

THE PILLARS

by

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In all ancient religions the pillar was a symbol of strength and stability. As each civilization reached the point in its evolution when a concept of the earth and its definition was formed, it was invariably that of a flat surface and usually supported by pillars. When such civilization came to designate certain definite places of worship, these were usually flat surfaces upon a high hill or elevation, surrounded by trees, either natural or trimmed; or by stones, to represent pillars. This was to indicate that the site was a place surrounded and protected by the power of the Deity. Such flat places of assembly later became depressions, either natural or excavated to form an amphitheater, and the trees or stones were succeeded by free-standing pillars, at first natural, but later sculptured. When these roofless temples were covered to furnish protection from the weather, the flat covering grew to be representative of the earth, supported upon the pillars of the power and wisdom of the Deity.

In the evolution of the symbolism of the temple, there were two types of pillars, or columns. Most ancient, symbolically, were those which first outlined the area of the temple and later supported its covering. In time the two pillars which stood at the doorway came to be regarded as representing entrance to the presence of the Deity, and as this symbol assumed higher importance the two pillars of entrance

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became free-standing obelisks, separate from the load-bearing columns of the doorway. Jachin and Boaz were such pillars. When Speculative Masonry made the Temple of Solomon the basis of all Masonic symbolism, the three columns--- Wisdom, Strength and Beauty were added. Another, which was not specifically a part of the temple symbolism, was the "Broken Column." To these were later added the five columns representing the "Five Orders in Architecture."

I have used the term "obelisk" interchangeably with "free-standing pillar", wherever found. The true obelisk, however, was peculiar to Egypt. It was usually square or rectangular in shape, tapering to a point at the top, and was commonly more or less covered with symbolic designs or inscriptions. The obelisk generally known to us today is "Cleopatra's Needle". There are two obelisks called "Cleopatra's Needle", --. one now stands on the Thames embankment in London, and the other is in Central Park, New York City. They were originally erected by Thothmes III, about 1,500 B.C., and stood at the entrance to the Temple of Heliopolis. They were undoubtedly known to King Solomon.

In ancient times it was a common practice to raise a pillar to commemorate some great or auspicious occasion in recognition of the power and protection of God. Joseph Fort Newton wrote in 'The Builders':

"In India and among the Mayas and Incas were three pillars at the portals of the earthly and sky temple Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. When a man set up a pillar he became a fellow worker with Him whom the old sages of China used to call the

'First Builder'. Also, pillars were set up to mark the holy places of vision and divine deliverance, as when Jacob erected a pillar at Bethel, Joshua at Gilgal, and Samuel at Mizpah and Shen. Always, they were symbols of stability, of what the Egyptians described as 'the place of establishing forever'--emblem of the faith that the pillars of the earth are the Lord's and He hath set the world upon them."

It should be pointed out that such pillars were often mere piles of stones, and frequently served as altars of sacrifice. Many free-standing pillars are, however, noted in ancient history, either natural or carved from stone formations, and some are standing today. These were often phallic in significance.

With the evolution of architecture, the free-standing stones or pillars marking the outline of the temple became load-bearing columns. Even as such, in ancient times there was always a symbolic significance. In some cases each column bore one or more symbols; in others, the number and arrangement embodied the symbol. Dr. Edward Robinson, in his 'Bible Encyclopedia,' published in 1881, writes: "On pillars (in the court of the Gentiles) placed at equal distances in this wall were inscriptions, in Greek and Latin, to warn strangers and such as were unclean not to proceed farther on pain of death." On each side of the Egyptian temple at Paestum were fourteen columns, symbolic of the fourteen days of each cycle of the moon. The theatre built by Scaurus, in Greece, had 360 columns. The columns of the druidic temple at Avebury, England, reproduced all the planetary cycles. The 'Washington Monitor' informs us that the Temple of Solomon was supported by 1,453 columns. I have been unable to discover the source from which Thomas Webb derived this number (it does not appear in the early Prestonian lectures). It has been suggested that his authority may have been the 'Talmud.'

W. J. Chetwode Crawley states: "The two cardinal epochs in English Freemasonry were associated with the appearance in London of models of the Temple of Jerusalem. At the first epoch, that of the Revival of Freemasonry, the Model ascribed to Councilor Schott had arrived in London, and was on exhibition in 1722 and 1730. At the second epoch, when the organization of the Antients was struggling into existence, the Model of Rabbi Jacob Jehudah Leon was on view in 1759-60." An advertisement in the 'Daily Courant,' London, of March 3, 1729, reads in part: "Within the Model are 2,000 chambers and windows, and pillar 7,000." However, it is not stated that the original Temple contained 7,000 pillars. Evidently no one bothered to count those of the second model. If the original Temple did contain 1,453 columns, and if Solomon had not departed from the custom of arranging such columns in symbolical order, at

17. least two explanations are possible: (1) the number, 1,453, is very close to a four-year cycle--yet, I know of no ancient symbolical significance to such cycle or (2) this was merely the total number, and the various columns were in several groups, each group having a symbolical significance. It may not be inappropriate to note here that the great "molten sea" rested upon twelve oxen, "three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east, and all their hinder parts were inward." According to Dr. Wm. F. Albright; who collaborated in the building of a model of the Temple in the United States, the arrangement "symbolized the round of the seasons through the year."

From the various accounts, the Temple of Solomon contained no less than 1,466 columns, not including the three symbolical pillars of "Wisdom, Strength and Beauty." In addition to the 1,453 pillars

which supported it and the two which stood at its entrance, Josephus informs us that, within it, the great "brazen sea" was supported by a pillar which was ten cubits in diameter and had ten spirals around it. Josephus also calls the support underneath each portable laver a pillar, although he describes them as square, not round. The writer of I Kings, verse 35, chapter 7, describes them as a "round compass of a half cubit high." There were undoubtedly others, but we are concerned here mostly with the two pillars which stood on, or at, the porch, and the three symbolical pillars which were the "three principal supports" of the Temple.

Albert Pike, in 'Morals and Dogma,' wrote: "To the Christian the two pillars, Boaz and Jachin, are symbols of that profound faith and implicit trust in God which are the Christian's strength; and of the good works by which alone that faith can be established. The three symbolical pillars which supported the Temple represented the Christian's hope in a future state of happiness; faith in the promises and the divine character and mission of the Redeemer; and charitable judgment of other men." In searching for the true symbolism we may well give weight to the views of the unknown "Kabbalist" who wrote. "The names of the pillars (Boaz and Jachin) signified potency and perpetuity; the pomegranates on their capitals or chapiters were symbols of generation." H. L. Haywood, in 'Symbolical Masonry,' reasons that: "Being properly stationed at the door of the Lodge Room or on the Porch of the Temple, they signify entrance, for it is through them that: the candidate passes to his initiation, and initiation is birth into. a new life."

Josephus' account of the building of the Temple is, in part, as follows: "After the delivery of this prophecy, the king commanded the strangers to be numbered; and they were found to be one hundred and eighty thousand; of these he appointed fourscore thousand to be hewers of stone, and the rest of the multitude to carry the stones, and of them he set over the workmen three thousand and five hundred." This would indicate that none of the Jews, excepting Solomon himself and probably some of the "bearers of burden" had any part in the construction of the Temple. In 'Antiquities,' Book VIII, Chapter III, he writes: "Moreover, this Hiram made two (hollow) pillars, whose outside was of brass, and the thickness of the brass was four fingers' breadth, and the height of the pillars was eighteen cubits, and their circumference twelve cubits, but there was cast with each of their chapiters lily-work that stood upon the pillar, and it was elevated five cubits, round about which there was a net-work interwoven with small palms, made of brass, and covered with lily-work. To this also were hung two hundred pomegranates, in two rows. The one of these pillars he set at the entrance of the porch on the right hand, and called it Jachin, and the other at the left hand and called it Boaz." It will be noted that there are differences in this from Biblical accounts, which Preston and everyone since him, have attempted, with not too much success, to reconcile. One thing, however, has been pretty well established, there were no "globes." The chapiters themselves, or the crowns at their tops, were the "globes."

Mackey's 'History of Freemasonry' relates how the account of the two pillars became a part of the legend of old Operative Masonry. The oldest known existing document relating to Freemasonry is the 'Regius (Halliwell) Manuscript,' which is generally assigned to the date 1390. The second oldest is the 'Cooke Manuscript,' which supposedly appeared about 1490. The latter gives the legend of the two pillars; the former has no allusion to them. According to the 'Cooke Manuscript' they were constructed by the children of Lamech. Josephus, however, ascribes them to the posterity of Seth, and it is upon his version

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that the Masonic Legend is founded (actually, there is no discrepancy). Modern Masons think of them mostly as symbolic of the strength and stability of God, but it is probable that their original significance in Operative Masonry was in reference to the pillars of fire and cloud by which the Children of Israel were led in their wanderings, and were thus symbolic of the guidance of God. Old Operative Masonry also made use of the legend of Enoch, who, in anticipation of the Deluge, is said to have erected two pillars, one of brick and the other of marble (other materials are named in other versions of the legend) upon which he inscribed all the wisdom of the world. Whatever meaning was ascribed to them by Solomon, it is probable that, as copies of such pillars in common use at the entrance to Egyptian and Phoenician temples, their principal significance was the entrance to the presence of God.

It has been averred that the Phoenicians borrowed from the Egyptians the idea of placing pillars before their temples, but this is doubtful. It seems more likely that the practice in both countries grew from the same more ancient sources, which became, in a way, centralized in the legend of the Pillars of Hercules or, more accurately, the various legends ascribing to the "Pillars of Hercules" the symbolical significance of entrance to a different world. The Greek version of the legend recites that when Hercules was required by his brother Eurystheus to perform his twelve Herculean labours, the tenth of these was to recover some stolen cattle from the island of Eurystheia, which lay far beyond the entrance to Oceanus. Upon his return with the stolen cattle, Hercules disembarked at Tartarus Tartessus, which was the boundary of Oceanus, and set up two pillars, one upon Abyla and the other upon Calpe, on either side of what is now known as the Strait of Gibraltar, signifying that this marked the entrance to Oceanus. Whether the two pillars ever existed, the legend was familiar to the Phoenician sailors who often ventured that far but seldom farther. It was probably also known to the Egyptians who carried it back to their homelands and made it a familiar feature marking the entrance to their temples. The two pillars of King Solomon's Temple had, in all probability, their inspiration from the two pillars at the entrance to the Tyrian Temple of Malkarth. They, like their progenitors in Tyre, represented the two Pillars of Hercules, the summer and winter solstices, and the two gates of Heaven. To Solomon and the priests of the Jews they represented the pillars of cloud and fire and possibly the two pillars of Enoch.

The symbolism connected with the "three principal supports" is one of the oldest in history. Without otherwise identifying it, and obviously modernizing the language, Albert G. Mackey states that it is contained in the oldest catechism of the eighteenth century, which he quotes as follows:

What supports your Lodge?	Three great pillars.
What are their names?	Wisdom
Strength and Beauty.	
Who doth the Pillar of Wisdom represent?	The Master in the East.
Who doth the Pillar of Strength represent?	The Senior Warden in the West.
Who doth the Pillar of Beauty represent?	The Junior Warden in the South.
Why should the Master represent the Pillar of Wisdom?	Because he gives instructions to the Crafts to carry on their work in a proper manner, with good harmony.

Why should the Senior Warden represent the Pillar of Strength? As the sun sets to finish the day, so the Senior Warden stands in the West to pay the hirelings their wages, which is the strength and support of all business.

Why should the Junior Warden represent the Pillar of Beauty? Because he stands

in the South at high twelve at noon, which is the beauty of the day, to call the men off from work to refreshment, and to see that they come on again in due time, that the Master may have pleasure and profit therein.

Why is it said that your Lodge is supported by these three great Pillars-Wisdom, Strength and Beauty? Because Wisdom, Strength and Beauty is the finisher

of all works, and nothing can be carried on without them.

Why so, Brother? Because there is Wisdom to contrive, Strength to support, and Beauty to adorn.

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William Preston developed this catechism in his system of lectures, and attached to it the three Orders of Architecture of which these symbolical pillars were said to be representative, denominating them Tuscan, Doric and Corinthian (this error was corrected by Dr. Samuel Hemming and Thomas Webb who, in their separate revisions of the ritual, replaced the Roman Tuscan order with the Greek Ionic). Webb, in 1797, published his 'Freemasons Monitor,' in which he considerably modified the lectures of Preston. Webb was in no way a philosopher, evidently having little knowledge of symbolism, and his changes were strictly ritualistic, and made as he wrote, hoping to make the Prestonian lectures better applicable to American Masonry. Dr. Samuel Hemming, a noted ritualist, was made Senior Grand Warden of the newly organized United Grand Lodge of England, and commissioned to frame a new system of lectures. He completed his revision in 1813, retaining most of the symbolism of the Prestonian lectures, including that of the pillars, but abandoning; the dedication of Lodges to the two Saints John and substituting dedication to King Solomon.

The symbolism of "three" is too well known and much too extensive to be dwelt upon here. The "three principal supports" is a development of Speculative Masonry, although derived from old Operative Masonry. We find little reference to it in Gnosticism and Rosicrucianism, the two other principal sources of our symbolism structure. In the so-called higher degrees, the denomination, "Wisdom, Strength and Beauty is, in some places, changed to "Faith, Hope and Charity," in keeping with the Christianization of these degrees

The "Broken Column is another of the most ancient of symbols, significant of the fall or perishing of a prince or other powerful or memorable person. Its introduction into the Masonic ritual is attributed to Jeremy Cross, but this cannot be verified. We are told that "the Broken Column is an expressive emblem of the uncertainty of human life"; and it is said to have composed a part of the memorial erected to the memory of our slain Grand Master, where it had a similar meaning. Although possibly much older, the symbol is best known from its use in the legend of Osiris. Osiris, slain by his brother Typhon by being imprisoned in a coffin which exactly fitted his body, was thrown into the river Nile and carried to Byblos, on the coast of Phoenicia. Cast ashore at the foot of a tamarisk tree, the coffin was completely encased by the growing tree. When found by his wife (who also was his sister) she bought the tree and had it broken in order to release the body. Biblical references to the "Broken Column" are found, in the original translations, in the eleventh Psalm and in the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah. The former reads, "When the columns are overthrown, what can the righteous do?" The latter reads, "Her (Egypt's) columns are broken down." Both are references to "pillars of state."

Henry Coil, in his 'Masonic Encyclopedia,' states: "The various pillars and columns referred to in Masonic legends and rituals are: '(1) The pillars of Cloud and Fire. (2) The two pillars mentioned in the Gothic legends and their symbolic derivatives, sometimes called the Pillars of Enoch. (3) The two porch pillars, or columns, Jachin and Boaz, with their pommels. (4) The five

columns representing the Five Orders in Architecture. (5) The three columns, Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. (6) The two Wardens columns. (7) The Broken Column.' "

The significance of the pillars in the Five Orders in Architecture has been adequately explained by Bro. Lee Harvey St. John, In 'Masonic Papers', Vol. II, No. 16, of Walter F. Meier Lodge of Research.

The significance of the two columns at the Wardens' stations must be the subject of, or included in, another paper, since I have found no satisfactory explanation. In the eighteenth century there were three such columns, denominated "Wisdom, Strength and Beauty," which were appropriately placed at the respective stations of the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden. Somewhere, the Master lost his pillar and those in the West and South became identified with other symbols. If we say that the pillar of Wisdom in the last was replaced by the Master's hat, what became of the other two? If it is proper to designate the columns in the West and South by two other emblems, what became of the proper Masonic emblem of the Worshipful Master?

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To most Masons, the devices and symbols with which they are familiar in the Lodge are little more than nice old emblems which at one time may have had some significance, but in this modern world have no meaning outside the Lodge and not too much in it. They would be amazed at the practical applications of many of the symbols. The Great Seal of the United States, for instance, is described as follows: "Arms: paleways of 13 pieces argent and gules; a chief azure; the escutcheon on the breast of the American eagle displayed proper, holding in his dexter talon an olive branch and in his sinister a bundle of 13 arrows, and in his beak a scroll with the motto: E Pluribus Unum; Crest: a glory breaking through a cloud proper and surrounding 13 stars; Reverse: a pyramid unfinished In the zenith, an eye in a triangle, surrounded with a glory proper, over the eye the words, Annuit Caeptis. Underneath the pyramid, MDCCLXXVI and words, Novus Ordo Saeculorum." Without taking the time or space for translating this the eye, triangle and glory (rays of light) will be at once recognized as Masonic symbols; but since the pillars do not appear here we will dwell on this only to point out that many ancient symbols still have a practical significance and use. Pillars do appear in two state seals: the state seal of Georgia has upon it three columns, denominated "Wisdom, Justice and Moderation"; the state seal of Nevada has in its centre a temple supported by columns. While these and other such seals may have no symbolic significance unless as a representation of an ancient temple, it is at least indicative of the influence of architecture that the seal of the University of Arkansas has upon a central shield a representation of the three unnamed columns. The University of Washington also has a central shield upon its seal, within which is the facade of a temple supported by four columns, but these also are not named, for they merely represent the four columns of the original University of Washington Building. None of the seals of the various departments of the United States Government uses columns or pillars, but that of the Senate has upon it a bee hive which, we are Masonically informed, "suggests the practice of that virtue to all created beings" presumably including Senators. Of the Grand Lodge seals within the several Grand Jurisdictions of the United States, four--Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana and Utah have the two pillars; each of which is surmounted by an arch resting upon the two pillars, and all, with the possible exception of that of Alabama, represented as resting upon a porch or an entrance. Seventeen of the Grand Lodge seals have columns as prominent features, most of them surmounted with "chapiters" of some description, and seven of them with globes. These are all twin columns, as Jachin and Boaz, excepting that of Washington. The seal of

the Grand Lodge of Washington has upon it two ovals, side by side; that on the right hand contains the "Mosaic Pavement," the three pillars--Wisdom, Strength and Beauty--and the sun, moon, stars and blazing comet. The seal of the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin has three columns on the right hand side and the two on the left.

One place where a Masonic emblem is seen every day by practically everyone over much of the world is in the "dollar sign." The dollar sign is usually made with two vertical marks crossed with the letter "S"; actually, it consists of two posts, or pillars, entwined with a wreath or scroll. This was the coat of arms of the Duke of Cadiz who, in the sixteenth century, had it imprinted on the "Spanish dollar" or eight-real piece. This coin was, on the reverse side, divided into eight parts, signifying that its value was eight reals. The early Americans called these divisions "bits," and thus four bits became a half dollar in value. The dollar originated in Joachimstad, Bohemia, the site of extensive silver mines, where it became known as the Joachimstadthaler, which was shortened to thaler. In other countries it became taler, or daler. It was finally Americanized to dollar. Because it was rigidly controlled as to weight and fineness, it came to have a circulation far beyond Bohemia, and in each country it received an imprint significant to that country, but its value never varied. It was so much more convenient than the British sovereign for purposes of trade and exchange that the British West India Company adopted it as its medium of exchange. Cadiz was at that time the money capital of the world, and the "Spanish dollar" or "piece-of-eight" was in current use in all Spanish colonies. In the United States, the Coinage Act of 1792 established the dollar as the standard of American currency, making it "of the value of a Spanish milled dollar the same as is now current," but using a new imprint upon it. The Spanish dollar was, however, so well known and widely used that the coat of arms of the Duke of Cadiz is still used as the "dollar sign." Curiously, the "dollar sign" is not, and never has been, an official designation for this or any other currency. In Masonic legend the two pillars have many meanings, but they will have served a most useful purpose if, whenever a Brother sees them in the "dollar

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sign," he is reminded that it was between two such pillars that he entered upon a new way of life.

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