

The Triple Tau in Freemasonry



The emblem of the Royal Arch Degree is called the Triple Tau, and is a figure consisting of three tau crosses. The Tau Cross, or Cross of St. Anthony, is a cross in the form of a Greek T. The Triple Tau is a figure formed by three of these crosses meeting in a point, and therefore resembling a letter T resting on the traverse bar of an H. This emblem, placed in the center of a Triangle and Circle - both emblems of Deity - constitutes the jewel of the Royal Arch as practiced in England, where it is so highly esteemed as to be called the “emblem of all emblems,” and “the grand emblem of Royal Arch Masonry.”

It was adopted in the same form as the Royal Arch badge, by the General Grand Chapter of the United States of America at a meeting in Chicago in 1859. The original signification of this emblem has been variously explained. Some suppose it to include the initials of the Temple of Jerusalem, T. H., Templum Hierosolymae; others, that it is a symbol of the mystical union of the Father and Son, H, signifying Jehovah, and T, or the cross, the Son. A writer in Moore’s Magazine ingeniously supposes it to be a representation of three T-Squares, and that it alludes to the three jewels of the three ancient Grand Masters. It has also been said that it is the monogram of Hiram of Tyre; and other assert that it is only a modification of the Hebrew letter shin, which was one of the Jewish abbreviations of the sacred name.

The equilateral triangle is a symbol of divine union, and was much revered by ancient nations as containing the greatest and most abstruse mysteries, and as a symbol of God, denoting a Triad of Intelligence, a Triad of Deity, a Triune God. Moreover, the Tetragrammaton, or incommunicable name was written by the Jews in a triangular form: the initial letter denoting the thought, the idea of God, a ray of light too transcendent to be contemplated by mortal eye; this name of God, the Tetragrammaton, could not be more aptly placed than in the symbol, or triangle, itself and hence the true meaning of the Royal Arch double triangle, but originally represented thus so that while this sacred emblem was deservedly revered by the Jews, both it and the double triangle itself are adopted as Royal Arch symbols.

The Circle is an emblem of eternity having neither beginning nor end, and reminds us of the purity, wisdom, and glory of the Omnipotent, which is without beginning or end.

A society of Royal Arch Masons is called a Chapter, and not a Lodge, as in the previous Degrees. All Chapters of Royal Arch Masons are “dedicated to Zerubbabel,” and the symbolic color of this Degree is scarlet.

The Tau cross is the emblem of Mercury, the God’s messenger, who also conducts souls through the underworld. He takes the dead by one hand & uplifting the caduceus in the other leads them from the grave through the underworld to the Elysian Fields, & before his caduceus the power of evil fled.

The Tau Cross is a Phallic symbol & represents male & creative power. The lowest form of this is our animal passions, which must be controlled if we are to advance spiritually. To do this we trample a tau cross under foot in the 1st 3 Craft degrees as we advance to receive the Scts. Thus by the time they reach the Arch MMs have made 3 tau crosses. Having subdued our animal passions while below the

Master's chair, on being installed as WM these powers are transformed & now distinguish IM's from those over whom they rule. It is thus the higher side of the tau cross which is depicted on an IM's apron. They now represent the Divine Power in man to create others in his likeness. It is the emblem of Brahma, & the creative aspect of the Deity. In this sense the tau cross symbolises the Divine Spark, the spirit & creative power in man. The 3 tau crosses of the RA are joined together, whereas on an IM's apron they are separate. MMs are taught that death does not end all & are given hope of life beyond the G. The IM degree when fully worked changes that hope to certainty. The 3 separate tau crosses on an IM's apron represent the 3 aspects of the Deity & show the newly risen man is not ready to appear before God. The 3 joined tau crosses of the RA teach that the 3 aspects of the Deity aren't separate Gods but different aspects of the one God. In man they represent Body, Soul & Spirit & their union shows a spiritual body as St Paul called it will be united with a perfected soul & spirit when they finally attain at-one ment with God. This is why in the 19th century only IMs could be made RA Masons. Until a man had risen from the dead he can't hope to understand God. Even after death he must progress through the spirit planes before he is fit to stand before God. This lesson has been lost in England by abolishing passing the vales. Thus the lost Scts can't be found in a Craft Lodge, & in reality can only be found by an IM who has been exalted into the RA & passed the vales. Then he may exchange the 3 separate tau crosses on his Craft apron for the triple tau of the RA. The RA is not essentially a Christian degree but there were 3 crosses on Calgary, which reminds us of the triple tau as Jesus would have been crucified on a tau cross. Thus the tau cross links the 5 Craft degree & teaches the evolution & purification of body, soul & spirit, which are now in perfect union as shown by the triple tau. The triple tau under the double triangles of the RS jewl teaches that Man will ultimately rest in the presence of God.