, or in other words, to receive power and wisdom from the Mother of the World.

(This has a correspondence, in principle, to the Installation of a Master of a Lodge into the Chair of King Solomon. During the Inner Working the incoming Master is invested with the Master's Collar, the highest honour the Lodge may confer on its elected ruler, and as the lesser cannot confer a greater power it is a badge of office. After the new Master has been placed in the Chair the Installing Master then hands him the gavel as an emblem of power the power received by the first Master at the Lodge's Consecration. But the outgoing Master cannot confer the Wisdom of King Solomon, for this is incommunicable, and has to be attained by the individual effort of each Master. Ed.).

Like her husband Osiris, Isis had a lower aspect personified by her sister Nephthys, the wife of Seth. Nephthys represented the lower Astral Light, the dark side, while her son Anubis was the Lord of

Hades, or the "nether world. ' He introduced the souls of the dead into that world and was related to sexual generation, which might indicate that Hades meant the human womb as well as the astral world, implying a belief in reincarnation.

The Ancient Egyptians believed in this doctrine and esoterically subdivided man into seven principles, these being the physical body, the vital principle, the etheric double, the lower mind, the higher mind or soul, the spirit of fire, and finally the divine principle or ultimate divinity. Exoterically, to the ordinary people, or "popular world," they divided man into three parts, the gross body (physical body and the vital principle), the soul (the etheric double, the lower mind and the higher mind), and the spirit (spirit or fire and divine principle). In their magic practices they evoked only the soul.

We find in the Lecture on the First Tracing Board, closely concerned as it is with the Egyptians and their tenets and principles of policy and philosophy, that when speaking of the attainment of the summit of a Freemasons profession, that is, the culmination of the work upon himself, it states that "it is figuratively speaking, an ethereal mansion, veiled from mortal eyes by the starry firmament, emblematically depicted in our Lodges by seven stars." It is pointing out that to reach at-one-ment with the Creator is the same as living in an ethereal mansion, or in a body which is less dense and more spiritual than the gross body, and that this aim is depicted in our Lodges, or in other words, in our bodies, by the seven stars or principles, previously explained with reference to the Ancient Egyptians.

Obviously, as it states, this condition is "veiled from mortal eyes," and can only be discerned by the "eye of understanding," the Eye of Horus. The acquisition of this "eye" was therefore a

decisive step in spiritual ascent. The Egyptians held that henceforward the aspirant was in harmony with the laws of cosmic equilibrium, then personified by Maat, the Goddess of Justice and Truth. This goddess was always present at the judgment of the dead, when on one side of a large pair of scales Anubis or Horus placed the dead man's heart and on the other the representation of the Goddess Maat, an ostrich feather. If they balanced the dead man was deemed to be "justified," that is, he was regarded as having played the part of earth assigned to him by the divine order, or as we would say, "he performed his allotted task while it was yet day." This thought was uppermost in the minds of most of the Ancient Egyptians, for even at banquets a wooden figure representing a corpse in a coffin would be shown to the participants as a reminder of death and the subsequent judgment. It is difficult to determine whether this deterred the guests from eating too much or even enjoying themselves!

The Lecture on the First Tracing Board continues with the words, "without which number no Lodge is perfect" when referring to the seven stars, and if we substitute our own selves for the word Lodge in this excellent Lecture, we will see that indeed we cannot be perfect without the full knowledge and co-operation of all our seven principles.

There is no doubt that the Ancient Egyptians had a profound knowledge of the invisible worlds, and that their embalmed mummies were not an attempt to retain the body here on earth, but were images of resurrection, symbols of immortality. Their representations of animals and insects in papyri, paintings and sculptures did not mean that they worshipped cats, dogs and other animals and insects. Cats, for example, were held sacred because of the connection they held between them and the Goddess Bastet, who defended Ra against Apophis, the Serpent of Evil. Bastet was represented by a woman's form with the head of a cat, and holding a sistrum an ancient form of rattle in her right hand, which was used to produce magnetic currents and sounds during the Ceremony of Isis. The Egyptians also held that the unjustified souls, after the judgment of the dead, wandered over the lower regions of the astral world, and exorcist priests were used to prevent their mischievous activities against the living.

The Egyptian mystics viewed the spiritual ascent as the union of the human soul with the Divine, this mystical union being the result of the "embrace" of man by the Divine, and consequently the God Ra was called the Great Embracer. The regeneration of man was visualised as the penetration into him of the Divine Light, symbolised by the rays of the sun. They called this divinised soul the Great Cat, for they believed the soul had destroyed its imperfections in the same way that cats destroy small birds and rodents that invade its territory.

The journey of the Sun God Ra was given as an allegory in the initiation teachings. In this myth, the Sun appeared each morning at the Eastern horizon behind Mount Nanu, passed between two sycamores, and sailed into the sky towards the West in Meandjet, the "ship of the millions of years." At night the sun continued its journey below the horizon in another vessel called Sektet in which it crossed the Douat, or invisible world. Having travelled through the twelve regions of this invisible world, the sun reappeared in the East at the dawn of the following day. During the twelve hours of this nightly passage the thresholds of twelve doors were crossed, doors and pairs of pillars (pylons) being symbols of the initiatory stages

of the soul's journey to at-one-ment with his Creator as progressive changes in consciousness, and the twelve depicting the twelve "trials" of rulership before the human soul can become a permanent resident in the higher regions of the astral world without the necessity of reincarnating. (Rev. ch. 21, v.10/12: And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city . . . and had twelve gates. Ed.).

The desire of every Egyptian aspirant was to become one of the crew of this solar vessel, but only those who had divinised themselves and had become followers of Ra were admitted. Once accepted, it was recognised that they would participate in the government of the solar system. The "Sa of Life" or "Ra's Liquid," the source of their power, would appear to be the spiritual energy called Kundalini by the Hindus, or as others later called it, the Philosophers Stone, or the Elixir of Life. This energy was

expected to confer health, power and happiness.

It is of interest to note that the passage of this solar vessel was depicted on Egyptian sarcophagi and in manuscripts by a moon-shaped boat over two parallel wavy lines. As the symbol for wavelength in modern science equates with these two parallel wavy lines, we could conjecture that the Egyptians may have been portraying space or the aether by this symbol, as everything proceeds through space in the form of waves. Their inner meaning of this symbol could have been that when the aspirant reaches a higher form of consciousness the vibration or wavelength of the aspirant changes accordingly.

Their symbol of the Sun was the "point within the circle," for as exoterically it represents the physical sun, so esoterically it represents the spiritual sun, the symbol of the Logos, the Divine Word, or manifestation of God, the very basis of life. The Circle indicates that the human soul is also cyclic in manifestation towards its appointed goal. Motion is inseparable from life, and thus the law of cycles applies equally to the solar system, the planets, and man.

The Egyptian Mystery teaching was very closely guarded and difficult to infiltrate. However, at times, it was conferred upon foreigners. Moses was said to be learned in the Egyptian Mysteries and passed the secrets on to the Jewish priests, who preserved it in more or less original form even until the days of David and Solomon. King Solomon built his Temple on Egyptian Masonic lines as a symbol and centre of Masonic work. It was intended to incorporate a set of measurements that would illustrate geometry and astronomy similar to those used by the Egyptians when building the Great Pyramid at Gizeh. It would appear that Solomon did not succeed in preserving the tradition in its entirety, probably because some of the earlier secrets were lost. The ceremonies and the ornamentation were fairly well preserved, but the inner meaning, to a great extent, was lost. Up to the time of building the Temple, Solomon's attention had been directed to the "Great House of Light" at Gizeh, but then Solomon attempted to focus attention on his own Temple, built at the behest of his father, David, to a plan providing the appropriate setting for an original form of what is now the Traditional History in the Craft Third Degree, which he substituted for the traditional Osiris legend. Solomon must have Judaized his ritual, substituting Hebrew words for the Egyptian, only sometimes succeeding in preserving the original meaning, as he would no doubt wish to bring Jewish practice into line with that of his nearest neighbours, for many Mystery cults formed around the land of the Jews, starting with the original Osiris story but

adapting it to local thought and conditions, and being influenced, no doubt, by stories of Adonis and Tammuz.

Some Pharaohs and they would seem to have been in the minority changed to other gods if the change was more favourable to their personal ambitions. It is important to note that, in many cases, these gods had at least two meanings, generally one referring to the material conduct of their followers and the other to their

spiritual conduct the exoteric and the esoteric. Hence, all Egyptians knew their gods and their representations according to the extent of their spiritual progress.

This, of course, applies today in Freemasonry. There are those outside the Craft who know of it, but know little of what it represents. Sadly, there are those even within Freemasonry who know little more than those outside, but who also know only little of what it represents. But the format that Freemasonry presents to its Members, as with the Egyptian Mysteries, is veiled in allegory and symbolism, and is as difficult to enter or understand as those earlier Mysteries were. The true secrets of Freemasonry are as closed to its Members as those of the Ancient Mysteries were to the outsiders, for it is only when a Mason realises that the predominant wish of his heart really is "Light" that the secrets begin to unfold..

Cosmically, all human life begins its quest of Light and Truth in a state of darkness, not knowing the nature, purpose or destiny of Life. Men are born blind and have drunk of the waters of Lethe or forgetfulness before descending to birth in the flesh. They fumble in darkness, not knowing for what they are searching, until the pain, sorrow and disillusionment of this worldly existence shows them that they are chasing shadows, unreality, and they grope for the Light they cannot yet see. Later, when experience causes them to reject outer interests and they search inwardly they begin to glimpse a flicker of Light.

Where does the seeker commence his search for Light? He could investigate the symbols and allegory of Freemasonry, many of which can be traced back to the Ancient Egyptians. The Tau, for example, signified the welding into one, one of the material and one of the spiritual aspects of Man. The base horizontal line represents the material plane and the upright or vertical line represents the spiritual. This sign was apparently used well before the Christian era, as a sign of recognition between initiates and adepts.

The initiate, carrying his hand to his forehead, would say: "To thee," then he added "belong," and continue, while carrying his hand to the breast, "the kingdom," then to the left shoulder, "justice," to the right shoulder, "and mercy," then joining the two hands together added, "throughout the generating cycles." Hinting here, that man must undergo a number of cycles (or lives) during regeneration.

The change on the apron from rosettes to taus when a Mason has passed through the Chair of a Lodge should indicate that he is now spiritually aware and fully master of his own faculties. The apron itself is a rectangle or square with a triangular flap above it whilst still an Entered Apprentice, and we are reminded that the pyramids built by the Ancient Egyptians were triangular-sided standing upon a square base. The lowering of the flap of the Masonic apron in the subsequent degree indicates that the spirit has been awakened within the material body. It is of interest to note that some of the pyramids had passageways driven at

angles downwards through the sides of the pyramid and into the

base, often from each side, thus forming a downward triangle into the base.

The triangle, of course, was considered by the Egyptians, as sacred, and the number of perfection, and so highly prized was it by the ancients that it became amongst them an object of worship. They called it a god, affirming that it represented the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, and termed it also the Soul of Nature. Often within the triangle there would be inscribed an eye the "All Seeing Eye" to emphasise its divine nature. Ladders were used in explanations, as with Jacob's Ladder, and they had various interpretations. When an initiate was told "to raise the ladder of Seth," he was not only expected to conform to a series of virtues, but to evoke the fire of the spirit, the kundalini, which was said to rise up the "ladder" of the spinal column.

Much of the Ancient Egyptian lore was gained from the East, and similarly their hierophants would teach the initiate from behind a curtain, thus representing the presiding but invisible deity. This is continued in some of the other degrees of Freemasonry .

It is said in our First Tracing Board Lecture, after referring to the Ancient Egyptians, that "Pythagoras seems to have established his system on a similar plan," and it is recognised that he travelled to many parts of the world in formulating his philosophy. Thomas Taylor, the English Platonist, says: "Since Pythagoras, as Iamblichus informs us, was initiated in all the Mysteries of Byblus and Tyre, in the sacred operations of the Syrians and in the Mysteries of the Phoenicians; and also spent two and twenty years in the adyta of the Temples in Egypt, associated with the magicians of Babylon and was instructed in their venerable knowledge, it is not at all surprising that he was skilled in magic, or theurgy, and was therefore able to perform things that surpassed ordinary human powers, and which, to the vulgar, appeared incredible . "

As has been stated before, Pythagoras was probably his title rather than his real name. He was obviously closely connected with the Egyptian and Ancient Mysteries, and taught much of the secret wisdom: the theory of reincarnation, the necessity for a return to a simple system of diet without meat, the rule of justice in the whole universe, and the certainty of the ultimate attainment of perfection by all beings regardless of failures in past incarnations.

We are now able to perceive why symbols were used to convey the Secret Wisdom, for the understanding of them should obviously be universal. No doubt the translation from one language to another has sometimes obscured the real meaning of a symbol, but nevertheless the symbol remains capable of its true interpretation for ever. The Egyptians also obtained many of their symbols from other Eastern cultures, and taught their meaning to their own aspirants, as did Pythagoras when he set up his own school at Crotona, at which, after a long period of instruction, philosophical discussions took place with particular regard to the application of known truths to the local circumstances of material life.

Intended Initiates, as in Freemasonry, were taught to be cautious, and to observe secrecy about the higher esoteric meanings of their symbols but to enable them to act propitiously in outer society, certain philosophies were written around these symbols. As an example, the alternating square stones of the flooring of their temples, as black and white squares of our

Lodge floors, were explained as the opposites of life, and that these opposites were the balance necessary for a soul to be able to incarnate into a body of materiality. Apart from the obvious opposites of light and darkness, life and death, good and evil, and so on, they dwelt upon the more philosophical side of life in order to create a code of behaviour so that the opposites could be balanced within themselves.

A number of examples of this balancing within ourselves may be given:

Silence-Speech: We have already mentioned silence and its opposite speech. To keep silent is divine and brings blessings on all concerned, if we do so where and when we should. However, if we remain silent when we should speak, perhaps when just a word could prevent danger to another, then silence becomes evil. We should also speak when we are prepared and have the knowledge to do so. If we speak in the wrong place at the wrong time, the divine gift is changed into idle chatter and gossip.

Receptivity-Resistance: We must learn to be receptive and yet to resist influence. Receptivity is divine if we are flexible and open to all that is high and beautiful, good and true in other words, if we are receptive to the will of the Great Architect, and allow His will to operate within us. Yet we must have the ability to resist unflinchingly all low influences.

Obedience-Ruling: Obedience has to be learned, and yet we must rule. Every co-worker in the great Divine Plan must give absolute obedience to the Will of God which acts through our innermost convictions, and this is the only form of obedience that is truly good. To obey against our own convictions, purely for reasons of cowardice, fear, material gain, or just merely to be good in others' eyes, is for low personal reasons and is servile and evil. To rule, however, means to give to those weaker than ourselves, some of our will power that they may take up the challenge of life and learn to work for themselves. Anyone who rules without the love of his Brethren, or for selfish motives, imposes his will upon others, thus violating their right of self-determination, and turns the divine act of ruling into the evil of tyranny. Retribution is inevitable to those who practise this evil.

Humility-Self Confidence: We must bear our life with humility towards the Divine, and the Higher Self that animates us, realising that all good, beautiful and true attributes belong to Him who created us, that this perishable frame is but an instrument for manifesting divinity, and that by itself it is but an empty shell. We must subject ourselves humbly to this divinity, which manifests itself throughout the universe, never subordinating

ourselves to earthly powers or forms, for this brings about weak and cowardly self-humiliation and violation of our eternal being. Conversely, we must show self-confidence, not in what we think are our own powers and qualities, but in the knowledge that what we have is His, and represents that inner union or at-one-ment with the Great Architect, our only true being, our only eternal Reality.

Speed-Circumspection: We have to learn to choose quickly the best of a number of different possibilities. Situations can arise when a moment's delay can mean missing a unique, non-recurring opportunity. When we act immediately with complete concentration and presence of mind, the power to decide can be divine. But acting without these attributes turns this divine power into evil haste, and therefore we must learn circumspection. Before any action,

we should control our temper, show patience and allow the decision to ripen within us. "Let Prudence direct you, Temperance chasten you, Fortitude support you, and Justice be the guide of all your actions."

Acceptance-Differentiation: In the progression of the Divine Plan we must accept all that fate brings us. Our worth is not judged by external appearances, but by our degree of divine manifestation. Worldly degradations or humiliations cannot destroy, or even reduce, our inner values, and similarly praise or glorification will not make them greater. For this reason we must never be affected by the way we are treated by those in ignorance. We should be content with our lot, be it poverty or riches, low or high position, regarding either of them as just a means to an end. None of these things must be allowed to change our inner attitudes. Learning to accept everything in this way is divine. However, never let this acceptance drift into indifference or a cowardly lack of character. Learn when to defend this divinity from humiliation, and when to withdraw modestly from glorification by others. Differentiate between what is beautiful and that which is ugly, remembering to probe beneath external appearances before deciding. Distinguish between the good and the bad, the true from the false, the divine from the satanic.

War-Peace: We must have the ability to fight with all our energy, and with the Sword of Truth fight the shadows of error so that Divine victory can be attained. But never let this willingness to fight develop into stupid quarrels. We can only fight with spiritual weapons to bring peace to the earth, to restore unity. But this love of peace must not be allowed to sink into the cowardly comfort of not wanting to fight for Divine victory.

Caution-Courage: We must possess courage and not fear any danger, and courageously face any difficulty, fending off any attack against the divine goal we have set ourselves. But this must not deteriorate into recklessness, and therefore caution must go hand in hand with courage.

Possess Nothing Command Everything: Whether we are poor or rich, we must remember that nothing, absolutely nothing, belongs to us.

On the contrary, everything is on loan to us from God, and we only require to use that which is necessary to complete our task. We should not worry about our needs in this life, for we will always receive as much as we need, according to the Book of Life. Always remember, we possess nothing, but whilst having this divine positive attitude we must not slide into the error of hating material things we must not expect others to maintain us without work on our own part. Matter is a manifestation of God, but it is our destiny to rule over this matter from the divine centre within ourselves.

Freedom from Ties-Loyalty: We must not become attached in the wrong way to anyone. Never love the external person but the divine within that person, who is also an instrument for the manifestation of God. Love God in everyone, and then you will not be attached in the wrong way. But freedom from ties must not breed indifference and apathy towards others. Be loyal to those who seek the same goal but express the divine within themselves in a way different to our particular way.

Recognising all these opposing forces within ourselves which will work in harmony when we know how to control them, we should then learn to use our abilities for others, and in

animating these abilities with spiritual forces, raise them to a climax of brilliance as to manifest the spirit to the highest degree. This must never awaken vanity in us, nor develop into self complacency, nor the base desire to show off. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Mat. ch. 5, v.16). Each must find a way for himself, but as in the days of the Ancient Egyptians, the signposts are not wanting for those who choose to raise their eyes from this plane of matter. We learn, as they did, "to make a daily advancement in knowledge" by the age-old method of Concentration, Meditation, and Contemplation. These we must apply to our Ceremonies, and to Tools and other symbols, just as those Ancients did, seeking ever to find their inner significance.

At no time in the era of recorded history has the application of these methods been more difficult than it is today in the Western World, but at no time has so much help been available to those who conscientiously attempt to apply them. Perhaps the time is nearer than we think when men will at last seek the Middle Chamber of their own Temple, as did those Fellowcrafts of old, and so receive the wages of Truth.

So Mote It Be.