

Some Observations concerning the Receptions, Steps, Signs and Due-guards of a Free-Mason

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Receptions

In Chapter VI, Section III, among several other places in Freemasonry and a View of the Perennial World Philosophy, I discussed some aspects concerning the Reception of a Mason. In viewing numerous craft degrees over the years I have noted a variance in the Work of the Senior Deacon at many Initiations, Passings and Raisings of Candidates and Brothers. In the current Standard Work and Lectures [SW&L] of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York [2007] the Receptions are parenthetically noted as follows:

First Degree	Entered Apprentice	(The S.D. pauses in statement as he applies instrument to each candidate)
Second Degree	Fellowcraft	(Pause & apply square)
Third Degree	Master Mason	(Pause, apply compasses)

Perhaps a more salient feature of the above Receptions is the considerable degree of latitude, the broadness of possible interpretation, of the parenthetical instructions to the Senior Deacon. Every Brother might with some degree of justification stipulate, from his personal experience and observation, exactly WHAT ‘instrument’ is to be used for the Reception of an Entered Apprentice, but the Standard Work and Lectures clearly does not specify WHAT it is to be.

In earlier days of the Craft, the First Degree instrument was traditionally a Sword, or in some Lodges, many Swords, to impart the attendant ‘moral lesson.’ By the above phrasing, however, virtually any ‘sharp instrument’ could be applied, such a dagger, a pair of scissors, a knitting needle, a hat pin, &c. For symbolic reasons we would tend to opt for a dagger, a sword, or the traditional compasses, although these are not specified in the SW&L.

From a strictly symbolic approach, and in keeping with both the ‘moral’ aspects of the degrees and the ‘basis’ of Freemasonry [Geometry], a case could be made for specific modes of Reception in each of the three Craft degrees. Again, however, it is not the intent of Grand Jurisdictions to encumber the Craft with such specifics. The average Brother, when asked to give the reason for the Receptions of three Craft degrees will give those words recorded in the SW&L which are preceded by the words “which is to teach you that . . .” These are the words and the lessons, again, that the Grand Lodges have designated for the Brothers to hear and the attendant experience or lesson they are to derive from the corresponding Reception.

Ask the Senior Deacon, or any other Brother, for the specific METHOD of application for each Reception, and WHY this method is employed, and you will predictably find several or many different answers or replies, perhaps interlaced with some philosophical ‘opinions’ . . . perhaps not. What follows is my ‘opinions’ only, based upon other portions of the Craft Ritual and of various principles of Sacred Geometry and the Perennial World Philosophy.

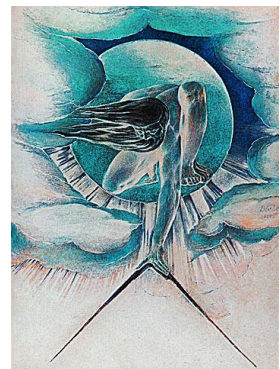
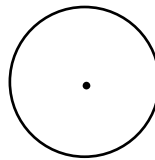
First Degree, Entered Apprentice [E.A.], Reception:

Instrument used: Compasses

Position of Compasses: Closed

How applied: with points closed, to the naked left breast,
pausing before applying so that the Candidate may impress upon his mind
and heart the ANTICIPATION of being ‘pierced by a sharp instrument.’

Discussion: Freemasonry has been referred to as a ‘progressive science . . . revealed by degrees,’ and a ‘system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.’ Its Basis is given as Geometry, and one of its ‘Landmarks’ and requisites for admittance is ‘a belief in the existence of an ever living and true God.’ This ‘true God’ is often referred to in the Craft as the Great Architect of the Universe or the Grand Geometer.



In terms of the compasses posing to be an 'instrument of torture to the flesh' would not seem to apply to the compasses under any circumstances, nor would the compasses appear to apply to the remaining words heard by the Candidate at his Reception as an E.A. The usage of a Sword would seem to be more symbolically correct for this Reception. The very usage of the compasses however might give a contemplative Brother reason to question this peculiar 'substitution' as an 'instrument of torture,' i.e. the compasses, instead of a more 'manly or threatening' Sword or dagger. Why, for instance, would it be a Sword in the 1st Degree, a Square in the 2nd and the Compasses in the 3rd. What do these THREE instruments have in common, as compared to the Compasses in the 1st, the Square in the 2nd and the Compasses in the 3rd [which DO have more in common]? The former three instruments, in terms of their 'moral lessons,' do not necessarily beg to have something in common, other than that each should have some bearing to the 'moral lesson' of the degree in which they are applied. In this case, the former would be acceptable. The latter, however, having something in common, provides a seamless continuity to A progressive moral lesson within the context of the Basis of Freemasonry . . . Geometry.

In the Beginning . . .

The Entered Apprentice begins his symbolic journey, his Initiation, divested of all that the World held for him. He is at a POINT in his Masonic journey where he knows virtually nothing of its Workings, 'secrets' or 'mysteries.' He had not taken his first 'step,' he is not properly 'clothed,' he has no 'working tools,' nor any of the other symbolic lessons or experiences inculcated through the Craft rituals. A most appropriate symbol of this 'innocence' is the Geometric 'Point.' The older ritual 'aids to the memory*,' before the official Grand Lodge publication of the SW&L, spoke of this 'Point' in the Middle Chamber Lecture as being:

" . . . that which has position, but not magnitude, and is the beginning of all geometrical matter."

* Allen Publishing Co., New York, King Solomon and his Followers. 1944, pg. 127.

Regarding the 'position' of the compasses, if they were opened, there would be TWO points; in applying them in the CLOSED position, there would be the merging of these two points into ONE point, the symbolically 'correct' position. In the closed position the Work is at the Point of its Beginning and contains therein its full Potential, just as with a Seed would have. In this 'potential' is the sum of its Past, Present and Future, in a timeless, spaceless 'now.'

The E.A. reception as given above, followed as given in the Craft SW&L, by the kneeling, the invocation of the aid of Deity 'before any great or important undertaking,' the 'rising' and of 'following his Conductor and fearing no danger,' are straight from the Great Lessons of the Initiatory experience of the 'mystery schools.' It might be noted here that the only 'Conductor' of the Candidate or Brother is the Senior Deacon. The one designated as the 'Conductor' in the working of the Degrees of the Craft is an honorary designation only, *representing* the Senior Deacon, who *receives and conducts* such as may be found among the 'duties' of the mystery schools in the guise of Mercury [Roman] or Hermes [Greek], the Messenger of the Gods. There is a greater mystery within this aspect of the 'messenger.'

A last note in this 1st degree Reception would be regarding WHERE this 'point' is applied. In being applied to *pierce* the 'naked left breast' is being applied, perhaps also or coincidentally, to the Heart. The predominance of the left side of the body in the 1st degree symbolically relates to the 'weaker / feminine' aspect of Man. In its most extreme symbolic representation, piecing the mortal heart is to cause the death of the mortal coil or shell, reducing the mortal being to a Point of existence or experience where it has 'no past or future;' to a 'place and time' where there is no one to 'help the Widow's Son' but Divine Providence. If the Initiate is to proceed on 'his' journey in Life, 'he' must be 'reborn' and take a 'first step' on this 'new beginning.'

Some have perhaps wondered . . . "Why is the Square and Compass(es) a symbol of the Fraternity?" I would not presume to state THE reason, but as you may suspect, I do have at least two reasons, one of which will follow as this discussion continues. I mention this at this time because of the appearance of the Compass(es) in the 1st degree Reception, and with the appearance of the Square in the 2nd. Why not the reverse, or why either? The 1st degree discussion gives a reason for why the Compasses should be first.

Second Degree, Fellow Craft [F.C.], Reception:

Instrument used: the Square

Position of the Square: 90°, if adjustable

How applied: the Angle of the Square applied to the Naked Right Breast



Discussion: There is no easy way to say it, but I do not concur with the symbol of the Master's Square, except in a more 'hidden' aspect of it. The usage of the Compasses, has been 'partially explained' above, especially with regards to 'marking' or 'focusing upon' a Point on the Naked Right Breast. Geometrically, at least in Sacred Geometry, a Square is a very unstable configuration. Every good Architect knows that a Square frame, without the proper supporting diagonals [or a 'thickness' which will allow this 'diagonal' support], will readily collapse. Every good 'journeyman' or Fellow Craft, knows that if you begin with a Point and never step off from it, who will ever enter upon the 'journey of time and space'? Every good Geometrician likewise knows that if you have nothing more than a single Point, you cannot portray, calculate or represent space or structure or 'multitude.' To the Geometer, $0 + 0 = 0$. To get 'from' a Point to 'anywhere' else, something must MOVE.

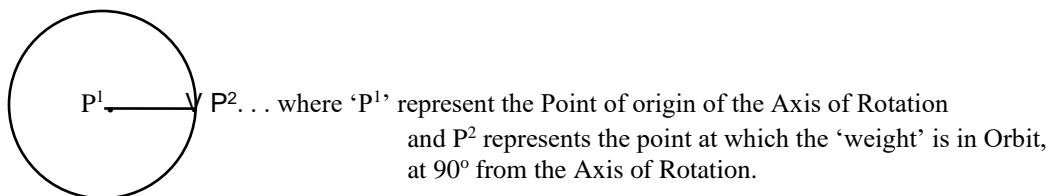
Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Gen. 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God MOVED upon the face of the waters.

What creates this motion; what is this motion? What would the Universe be without motion. If atoms did not have motion, this would be a rather 'frozen' Universe, devoid of Life. From whence and to where does this motion MOVE?

From the simplest hydrogen atom, there is a nucleus about which an electron moves. There is a 'force' which keeps a proportional relationship between the nucleus and the orbiting electron. If you were to take a length of thread or string and attached a small weight to one end of it, you could hold the string and with the weight upon it in your hand or suspend the weight from the string. There would be no 'motion' until you 'moved' the string back and forth or 'spun' the weight to produce an 'orbit' for the weight . . . equal to the length of the string, or some portion of its length. The resulting 'force' which keeps the weight in 'orbit' we refer to as 'centrifugal force' [or its corresponding, inward 'centripetal' force]. This centrifugal force rotates about an 'axis' referred to as its 'axis of rotation.' At any given moment, the weight will be at 'angle of 90 degrees relative to this 'axis of rotation,' assuming the momentum is maintained to allow this. If we lessen the speed of rotation about this axis, the orbit may collapse or become erratic, If we increase the speed of rotation about this axis, the orbit may lengthen [if we have enough 'string'], may become erratic, or 'fly out of control or orbit.'

What we have, though, under proper conditions is 'something' orbiting about an 'axis of rotation.' This axis of rotation is the Point about which the 'weight' is orbiting and may be represented as follows:



In the above diagram you can SEE nothing spinning, you can SEE no force, but it does REPRESENT the concept discussed: it is a SYMBOL of the concept and discussion, what we may also call a 'figure' or 'illustration.'

If P¹ happened to be the closed 'points' of a compass(es) applied to your Naked Left Breast, and P² happened to symbolically represent a DISTANCE to your Naked Right Breast, the relationship of P¹ to P², in terms of MOTION or FORCE, could be referred as being at an 'angle of 90° from the axis of the Point of Origin [P¹]. The 'apparent' connector of P¹ to P² could be referred to as the 'radius' of the Circle, with a Center of P¹. This 'radius' could also be referred to as a LINE [or line segment] with a 'length' of P¹P². A line, according to the previously reference Masonic 'aid to memory,'

" . . . has length without breadth." i.e. P¹ ————— P²

. . . where P¹ could represent the 'Naked Left Breast' and P² the 'Naked Right Breast' [of you, facing the East]. How should we 'mark' P²? With a piece of string? Masonically, we may allude to this 'angle of 90°' by 'apply the 'angle of a Square' to P², but are we talking about the Master's Square, or is this an allusion to the ANGLE of it only? Remember, a square [or cube] is a very unstable 'structure,' without its supporting a diagonal force.

Why do we not then just receive the Brother in the 2nd degree as we did in the 1st, only applying the closed Compasses to the Naked Right Breast? Because the Compasses has not yet ARRIVED, symbolically, at the (stronger) right side of the 'body.' Only the FORCE or MOTION [or 'effort'] to get there is implied in this 'angle of 90°.' We are yet to undertake the Work of a Fellow Craft that will allow us to TRAVEL from the 'West' to the 'East.' We have not yet taken the 'step,' been properly clothed, been given the 'Working Tools' or 'Passed' to merit the distinction of having 'arrived' at the 'second Point.' We need also to yet understand the 'illusion' of the Square AND of the second Point (hence there is no 'second point' applied in the 2nd degree of Masonry).

I believe it was Galileo who noted that the heart of geometry could be worked out with a compass and straightedge. This, too, has been my experience. In over 25 years of studying contemplative geometry I have never needed a square and have rarely used the measurements on my rulers, other than for occasional convenience.

If the Master's Square, of the Square and Compass(es) symbol of Freemasonry, is an illusion, then what is the 'correct' symbol? The 1st Degree symbol would be a Point (•); the 2nd Degree would be a line (. ——— .), but in that neither a Point nor a Line, by the above Masonic definitions has breadth [or thickness], neither is visible to the mortal eye. [Now there's something for the contemplative mind or heart . . .].

Third Degree, Master Mason [M.M.], Reception:

Instrument used: the Compass(es)

Position of the Compasses: Opened [preferably at a symbolic angle of 60°, which would require a larger compasses]

How applied: as the Ritual reads: "on the extreme points of the compasses, extending from your naked LEFT* [apply left point] to your naked RIGHT* breast [apply left point so that now BOTH Points of compasses are touching the Brother at the points indicated, at the same time]

*Note: the SW&L has the 'left' and 'right' reversed, i.e. ". . .from your naked RIGHT to your naked LEFT breast . . ." Philosophically, when the compasses are opened, starting from the original 1st degree point of the LEFT breast, this would be applied first in the 3rd degree, followed by applying the second point on the RIGHT breast [as was the practice recommended in, for example, 'Duncan's Ritual.'] [see below**]

Discussion: The Work of the first two degrees is obviously such that 'proficiency' in the preceding degree could not normally be accomplished in the space of a few weeks. It could be the Work of a lifetime, or more. Both the degrees and the periods of advancement are therefore symbolic. In the space of a few weeks a rote memorization of the words of the 'Questions and Answers' is hopefully attained, a modicum of understanding as to their 'moral significance,' and of some of the history, etiquette and organizational workings of the Fraternity.

In the Third Degree Reception, the compasses have been opened for the first time for the purpose of Receiving the new Brother on his further journey in Masonry. Whether the compasses had been opened a millimeter or a million light years, there are still only TWO points on the open compasses, the distance of which between these two points being a philosophical ONE unit, regardless of any other such units as could be used.

**When the first point is applied to the naked left breast, it is not in the third degree done so to pierce it, but to recall to the Brother the lesson of the 1st degree. When done with affect, the placement of the second point on his naked right breast calls to his attention the 'extreme-ness' of the points and of the 'time and space' between them. The direct quote from Duncan's Ritual is as follows:

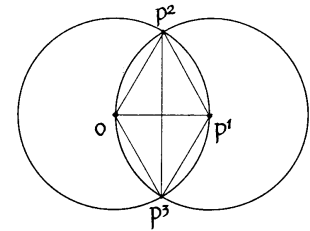
S. D.--Brother Gabe, on entering this Lodge the first time, you were received on the point of the compasses, pressing your naked left breast, the moral of which was explained to you. On entering the second time, you were received on the angle of the square, which was also explained to you. I now receive you on both points of the compasses, extending **from your naked left to your naked right breast** (he here places both points against candidate's breasts), which is to teach you, that as the vital parts of man are contained within the breasts, so the most excellent tenets of our institution are contained between the points of the compasses--which are Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love.

There arises here a principle that could be called 'Focal Radiance.' Light and heat Radiate FROM the flame, not TO it. Sound Radiates FROM its source, not TO it. A bullet, arrow, fishing lure, baseball, or golf ball, each Radiate

FROM their respective source, not TO it. Hence the Compasses in the Third Degree should be applied from the Left to the Right Breast, as above noted. The contemplative Mason would recognize that if there is an 'extreme' there must ALSO be a MEAN point. This is represented by the golden proportion of $a:b::b:(a+b)$.

When the compasses are opened, an erring natural law is revealed for the Brother to contemplate, should he be so inclined. A more complete discussion of this may be found in Chapter VI, Sections I and III of my book, but is herewith illustrated briefly:

Here you may note that the extreme points are labeled 'O' for origin, and P^1 , corresponding to the 'naked left and right breast' respectively [from the viewpoint of the Brother facing East]. In describing circles, with the centers of O and P^1 you will note that the 2nd degree "angle of 90 degrees" from the Axis of Rotation of BOTH of the circles is present as line OP^1 , and that we now also have the two triangles in the middle enclosed by a *vesica pisces*. The upper triangle is exactly the same one which appears in the First Proposition of Euclid [he did not show the lower one in his Proposition 1]. The 'arch' described by the *vesica pisces* is exactly the same Gothic Arch of the medieval Architects and artisans. The two triangles immediately 'obey' the ancient Hermetic injunction: *as above, so below*, and exhibit what may be referred to a 'polarity.'



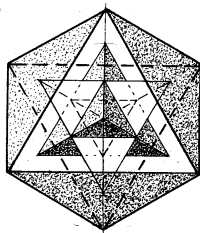
In keeping with the geometric progression from a Point [1st degree], to a Line [2nd degree], you may now, *and only now in the 3rd degree*, see the next progression . . . to the Superfices, which again from the older ritual:

"... is that which has length and breadth without thickness."

You may now be beginning to see why I like my version of the Receptions of the Craft degrees . . . Those who have followed this far, and are familiar with the old ritual, may now well ask the question: but what of the next progression . . . the SOLID, which, of which it is written:

"A solid is a magnitude which has length, breadth and thickness."

In one regard this is a valid question to ask of the progression of the THREE degrees Craft Masonry. In a subtle way the Solid IS in the 3rd degree, but it is 'unfinished.' One must consider that the above two circles shown are ALSO SPHERES, and may easily be derived as such from the usage (and philosophy) of the compasses and 'square.' Remember, too, that Sanctum Sanctorum of KST (20 x 20 x 20 cubits) was a CUBE, which in contemplative geometry may be shown as:



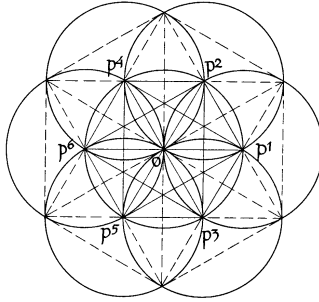
This aspect of the SOLID, however, appears more specifically and ritualistically in Masonry in the 'fourth' degree, or more correctly in that system-of-four-degrees comprising the Holy Royal Arch [currently the '7th' degree]. A further hint of this may be seen from the older version of the Constitutions of the Antient Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons under the Grand Lodge of England, "General Laws and Regulations for the Government of the Craft:

Declaration. 1. By the solemn Act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of Free-Masons of England in December, 1813, it was "declared and pronounced that pure Antient Masonry consists of three degree and no more, viz., those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, *including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.*" [italics added]

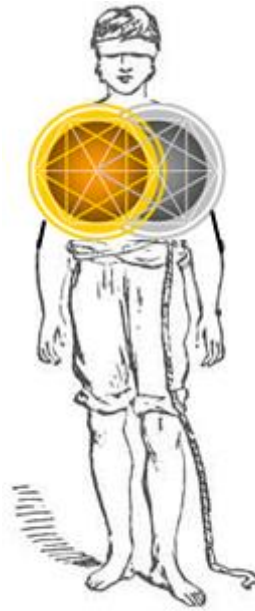
Needless to say, I would agree. I have often wondered why the Holy Royal Arch degree has been conferred by separate application to the 'York Rite Bodies,' rather than as a degree within the Craft Grand Lodge under its GM.

Meanwhile, back in the 3rd/4th degree, if this were not enough, we are also looking at the natural 'process' by which cells divide and the gateway to atomic and molecular structure. In completing the above projection of 'angles of 90°' we arrive at a place representing the Sanctum Sanctorum of KST:

From this 'Flower of Life,' as such it is often referred, may be found the 'Tree of Life' of the Jewish Mystics, the DNA spiral, the Carbon atom, all of the notes in all of the musical scales [sound, tone, speech], all of the colors [light] and many others delightful reflections of the Creation.



Gen 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

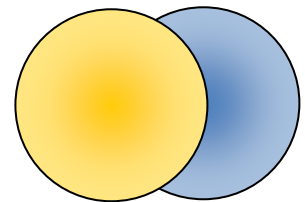


Third Degree Candidate

The *Vesica Pisces* as a geometric symbolism is well known to the church in its architecture and its art. It is frequently shown as the nimbus or border surrounding the Christ, shown below with the Evangelists of the Four Gospels in the corners of the picture. From the above figure, pertaining to the 1st Proposition of Euclid, this *vesica pisces* [latin - 'bladder of a fish'] is shown from the joining of two circles (a universal symbol of 'marriage') which presents further symbolic significance to some.



The first circle [left] may be viewed as the Source of Creation, of the Light, and may be further compared to the Light of the Father, as personified by the Sun. In the Lodge this symbolism would not be lost on those who are familiar with the 'Sun in the East,' or by the staff and jewel of the Senior Deacon. Having shaded this portion of the figure it may be seen that what remains is a 'lunar crescent,' [right] emblematic of the moon in the West, the Senior Warden and the Junior Deacon. It is this aspect of 'reflected' light which gives rise to the 'yielding, feminine' nature assigned to the left side of the body and of the 'illusory' nature of things which are but reflections of the Source, to include 'time and space.' Countless works have been written on this illusory nature of time and space, which I would encourage the Brothers to contemplate at some time. Many would dismiss this subject, having never studied it. Science has come to accept many aspects of 'variable' or 'relative' time and space.



In the Craft we are further told, at the Reception of the Master Mason, “that as within the breast are contained the most vital parts of man, so between the extreme points of the compasses are contained the most valuable tenets of Freemasonry, [which are friendship (virtue in the older rituals), morality and brotherly love].” The words in brackets may be correct from an exoteric point of view, but there may be further Light on this matter.

The Catholic Church gives frequent reference to the ‘Sacred Heart,’ which is often shown graphically in a picture of the Christ emblazoned with a Heart in the CENTER of His chest [breast]. This Heart is further portrayed with a bleeding wound, surrounded by Thorns and surmounted by a Flame, the whole of which being surrounded by Rays of Light, or a ‘Glory of Light.’ Some would think this to be ‘a nice representation,’ and some may be moved by the ‘picture.’ I would suggest that this ‘sacred Heart’ actually and ‘physically’ EXISTS, although not necessarily ALL in this dimension, but enough so that the ‘emanations’ of ‘it’ may be physically felt by many.

Strange that it would emblematically appear in our Craft ritual; stranger yet and most wonderfully, that it DOES EXIST. Many have been ‘Raised’ to an awareness of it. Perhaps stranger yet, is that the Sacred Heart is in the Center of the breast.

If the ‘Square’ of the 2nd degree is not really a ‘Master’s Square,’ what then of the great symbol of Masonry? Should we change it? I would think not; it has been around too long, and it does give the message, exoterically, I have given above. Is there a more ‘correct’ symbol? Yes and no, at least there are alternative symbols which could be used.

Being as deeply immersed in symbols as Masons are, they may perhaps have some empathy towards my somewhat child-like delight when I see people wearing hats or crowns . . . necklaces, pendants or ‘jewels’ of office. Crowns of State, Diadems, Bishops Miters [Mitres], Indian Headdresses, Master’s top hats; Officers Jewels, High Priest’s Breastplates, worshippers Crosses or Stars . . . a vast symbolic representation of something that EXISTS within the wonderful Creat-ure we call Man. How wonderful, too, that so much of it is preserved in the Standard Work and Lectures of the Craft.

If the Craft degrees do represent a progression from a Point, to a Line, to a Superfices, [to a Solid,] WHEN did this find its way into the ritual? The Third Degree did not find its way into the Craft ritual until about 1726 [e.g. the Graham Manuscript]. A review of the early manuscripts and exposures clearly show that the only reception approximating the current ones was for the Entered Apprentice only, who initially held the compasses [sword or dagger] to his naked left breast while taking the obligation; there was no corresponding reception in the Fellow Craft degree. In time some 1st Degree receptions had the Candidate received at the Point of some martial instrument, such as a sword or dagger, but still no 2nd degree reception. As previously indicated above, the Grand Lodge of England united in 1813. In the Masonic Treatise with an Elucidation on the Religious and Moral Beauties of Freemasonry, by W. Finch [1802], which is reportedly similar to Browne’s Master-Key of the same year, and the later Vancouver MS, [re: Alexander Horne’s transliteration, 1956], the reception’s per Finch were as follows:

Was you admitted,

I was

On what,

On the P. of [a sword] or some S.I. [extended to my n.l.b. – Browne].

For why was this so applied,

Not only to intimidate but likewise to intimate to me that I was engaged upon what was serious, solemn and awful, [Browne here adds: -- likewise to distinguish the sex.].

There was no reception record in the Finch ‘Treatise’ for the 2nd or 3rd degree. [note: the full text of this Treatise may be read at the website of the Onondaga & Oswego Masonic Districts Historical Society (OMDHS), at www.ondhs.syracuseasons.com.]

Soon after the Union of 1813 and the great Morgan excitement, a [anti-] Masonic catechism by Elder David Bernard appeared under the title of Light on Masonry: a collection of all the Most Important Documents on the Subject of Speculative Free Masonry . . ., printed in Utica, New York, 1829. This catechism appears to relative reliable, and was no doubt collated prior to 1829 by a few years and most likely modeled on Morgan’s exposure. This catechism gives the following receptions for the Craft degrees:

pg. 18 - 1st degree:

. . . The candidate then enters, the Junior Deacon at the same time pressing his naked left breast with the point of the compass, and asks the candidate, 'Did you feel anything?' *Ans.* 'I did;' Junior Deacon to candidate, 'what was it?' *Ans.* 'A torture.' The Junior Deacon then says, 'as this is a torture to your flesh, so may it ever be to your mind and conscience, if ever you should attempt to reveal the secrets of Masonry unlawfully.' . . .

pg. 43 - 2nd degree:

. . . He enters; the angle of the square is pressed hard against his naked right breast; at which time, the Junior Deacon says, 'Brother, when you entered this lodge the first time, you entered on the point of the compass pressing your naked left breast, which was then explained to you. You now enter it on the angle of the square, pressing your naked right breast; which is to teach you to act upon the square with all mankind, but more especially with the brethren.' . . .

pg. 60 - 3rd degree:

. . . In entering, both points of the compass are pressed against his naked right and left breasts, when the Junior Deacon stops the candidate [sic], and says, 'Brother, when you first entered this lodge, you were received on the point of the compass pressing your naked left breast, which was then explained to you; when you entered it the second time, you were received on the angle of the square, which was also explained to you; on entering now, you are received on the two extreme points of the compass pressing your naked right and left breasts, which are thus explained: 'As the most vital parts of man are contained between the two breasts, so are the most valuable tenets of Masonry contained between the two extreme points of the compass, which are, virtue, morality, and brotherly love.'

I have not yet determined just WHEN, why, by whom and/or under what circumstances the receptions were introduced into all three degrees in, at least, the preceding form. Some of the intermediate pamphlets or books were issued in Constitutional or Monitorial form [such as Webb - 1797] and do not contain the catechism of the Q&A's.

I did not start out to prove that the point, line and superficies 'could' be in the receptions of the Craft degrees. I did not even suspect it at the time [April 2001]. This prospect just sort of 'crept into' the present discussions as I continued to type at the computer. Nor did I have any preconceived thesis regarding the Square until I began to ask myself why such an oddity was placed between the receptions by the compasses of the 1st and 3rd degrees. It was then that it 'popped into my head' that this 'angle of 90°' was a 'force' of 90°, nor an instrument of the Mason's or a 'Square of virtue,' as stated by its 'moral teaching.'

Happily the point, line, superficies and solid clause was put back into the latest edition of the SW&L [albeit as 'optional' work]. Perhaps too, some of the 'moral lessons' may be annotated. It may perhaps be acceptable that the moral lesson of the Point in the 1st degree is appropriate for an Entered Apprentice. Perhaps in the 3rd degree instead of the stating 'the morals of which were then explained to you,' could be modified something along the line of:

"There are yet further considerations to be obtained by the Contemplative Heart regarding the Receptions of a Mason in the Craft degrees, and of many of its other symbols, which I would urge you to seek."

Is the Craft the sole possessor of this 'ritual' or 'teaching'? Of course not; there are countless other sources for it, from fables, fairy tales, great works, lesser works, poems, music, art, sculpture, architecture and from the everyday living experience. It was heavily propounded in Jewish Mysticism, the Rosicrucian Enlightenment, the 'ancient mysteries,' and in countless other movements, societies and cultures. I would, however, still maintain that it is most interesting how the Craft has captured the essence of these teaching in less than 200 some odd pages of its pocket editions of the Standard Work and Lectures, regardless of that which could possibly be added, subtracted or amended to it.

Will anyone from a Grand Lodge come forward to officially endorse anything that has been 'discussed' in these pages? Of course not. It is all there for the 'duly and truly prepared,' they may or may not say. It is not for the Grand Lodge to 'interpret' what it has already, of long standing, put into the 'symbols' and 'allegories' of the Craft. This is for each Brother to experience in their own way. I'm sure you can all remember that day when you were told, again in the relationship of the Compasses to the Square, that they were so configured "to teach you that you have received, and are entitled to receive, all the light that can be conferred upon or communicated to you in a Master Mason Lodge." For those still searching or not, the early injunction is still appropriate. . . "Rise, follow your Conductor and fear no danger."



Note: I had noted above in the preceding discussion a second reason for the Square and Compass(es) being a symbol of the Fraternity. In Albert Pike's Morals and Dogma, he noted in the Jenkins Reprint of Oct 1952, XXXII - 'Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret' [Master of Royal Secret], pg. 858:

“ . . . it may be said that in man the Divine is united to the Human.
Of this union the *equilateral Triangle inscribed within the Square* is a Symbol.”

Bro. Pike did not go on to explain the why or how of this 'inscribed equilateral Triangle within the Square.' I have written a separate discussion on this subject. Those wishing to have a copy of it may forward their 'solution' to Pike's above statement and the reasons therefore to garylheinmiller@gmail.com. For the record, since 2001 no one has submitted a proposed solution.



Steps

The next part of this present work is a brief discussion on the 'Steps' of a Freemason for the three craft degrees. Again, there appears to be variance of instruction regarding which foot should be shod or unshod, and the purpose for this. First, as to purpose for this, it is given in the New York State Standard Work and Lectures, Entered Apprentice Degree, Second Section, Part II, Lecture of Reasons [sometimes referred to as the 'Whys and Wherefores']:

Wy wr u nth b nor shd? . . . with the answer being given as:

Agrbly t an anc Isrltsh cstm adptd amg Ms. We read in the Book of Ruth concerning their manner of changing and redeeming, that “to confirm all things, a man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor.” That was testimony in Israel. This therefore, we do, testifying thereby in the strongest manner possible the sincerity of our intentions in the work in which we are engaged.

The answer shown in Duncan's Ritual is slightly different, which, considering its position on 'free will' and 'obedience' is not the current work of our Grand Lodge:

It was in conformity to an ancient Israelitish custom: we read in the book of Ruth, that it was their manner of changing and redeeming; and to confirm all things, a Mason plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor, and that was testimony in Israel. This then we do in confirmation of a token, and as a pledge of our fidelity; thereby signifying that we will renounce our own will in all things, and become obedient to the laws of our ancient institution.

Considering that the work of a Freemason in a tiled Lodge is done, symbolically, in the 'Ground Floor' of KST in the First Degree; the Middle Chamber of KST in the Second Degree; and the 'unfinished' SS of KST in the Third Degree, there exists the possible interpretation of a somewhat higher meaning to being shod or unshod. When I first heard the 'Lecture of Reasons,' I was somewhat uncomfortable with the explanation given, and felt it had more to do with 'holy ground.' It would appear that I am not alone in this feeling, in that Bro. Mackey expressed his similar views on this in his An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences.

For the word '**Shoe**' Bro. Mackey more or less agrees with the above Lecture of Reasons . . . for the First Degree, but notes that “In the Third Degree the symbolism is altogether different.” Bro. Mackey gives a little more insight into this when he notes:

“Thus we read in the Book of Ruth, that Boaz having proposed to the nearest kinsman of Ruth to exercise his legal right by redeeming the land of Naomi, which was offered for sale, and marrying her daughter-in-law, the kinsman, being unable to do so, resigned his right of purchase to Boaz . . . for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbor; and therefor the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe.”

For the First Degree this would be in keeping with Freemasonry as a 'progressive science' and the penchant for early ritualists, such as William Preston, to present 'exoteric' work for the First Degree and proceed to progressively more esoteric work in the Second and Third Degrees. I'm sure that the above references from Bro. Mackey to the 'land' [terrestrial] the abundance of female persons and [the pillar] Boaz will not be lost on those who are familiar with time honored usage of symbols.

Bro. Mackey then goes on to write why “In the Third Degree the symbolism is altogether different,” under the separate heading of “Disalceation, Rite of,” which he explains as follows:

Rite of Disalceation – The Ceremony of taking off the shoes, as a token of respect, whenever we are on or about to approach holy ground. It is referred to in Exodus iii, 5, where the angel of the Lord, at the burning bush, exclaims to Moses: “Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” The Rite, in fact, always was, and still is, used among the Jew and other Oriental nations when entering their temples and other sacred edifices. It does not seem to have been derived from the command given to Moses; but rather to have existed as a religious custom from time immemorial, and have been borrowed, as Mede supposes, by the Gentiles, through tradition, from the patriarchs. The direction of Pythagoras to his disciples was [translated] to “Offer sacrifice and worship with their shoes off.”

Hence, in giving our Entered Apprentices the Lecture of Reasons as it currently reads, we are perhaps somewhat correct, but the shod or unshod symbolism is perhaps not more fully explained to the Master Mason.

Next would come the consideration of which foot should, symbolically, be shod or unshod. I have heard this question arise many times, and answered by various rankings of Brothers. The Standard Work and Lectures of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York does not specify one way or other which foot is to be shod or unshod, only that the Candidate or Brother should be neither barefoot or shod [for all three Degrees]. Nor does it comment whether socks should be worn or not, which is yet another popular topic of discussion from time to time.

As recently as this Spring [2012] I have read an authoritative explanation relate that:

“The sandal is placed on the advancing foot, which is the left foot for the first degree, the left foot for the second degree, and the right foot for the third degree. The socks are left on both feet; there is no reason to remove the socks.”

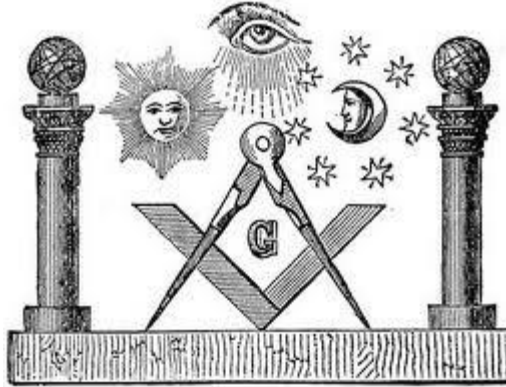
From an authoritative reference, this is the placement and procedure I would have to support. From a symbolic point of view, I would not agree at all for the reasons which follow.

In the First Degree the Candidate is entering the Ground Floor of KST . . . the holiest site in symbolic ‘Blue Lodge’ Freemasonry. The password of an Entered Apprentice denotes the advancing foot as being from the ‘terrestrial’ pillar, it being the ‘weaker’ side of the body [feminine/lunar]. This advancing left foot, entering upon holy ground in its journey from Darkness to Light would symbolically be bare, with no sock.

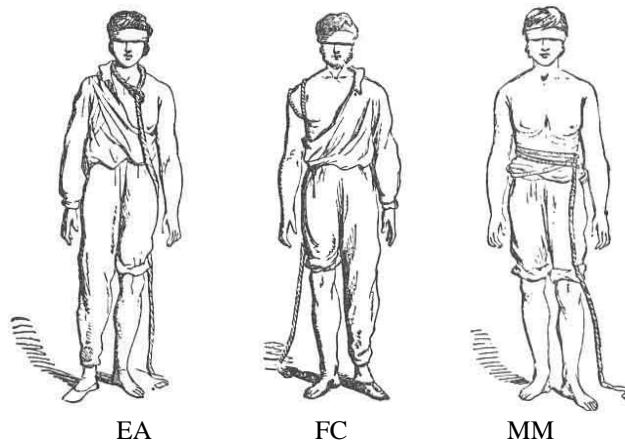
In the Second Degree the Brother is entering, eventually, the Middle Chamber of KST. The password of a Fellowcraft denotes the advancing foot as being from the ‘celestial’ pillar, it being the ‘stronger’ side of the body [masculine/solar]. This advancing right foot, entering upon holy ground and more of its journey from Darkness to Light would symbolically be bare, with no sock.

In the Third Degree the Brother is entering, eventually, the Unfinished SS of KST. There is here the situation where the Brother has already ‘passed’ the pillars to further continue his journey in the [unfinished] holy precinct where only the High Priest is allowed [something to symbolically consider more deeply] which would indicate that both feet are bare, with no socks.

Why bare feet instead of socks? In today’s world of disinfectant hand soap dispensers appearing with increased frequency it seems to have become ‘politically correct’ for exposed skin to be covered with [hopefully] clean socks. But symbolically bare feet are the ones who come into contact with the holy ground, not shod or socked ones, unless one contemplates how the lead character of the old popular “Kung Fu” television series, when he walked on the rice paper without leaving any footprints. The only way to do that, with or without shoes OR socks, is to be perfectly suspended [balanced] between ‘heaven [celestial/masculine/solar] and earth [terrestrial/feminine/lunar].



The following figures are as shown in Duncan's Ritual, which may be read in its entirety at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/mas/dun/index.htm>. Note the bare foot [feet] is as I have noted above, with no sock[s].



Signs & Duegards

One last item to consider for this present work is that of the Signs of the Three Degrees.

Again, in visiting many Lodges there is a considerable divergence of the 'giving of the signs.'

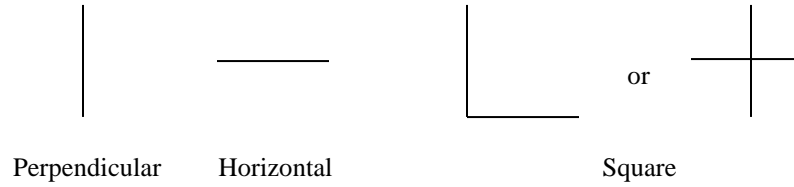
In that these are considered among the 'secrets' of Freemasonry I shall not give descriptions or show illustrations of these signs except as noted below. They may, however, been seen on the internet is Duncan's Ritual at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/mas/dun/dun02.htm>

There is a certain degree of uniformity, dignity and respect to be implied by the giving of these signs. They are not clearly described in the New York State Standard Work and Lectures, but they are very clearly described in Richardson's Monitor, which may be read at <http://www.themasonictrowel.com/ebooks/freemasonry/eb0348.pdf>

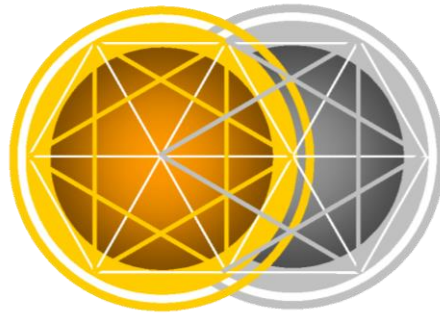
The basis of these signs is right angles, horizontals and perpendiculars in the Duncan's and especially Richardson's Rituals. In most cases when viewed in most Lodges such is not the case, where such things as bent wrists are seen for the First Degree; swinging arms for the Third Degree and other assorted motions.

The first movement in giving each sign should be a clear, respectful and dignified right angle; followed by a short horizontal, and then by a perpendicular.

Why would this be so; what is its symbol? For one, it also corresponds to the three principal officers of the Lodge. But then one may wish to ask why this should be so. In so asking we may once again find ourselves back at the Pillars of the Craft. The perpendicular represents the active or so-called masculine principal of nature and the horizontal represents the passive or so-called feminine principal of nature, which when combined form a so-called 'square.' If these were to be represented graphically they would at best be three two-dimensional lines represented thusly:

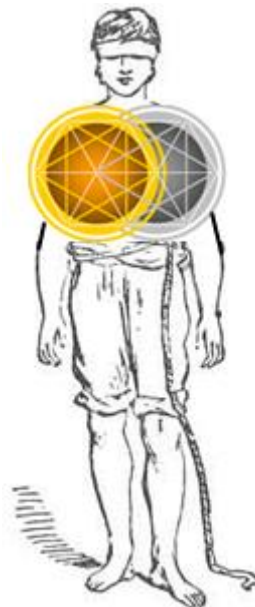


On the earth we see the manifestations of this, for example in the active flow of water, where its descends down and comes to a state of 'rest' horizontally. Or in computers where binary 1s and 0s interact to permit the flow of data in our computers. Or where positively and negatives atomic particles allow the flow of electromagnetic 'matter' to produce such phenomena as electricity, thought, molecules, cells and weather. The one factor that science is still searching for is the secrets of spacetime, gravity and the so-called 'unified field.' It represents Brotherhood, Unity, Mastery. According to our ritual its Basis is Geometry, and in 289 small pages the journey to Light is contained in our time honored Fraternity.



The above is a 'matrix' representing the geometric progression from a Point to a Line to a Superfices to a Solid, whereby may be seen in symbol 'the Sun, the Moon and the Stars.'

These may be represented two-dimensionally, as shown, but are also representative of the three-dimensional Platonic Solids among other things, to include the Gothic Arch and the First Proposition of Euclid.



Third Degree Candidate



Richardson's Monitor - Signs & Due-Guards of the Degrees

Right Angles, Horizontals and Perpendiculars

Master—Attend to the signs, brethren.



Right Angles, or, the Sign of Distress.

Horizontals, or, Due-Guard.

The signs of this degree are now given by the Master and brethren, viz.: right-angles, horizontals, and perpendiculars. The right-angles are shown by holding open the left hand and crossing the palm of it with the open palm of the right hand at right-angles—the hands to be held out about twelve inches from the body. This is called the first sign of a Mason. It is the sign of distress in this degree. To draw a horizontal, raise your open right hand and arm to your neck, and holding the palm downwards, and the thumb partly under the hand, but parallel with the fingers, draw the hand from the left to the right shoulder by a quick motion. While you are doing this let the left hand drop perpendicularly by your side, the palm backward. This to show the perpendicular sign. The horizontal is called the due-guard.

This sign is given by Sign and Due-guard of taking hold of the left breast, with the right hand, as though you intended to tear out a piece of it, then draw your hand, with the fingers partly clenched, from the left to the right side, with some quickness, and drop it down by your side.—

The due-guard is given by raising the left arm until that part of it between the elbow and shoulder is perfectly horizontal, then raising the rest of the arm in a vertical position, so that that part of the arm below the elbow, and that part above it, forms a square. The two are always given together, and are called the sign and due-guard of a Fellow Craft.



The sign is the hailing sign of distress given on page 29. The words accompanying it are, "Is there no help for the widow's son?" As the last words are uttered, you let fall your hands in a manner to indicate solemnity.



The due-guard is given by putting the open right hand to the left side of the bowels, the palm of the hand flat, and downwards; then draw it quickly from the left to the right, and let it fall by your side.

Page 7 – Entered Apprentice

Page 22 – Fellowcraft

Page 30 – Master Mason

Please try to remember when giving the signs and due-guards the Right Angles, Horizontals and Perpendiculars. There has to be a reason these are so prominent in Lodges. The Symbol of the Master is the Right Angle [remember the 'Square' and the Reception of a Fellowcraft]; the Symbol of the SW is the Horizontal [Level] and that of the JW is the Perpendicular.

Also Fire rises Perpendicularly [which element is found with Sun of the SD in the East and the Pillar Jachin . . . and its 'masculine' attribute]; the Water seeks its own level [Horizontally], which element is found with Moon of the JD in the West and the Pillar Boaz . . . and its 'feminine' attribute. Merging these two, the Horizontal and Perpendicular one produces the 'Angle of Square' . . . or Mastery [between the Pillars], in the Timeless and Spaceless eternal "Here and Now," in which we all live.