

# An American Masonic Odyssey: The Revd Bro. Daniel Parker and his *Masonic Tablet*

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**A**ERICAN GRAND LODGES DISSEMINATE RITUAL IN SEVERAL WAYS. SOME communicate it solely ‘mouth to ear’ (without a manuscript or printed text), while others have a single or multiple-letter ‘cipher’ (an *aide-memoire*), and/or print the ritual in plain text. Most Grand Lodges also print *monitors* – works which include non-secret portions of ritual. While the monitors generally agree with each other quite closely, there often exists great variation in the unwritten work. Further, some Grand Lodges have subordinate lodges with their own variation of ritual, usually owing to their antiquity.

Prior to the mid-nineteenth century most American Grand Lodges did not enforce ritual uniformly, and individual lodges enjoyed some freedom of doing things their own

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way, so long as there was agreement in the major features, especially in the ‘modes of recognition’ (signs, tokens, and words). The language was somewhat less formal, and some American lodges preserved archaic expressions and/or practices. For example, the first exposé of American Masonic ritual, William Morgan’s *Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity* (New York, 1826), includes the phrase ‘marrow in the bone’, which survived as an oral tradition since *Graham Manuscript* (1726). Remarkably, the phrase still occurs in the rituals of a couple American Grand Lodges. Other practices of even older antiquity have disappeared: e.g., the *Edinburgh Register House* (1696), *Chetwode Crawley* (c.1700) and *Arlie* (1705) manuscripts all note that during the initiation there were a ‘great many ceremonies to frighten’ the candidate. This too was an aspect of early American Masonry. Benjamin W. Case, a physician who was made a Mason in 1796 in Newport, Rhode Island, recalled that during the initiation of an Entered Apprentice Mason there was an attempt made ‘to frighten or alarm the candidate . . . by making noises, shuffling on the floor, throwing sticks down and directing the candidate to step high.’<sup>1</sup> Dr Case also remarked that generally ‘The oaths, forms of initiation, and manner of working in lodges were similar to those laid down in a book called *Jachin and Boaz*, until about the time of the publication of Webb’s Monitor in 1802.’ He added when he again attended those same lodges about 1810 he ‘found material alterations in the ceremonies and oaths in the lodges; changes were introduced, which were not in use at the time of my initiation.’ With the exception of exposés very few printed testimonies exist regarding the nature of early American ritual. Perhaps the most important is Daniel Parker’s *Masonic Tablet* of 1822. The text, which provides the first full description of American Craft ritual, is largely unknown and, prior to my own effort in 2001, it had never before been completely deciphered.

### America’s First Masonic Guidebook

In order to appreciate the context of America’s first printed cipher ritual it is helpful briefly to rehearse some history, which during this period largely revolved around the man who endeavoured to codify American Craft ritual. As Dr Case noted, the changes in ritual coincided with the appearance of ‘Webb’s Monitor.’ *The Freemason’s Monitor or Illustrations of Masonry in Two Parts* (Albany, 1797; 2nd ed., 1802), by Thomas Smith

<sup>1</sup> Testimony of Benjamin W. Case, in *Report of the Committee Appointed by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations to Investigate the Charges in Circulation Against Freemasonry and Masons in Said State: Together with the Official Documents and Testimony Relating to the Subject* (William Marshall, State Printer, 1832), 76. In 1817 Case was elected Master of St. John’s Lodge No. 1, New Port, Rhode Island, but following a controversy the Grand Lodge declared the election void. Case and his followers acted schismatically and declared themselves ‘free and independent from the Grand Lodge.’ He took the lodge’s ‘papers, records and jewels’ which were finally reacquired from his heirs in 1858 by Bro. Nathan Hammett Gould. During the ‘Morgan affair’ Case was editor of the Anti-Masonic *Rhode Islander Weekly*, Newport, established April 29, 1829, although the paper died within six months from lack of funds.

Webb<sup>2</sup> (1771–1819), was the first guidebook to American Freemasonry and exerted a tremendous stabilizing influence on the ritual. Webb, a Boston native, was initiated in Rising Sun Lodge, Keene, New Hampshire, at age nineteen on 24 December 1790, then passed and raised three days later on St John's Day.<sup>3</sup> Contrary to what has been recently written, he was not 'a regular attendee at the lodge during his brief sojourn in Keene,'<sup>4</sup> but rather the lodge records show that he 'discontinued, July 6, 1791, was admitted again August 13, 1791, and again withdrew March 7, 1792.'<sup>5</sup> As a youth he was apprenticed in a print shop, and in 1793 he and a partner opened a wallpaper ('paper staining') business in Hartford, Connecticut,<sup>6</sup> but Webb dropped out 'almost immediately, or else acted as a partner in absentia.'<sup>7</sup> In November of that year he moved to Albany, New York, where he joined Union Lodge No. 1, and established another wallpaper business<sup>8</sup> with Henry Spencer (1748–1823), a bookbinder and bookseller.<sup>9</sup> The title page of Webb's book states that it was printed 'for Spencer and Webb,' but the printer's name is not identified.<sup>10</sup>

The inspiration for Webb's book and ritual was largely twofold. The first was William Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry* (first ed., 1772). In July 1796 the Albany bookstore of John Barber and Solomon Southwick (a Freemason) offered Preston's work for sale, and Webb must have quickly secured a copy. Webb's second source was the well-known exposé *Jachin and Boaz* (1762). Webb, who had a liberal education and some skill at writing, borrowed both from Preston's title and content and used *Jachin and Boaz* (in print in the United States since 1774), for the ritualistic structure. According to

<sup>2</sup> In the first edition Webb simply identified himself as 'A Royal Arch Mason.'

<sup>3</sup> H. L. Stillson and W. J. Hughan, *History of the Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, and Concordant Orders* (Boston and New York: Fraternity Publishing Company; London: George Kenning, 1891), 599.

<sup>4</sup> R. G. Davis, *The Mason's Words: The History and Evolution of the American Masonic Ritual* (Guthrie, Oklahoma: Building Stone Publishing, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> H. W. Rugg, *History of Freemasonry in Rhode Island* (E. L. Freeman & Son, State Printer, 1895), 283.

<sup>6</sup> R. C. Nylander, et al., *Wallpaper in New England* (Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1986), 21.

<sup>7</sup> P. Kihn, 'Zechariah Mills: Paper Hanging Manufacturer of Hartford, 1793–1816' in *Bulletin of the Connecticut Historical Society* 26 (January 1961), No. 1, 21.

<sup>8</sup> M. Coffin, *Borders and Scrolls: Early American Brush-Stroke Wall Painting 1790–1820* (Albany Institute of History and Art; SUNY Press, 1986), 20.

<sup>9</sup> H. French, 'Early American Bookbinding by Hand' in Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, ed., *Bookbinding in America: Three Essays*. Rev. ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1967), 99; *Vermont History*, Volumes 42–43 (Vermont Historical Society, 1974), 290; J. Munsell, *Annals of Albany* vol. 8 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1857), 93.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Spencer's brother Thomas (1752–1840) was also an Albany bookseller, who did business with printer Solomon Southwick (1773–1839), a Freemason, and later prominent anti-Mason. Webb's printer may have been John McDonald, who sold his business to Joseph Fry and Henry C. Southwick (brother of Solomon) in 1798. The Fry and Southwick print shop was on Market Street, as was the Spencer and Webb business. Henry C. Southwick, also a Mason, would be appointed printer of the Grand Lodge of New York in 1820. See J. Munsell, *Annals of Albany* vol. 8 (Albany: J. Munsell, 1857), 334; C. T. McClenachan, *History of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons in New York, from the Earliest Date: Embracing the History of the Grand Lodge of the State, from Its Formation in 1781 [...]* (New York: Published by the Grand Lodge, 1888), 324.

tradition Webb also learned ritual from John Hanmer, an Englishman who was a member of Preston's Lodge of Antiquity No. 1, though this is unproven. Although the story has been oft-repeated, Hanmer's identity and original membership in Craft Masonry remains a bit of a mystery.

Southwick, who became one of Webb's students, later remarked he had 'obtained possession of a printed copy of the very identical edition of *Jachin and Boaz*, out of which he was himself taught the first three degrees of Masonry by the late Thomas S. Webb, author of the *Masonic Monitor*, and during his lifetime regarded by the fraternity as an infallible oracle, in their 'sublime mysteries.'<sup>11</sup> Webb possibly revised the Craft ritual as he worked on his *Monitor*, since David Vinton may have transcribed the Webb work around 1798.<sup>12</sup> It is known that Benjamin Gleason became Webb's student around 1801–02, and that he thought so highly of Webb's revisions that he urged the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts to adopt it. On 24 June 1805 Gleason wrote:

A sanction from the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts is presumed, a uniform and exemplary mode of work and lecturing will soon succeed the present mutilations and informalities—and Free-Masonry thus rendered glorious, will in due time be "a Name and a Praise throughout the Earth."<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly Grand Master Isaiah Thomas appointed Gleason to be 'Grand Lecturer and Instructor', with the power to correct the 'rude, imperfect, and in many instances, erroneous Lectures and modes of work' throughout the Commonwealth.<sup>14</sup> This began a concerted effort to promote Webb's ritual throughout the United States, which story is itself is too long and involved to rehearse at this time.

<sup>11</sup> *National Observer* 2, No. 44, whole No. 122 (Albany, May 23, 1828): [4]. Spaulding also tells the story in his book *A Solemn Warning Against Free-Masonry. Addressed to the Young Men of the United States* (Albany: Geo. Galpin, Office of the National Observer, 1827), 71.

<sup>12</sup> "The Vinton notes compare in some respects very nearly with yours; in others, they differ very materially. They are not properly notes so much as full reading. They are full of signs and contracted words, but he did not seem to have even learned the idea of the cypher in which yours and others is written. The history of them is about this: VINTON was one of the earliest of WEBB's pupils; he went South, lectured, and was the author of one funeral ode, 'Solemn Strikes the Funeral Chime.' He taught in North Carolina, and to some few Lodges furnished a copy of his lectures. He died in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and was buried by the Masons. After his death, in his trunk was found this copy of notes and some other papers which told who and what he was. His teachings are probably those of WEBB's teachings. It is supposed this copy was made about 1798.' W. B. Langridge, October 19, 1866, to Samuel Willson, in *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, at the Twenty-seventh Grand Annual Communication, Held at Springfield, Oct. 1st and 2d, A.L. 5867* (Springfield: H. G. Reynolds & Son, 1867), 175.

<sup>13</sup> B. Gleason, *A Masonic Address, &c. Pronounced Before the Brethren of Mount Moriah Lodge, at Reading, on the anniversary of St. John the Baptist, June 24th, A.L. 5805* (Boston: A Newell, 1805), 12.

<sup>14</sup> *Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts [...] 1792–1815* (Cambridge: Press of Caustic-Clafin Co., 1905), 283.

On the other hand there were others, including Minnesota Grand Master, A. T. C. Pierson, who were neither enamoured with Webb nor enchanted by his work:

[S]uch was his wonderful Masonic experience had in—Keene, N. H., 1792-5, that he made a perfect ritual. ‘Great is Diana.’ A laboring man—poor, with a growing family, no Masonic publications in that day except PRESTON and the constitutions of JACHIN and BOAZ, much of his work he took from the latter, and yet with all his cares, he got up a perfect work. Again, WEBB, in changing and altering PRESTON’s lectures, left out the most beautiful and instructive part, and destroyed much of the symbolism of the degrees.<sup>15</sup>

Whatever the merits or failings of Webb’s ritual, such is the power of the printed word that he now sits firmly enthroned in the pantheon of the fraternity. Webb served as Grand Master of Rhode Island in 1813–14, and became the founder of what is called the ‘York Rite’ in the United States.

Much of the Webb-form ritual was preserved and promulgated by a variety of published monitors, while the secret portions were enciphered in his student’s manuscript books; but it would take about twenty-five years, from the first publication of the Webb’s book, until someone came upon the idea of *printing* a cipher ritual as a companion volume.

## Daniel Parker

The Revd Daniel Parker was an imposing figure standing ‘over six feet in height, powerfully made and of great strength.’ Born in Washington, Connecticut, on 22 June 1774, he was the eldest son of Amasa Parker (a Revolutionary War veteran) and Deidamia Parmelee. He entered Yale in 1797, but left before the end of his Freshman year, and joined the next class in Sophomore year.<sup>16</sup> While at Yale he was admitted to the Linonian Society, which was founded to promote “Friendship and Social Intercourse”, as well as the cultivation of literature.<sup>17</sup> In 1799 he married Anna Fenn, the daughter of Col Thomas Fenn, a ‘distinguished Revolutionary veteran’, and they had two sons and one daughter.

Parker studied theology and began preaching as a Congregational minister in 1801 in the small parish of Ellsworth Society, in Sharon, Connecticut. He accepted a call-

<sup>15</sup> A. T. C. Pierson, St. Paul, Minnesota, February 12, 1863, to James Fenton, Detroit, Michigan, quoted in J. Fenton, *An Address Delivered at Masonic Hall, Detroit, March 13, 1863* (Detroit: Free Press Steam Power Press Printing House, 1863), 10.

<sup>16</sup> F. B. Dexter, *Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals History. Vol. V. June 1792–September, 1805* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1911), 331–34.

<sup>17</sup> *A Catalogue of the Linonian Society, of Yale College: founded September twelfth, 1753* ([New Haven:] Hitchcock & Stafford, 1841), 1, 27.

ing and was ordained in 1802,<sup>18</sup> and in 1806 he received an *ad eundem* Master's degree from Williams College. While acting as a minister in Ellsworth 'he established, and had charge of, an academy at that place, which acquired a high reputation.'<sup>19</sup> The success of his academy (one of the first female boarding schools in the United States),<sup>20</sup> and the time it required, led Parker to request a demission from his church calling. The church, unhappy with his other avocation, would only grant his dismissal after a trial.<sup>21</sup> In June 1812 he attended his last meeting of General Association of Connecticut, and in March 1813 he was dismissed as a Congregational minister.<sup>22</sup> As a result of hardships which partially resulted from the War of 1812, and other financial problems,<sup>23</sup> he was forced into bankruptcy in 1814, as were many other Americans.

Following his bankruptcy Parker hoped to make fresh start. In March 1816 he moved his family to Greenville, Green County, New York, where he served a principal of the new Greenville Academy (attended by Martin Van Buren, later American President). The Academy's act of incorporation was signed 27 February 1816 by Daniel D. Tompkins, who was then governor of the State of New York, and Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, 33°, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. Parker served as principal of Greenville Academy until 1817, and was also a member of the Greenville literary institution.<sup>24</sup>

Unfortunate hardships followed Parker to New York. The Litchfield, Connecticut, North Association for Ministers filed charges against him in August 1817 for fraud and falsehood, accusing him of misusing his ministerial certificate which had been suspended.<sup>25</sup> It has been suggested that his persecution was at least partially due to his promi-

<sup>18</sup> *The Connecticut Evangelical Magazine*, Vol. 3 (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin, 1802), 39.

<sup>19</sup> W. Hunt, *The American Biographical Sketch Book* (New York: Nafis & Cornish, 1849), 117.

<sup>20</sup> H. Reed, in the *Cincinnati Gazette*, quoted in *Supplement to the Courant. Published Every Other Week as a Part of the Connecticut Currant*. Vol. 34 (Hartford, Saturday, April 3, 1869) No. 9, 67.

<sup>21</sup> D. Parker, *Proscription Delineated; or a Development of Facts Appertaining to the Arbitrary and Oppressive Proceedings of the North Congregationalist Association of Litchfield, County, in Relation to the Author* (Hudson: Stone and Cross, 1819), 26; Dexter, *Biographical Sketches* [...] (1911), vol. 5, 332. Parker and his prosecutor in the trial, Dr. Lyman Beecher, were former classmates. In his autobiography the latter accused Parker of neglecting his calling: "There was a man by the name of P— settled at Sharon who went into every thing but the work of the ministry— speculated, borrowed money at bank, and got aground." Charles Beecher, ed., *Autobiography, Correspondence, etc. of Lyman Beecher, D.D.* 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1865), vol. 1, 454.

<sup>22</sup> *Proceedings of the General Association of Connecticut June 1812* (Hartford: P. B. Gleason & Co., 1812), 12; B. B. Edwards, *The American Quarterly Register* (Boston: Perkins & Marvin, 1832), vol. 4, 319; G. F. Goodenough, ed., *A Gossip About a Country Parish of the Hills and Its People* (Amenia, New York: Times Press, 1900), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Goodenough, ed., *A Gossip* [...] (1900), 16.

<sup>24</sup> D. Parker, *A New-Year's Discourse, Delivered Before the Members of the Literary Institution in Greenville, Green County, the 1st of January 1817* (Catskill [N.Y.]: M. Croswell & Son, [1817]); B. F. Hough, *Historical and Statistical Record of the University of the State of New York: During the Century from 1784 to 1884. With an Introductory Sketch by David Murray* (Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons & Co., Printers, 1885), 634.

<sup>25</sup> The Congregation's position was detailed in J. Harvey, *A Reply to the Statements of Mr. Daniel Parker: In a Late Publication, Entitled "Proscription Delineated."* (Hartford, Conn.: Peter B. Gleason and Company, 1819); Dex-

nent Masonic membership.<sup>26</sup> He defended his character in a 290-page book entitled *Proscription Delineated*,<sup>27</sup> and in a 140-page follow-up called *A Complete Refutation*.<sup>28</sup> In 1818 he moved to Hudson, New York, where he served until 1819 as the principal of the Hudson Academy,<sup>29</sup> when he moved to Kingston. In 1823 Parker was employed to take charge of the Kingston Academy, and was paid a base salary of \$300 per annum (approximately \$154,000 or £105,177 income value in 2016),<sup>30</sup> which position he held until September 1826.<sup>31</sup>

Parker had strong academic and literary interests, and later published a book on arithmetic.<sup>32</sup> It is said that towards the end of his life Revd Parker became interested in the mystic doctrines of Emanuel Swedenborg.

## The Freemason

Revd Parker was initiated into Freemasonry in Connecticut ‘several years before [he] entered upon the ministry.’ This may have been around 1795, when he turned twenty-one, five or six years before he started preaching. His Masonic membership records have not been discovered, but at the Grand Lodge session of 17 May 1815, just a month shy of his forty-first birthday, he was appointed charter Master of a new lodge.

The petition from the brethren in Sharon, praying for the establishment of a new Lodge in that town, continued from the last Grand Communication, was introduced, and the consideration thereof resumed. The committee appointed to examine the Master elect, reported, that they made the examination as directed, and found him well qualified. After a full discussion, and the hearing of a remonstrance, the petition was granted, and a charter ordered to be issued, by the name of ‘Hamilton Lodge, No. 54’ – Bro. Daniel Parker to be first Master, and the Wardens appointed as per petition.<sup>33</sup>

ter, *Biographical Sketches* [...] (1911), vol. 5, 332.

<sup>26</sup> Dexter, *Biographical Sketches* [...] (1911), vol. 5, 334.

<sup>27</sup> D. Parker, *Proscription Delineated; or a Development of Facts Appertaining to the Arbitrary and Oppressive Proceedings of the North Congregationalist Association of Lichfield, County, in Relation to the Author* (Hudson: Stone and Cross, 1819).

<sup>28</sup> D. Parker, *A Complete Refutation of the Reply of Mr. Joseph Harvey to Proscription Delineated* (New-York: Wiley & Halsted, 1820).

<sup>29</sup> F. B. Hough, *Historical and Statistical Record of the University of the State of New York: During the Century from 1784 to 1884* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Company, Printers), 664.

<sup>30</sup> According to measuringworth.com (accessed August 25, 2016).

<sup>31</sup> N. B. Sylvester, *History of Ulster County, New York: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880), vol. 1, 216.

<sup>32</sup> D. Parker, A.M., *The Improved Arithmetic: newly arranged and clearly illustrated, both theoretically and practically, to meet the exigencies of the student in the acquisition of the nature and science of numbers; and also to aid the accountant in all arithmetical computations, relative to business transactions; designed for the use of academies, schools, and counting-houses* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1828).

<sup>33</sup> E. G. Storer, ed., *Record of Freemasonry in the State of Connecticut, with a Brief Account of its Origin in New England, and the Entire Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, from its First Organization, A.L. 5789* (New Haven: Henry

In 1815 and 1816, owing to financial burdens and his recent move to New York, W. Bro. Parker was unable to attend the Grand Communications of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut, and Hamilton Lodge sent a proxy. The following year no officer was present and the lodge was found delinquent 'for non-attendance and not making returns.'<sup>34</sup>

Bro. Parker was also active in the capitular (Holy Royal Arch) Masonry, and in 1813 he was appointed to a Grand Chapter committee to examine the proficiency of officers elect.<sup>35</sup> In the same year he petitioned the Grand Chapter for a charter to establish a Royal Arch chapter in Kent. This was approved, and he presided as high priest of the new Hamilton chapter No. 14 in 1814–15.<sup>36</sup> In 1814 he also served as Grand Secretary, *pro tempore*, of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Connecticut, and was a part of the committee assigned to find a new Grand Secretary.<sup>37</sup> In 1815 at the installation of the officers of Meridian Chapter No. 15, Royal Arch Masons, Canaan, he delivered a discourse on Psalm 133:1 ('Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity . . .') which he later published.<sup>38</sup>

## The New York Mason

Parker's residence in New York was during one of its most exciting periods. De Witt Clinton, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York from 1806–20, oversaw the Erie Canal project of 1817–25, which was one of the country's most ambitious feats of engineering. Albany had recently seen the publication of Webb's *The Free-Mason's Monitor*, and between 1813 and 1815 a Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite was established in New York City.

Kingston Lodge No. 23 was chartered by the Grand Lodge of New York in August 1808. In 1820 'Immediately after this [24 June, St. John's Day] anniversary the number of the lodge was changed from 23 to 20, and by a resolution of the lodge the charter under which it was working was forwarded to the Grand Lodge for the necessary change.' It is likely that Parker affiliated with Kingston Lodge soon after his move, and in 1824 he

B. Storer, Printer, 1859), 266. In his published defence Parker referred to himself as a Past Master. See *Proscription Delineated* (1819), 92.

<sup>34</sup> Hamilton Lodge No. 42 surrendered its charter to the Grand Lodge in 1838, and had it restored in 1873. The lodge ultimately surrendered its charter in 1997, and the members were assigned to Montgomery Lodge No. 13 (originally chartered by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts in 1783).

<sup>35</sup> J. K. Wheeler, ed., *Records of Capitular Masonry in the State of Connecticut: with a Brief History of the Early Grand Chapters, and the Proceedings of the Grand Chapter, from its Organization, A.D. 1798* (Hartford, Conn.: Press of Wiley, Waterman & Eaton, 1875), 59.

<sup>36</sup> Wheeler, ed., *Records of Capitular Masonry in the State of Connecticut* (1875), 57, 59, 64, 66, 69; Samuel Green, ed., *The Connecticut Annual Register and United States Calendar for the Year of our Lord 1815* (New London, Conn., 1815), 79.

<sup>37</sup> Wheeler, ed., *Records of Capitular Masonry in the State of Connecticut* (1875), 63.

<sup>38</sup> D. Parker, *A Discourse, Delivered at Canaan, March 23, 1815, at the Installation of Meridian Chapter* (Hartford [Conn.:] Peter B. Gleason & Co., Printers., 1815).

acted as lodge orator at that year's St John's Day anniversary.<sup>39</sup> It is not known if he was among the members of his lodge which greeted the visiting Marquis de Lafayette at nearby Red Hook in September 1824.

Parker's interest in the Royal Arch continued in New York. In 1817 he and two other Royal Arch Masons were granted a charter 'to hold a Chapter at New Durham, County of Greene, by the name of Friendship Chapter, No. 65,' and the following year he attended the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New York in Albany as its representative.<sup>40</sup> Still suffering from financial hardships, the following year he applied through his chapter for assistance from the Grand Chapter, which request was denied.<sup>41</sup>

### The *Masonic Tablet*, or *Free-Mason's Circular*

Nothing exists to show when Parker conceived his idea to create a cipher-text of Masonic ritual, and nothing suggests that he did so with malicious intent. Indeed its text reveals it as nothing more or less than a supplement to Webb's *Free-Mason's Monitor*. Parker's work supplied the missing esoteric content with included frequent notes to 'see Monitor.' It is not known what the members of his lodge thought about it, although they notified the Grand Lodge of its availability on 4 December 1822.

A Communication was received from Kingston Lodge, No. 20, informing the Grand Lodge that a printed work, as a help to the memory, called the "Masonic Tablet," was being advertised and sold by the Rev. Daniel Parker, to whom the Grand Secretary had written, condemning the same. The Communication of the Grand Secretary was approved by the Grand Lodge, which added that it decidedly condemned the use of all books or manuscripts, the support or tendency of which was to elucidate and explain Freemasonry.<sup>42</sup>

Although one person reported that he had seen the *Masonic Tablet* as early as 1820 (quoted later in this article), there is nothing else to support this date. In any case it is noteworthy that the Grand Lodge, which also overlooked the Webb manuscript ciphers, took no action against Parker other than generally to condemn the work, while Peter Ross' history of New York Masonry called it a 'perfectly harmless book.'<sup>43</sup> Understandably the *Masonic Tablet* must have pleased some Masons while simultaneously anger-

<sup>39</sup> N. B. Sylvester, *History of Ulster County, New York: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Philadelphia: Everts & Peck, 1880). vol. 1, 266.

<sup>40</sup> *Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of New York, from its Organization, in 1798, to 1867, Inclusive. Volume I. 1798–1853* (Buffalo: Published by Order of the Grand Chapter, 1871), 136, 141.

<sup>41</sup> *Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of New York [...] Volume I. 1798–1853* (1871), 146.

<sup>42</sup> C. T. McClenachan, *History of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons in New York from its Earliest Date*, 2 vols. (New York: Published by the Grand Lodge, 1892), 2:351.

<sup>43</sup> P. Ross, *A Standard History of Freemasonry in the State of New York* (New York and Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1899), 282.

ing others. Although it certainly facilitated learning ritual, its publication was strictly a breach of obligation.

### Editions of Parker's Cipher

Parker's text was available in three versions – Craft, Chapter, or both. The ritual was protected by employing a simple cipher which utilized five tactics to conceal the ritual: (1) letter and/or number substitution, (2) omission of letters, (3) inclusion of meaningless letters between backward brackets, numbers and punctuation marks, (4) spelling words backwards, and (5) inclusion of simple foreign words. The cipher is sometimes referred to as the 'Ast ritual' – an allusion to the first line on the document. The heading of the first page of the Craft Ritual reads 'Ast SC PE's L', which is deciphered as '[Fir]st S[e]c[tion] E[ntered] [A]p[prentice]'s L[ecture], and the Chapter page begins 'TP OS TCL,' meaning 'P[as]t [Master]'s L[e]ct[ure].'

Lacking publication information, identifying the various editions was achieved by textual analysis, and comparing types of paper and binding. During the 1990s I worked with my very dear and late friend Kent Logan Walgren to identify the editions, the results of which were published in Walgren's masterful *Freemasonry, Anti-Masonry and Illuminism in the United States, 1734–1850: A Bibliography* (2003).<sup>44</sup> Subsequent to completing his bibliography however, but prior to publication, we agreed on some minor refinements which are not reflected in the printed text. In the following descriptions Walgren's catalogue numbers are used to identify the editions. There were at least three Craft editions of the *Masonic Tablet* printed c.1822.

*The first edition*, untitled and string tied, measured 20 x 12 cm., with 28 pages (Walgren #2038). At the time the bibliography was published I owned the only known copy of the first printing, but a second copy was subsequently discovered and donated to the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum and Library of the Supreme Council, 33°, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, in Lexington, Massachusetts.<sup>45</sup>

*The second edition*, untitled and string tied, was retypeset and measured 17 x 10 cm., with 44 pages (Walgren #2039).

*The third edition*, untitled and string tied, was identical to the second, with the addition of a five page key to the cipher (Walgren #2040). A posthumously-printed version of the third edition appeared c.1845, measuring 15.5 x 9.5 cm, with 88 pages, and included the key to the cipher. This edition was hardbound in either green or brown blind-stamped cloth (Walgren #4630).

<sup>44</sup> K. L. Walgren, *Freemasonry, Anti-Masonry and Illuminism in the United States, 1734–1850: A Bibliography* 2 vols. (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> [http://nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com/library\\_and\\_archives/daniel-parker/](http://nationalheritagemuseum.typepad.com/library_and_archives/daniel-parker/)

*The fourth edition*, string tied, c.1824, measuring 19.5 x 13 cm., was retypeset, with the addition of the new title *The Free-Mason's Circular*, with 33 pages. It was originally believed that this edition dated to c.1840 (Walgren # 4206). This edition accidentally omits parts of two lines on page 8, which were restored in a second, corrected, printing, which may have appeared in late 1824, or early 1825 (not in Walgren). As will be discussed later, the second printing was deciphered into plaintext during America's anti-Masonic episode under the title *Morgan Confirmed* (1827).

*The Capitular edition*, also untitled, appeared c.1822, measured 17 x 10 cm., with nineteen pages, and included a twelve page key to the cipher. It includes rituals of the Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch Mason.

To enable the reader to see the simplicity and security of Parker's cipher, I have decrypted a portion of the first catechism below. Note that in the original *Masonic Tablet* the text runs together, but it is here broken apart into sentences for ease of comparison.

MASONIC TABLET – CIPHER TEXT

;Ast SC PE's L

1. FM whnc cm u ]oviz[ sa na PE ]gmz[  
 2. fm ]gp[ e g f h st jn t j ]mqz[ rsa ]pq[ lm  
 5 wt cm u hr o d ]mpq[  
 8 o lrn o sbdu ym psns nd mprv flsm n ysm  
  
 3 tn u r a ]vs[ n i prsm  
 4 I m os tkn nd cptd mg brs nd swlf  
  
 7 hw d u no urslf ]pmz[ o b a n  
 6 y hvg bn ftn trd ]cma[ nv dnd nd m wlng o b trd gn  
 3 wt mks u a n  
 2 ym obn  
 1 hw shl I no u o b a n  
 4 y a crtn sn nkt drw nd e prft stnp f ym ntnc  
  
 1 wt r sns  
 2 rt slgna, sltnzrh, nd srlcdnprp.

MASONIC TABLET – PLAIN TEXT

First Section Entered Apprentice's Lecture

From whence came you as an Entered Apprentice?  
 From the lodge of holy St. John at Jerusalem.  
 What came you here to do?  
 To learn to subdue my passions and improve myself  
 in Masonry.  
 Then you are a Mason I presume?  
 I am so taken and accepted among Brothers and  
 Fellows.  
 How do you know yourself to be a Mason?  
 By having been often tried, never denied and my  
 willingness to be tried again.  
 What makes you a Mason?  
 My obligation.  
 How shall I know you to be a Mason?  
 By a certain sign, token, word, and the perfect  
 points of my entrance.  
 What are signs?  
 Right angles, horizontals, and perpendiculars.

The cipher for the Capitular degrees differed from those of the Craft, perhaps intended to safeguard them from those who had not yet obtained them. Questions and answers are not separated by numbers, as with the symbolic degrees, but use italicized letters. Letter substitutions compounded the difficulty in deciphering, e.g., q = a, z = I (the personal pronoun), j = i (or sometimes has no meaning in a word), while other letters and/or combinations had other meanings, e.g, o = Master, t = to, v = and, yn = then, ys = this, qt = that, zm = am, some of which is seen in the following brief example of the first lines.

PT OS TCL	Past Master's Lecture
E r u q p t o	[Q.] Are you a Past Master?
P z h v t . h n r . t e b	[A.] I have the honor to be.
A h w r r j v d u . t y t h n r	[Q.] How arrived you at that honor?
D b i e b n g d l i l c j t d . t p r j s d v r q r g l i c n j s t d m f f r r v a c j d g s	[A.] By being duly elected and installed to preside over a regularly constituted lodge of Free and Accepted Masons.
I b i w m w r u n s j t l d	[Q.] By whom were you installed?
B b i m i p r j d c j e e r n f f c	[A.] By my predecessor in office.

## The Grand Chapter Reacts

Because the *Masonic Tablet* included the rituals of Capitular Masonry, the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of New York also had cause to investigate the matter. The detailed reports of the Grand Chapter, which describe Parker's odyssey, reveal that he was afforded due process when his troubles began in February 1823.

Livingston Billings, a Past Master of Sullivan Lodge No. 272 and member of Sullivan Chapter No. 65, and Benjamin Chamberlain, of Washington Chapter No. 29, brought a complaint to the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of New York:

A complaint was made by Comp. Livingston Billings against Comp. Daniel Parker, P. . H . : P . . of a Chapter under the jurisdiction of this Grand Chapter, which was referred to a Committee, which reported as follows:

It appears to your Committee that, within the last year, Comp. Parker, has procured to be published and had offered publicly for sale, certain printed pamphlets purporting to be the lectures on the several degrees in masonry. Your Committee are of opinion that such publication is a violation of every principle of masonry, and subversive of the best interests thereof. Your Committee have prepared resolutions which they deem proper to be adopted in the premises, which they beg leave to submit.

1. *Resolved*, That the Grand Secretary cite the said Daniel Parker to appear before the Grand Chapter on the first day of the next annual meeting, to show cause why he should not be expelled for unmasonic conduct in the premises. And further, that the Grand Secretary furnish said Parker with a copy of these resolutions.

2. *Resolved*, That it shall not be lawful for any Companion or Brother under the jurisdiction of this Grand Chapter, to write, print, or publish, or cause to be written, printed, or published, any book or books, or anything on the subject of masonry, without the permission and approbation of the Grand Council.

3. *Resolved*, That the Grand Secretary transmit a copy of these resolutions to every Subordinate Chapter under the jurisdiction of this Grand Chapter, and a like copy to each Grand Chapter in the United States.

L. Billings,  
B. Chamberlain.<sup>46</sup>

The following year (5 February 1824) the committee reported.

<sup>46</sup> *Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of New York [...] Volume I. 1798–1853 (1871)*, 208.

The Committee appointed to investigate the case of Comp. Daniel Parker, High Priest elect of a subordinate Chapter at Kingston, reported as follows: That they have given the subject that attention which the circumstances under which they were compelled to act would permit. It is with deep regret that your Committee are compelled to state their conviction, that the said Comp. Daniel Parker, by a series of reprehensible conduct as a Mason, has rendered himself a dangerous member of our fraternity and wholly undeserving of its benefits, its honors, or its confidence. It has satisfactorily appeared to your Committee, after a patient examination of a number of brethren, some of whom occupy and adorn the highest stations in the gift of then order, that Comp. Parker has not only expressly violated one of the most important of our Masonic obligations, by printing and publishing, or causing to be printed and published, a work calculated to expose some of the mysteries which bind together and preserve our fraternity; but, in order to find a more ready and profitable market, he has added to his perfidy a series of falsehoods in regard to the opinions of his work entertained by some of our most eminent officers. \*\*

\*\* With these facts before them, the Committee cannot hesitate as to the course that ought to be pursued. Comp. Parker cannot be allowed, while laboring under charges or imputations like these, to mingle in fellowship with our brethren—much less to preside as the head of a subordinate Chapter, whose motto is “Holiness to the Lord.” Your Committee therefore recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

*Resolved*, That Comp. Daniel Parker, recently elected High Priest of Mount Horeb Chapter, No. 75, at Kingston, be, and he is hereby suspended, not only as the presiding officer of said Chapter, but as a member of our fraternity.

*Resolved*, That the aforesaid Daniel Parker be cited to appear before this Grand Chapter on the first day of its session, to be held in February, 1825, to show cause, if any he has, why he should not be expelled.

*Resolved*, That the Grand Secretary, under the direction of the Grand Council, be instructed to prepare charges and specifications, upon which the foregoing report and resolutions are founded, and serve a copy of the same upon the said Daniel Parker.

All of which is respectfully submitted,  
By order of the Committee,  
WILLIAM L. STONE,  
*Chairman.*<sup>47</sup>

A family illness prevented Parker from attending the February 1825 meeting. At the meeting of 8 February 1826, while Parker served as High Priest of Mount Horeb Chapter, it was reported:

That the Grand High Priest has had an interview with Comp. Parker on the subject of his tracts, as he calls them, and by referring to a letter from the said Parker, which

<sup>47</sup> *Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of New York [...] Volume I. 1798–1853 (1871)*, 208.

accompanies this report, dated Jan. 30th, 1826, to Comp. Ames, it will be perceived that he admits the substance of the charges against him, and justifies his conduct. The Grand Chapter will therein discover the reasons which he urges in his defence. The Grand Council are in possession of his tract with explanations, which it is unnecessary to detail in this report.

The report was received and referred to a select committee. On 10 February 1826 the committee reported:

That they deemed the publication of the tract alluded to in said charges and which the said Parker, in the letter accompanying the report, admits he has published, a direct violation of the long established usages of the fraternity. The Committee have also perused the letter in which the said Parker justifies the said publication, and cannot forebear giving it as their decided opinion that the language it contains is highly indecorous and insulting to the Grand Council; and that said Comp. Parker ought to be suspended or expelled from all participation in the benefits of masonry.

Whereupon, it was

*Resolved*, that Daniel Parker, High Priest of Mount Horeb Chapter, No. 75, be and he is hereby expelled from this Grand Chapter, and from all the communication with the Chapter and Mark Lodges under the jurisdiction of the same.<sup>48</sup>

Parker's conduct, which was deemed 'reprehensible', resulted in his expulsion from the fraternity only a few months before Morgan disappeared. In a letter to John Quincy Adams William L. Stone, author of *Letters on Masonry and Anti-Masonry* (1832), cited Parker's case in reference to the so-called Masonic 'penalties' to demonstrate that expulsion is the only true penalty of the fraternity.

The truth is, that a simple expulsion from a lodge, or chapter, with a public advertisement of the fact, is the only penalty, for any offence, which the Masons, previously to the Morgan outrage, have ever, to my knowledge, considered themselves authorized to inflict. As an illustration of this assertion, I may perhaps be excused for stating a case in point. No longer than the year 1824,—only two years before the Morgan outrage—I myself introduced a resolution into the Grand Chapter, requiring the Grand Priest of a subordinate chapter to show cause why he should not be expelled. The accusation was the same as that for which Morgan died, viz: the writing and revealing of Masonic secrets. The charge was investigated, *and he was expelled*. He is yet a living witness that his throat was not cut across, nor his tongue torn out by its roots, nor his body buried in the rough sands of the sea.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of the State of New York [ . . . ] Volume I. 1798–1853* (1871), 239, 257.

<sup>49</sup> W. L. Stone, *Letters on Masonry and Anti-Masonry, Addressed to the Hon. John Quincy Adams* (New York: O. Halsted, 1832), 80.

‘Morgan’ was, of course, William Morgan, author of the *Illustrations of Masonry by One of the Fraternity* (1826), the most infamous of the American Masonic exposés. The story of Morgan’s disappearance, and the turbulent period which followed, has often been told and need not be recited again here. Suffice it to say that his disappearance, following a boast to publish an exposure of Masonic ritual, precipitated an anti-Masonic episode which swept the United States from 1826 to 1842.

In about the year 1825 Parker moved to New York City, where he worked as a teacher. It is not known if there were any bitter feelings on his part, but Stone noted that *someone*, who must have been Revd Parker, met with William Morgan at a hotel. If true, Morgan may have been influenced by the *Masonic Tablet*:

He [Morgan] was at a Masonic hotel in this city, for a short time, in the course of that year, and was often closeted with a man of considerable talents, and some scholarship, who had been expelled from the fraternity the preceding year, for a breach of his Masonic faith, in writing and exhibiting certain Masonic matters that were then supposed to be unwritten. Parts of his manuscripts had been shown by Morgan to his friends....<sup>50</sup>

We last hear of Parker about nine years later. During an outbreak of cholera, which began in August 1834,<sup>51</sup> we discover that he was again preaching. ‘He was urged to leave the city until the alarm was over, but declined, saying it was his duty to remain and care for his parishioners, whatever might be the consequences. He died at his post on September 26, [1834], in his 61st year . . .’<sup>52</sup>

## Morgan Confirmed

The story of the *Masonic Tablet/Free-Mason’s Circular* does not end with Parker’s death. Although it was prepared as an aide-memoire, it was perhaps inevitable that it would be used as a witness to describe the rituals of the fraternity during the ‘Morgan affair’, – an anti-Masonic period in American history which lasted from 1826 to 1842. In brief this period was named for William Morgan of Batavia, New York, who disappeared in September 1826, after he unwisely boasted of his intent to print an exposé of Masonic rituals for the public. It was presumed he was ‘murdered by the masons’, which set off an anti-Masonic excitement which grew rapidly and burned so furiously that the fraternity was nearly extinguished in the United States. In 1827, the year following Morgan’s disappearance, a second, corrected edition of *The Free-Mason’s Circular* (c.1824–25), was reprinted and decrypted by ‘Edward Hicke’ under the title *Morgan Confirmed: or the Secrets of Freemasonry Made Known to all the World . . . Obtained by the Possession of a*

<sup>50</sup> Stone, *Letters on Masonry and Anti-Masonry*, 130.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Cholera in New York’, *North River Times Vol. 1* (Haverstraw, New York, 22 August 1834), No. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Dexter, *Biographical Sketches* (1911) vol. 5, 333.

*Key to a Masonic Document* (1827).<sup>53</sup> In his introduction Hickes, about whom nothing can be found, claimed to be Mason, yet his decryption includes several errors, which make his claim questionable.

### ‘The Mason’s Own Book’

Unaware that *Morgan Confirmed* had been published, in May 1831 the ‘Antimasonic State Convention of the Massachusetts,’ held at Faneuil Hall, Boston, noted that it had acquired a copy of a cipher ritual, which they referred to as ‘the Mason’s own book.’ From the context, and the extracts which were printed, it is easily identified as Parker’s work. At that time it was resolved that a committee

... examine a pamphlet herewith presented, believed to have been designed and published in cypher, by Masons, as a guide for Masters of Lodges to procure uniformity of the working of the first three degrees in Masonry, and that they report to this Convention how far the same confirms the disclosures, that have been made, touching the first three degrees, together with their opinions on such other original masonic documents as may be presented for their consideration.<sup>54</sup>

The committee, having discharged its duty, the following was reported:

Mr Hallett, from the Committee on a Pamphlet in character and cypher, &c. presented a Report, which was read and laid on the table. A part of the accompanying pamphlet was read, as transcribed from the original.

The Committee to whom was referred a pamphlet published in characters and cypher, purporting to be a publication put forth by adhering Masons, beg leave to

#### REPORT.

That the pamphlet in question, which is herewith presented as a part of this Report, is without title or date, and consists of an ingeniously devised system of short hand, by omitting consonants, inverting their order and the occasional use of arbitrary signs, with other guards against detection, sufficient to render the decyphering of the work hardly possible, without the aid of the disclosures that have been made of the lectures and obligations of the three first degrees, which are fully comprised in this publication. It therefore might have been put forth, at the time it is believed to have been devised, with perfect confidence that through it the secrets of Masonry could not become intelligible to the world, though your Committee infer from certain refer-

<sup>53</sup> *Morgan Confirmed: or The Secrets of Freemasonry Made Known to all the World: Being An authentic and true History, by the Masons Themselves, of All Their Transactions, Signs, Ceremonies, Formalities of Initiation, Expulsion, Proceedings, &c. &c. Obtained by the Possession of a Key to a Masonic Document; which Key and Document are herewith published; and are of such a nature that any Person can, by use of them, understand immediately, and can practice all that the most accomplished Freemason can do: Confirming All the unfortunate Morgan has written on the Subject; and furnishing much additional and interesting Matter* (New York: Printed for the author, 1827)

<sup>54</sup> *An Abstract of the Proceedings of the Antimasonic State Convention of Massachusetts. Held in Faneuil Hall, Boston, May 19 & 20, 1831.* (Boston: Office of the Boston Press, for the Publishing Committee, 1831), 27.

ences to the devisers of this and similar systems of rendering the masters of lodges bright Masons, that it was not seconded with approbation by the higher orders of the Fraternity.

The evidence on which the Committee found their belief that this pamphlet contains original Masonry in the three first degrees, as administered in the New England lodges, is circumstantial, but of a nature that must convince every candid mind. Such circumstantial evidence is as conclusive as positive testimony, and on it rests the proof of the origin of the most celebrated works of antiquity, and in a great degree, the authority of the Scriptures themselves.

Your Committee have the fact, that this pamphlet was the property of an adhering Mason, a citizen of Providence, R[hode]. I[sland]. who died at sea, and that it was found among his papers after his decease, several years before the abduction of William Morgan, and of course before Antimasonry had an existence. This fact might be directly substantiated, but from the circumstance that it requires a presentation to the public of the names of females, who would naturally shrink from such an exhibition. Independent of this fact, the internal evidence of age, in the appearance of the type, letter, &c. a criterion by which a printer or antiquarian would fix the age of a work with very tolerable accuracy, is entirely satisfactory, that the origin of the publication must be carried back to a period often, fifteen and perhaps twenty years. It could also be shown that a Past Master of a lodge in Rhode Island, a warm adhering Mason, has repeatedly admitted, on examination of the work, that he had seen it in the lodge, over which he presided, in 1820, and that he believed it to be genuine Masonry, as it was administered in that lodge, but that no person, not a mason, would ever be the wiser for it. We have also satisfactory evidence of the fact, that another copy of this work is in the possession of an adhering Mason, of Newport, R. I. by whom it has been shown to gentlemen in that town, and pronounced by him to be genuine Masonry, devised for the purpose of enabling Masters of lodges, to whom alone the Key was entrusted, to perform the ceremonies and administer the oaths with accuracy and uniformity. Your Committee therefore, on every principle of evidence, are satisfied of the fact that this work was published several years before any inquiry had been made in this country, affecting the character of Freemasonry.

Having thus fixed the period of publication, beyond the origin of the present investigations into Masonry, it is obvious that the book in question must have been published from one of two motives— Either by adhering Masons for the purpose of affording aid in delivering the lectures and administering the oaths, and thereby producing uniformity in the work of the lodge room—or, that it was published by the enemies of Masonry, for the purpose of disclosing the secrets of the Order.

The last of these grounds is wholly untenable from the consideration that had the author of the work intended to disclose the real or pretended secrets of the order, he never would have been at the labor and expense of publishing it in a form as unintelligible to the uninitiated as were the symbols and devices which had already been published and approved by masonic chapters and lodges.— To disclose the secrets of Masonry, out of the lodge room, could not therefore, by any plausible construction,

have been the design of a publication so carefully shrouded in mystery, as to render it a sealed book to the uninitiated.

The only possible conclusion then to arrive at, is that the work was designed and published by Masons, and for the use of Masons. The Committee challenge a refutation of this position by the advocates of the Order, for which purpose the work in question is offered to the examination of members of the Fraternity. That the work has not been generally known by Masons, (excepting perhaps, Masters of Lodges) is presumed from the fact that your Committee have met with no seceding or other mason, not a Master of a lodge, who professes any acquaintance with the cypher. One seceder, n Past Master of a lodge in Rhode Island, has recognized the work as a guide by which masonic oaths were administered, and Masters of lodges brightened in their duties.

A strong evidence of the authenticity of this work, has been derived by testing the effect of a repetition of its oaths upon adhering masons. Many who have sheltered themselves behind the slightest variation in terms, to deny the whole obligation as cited from Bernard, in peremptory phrase, have shrunk from the test of the oath when presented to them from what your Committee would designate by way of distinction, "THE MASONS OWN BOOK" in no instance within our knowledge, has an adhering Mason denied the terms of the oaths as transcribed from this book. Should it be objected to the authenticity of this book, that its publication by Masons, would be a violation of the Entered Apprentices oath, not to cut, carve, print, &c. the answer is plain, that the same obligation would apply with equal force to the Monitor of Webb, the Chart of Jeremy L. Cross, and the whole collection of Masonic Mirrors, Charts and Emblems, published under the express sanction of the highest masonic bodies in this country.

Having thus fairly established the masonic origin and authenticity of this work, the next is, what does it disclose, and how do the statements here given by adhering Masons correspond with those given by seceding Masons? On this point the work in question is entirely satisfactory and conclusive, as will be seen by a translation, herewith presented, of the three first lectures in the three first degrees. It will be found that while every substantial point in the obligation, is here expressly confirmed, there are repeated variations in language and arrangement, from the disclosures made by other sources of information, such as must inevitably occur, in oral repetitions, for which the Masters of different lodges rely upon memory alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Committee would here close their suggestions with the remark that in their opinion the work they have examined fully and circumstantially establishes the fact that the three first degrees of the Order are faithfully revealed to the world, by seceding Masons, and that the information of the disclosures in these degrees, by this evidence drawn from Masonic authority, is strong collateral evidence that the disclosures made by them of the advanced degrees, are equally correct. The fact that Masons and their adherents deny to this day that the secrets of the three first degrees are before the public, while their own Book, in their own figures and devices convicts them of misrepres-

sensation, furnishes fair ground for the belief that they are equally disingenuous and reckless in denying the truth of the disclosures in the advanced degrees.<sup>55</sup>

Although the report ended with a remark that a ‘correct translation of the three first Lectures, comprised in the pamphlet’ was submitted to the convention, the decryption was curiously not included in the published report. The reason for the omission was soon discovered by the ‘Committee Appointed by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations to Investigate the Charges in Circulation Against Freemasonry.’ In contradistinction to the ‘Antimasonic State Convention of the Massachusetts’, which used Parker’s cipher to condemn the fraternity, the committee appointed by the State of Rhode Island discovered that it vindicated the character of local Masons. The Rhode Island committee found that Parker’s ritual text, which was prepared for Masonic use, did not include the objectionable language or ‘falsified forms’ contained in exposés which had been prepared for the public. The Rhode Island committee confirmed what Masons – and honest ex-Masons—had said: ‘infamous interpolations’<sup>56</sup> had been added to ritual exposés to prejudice the public against the fraternity.

There is one curious piece of documentary evidence, proving the correctness and truth of the constructions and explanations, given by masons, of their masonic obligations, which has been inadvertently furnished by those who now insist upon a totally different understanding of those obligations; such an one as would render them highly criminal. In the published proceedings of an antimasonic assemblage, held in Boston in May last, we find the following entry, viz: “On motion of B. F. Hallett, Esq. of R. I. it was resolved that Messrs. Hallett, Whalley and Pike, of Suffolk, be a committee to examine a pamphlet herewith presented, believed to have been designed and published in cypher, by masons, as a guide for masters of lodges,” &c. &c. And shortly afterwards, among the same proceedings, is to be found the report of that committee. More than one half of that report is occupied in establishing the fact that the said pamphlet in cypher is a genuine masonic work, and “contains *original masonry, in the three first degrees as administered in the New England lodges.*” This fact they pronounce to be conclusively substantiated by such kind of evidence as that on which “*rests*” to use their own language, “*the proof of the origin of the most celebrated works of antiquity, and, in a great degree, the authority of the scriptures themselves.*” They therefore, “by way of distinction,” they say, designate this book by the title of “THE MASON’S OWN BOOK.” In another part of the report they say, “we have also satisfactory evidence of the fact, that another copy of this work is in the possession of an adhering mason in Newport, R. I.” It happens that this last mentioned copy is now in possession of this committee; and has been identified by the testimony of one of the witnesses, (Doct. B. W. Case,) who had been in possession of both the copies; that which was carried to Boston, as well as this. Dr. Case obtained this book from Capt. Howland, a mason,

<sup>55</sup> *An Abstract of the Proceedings of the Antimasonic State Convention of Massachusetts [...]* (1831), 46–48.

<sup>56</sup> A. de Hoyos, *Light on Masonry: The History and Rituals of America’s Most Important Masonic Exposé* (Washington, DC: Scottish Rite Research Society, 2008), 76–77.

and afterwards loaned it to the chairman of this committee, whom he also favored with a key or translation of a considerable portion of it, with which, for a clue, the rest is easily decyphered. The committee before mentioned, after assuring the Boston assembly that “the information developed is doubtless highly important,” conclude as follows, viz: “Annexed to this report, is a correct translation of the three first lectures comprised in the pamphlet under consideration, all which is submitted for the disposition of the convention.” But it seems that, that *convention* did not think proper to make any other disposition of the highly important translation, than to suppress it; for it is not to be found among the *published* proceedings of that body; and we do not understand that it ever has been made public. The reason of this attempted concealment and suppression of that important document is now obvious. It appears that the oaths given in that book in cypher, are the same as those proved to be used by masons in Rhode Island; almost word for word the same as those used in Newport; and wholly falsifying the forms contained in Bernard and Allyn’s books, so far as they differ from the Rhode Island forms; not one of the obnoxious clause\* introduced in those books being found in “*The mason’s own book*.”<sup>57</sup>

Additionally, the Rhode Island committee concluded that a literal interpretation of the symbolic penalties was both inappropriate and unjustified, and suggested that ‘obnoxious and criminal clauses’ were inserted into popular exposés ‘to serve the purposes of corrupt politicians.’<sup>58</sup>

### Parker’s Cipher Legacy

As noted earlier, the third edition of the *Masonic Tablet* was reprinted c.1845 soon after the Morgan affair died out. Coinciding with a renewed interest in the fraternity, Parker’s rituals were likely responsible for inspiring the explosion of printed cipher rituals during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the first of which was another untitled work, which began with the header *O a □ E.A.* (Walgren #4696), meaning ‘Opening a lodge of Entered Apprentices.’ This first new cipher, which included the ritual for New Hampshire, was probably printed about 1843. It was much simpler than Parker’s cipher, merely employing the first letter of each word. Its layout was somewhat similar, but improved, and, like Parker’s, included notes to refer to the printed monitors, which it supplemented.

Within the next quarter decade American Masonry witnessed a proliferation of printed ciphers, the most successful were entitled *Ecce Orienti* and *King Solomon and his Followers*, which included the unique ritual work for several of the American Grand

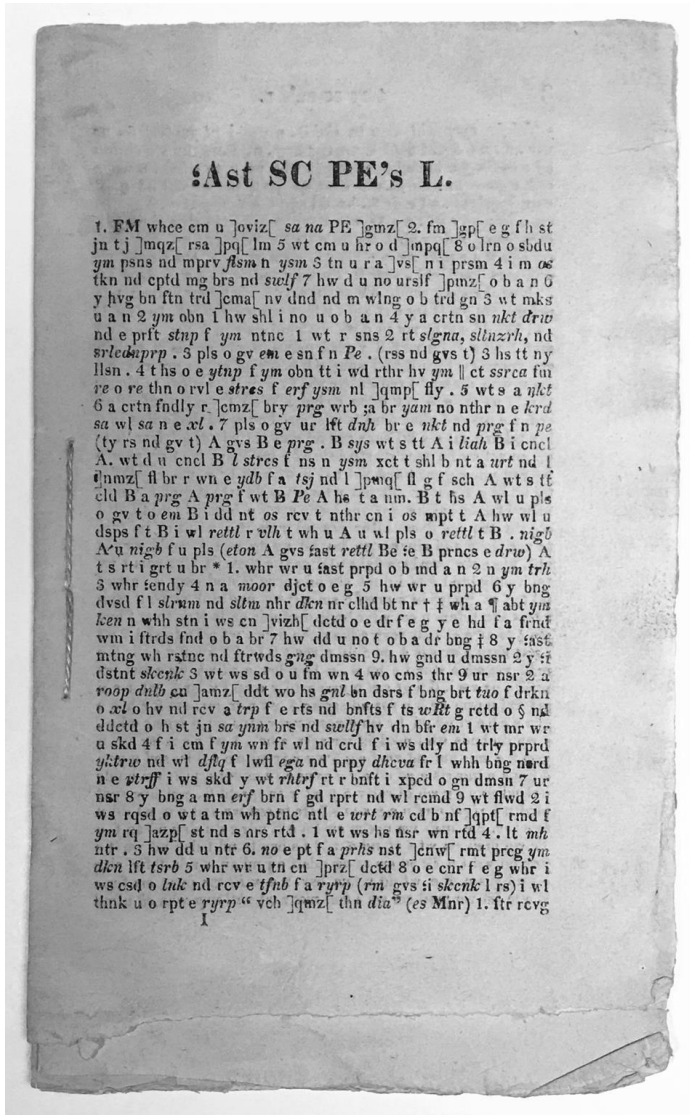
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<sup>57</sup> Report of the Committee Appointed by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations to Investigate the Charges in Circulation Against Freemasonry and Masons in Said State: Together with the Official Documents and Testimony Relating to the Subject (Providence: William Marshall, State Printer, 1832), p. 26.

<sup>58</sup> Report of the Committee Appointed by the General Assembly of the State of Rhode-Island [...] (1832), p. 28.

Lodges. Although these ciphers were also frowned upon, some Grand Lodges have subsequently embraced them as unofficial, and in some cases official, guides to the ritual. But that, is another story.

## APPENDIX

First edition of the Rev. Daniel Parker's *Masonic Tablet* (New York, 1822)

( 1 )

† ast	seafirstuce	bmlp	acreplumbastic
† a	tonez	brng	nesibearingcame
† ae	attwelveam	br	ecbareum
alr	rmdashleripe	bnt	elabentume
ahfj	mandajepthanoves	bndr	muchboundaryfrom
† aeth	ovimtwelfhpine	bdr	ecelobdurateask
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bng	gadburningrac	chr	amrcharacterswa
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bg	rubadgeur	crt	masccertainitu
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bsn	acebusinessuch	cnci	mascconcealaste
bdnt	rastobedientubes	cld	evrcalledunt
bt	seabouter	cn	nacanda
bts	zembeauticsant	clhd	mascclothedusty
blf	wambeliefsna	cndd	dicoconductedetal
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 ys mi th qt bo f q th o I fir rcjvg t. th qt bo f q tp O  
 wt dd u yn bsjrv A t. W R O ppjhg mi fm t. E ndr t.  
 dgd v sg f q tp o ho pystd zs hs rt hdn tkn f hs cnjnc f  
 Fri lv v frjndh v yth zt t. gp v wd f q th o v bd zs og v  
 sljt t. S W Ss qs sch E hw wr u yn dsjpsd f F z ws  
 ken bi t. rt hnd bi t. o f crmjns v endjctd bfr t. thjrn  
 whr z ws cs d .t gy mi sst .t crtn nct chjrgs qs cnjnd

Capitular ritual cipher

1	
A. klamighyte	blm jmemlabs
ac bckrads	blmsd osolbsomdez
acted oacceptder	blndd ednilbder
A D plamighytgodd	blsg iselbgnist
ad bediant	blts halibiseits
Adam odaainramp	blty halibiyth
aer coriash	bn boneebeg
Af betsewen	bndg adnib,
Agn haniags	bnft onebetifk
agrd jadeergo	bntt knobneth
Ah lihramafibt	bo eboliag?
ald plalowder	bon cadooged
an chraeyst	bonss idooqssent
ann bosraeyck	bos eboliagtionss
apex dapoted	br brerabet
aq pawterk	brd pubridet
artl pratieck	brlt illirbitnas
A S jhgihitseirps	brng bognirbal
assis inepynk	brngb onrubinghsube
autrsd luathordezid	brsn garbsent
avns hvaaseung	brst batsaerben
Bck bokcaben	brstp itsaerbetalpt
benzr abenudahenezrazk	bsgd gebsiegden
bcm hebemock	bsm kobsomg
bcs jebesuack	bsnss nubsissent
bdd adubded	bst betsebl
bdi jaedibg	bsrv iboevrest
bdi nobdys	bsrvd uboserdevt
bd dedibel	bt hatuobe
bdt cetbuodm	bti muaebtys
bdtf jtbuodluf	btn ubotaing
bfr heberoft	bttb otubtonk
bgn jebnigs	bv haevobs
bgng jebnig,	bw cawobed
bgt cathguoben	bx doxobsh
bh bohsuber	Bya obabynolt
bld jebdloht	C bahcrald
bi blybon	Cal glahcdenat
bis bleciwted	cant bognis,
bk cakooen	cap opahctern
bl haelbs	ccrd jcadrock
blee plablancer	cedli ocacorgnidlyt
bld cadoolbug	cct icatnuocs
bldg adliub,	cdt anacdietadg
blus iebsgnold	cent inuhderds

Key to the capitular ritual

EXCERPTS FROM THE LECTURES AND  
CEREMONIES OF THE MASONIC TABLET

Excerpt from the Second Section of the Entered Apprentice's  
Lecture

You have satisfied me, Brother A., as to the manner and method of your initiation into this degree but, as there appears to be many singularities made use of on this occasion, I wish to know why you were caused to submit to them.

[Q.] In the first place why were you divested of all minerals and metals?

[A.] For two reasons: first, in order that I should carry nothing offensive or defensive into the lodge with me.

[Q.] Second reason?

[A.] Because at the building of King Solomon's temple, there was not heard the sound of axe, hammer, or any tool of iron.

[Q.] How could the building of such stupendous magnitude as King Solomon's temple be erected without the use of iron tools?

[A.] Because the stones were all hewed, squared, marked, and numbered in the quarries where they were raised. The timber was fallen and prepared in the forests of Lebanon and carried on floats by sea to Joppa, and from thence conveyed to Jerusalem, where they were set up with wooden mauls prepared for that purpose. And, when the whole building was completed, those several parts fitted to that exact nicety that they had more the appearance of the handy work of the Supreme Architect of the Universe than that of human hands.

[Q.] Why were you neither naked nor clothed?

[A.] Because Masonry regards no man for his worldly wealth or honors. It was therefore to signify that it was the internal, and not the external, qualifications of a man that should recommend him to be made a Mason.

[Q.] Why were you neither barefoot nor shod?

[A.] It was in conformity to an Israelitish custom adopted by Masons and we read in the book of Ruth it was the manner in former times concerning redeeming and changing that, to confirm all things, a man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor. This was testimony in Israel. This, therefore, we do, on this solemn occasion, as a token of our sanctity and a pledge of our fidelity in the business we were then about, thereby signifying that we renounce our own wills in all matters as it regards the secrets of Free Masonry, and become obedient to the laws of our ancient institution.

[Q.] Why were you hoodwinked, with a cable-tow about your neck?

[A.] For several reasons: first, as I was then in darkness as it regarded the secrets of Free Masonry, so should I endeavor to keep all the world in after, until they should become as justly and lawfully by them as I was then about to do.

[Q.] Second reason?

[A.] That my heart might be taught to conceal, before my eyes should discover, the beauties of Masonry.

[Q.] Third reason?

[A.] That, had I refused to submit to the forms and ceremonies made use of at my initiation, and thereby been thought unworthy of being taken by the hand as a Brother, I might, by the assistance of the cable-tow, have been led out of the lodge, without discovering the form thereof.

[Q.] Why were you caused to give three distinct knocks at the door?

[A.] For two reasons: first, to alarm the lodge and inform the Right Worshipful Master that there was a candidate prepared for initiation.

[Q.] Second reason?

[A.] It was to remind me of a certain text in scripture: Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

### Excerpt from the First Section of the Fellow Craft's Lecture

[Q.] Brother, will you be off, or from?

[A.] I will be from.

[Q.] From what?

[A.] From the degree of an Entered Apprentice to that of a Fellow Craft.

[Q.] Then you are a Fellow Craft, I presume?

[A.] I am. Try me.

[Q.] How will you be tried?

[A.] By the square.

[Q.] Why by the square?

[A.] Because that is one of the working tools of my profession.

[Q.] What is a square?

[A.] An angle of 90 degrees, or the fourth part of a circle.

[Q.] What induced you to become a Fellow Craft?

[A.] In order that I might obtain wages, the better to support myself, and assist all worthy distressed Fellow Craft.

[Q.] Where was you made a Fellow Craft?

[A.] In the body of a just and lawful lodge of Fellow Crafts, duly assembled, and legally constituted.

[Q.] Where was you prepared to be made a Fellow Craft?

[A.] In a room adjacent to the lodge.

[Q.] How were you prepared?

[A.] By being divested of all minerals and metals, neither naked nor clothed, bare-foot nor shod, hoodwinked, with a cable-tow twice around my naked right arm.

[Q.] Why had you a cable-tow twice around your naked right arm?

[A.] It was to denote as a Fellow Craft that I was under a double tie to the fraternity.

[Q.] Where were you then conducted?

[A.] To the door of the lodge by the hand of a Brother, where I was caused to give three distinct knocks.

[Q.] To what do those three distinct knocks allude?

[A.] To the jewels of a Fellow Craft.

[Q.] What are they?

[A.] The listening ear, the instructive tongue, and faithful breast.

[Q.] I will thank you to explain them.

[A.] The listening ear receives the sound from the instructive tongue, and the sacred mysteries of Freemasonry are safely guarded in the repository of a faithful breast.

[Q.] What was said to you from within?

[A.] Who comes there, repeated.

[Q.] Your answer?

[A.] A Brother who has justly and lawfully served his time as an Entered Apprentice, and now seeks for further light in Masonry, by being passed to the degree of a Fellow Craft.

[Q.] What more were you asked?

[A.] If I came of my own free will and accord, if I was duly and truly prepared, worthy and well qualified, if I had made the necessary proficiency in the preceding degree, and properly vouched for; all which being answered in the affirmative, I was asked by what further right or benefit I expected to gain admission.

### Excerpt from the Second Section of the Master's Lecture

[Q.] You have satisfied me as to the manner and mode of your entrance into this degree, but you have not yet informed what a Master Mason's lodge represents, nor have you explained to me the origin or historical part of this degree. In the first place, I wish to know what a Master Mason's lodge represents?

[A.] The Sanctum Sanctorum, or Holy of Holies, of King Solomon's Temple.

[Q.] After being reinvested of what you had been divested, and on returning to the lodge, where were you first conducted?

[A.] To the Northeast corner of the lodge, where I was caused to kneel, and hear the Master Mason's prayer repeated.

(Note: A cushion is placed on the floor, between the altar and the Master's throne, in the Northeast side of the lodge. The Senior Deacon receives the candidate at the door, advancing towards this cushion, saying, "It was the daily custom of our Grand Master Hiram Abiff, at the hour of high twelve," etc. See second section of the work in this degree.)

(Note: Again, while candidate is investing himself with his clothing, the Master appoints the assassins, who are stationed South, West, East; likewise, three Fellow Craft representing the twelve; likewise the wayfaring man, with a cain [sic] and pack on his back. Master gives three knocks. All rise.)

[Q.] I will thank you to repeat that prayer.

[A.] "Thou, O God, knowest our downsitting," etc. (see Monitor).

[Q.] After hearing the Master Mason's prayer repeated, what followed?

[A.] I then rose and was conducted to the South door, where I was accosted by a Fellow Craft, who demanded of me at three several times the secrets of a Master Mason, or he would take my life. But, on my third refusal, he struck me on the throat with the 24 inch gauge.

[Q.] Where were you then conducted?

[A.] To the West door, where I was accosted by a Fellow Craft, who in like manner demanded of me at three several times the secrets of a Master Mason, or he would take my life. But, on my third refusal, he struck me on my right breast with a square.

[Q.] Where were you then conducted?

[A.] To the East door, where I was accosted by a Fellow Craft, who in like manner demanded of me at three several times the secrets of a Master Mason, or he would take my life. But, on my third refusal, he smote me on the head with the common gavel, or setting maul.

[Q.] Whom did you represent?

[A.] Our Grand Master, Hiram Abiff, who was slain when the temple was near its completion.

[Q.] Was his death premeditated?

[A.] It was.

[Q.] By whom?

[A.] By fifteen Fellow Craft, who, seeing the temple near its completion, were fearful they should not be able to obtain Master Mason's wages when traveling into foreign countries, entered into a horrid conspiracy to extort from our Grand Master Hiram Abiff the Secrets of a Master Mason, or to take his life. But twelve of them, fearing the evil consequences, were struck with horror at the atrocity of the crime, and recanted. But the other three, who were Jubela, Jubelo, Jubelum, being more hardened in villainy,

were determined to put their murderous designs into execution, and accordingly placed themselves at the South, West, and East entrances of the temple.

### Excerpt from the Ceremony of Opening a Past Master's Lodge

Past Masters may be made in a Mark Masons Lodge, or rather the Mark Lodge is not closed but the Past Masters is opened up in it. Right Worshipful now takes off his jewel and says, Brother Senior Warden, I have important business to attend to, and I must go if the Brethren will excuse it.

Senior Warden says: Right Worshipful, if you leave us there will be no one to preside over the lodge.

Right Worshipful says: I cannot tarry, my business is urgent.

Senior Warden says: If you will have the goodness to preside until we can elect a Master, Right Worshipful, you will oblige us.

Right Worshipful says: If you will be expeditious I will.

He returns and says: Brethren, you will please to bring in your votes for a Master.

(The votes are before prepared for the Candidate.)

He is duly elected. On being informed he is much surprised. The Senior Warden, then receives him and conducts him, or the Master of Ceremonies does it by the order of the Senior Warden, and conducts him to the altar where he receives the obligation. He is then installed in due form. He is then conducted to the chair. The Brethren are then ordered by the Master of Ceremonies to form a procession and salute the new Master. This bring done some of the Brethren make a disturbance.

Some of the Brethren say: Right Worshipful, I wish you would call the Brethren to order.

He knocks two or three times and says, Brethren, come to order.

They do not attend.

He is requested again to call to order, but being confused does not give his order correctly. Some of the Brethren inform him to give but one knock. He does this and all is order.

(But one Candidate can be brought in at a time. After all are received the charge is given.)

The Lodge may close in due form, or in the Mark Master's Degree. (The jewels in a Past Masters lodge may be the same as in the Mark Masters Degree.)

### Excerpt from the Most Excellent Master's Lecture

[Q.] Brother, are you a Most Excellent Master?

[A.] I have been received and acknowledged as such.

[Q.] Where were you received?

[A.] In a regularly constituted lodge of Most Excellent Masters.

[Q.] How gained you admission?

[A.] By six distinct knocks at the door.

[Q.] What was said to you from within?

[A.] Who comes here?

[Q.] Your answer?

[A.] Brothers A, B and C (as may be) who have justly and lawfully served their time as Entered Apprentices, been passed to the Degree of Fellow Crafts, raised to the sublime Degree of Master Masons, been invested with the Degree of Mark Master, been duly elected and installed Past Masters and now wish for further promotion by being received and acknowledged as Most Excellent Masters.

[Q.] What more were you asked?

[A.] If I came of my own free will and accord, if I was worthy and well qualified, duly and truly prepared, if I had made the necessary proficiency in the preceding degrees and properly vouched for, all which being answered in the affirmative I was asked by what further right or benefit I expected to gain admission.

[Q.] Your answer?

[A.] By the benefit of a pass.

[Q.] Did you give it?

[A.] I did not, but my conductor gave it for me.

[Q.] Please to give it to your left hand Brother.

[A.] (He rises and gives it.)

[A.] It is right, I greet you Brother G—.

[Q.] To what does that word allude?

[A.] To the title of a Past Master, the honor I then sustained.

### Excerpt from the Royal Arch Lecture

[Q.] Are you a Royal Arch Mason?

[A.] I am that I am.

[Q.] How shall I know you to be a Royal Arch Mason?

[A.] By three times three and under a living arch.

[Q.] Where were you made a Royal Arch Mason?

[A.] In a regularly constituted Chapter of Royal Arch Masons.

[Q.] How many make a regularly constituted Chapter?

[A.] Nine Royal Arch Masons, consisting of the High Priest, King, and Scribe, Captain of the Host, Royal Arch Captain, Principal Sojourner, and the three officers of the veils.

[Q.] Whom do the three first represent?

[A.] Those three ancient Brethren who came past the Grand Council at Jerusalem and held their meetings in the tabernacle.

[Q.] Whom do the three latter represent?

[A.] Haggai, Joshua, and Zerubbabel, that were the three worthies who first brought to light the principal secrets of this degree. They had been buried in darkness from the death of our Grand Master Hiram Abif. At the erection of the second temple at Jerusalem and as a reward for their merits were advanced to be the three officers of the veils.

[Q.] How many were there?

[A.] Four.

[Q.] What were their colors?

[A.] Blue, purple, scarlet, and white.

[Q.] What does the color of blue denote?

[A.] It is an emblem of friendship, and as such is characteristic of a Masters Lodge.

[Q.] What does the purple denote?

[A.] It being composed of blue and red, is therefore placed between the first and third veils of those colors to denote the intimate connection that subsists between this emblematic degree and Ancient Craft Masonry.

[Q.] What does the scarlet denote?

[A.] That fervency and zeal which ought to actuate all Royal Arch Masons as the principal characteristic of this degree.

[Q.] What does the white denote?

[A.] That purity of intention and rectitude of conduct which ought to govern all those who seek to gain admission into the sacred sanctuary or Holy of Holies.

[Q.] Where were those veils placed?

[A.] At the outside of the tabernacle.

[Q.] Why there?

[A.] To serve as a covering for the tabernacle, and a stall for the Masonic degrees.

