



**BUILDING
HIRAM**

**Uncommon Catechism
For Uncommon
Masonic Education**

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Uncommon Catechism for
Uncommon Masonic Education
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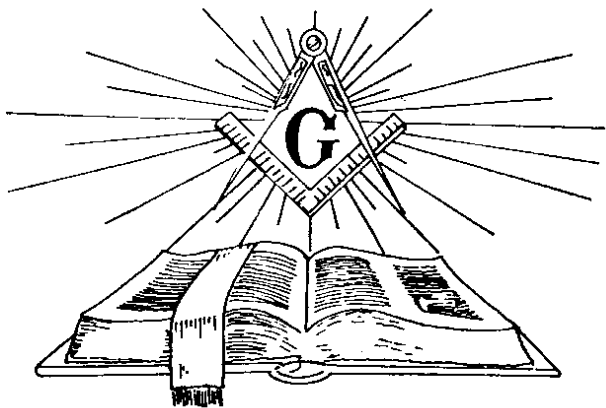
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Dedication

To my present Brother Builders all who helped
make this book possible;
To my future Brother Builders, may this book help
Light your way as you continue your journey East.



Masonic Warning

ALTHOUGH ALL THAT IS WRITTEN AND REFERENCED WITHIN THESE PAGES IS OPENLY AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE WITH ACCESS TO ARCHAIC BOOKS, IF YOU'RE ON A MASONIC PATH, IT IS WISE THAT YOU SAVE READING THIS DOCUMENT UNTIL AFTER YOU ARE RAISED A MASTER MASON.

Preface

The Word before you is what I wish I had been given when I was Raised. – Dr. John S. Nagy

The Masonic journey that began with the preparation of one's heart does not end at becoming a Raised Master Mason. Everything prior to that Raising moment was merely preparation for that true Journey toward becoming your Word.

The first Three Degrees of Masonry are comprised of nine sections – Three Rituals, Three Lectures and Three Catechisms. Experienced linearly, these nine sections provide to Masons a Journey toward a perceived goal – being Raised a Master Mason. This is what many Brothers have in their minds and hearts when they join the fraternity of Brothers called "Freemasons."

Should Masons take a step back and reflect on the actual picture that was painted before them, much more may be gleaned. In fact, further Masonic benefit occurs only by considering the interconnections between the symbols, the overlap of themes and the rhythm of the patterns continually played out from beginning to end.

The Word before you is a look at some of these interconnections. It shows an overlapping of themes and reveals many rich patterns that all Master Masons may benefit from should they venture forth and seek the Light.

Catechism

cat·e·chism (kăt 1-kīzəm) n.

I: What is "Catechism?"

R: A word whose first recorded use was in 1502, rooted in French by way of Latin and originating in Late Greek with the following meaning: to teach by word of mouth.

I: What is its use?

R: It is primarily oral instruction.

I: What else?

R: It is a book or manual of basic instruction giving a brief summary of the basic principles of a subject, usually by means of rote, formulaic statement or repetition in question and answer form.

I: What's more?

R: A close questioning or examination, as of a political figure, student or a person wishing to show their proficiency of a topic or subject.

I: What's further?

R: A body of work expressing fundamental principles or beliefs, especially when accepted uncritically.

I: How may it be so presented?

R: As a series of searching **I**nquiries and **R**esponses on any targeted subject of interest.

I: What is its purpose?

R: To share Light with those so interested.

Table of Contents

Preface.....	iv
Catechism.....	v
Introduction.....	8
I. The Ashlars.....	15
The Ashlars Catechism	16
II. The Stone Builders' Tools.....	25
The Stone Builders' Tools Catechism	27
III. The Orders of Architecture.....	45
The Orders of Architecture Catechism	48
IV. The Staircase Unwound	56
The Staircase Unwound Catechism	57
V. The Four Ruffians	70
The Four Ruffian Catechism	73
VI. The Ancient Penalties	81
The Ancient Penalties Catechism.....	83
VII. The 3-4-5 Triangle	93
The 3-4-5 Triangle Catechism.....	95
VIII. The Sacred Triad	101
The Sacred Triad Catechism.....	103
IX. The Square and Compasses	112
The Square and Compasses Catechism....	113
X. The Temple's Templar	123
The Temple's Templar Catechism	124
XI. The Lost Word.....	138
The Lost Word Catechism	142
XII. The Master's Wages	147
The Master's Wages Catechism	149
Resources and Foot Notes	161

III. The Orders of Architecture

Ritual tells us that Order in Architecture is an important aspect of our Masonic understanding. What many do not gather though is the significance of our development and success as Masons is symbolized in this Order.

– Dr. John S. Nagy

Summary: The Orders of Architecture are replete with many beneficial Masonic symbols. Masons hear them disclosed in lecture but few may understand the significance of them in their work as Masons today. To the casual listener, they may come across lofty and appear to be added to bolster our connection to operative builders of the past. Far from this conclusion, they metaphorical represent what we must be as Masons to have any worth in our world.

I confess, I believed some misinformation about the Fellow Craft degree. Somewhere I was heard that around the time when Freemasonry's "first" Grand Lodge was formed, the second degree (the highest degree at that time) was split and separated into two degrees – what we now know as the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason degrees. I also heard that some of the Fellow Craft Lecture was put together to "fill it out" due to this split. Sure, I thought the additional material and symbols were great to hear and provided me with an interesting moment or two, but it — The Orders of Architecture — seemed like it had been thrown in

to give some historical foundation for what “those great Masons” did way back in the beginning. To me, the pillars described therein were just a bunch of differently carved stones that supported the roofs of buildings in an archaic fashion.

Because of my attitude, I sat listening to the Fellow Craft degree lectures thinking to myself, “Yup. This all sounds like filler to me.” I didn’t see that the lecture was not about “them then,” but “me now!” Therefore, I sat through lectures that made known to me the importance of Architecture never realizing how the disclosed information tied into both my own development and my work as a Mason in the world at large.

That changed one day. An uncomfortable awareness came immediately to me after I gave a Masonic Education presentation at my lodge. I mentioned the Three Great pillars of Masonry during my presentation and the secretary inquired quite innocently, as to where the Three Great Pillars of Masonry existed inside our Lodge. He wasn’t trying to be facetious or to test my knowledge; he really wanted to know. I told him I did not know but would have the answer next time we met. Had I remembered my “The Support of the Lodge” section of the Entered Apprentice lecture, I would have easily told him immediately. I didn’t remember though and that knew I had some studying to do.

Over the next few weeks, I looked into this topic with the intent to learn as much as I could to prepare for future questioning. I knew that there

was a mention of Pillars in the first-degree lecture and an extensive section talking about them in the second lecture but I didn't recall anything that was spelled out in the third lecture. This added to my original thoughts and attitude.

I found that I was skimming through my own Ritual books for answers. Some answers came but I wanted to know more – something was missing from all this and I was driven to find out what that was. I found myself cruising through encyclopedias on Architecture, centuries old Ritual books and Monitors and any other arcane tome I could find. I diligently searched for further Light and I began connecting the dots more and more as I progressed slowly.

I found my notes expanding. As more insights came to Light, I was very challenged to put into writing what I was uncovering. I was frustrated — most of what I could write about my discoveries would be considered a bit too academic for presentation in a lodge. The last thing that I wanted to have occur as a result of sharing in Lodge was to receive back a glassy eyed stare from any Brother who might show up for a long drawn out technical treatise on Columns. I had to keep it short and to the point! And the catechism format was just the right tool.

Here now for your perusal, enjoyment and possible further enlightenment is a Catechism I provide during Masonic Education spots in Lodges around my area. May this Catechism shine a bright Light on your current day ritual!

The Orders of Architecture Catechism

- I:** Are you a Master Mason?
R: Indeed I am.
I: Are you well versed in Building?
R: I am in Word and deed.
I: What is your Building basis?
R: Architecture.
I: What Orders be there of such?
R: They number five.
I: Give them to me.
R: Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite.⁶
I: Which are Greek in origin?
R: The Middle or Center Three.⁷
I: What remain?
R: Those of Roman origin.⁸

The Central Officers

- I:** Who is the first Pillar?
R: The first Pillar or the Tuscan Order⁹, is at first Candidate then Entered Apprentice, whom enters into Masonry without the full Light that Masonry offers.
I: Why is this so?
R: The Entered Apprentice has yet to develop beyond his Tuscan Order and be thus positioned to support the lodge and himself accordingly.
I: Who else is this Order?



- R:** The general member whom supports the Lodge as only this Order can.
- I:** What other Orders are found in Lodge?
- R:** The Doric, Ionic and Corinthian Orders.¹⁰
- I:** Tell me how they are so positioned?
- R:** In the East, West and South.¹¹
- I:** Why so?
- R:** To support the Lodge.¹²
- I:** What offices symbolize these Center or Middle Three Orders?
- R:** They are the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden.¹³
- I:** Explain to me the First Officer so Ordered.
- R:** The Doric Worshipful Master is so positioned as to open and govern the Lodge by Wisdom.¹⁴
- I:** Explain to me the Second Officer so Ordered.
- R:** The Ionic Senior Warden is so positioned as to give Strength to the Worshipful Master and so to be the resource to which the Worshipful Master, and the craft of the Lodge as a whole, can draw upon to assure just support and due payment.¹⁵
- I:** Explain to me the Third Officer so Ordered.
- R:** By his position the Corinthian Junior Warden is best able to observe the time and call the craft from and to labor or refreshment in accordance with what Wisdom dictates and hence be the Beauty and Glory of the day.¹⁶
- I:** What other Pillars do these three Orders and Offices so represent?
- R:** The Three Great Pillars of Masonry.¹⁷

The Three Great Pillars

I: What do they represent?

R: Wisdom, Strength and Beauty.¹⁸

I: Explain them to me.

R: Wisdom to Contrive; Strength to Support; and Beauty to adorn all great and important undertakings.¹⁹

I: What is Wisdom?

R: Wisdom is Informed Choice that is of Supreme Benefit.²⁰

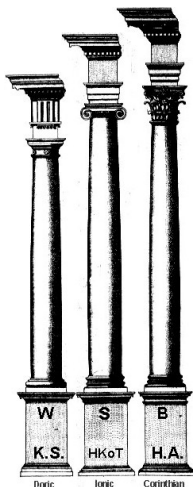
I: What is Strength?

R: Strength is Useful Resource provided by a Supreme Benefactor.²¹

I: What is Beauty?

R: Beauty is Craftsmanship Realized and the result of Applied Craftsmanship. Craftsmanship is the

rendering of Supremely Beneficial results which function physically and spiritually.²²



Representation

I: Whom do the Three Great Pillars represent?

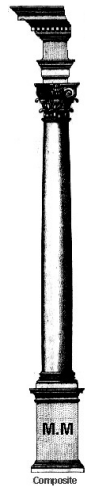
R: King Solomon, Hiram, King of Tyre and Hiram Abiff.²³

I: Who is King Solomon?

R: He is the Doric who Contrived the Great Temple.

I: What does King Solomon inculcate in a Master Mason?

- R:** King Solomon's symbolic presence continually reminds a Master Mason that his temple must be opened and governed with Wisdom.
- I:** Who is Hiram, King of Tyre?
- R:** He is the Ionic who Strengthens both the Doric and Corinthian by making possible the resources for the Great Temple.
- I:** What does Hiram, King of Tyre inculcate in a Master Mason?
- R:** Hiram, King of Tyre's symbolic presence continually reminds a Master Mason that his efforts must be provided with resource for his endeavors to be properly supported through to fruition.
- I:** Who is Hiram Abiff?
- R:** He is the Corinthian whose skill and cunning adorns the Great Temple.
- I:** What does Hiram Abiff inculcate in Master Masons?
- R:** The symbolic presence of Hiram Abiff continually reminds Master Masons that their craft must always be a creation of Beauty.
- I:** What pillar is left?
- R:** The Pillar of the Composite Order.²⁴
- I:** What Lodge member does this Order represent?
- R:** Master Masons who have so been positioned as to be transformed from the simplest of Orders to that most illustrious Order that encompasses all the qualities found in the Middle or Center Three.
- I:** Where are they so positioned?



R: The answer lay with the Senior Warden.

I: What must be asked of the Senior Warden to afford proper answer?

R: "What interested you in becoming a Master Mason?"²⁵

I: His response?

R: Their Travels will determine their positions since what they have inculcated in becoming Master Masons allows them to Work, to Earn and to Contribute according to their Words and their Abilities.²⁶

I: How do the Center Three Pillars support this?

R: They must be present for the Composite Pillar, as represented by Master Masons, to give and Be their Word.²⁷

I: Explain this to me.

R: In becoming a Pillar of the Composite Order, Master Mason's Travel and ability to earn Master's Wages is only limited to the Word that they give, which will always be governed by the Three.

I: How so?

R: Nothing of any great value will ever come from a Mason's work should the presence of the Three Orders of Architecture, whom and what they so symbolically represent, be not within a Master Mason's Word when given.

I: What value are these Three to a Master Mason?

R: Their presence assuredly makes Word Flesh when given by Master Masons.

I: What makes a Master Mason's Word Flesh?

R: Cultivation and application in every day life of the Almighty Wisdom, Strength and Beauty.²⁸

Wisdom's Porch

- I:** Where might we read about the Almighty Wisdom, Strength and Beauty?
- R:** It is alluded to by what is held atop a Pillar found on the Porch of King Solomon's Temple.²⁹
- I:** To what does it allude?
- R:** To the Heavens Above, where we find Almighty Wisdom, Strength and Beauty when we seek it.³⁰
- I:** What of the other Pillar on said Porch?
- R:** It holds a symbol of our earthly World Below the Heavens Above.³¹
- I:** What are their names?
- R:** The Volume of Sacred Law says that one was so named after the great-grandfather of King Solomon himself while the other was named after the first High Priest of his Temple.³²
- I:** What do their names mean?
- R:** One means, "founding" and more specifically "God will Establish or Raise Upright."
- I:** What does the other mean?
- R:** Fleetness; Strength
- I:** What were both Pillars intended to communicate to Masons?
- R;** In Strength shall the Temple be Raised Upright.
- I:** What's more?
- R:** It refers to what must be present to Raise a Mason.
- I:** What's further?
- R:** Once Raised, Masons must remain Upright.
- I:** Of that which is atop these Pillars, what are their principle Masonic use?

- R:** They are instruments to symbolically illustrate and explain every day life.³³
- I:** What is their symbolic use?
- R:** To improve the mind, solve problems, inspire reverence and induce courage to benefit all.³⁴
- I:** What do these Two Topped Pillars collectively represent?
- R:** The passage we must take in our journey to obtain Unity, Peace, and Plenty within and without for all who employ such instrument.³⁵
- I:** How does a Master Mason assure such is visited upon him?
- R:** By drawing on the Almighty Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, As is provided from Above, a Master Mason So Establishes it Below in the World in all matters.
- I:** Where do you find other types of Pillar in Ritual herein?
- R:** To the South and West.³⁶
- I:** What is their function?
- R:** To indicate to the Craft that they are at labor or rest.³⁷
- I:** And of the Southern pillar, is it intact?
- R:** Not at the grave of Hiram Abiff.³⁸
- I:** What will you find therein and why?
- R:** A broken pillar representing an unfortunate death.³⁹
- I:** What does this remind Masons of?
- R:** Our time is most fleeting, work well and with great haste; for death is us defeating, and time we must not waste.



Foundation

I: Are there other types of Pillar in Ritual?

R: None save the Foundation of one alluding to Justice.⁴⁰

I: What is Justice?

R: What every person be duly rendered without regard to distinction.⁴¹

I: What else is it?

R: The measure of a good person, consistent with Divine Law and the very cement that holds society together.⁴²

I: How ought to be its practice?

R: Without any deviation thereof.⁴³

I: How do we know it to be Foundational?

R: It is the last of Four Cardinal Virtues alluded to by the Perfect Points of Entrance.⁴⁴

I: Name the one associated with Justice.

R: Pedestal.⁴⁵

I: What does this say?

R: No pillar shall ever stand well save for that which is founded on a firm Pedestal of Justice.

I: Shall any Composite Pillar have viable stability without such Pedestal?

R: No and neither shall any Master Mason should he so stand without.

I: How do I know all this to be so?

R: Am I known to you as a Master Mason?

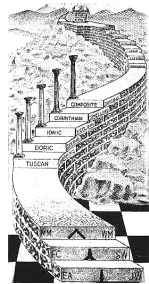
I: I know you to be as such.

R: Then you have the Word of a Master Mason that this be all true.

IV. The Staircase Unwound

The ascent and decent upon the Winding Staircase is a journey that all Master Masons can find enlightening even if they have already traveled it. – Dr. John S. Nagy

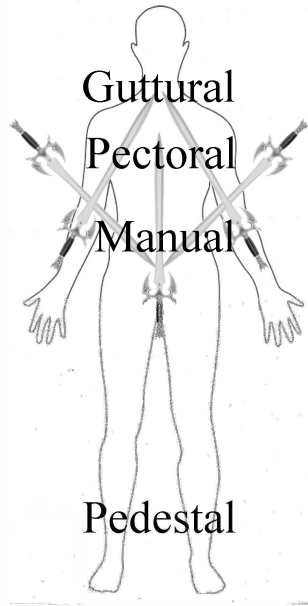
Summary: The Winding Staircase found in most Masonic Fellow Craft degrees has been the focus of much speculation over the years. The lectures themselves are filled with varied explanations all reflecting upon the numbers offered and what they mean. As time has unfolded, so have the numbers used to exemplify the staircases themselves. Coming down through the years there have been various versions of the numbers offered. Ultimately, what we have in modern day Masonry is the dominant “3-5-7” description that most Orders adhere to without waver.



It's understandable as to why the specific numbers 3-5-7 were ultimately accepted and used by the Craft in the Staircase Lecture. The magic and power that they symbolize allow for much conjecture and debate, the very actions that are supported by the last Seven Steps. Nestled within these numbers are the echoes of years past when members of humankind made effort to raise each other above the common threads that held back humanity. The various explanations though pale in

VI. The Ancient Penalties

In some areas Ritual has been altered to either do away with or indicate that the Ancient Penalties are but symbolic in nature and are merely what occurred to Masons in the past when they broke any part of their obligations. This corruption of Ritual sets Masons up for a rude awakening should they believe they will not suffer in like manner should they ever violate their Word.



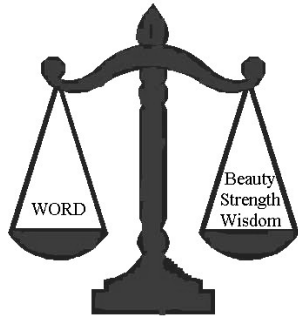
– Dr. John S. Nagy

Summary: There are consequences for every choice. Ritual reminds us of this continuously. Some jurisdictions try to soften this message. They go so far as to eliminate or imply that severe consequence will never occur for severe choices. That claim has corrupted an important message given to us by the Penalties communicated and expressly desired should Masons break their Word.

VIII. The Sacred Triad

It is impossible to give the Master's Word save in the presence of the Three. Equally, it's impossible not to give the Master's Word if the Three are present! – Dr. John S. Nagy

Summary: There's a lot of speculation about what the Master's Word might be. Ritual tells us that it was lost due to the untimely death of one of three Grand Masters. Upon further inspection, one can clearly see that all three Grand Masters still exist and that the Master's Word is not as lost as has been reported.



It was about 5 years into my Masonic Raising when I began to understand more fully what was most important in giving my Word. I thought that being my Word was just a matter of making sure that I followed through on what I promised. From what I believed, this was just a matter of will power and not overcommitted myself in any one direction. What I didn't realize is that ritual speaks to Masons on this topic in many wonderful and unexpected ways.

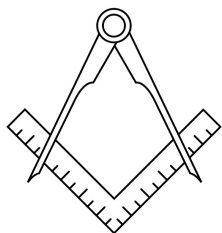
The most wonderful way I found though is what Ritual has to say about the support required for giving the Master's Word. Hidden in plain view for

IX. The Square and Compasses

The Square of Wisdom is equal to the Sum of the Squares of Beauty and Strength.

– Dr. John S. Nagy

Summary: To create things that are right, operative Masons need to both create a tool for such efforts and to make sure that this tool was true. The Square is created using a simple measurement tool like a 24-Inch Gauge, using its measure to create a 3-4-5 right-angle triangle. Using such good measure allows for what is right to be created quite easily and quickly.



A problem for Masons is that there is not always a true measure available to create that which is Right. In these times, Masons relied upon other tools to both create and try Squares.

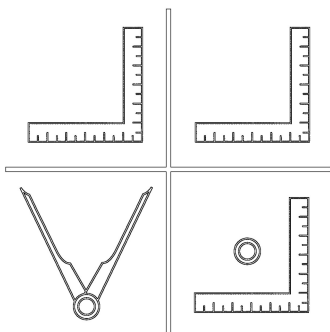
One Tool that can accomplish such tasks is the Compasses. This tool when used properly creates a perfect circle. One might immediately question the wisdom of using a circle-creating tool to create and try a square since the connection between the Compasses and the Square might not be obvious at first. To a trained practitioner though, the two are inseparable. Masons know that the unique qualities

XI. The Lost Word

For those who understand, no explanation is needed. For those who cannot understand, no explanation is possible. For those wanting to understand, experiencing the explanation helps.

– Dr. John S. Nagy

Summary: Masonic ritual and lectures are replete with references to the “Master’s Word” and how it was “lost.” It is considered a special word that one may obtain only after one is considered worthy of earning it. The Master’s Word has great value to Master Masons since it allows for special benefits that only a Master Mason may have. It can only be shared under specific conditions, which did not exist at the time of it initially being lost. It is not lost though; it is merely not rediscovered.



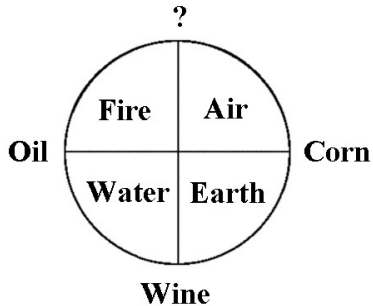
For Operative Masons, it is speculated by some, that the Master’s Word was simple: It was the ability to create a right angle so that they could use that creation to build superior work. This ability allowed them the benefits of Travel, Working and Earning Master’s Wages and Contributing.

XII. The Master's Wages

Of all the searches that one can make through archaic writings, finding anything specific about the Master's Wages could be the most elusive; yet, living books called "Master Masons" realize these Wages on a daily basis.

– Dr. John S. Nagy

Summary: It is clear that Masonic Ritual borrowed much from the Volume of Sacred Law as a source to create the rich connections



Masons enjoy today. The mention of Wages within Ritual is one such borrowing. Corn, Wine and Oil are some, but not all, of the Wages mentioned in the Volume of Sacred Law. These Wages were provided to the hewers of wood, also known as carpenters, during the construction of Solomon's Temple. These mentioned Wages are typical examples of many references based on scripture and used within Ritual over the years. Their mention in Ritual and what is not mentioned provided some vital clues to both the past and what a Master's future may hold.

The search for what originally constituted Master's Wages can be a tough but rewarding one.