

LIVING STONES

The inextricable link between Craft, the Holy Royal Arch and The Degree of Mark Master Mason, the allegorical construction of a mason as a "Living Stone"

From the very moment of our Initiation, all Masons are told that they represent builders and stonemasons, and that the allegorical act of "building" a structure does, in its own way, represent the continuing improvement of ourselves from that rough ashlar placed in the north east part of the Lodge to "that stone, perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder".

In the Craft we assume the role of Temple builders, working from Entered Apprentice, the lowest class of workman receiving only food and drink for wages, through Fellowcraft who is paid for his skilled work (of which we learn more in the Mark Degree) to Master Mason and, ultimately, to Master of the Lodge where we preside over others.

In the Degree of Mark Master Mason, we return to the role of a Fellowcraft before being made a Mark Man and, ultimately, rewarded for our skills and efforts in being made a Mark Master Mason. It is also of historic interest that Mark Master Masons are introduced to a character known only to Installed Craft Masters of whom no explanation is given as to his importance.

In the Holy Royal Arch we represent Journeyman builders, who, by good fortune, exploration and adherence to ancient customs we make a discovery of great importance and are admitted as favoured people.

So, it is clear that in the Craft we learn the great import of the worthy mason working with stone blocks to turn the rough ashlar into the smooth to build the Temple.

In Mark we are taught to take our skills to a new level, to become experienced, and to produce the finest piece of work. We fashion a special stone, one that allows us to complete the sacred arch.

In the Holy Royal Arch, we are journeyman builders. During what may be termed "menial work" we make a discovery as we lever away a key stone (or stones) in the ruined Temple and discover a hidden vault which leads to a discovery of great import. This may also be said to be allegorical of the fact that no good work is "menial" and that, if we strive always to do our best, then great riches await us.

We can, therefore, make the connection between all three of these different Masonic Orders in the common theme of the allegorical reflection of all men as "living stones". It should be obvious, however, that there is a change in each stage of the construction of our "living stone" but there is also an inextricable link in all of these allegorical rituals, step by step, in constructing that "spiritual edifice" that Temple built to the glory of God.

So, to recap, in the Craft we are figuratively worked on, hewn from a rough state to become a smooth ashlar, experienced and worthy, ready to go on and produce better work.

In Mark we represent the finest work in God's House, the ultimate product of our trade, ready to take our place in that spiritual stone edifice.

In the Holy Royal Arch it can be said that we have "removed" that "earthly stone" and finally been rewarded with reaching that "spiritual edifice" and finally fulfilled our true relationship with God. At the same time, however, we realise that all our earthly building efforts have produced the finest stonework that has protected the Holy of Holies from the conflagration (earthly destruction) and protected the Sacred Word for evermore.

Ultimately, we are builders for eternity, we have finally become that living stone that we mentioned at the start, "perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder".

