I wish each of you the very best and I hope this copy of the Guardian is helpful to you. I am providing you the names of a few authors who have published a few books I think you will enjoy reading. They are Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh who wrote the Temple and the Lodge. Joseph Campbell wrote the Inner Reaches of Outer Space and Metaphor as Myth and Religion. Finally J.C. Found wrote the Pathway to Bliss.
The Origin of the Triple Tau
And it’s Relation to Other Symbols

A Paper By

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ONE OF THE most intriguing of the minor mysteries of Masonry is the origin of the Triple Tau (fig. 1*); and the most contradictory theories astonish, startle and confuse the student. It seems extraordinary that so many conflicting views can be held on so apparently simple a subject.

The "Domatic" English Royal Arch ritual proclaims the Triple Tau to be its supreme symbol. It figures on the 'central banner and on the west side of the altar. It is called the Triune Essence of Deity; but later, when the companion receives his jewel, he must surely note that its central design is not the triple tau, but two interlaced triangles (fig. 2), as is also true on that of the Royal Arch of Scotland. The triple tau does indeed appear on his jewel, but only as a small pendant, like an after-thought. Then again, the English Grand Chapter certificate does not show the triple tau, and on the jewels of Supreme and Provincial Grand Officers it appears only on those of Standard Bearer and Registrar. The certificate of the Scottish Royal Arch displays three interlaced triangles (fig. 3). Another example of these in Masonic use is shown in fig. 58.

For fifteen years I have searched for the secret of the triple tau and have read everything available dealing with it. I found, for example, a picture of the oldest known Royal Arch apron (circa 1760), but the central design is a triangle within two circles (fig. 4). I found a copy of the 1818 certificate of Admiral Sir Sidney Smith, issued by Phoenix Chapter of Paris, which did not show the triple tau; and I found a print of the 1811 charter of Lennox Chapter No. 271, Brighthelmstone (Brighton) with four separate triangles and a T. H. monogram (fig. 5) bracketed with the signatures. This
seemed an important clue; and I found it again on the P.Z. jewel of Authors Chapter, London (w. II:432t).

In 1808 Charles Binet, Jr., was given a Royal Arch certificate by Chapter of Fortitude, Jersey. On- this certificate the principal design is a hexagon (fig. 2) enclosing the letter G of craft Masonry. The Royal Arch Tracing Board, drawn by Brother Harris (circa 1840) and illustrated in Dr. Oliver's "The Origin of; the Royal Arch:" displays, not the triple tau, but a hexagon enclosing a sun in splendor.

Dr. Oliver claims that the triple tau originated with Christianity (i, 153). Another writer challenges its appearance before 1820 (f, XXI: 1127- We have, therefore, an extensive problem.

The Irish Royal Arch certificate of Brother Archibald Kyle, dated June 20, 1818, has three interlaced triangles (fig. 3) but no tau. Today, however, it figures insignificantly on Irish and Scotch Royal Arch jewels (yy, 301); but it is unknown in Irish and Scotch rituals (f, XXI: 180). In an old Irish ritual the T.H. symbol is described as "the initials of the Architect" (f, XII:47).

"So far as I can discover, the triple tau is not used in Continental Masonry. In the U. S. A. the Royal- Arch prefers the hexagon (fig. 2). The Arms of the "Ancients" were first adopted as the Royal Arch central banner with the circle and triangle as favored symbols (mm, II: 27 and yy, 26). In American Royal Arch rituals the triple tau does not appear before 1850. The cover of the Boston Freemasons' Monthly Magazine of 1860 is headed with Royal Arch figures and banners, but the central banner is missing. By 1876, however, the triple tau was well established in English Royal Arch Masonry (ll).

Did the triple tau come into the Royal Arch from Craft Masonry? These suggestions have been made: (a) It could represent the three r ... s (ggg, 8). (b) It has reference to the Master and his Wardens (fig. 12). (c) Another writer says it represents the three Great Lights. (d) Several old members of the Rose and Crown Lodge, Sheffield, affixed it to their signatures several years earlier than the establishment of a Royal Arch chapter, possibly as the mark of an Installed Master (a, XXXIX:48). Does it signify the completion of the three degrees of Craft Masonry? Did it develop from the symbols on the apron of an Installed Master, and are they taus, levels, or footing-stones (fig. 13)? Or is it a combination of squares, levels and plumbs (fig. 15). Or did it have the common-place origin of the "T.H." signature of Thomas Harper, Deputy Grand Master of the "Ancients" and Masonic jewelers (a, LVII: 126)?

Initials formed into monograms easily develop into symbols. In the seventeenth century the Jesuits built a church to St. Ignacio in Misiones, Argentina, and placed on it the Ave Maria monogram (fig. 30).

Did the triple, tau come into the Royal Arch from Christianity? Does it represent the Trinity, H for Jehovah and T for Jesus? Or does it represent the three crosses on Mount Cavalry, as pictured in the fourteenth degree (m, 248) (fig. 16)? Was it invented to replace the I.H.S. (fig. 17) in de-Christianized Masonry? Is it the upper part of a Cross Potent (fig. 18) or is it an emblem of the K.H.S. and St. John? A Roman Catholic lady told me that the triple tau reminded her of the three principal altars of a church! In heraldry the common practice of triplicating the objects on a shield of arms is said to have originated as homage to the Trinity, and the three-fold tau might have developed in a similar manner. Compare the ancient hymn, "St. Patrick's Breastplate":

"I bind unto myself the name, The strong name of the Trinity."

The holy Royal Arch is to the majority of its Christian members a Trinitarian degree. Was the triple tau an early Christian symbol of the Great I Am?

Oliver tells the story of a working mason who, on seeing a triple tau, recognized it as a 'Holy Jesus:' an operative name for the I.R.S. (l, 163). One of the most extraordinary Christian-Triple Tau-I.H.S. theories is that they, represent T.I.H.-T for the cross, and I.H. for the first two letters of the Greek word for Jesus. A similar theory holds that T.I.H. is taken from the initials of Greek numerals, the Greek word for three beginning with a tau. See Ambrose, in "De Fide" (l, 18).

Another, line of research is from the Hebrew tau. We might take the simple tau (fig. 19), compare it with, the Egyptian ankh (crux ansata, key of life) (fig. 20), then look to the north at the Hammer of Thor (fig. 21), return to Egypt to find the tau called a St. Anthony's Cross,' and see the connection of the tau and the ankh with that most noble of symbols, the Chi-Rho (fig. 22). The Hebrew letter shin is also a candidate for triple tau honors (fig. 23), as also the Amharic sha (fig. 24).

In various Mark and Royal Arch rituals we find many other suggestions, such as the monogram of Hiram Abiff (fig. 25). There is Hidden Treasure, from the same symbol. We have three small

For this and subsequent references see List of References at conclusion of paper.
trying squares \((gg, 126, 129)\), or three small squares \((vv, 260)\), a combined jewel of Past Masters \((vv, 308)\), or of the three ancient Grand Masters \((u, 110)\), or their united mark \((0, 61)\). There is a projection of the five regular Platonic bodies, and there are the first two letters of the phrase, T.T.A.L.G.M.H., Templum Hierosolyma, the Temple at Jerusalem, and H.T. for Holy Temple.

The rise of the Royal Arch degree and its working in Chapters instead of in Craft Lodges, gave the opportunity for the introduction of a special Royal Arch symbol. The Craft had the letter G and the Square and Compasses; the Mark had the Keystone; the Knights’ Templar used the letter E on the 1794 "Chichester certificate of Thomas Dunckerley"; the Royal Arch needed a symbol of its own. Then, too, the Banner of the "Ancients" was no longer suitable in the United Royal Arch after 1813. The vital question seems to be, is the triple tau an ancient symbol, like the triangle, the hexagon, the swastika \((\text{fig. 6})\) or the pentagram \((\text{fig. 7})\); or is it a comparatively modern innovation or adaptation?

The triangle has been called the most perfect of all geometrical figures. It was adopted, by all the ancient mysteries as a symbol of Truth or Deity \((u, 129)\). To the Hebrew the triangle with a "jod" in the center \((\text{fig. 9})\) represented Jehovah, being an abbreviated form of the Name of Ten Letters. To the Christian the triangle was an emblem of the Trinity. There is a good example of this in the Viborg Cathedral of Denmark. The supreme triangle is, of course, the Great Pyramid. The jewel of the United Service Chapter No. 101 in Egypt, displaying pyramids surmounting a triangle, is excellent symbolism. Figures of Buddha are often triangular in outline. The Compasses, set at sixty degrees on the Bible of a Craft Lodge, allude to the triangle.

Some writers prefer the triangle to the tau as the symbol of the Royal Arch, but their value in angles is the same, as also the value of angles in the triple tau is equal to those in fig. 10. Perhaps the best Masonic exemplification of the triangle is in the degree of Royal Arch Mariners. The tau is contained in the triangle, as demonstrated in fig. 11.

The hexagon, or hexalpha, is an ancient and world-known symbol. We find it in Egypt, India, and Assyria, Mexico. To the Hebrews it was Magen David (Shield of David); it was the ensoph of the Chaldeans, and a sacred symbol of the Moslems; we find it in the Catacombs \((c, 181)\), on a Canaanite fortress built before 800 B.G. \((f, \text{XXII: 14})\), on sixth century Anglo-Saxon fibulae unearthed in the London area, on the Roman silver found at Mildenhall in 1946. It was a symbol of old Roman Colleges. As a Mason mark we find it on the Taj Mahal; it is a badge of Nigeria and also of the new Jewish nation. Most snow crystals are hexagonal, but the - hexagon pre-dated the microscope; some flower forms are hexagonal, and inevitably someone, some time, engraved it to use as a symbol. It is often seen in Christian churches, and is used by Operative Masons.

The swastika is also a symbol used by operatives. We may call it four "gammas," or a cross with curved arms. It is called "gammadion" or "fylfot" and is very ancient, very wide-spread and significant. It is commonly thought to represent the four directions, or, the sun on its way through the heavens.

The pentagram or pentalpha is sometimes called Solomon's Seal, being confused with the hexagon. Gilbert K. Chesterton wrote:

"We have set the seal of Solomon
On all things under sun."

It, was a favorite with Pythagoras, an ancient and sacred symbol. Speculative Masonry took it from the Operatives and made it the symbol of the Five Points of Fellowship. No astrologer's outfit was complete without it. We find it today in Russia and in Morocco. It is called the signal of Hiram Abiff, and it is the jewel of the Scottish Excellent Master.

Can the triple tau be compared with these, venerable symbols: triangle, hexagon, swastika, and pentagram?

Symbols migrate and often change their meanings with travel. The swastika may have had a very different meaning to a North American Indian, a Hindu, a Viking. Whether it originated in one place or several places, we do not know; similar or, identical designs might have been invented independently by different people in different countries. Then, too, symbols often changed their meanings, or took on additional meanings, with the years. New teachers gave them different interpretations, and missionaries adapt or convert them to the new religion. A symbol may be lost and recovered after long oblivion and given a new meaning. In study of symbolism dogmatism is ridiculous.

The ancient symbolist might have found inspiration in the geometrical outlines of certain flowers, in the markings of animals, in the disc of the sun. The starfish found its way into heraldry as a star, and the tau has been seen on the backs of beetles; but I think that the triangle, at any rate, must have been invented----accidentally or of set purpose.
As an example of how soon the meaning of symbols may be lost there is the case of a Lodge room decorated with Masonic symbols in 1804 at Hall's Tavern, Cheshire, Massachusetts. When recently found under five layers of wallpaper, one symbol baffled all who saw it (New Mexico Freemon, September, 1946.) But, on the other hand, symbolic customs often survive long after their meaning is forgotten. A Greek peasant, placing a 10,000 drachma note on the breast of the dead, may never have heard of Charon, the grim ferryman, carrying his fare over the Styx. A symbol, like a word, may rise in the world of interpretation or it may sink into foolishness.

Another difficulty with symbolism is that a meaning is sometimes imagined where none is intended. The West London Observer, founded in 1855, was marked with T.H. and interlaced triangles, but there was no Royal Arch reference. It meant only Henry Thompson and his trade mark (f., XXII: 77.) Was Dickens laughing at Freemasonry when he wrote Pickwick Papers? The year was 1836 when Dr. Oliver received his doctorate and two years after the Royal Arch lectures were written. You remember the mysterious Dickens inscription: "BILST UM PSHI S.M. ARK," which turned out to be "BILL STUMPS HIS MARK." Another illustration of the danger of too much imagination is that of a tavern called "The Square" at New Windsor, where James Hamilton was Master of Little Britain Lodge No.6. The square, however, was not Masonic; it only meant "Washington Square" (aa. IV:222).

The eighteenth century Freemason loved to decorate his personal and household effects with the symbols of the Craft—not merely those well known today, such as squares, compasses, levels and plumbs, but with such varied, and at times far-fetched, designs as I have collected into the following list. Note that the triple tau does not appear.

| triangles | pentalphas |
| Euclidian propositions | doves |
| pillars | all-seeing eyes |
| crowns | mercuries |
| rainbows | trowels |
| scrolls | Bibles |
| .. chains | swords |
| fish | lams |
| scylthes | mauls |
| letter G | Father Time |
| baskets of fruit | arrows |
| crosses | urns |
| knots | pendul ashars |
| jugs and pitchers | lyres |
| obelisks | dormers |

There was even a "machine for making a triangle:' and there were the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Many of these symbols are practically unknown today in Masonic Circles. Can it be doubted that if the triple tau had been known in the eighteenth century it would have been added to the treasures of these old collectors of Masonic symbols?

I have also a collection of Mason Marks from England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Norway, Italy, Persia, India, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, China and Japan. But I have yet to find the triple tau on any ancient Masonic; it only meant "Washington Square" (aa. IV:222). 

The Eighteenth Century Freemason caused Masonic symbols to be depicted not only on Masonic regalia, aprons, collars, jewels, Lodge furniture, chairs, firing glasses, jugs, punchbowls, goblets, beer-mugs, alms-dishes, and decanters, but also on "such personal and household articles as:

| spice boxes | book bindings |
| sundials | walking sticks |
| watches | tobacco boxes and jars |
| razors | checks and jokers |
| trivets | fire backs |
| swords and sheaths | seals |
| horns | pictures |
| tea caddies | lottery boxes |
| coconut shells | porcelain figures |
| china trays | watch papers |
| buttons | fire arms |
| snuff boxes | jewel cases' handkerchiefs |
| knives | horse brasses |
| | clocks |
| | tea services |
| | paper weights |
| | toodly ladies |
| | woolwork panels |
| | powder flasks |
| | mirrors |
| | plaques |
| | barometers |
| | iron stands |
| | match boxes |
| | pipes and pipe racks |
Masonic museums and collectors have thousands of these engraved objects but the triple tau is missing on practically all of them.

Hutchinson’s *Spirit of Masonry* (1815) has a frontispiece with thirty emblems, but no triple tau. The Grand Lodge of New South Wales has an old apron with fifty Masonic symbols, but no triple tau (a, XXXVIII: 221; also see f, V: 225). The Kirkwall Kilwinning Cloth (*Masonic Record*, Nov. 1923, p: 1177) has more than a score of Masonic designs, but no triple tau.

On all of these articles and amidst all these symbols the triple tau is almost entirely absent, and we may fairly ask: If the triple tau is ancient, as the triangle, swastika, pentalpha and hexagon are ancient, why is it so difficult to find? There are some old examples, but they are painfully few, and some of them are suspect. Dr. Oliver claimed to have found the triple tau on a Royal Arch tracing board dated 1725, but, though charming and prolific, the imaginative Doctor is not nowadays considered reliable. Mackenzie has another R.A. tracing board “obviously engraved during the lifetime of Dermott” who died in 1791, and this has a triple tau within a triangle. Hughan writes of a jewel with the triple tau, dated 1797 (f, XII: 89). There is a triple tau mark on the battlements of Coolridge-on-Tyne bridge (a, IV: 243); but the top line may be a later addition. Durham Masonic Museum has an old water clock, dated 1701, made by T. Barton of Newcastle, marked with a triple tau within a hexagon,—but was it put on when the clock was made? Another triple tau within a hexagon is on a brass sundial bearing the date 1749, and Charles Merry, London, as the maker’s name; but was the emblem added later? (*Masonic Record*, April, 1925.) A few triple taus have been found on old aprons, but it is even now a common practice to add new emblems to old aprons. Grand Lodge Museum, London, has two aprons dated 1770, with traces of what may have been triple taus, and one of 1790 with a triple tau in gilt sequins.

Of course the argument from negative evidence must be handled with great care. Gloves have often been described as comparatively modern, yet one was found in Tutankhamen’s tomb (1400 B.C.). It was taken for granted that the wheel was unknown in ancient America, yet a child’s toy with wheels was found in 1946 in Mexico by Dr. Gordon F. Ekholm, who declared it to be pre-conquest. Historians are constantly lamenting the paucity of early information. The 1947 edition of the *Anuario Ponfifico* even omitted two Popes as non-existent, whose names had previously figured on official lists.

The only possible argument I could imagine for the eighteenth century absence of the triple tau would be that it might have been considered too sacred to engrave. It is certainly difficult to accept the theory of the antiquity of the triple tau when it was practically unknown in the eighteenth century. Masonic jewelers and furnishers were none too particular; Christian symbols were employed long after English speculative Freemasonry ceased to be definitely Christian; any kind of symbol was used for which the slightest excuse could be thought of; but the triple tau is so seldom met with that its few appearances are suspect.

My own suggestion is that the triple tau was introduced into the Royal Arch between 1817 and 1834, and possibly about 1833 (f, XXIX: 26).

The United Grand Chapter of England was inaugurated in 1817, and between that year and 1822 new warrants were issued to replace the old. Revised ritual and lectures were approved in 1834 (f, XXIX: 26). Two who had much to do with this revision were Brother Aarons (bb, 53); blind Master of Lodge of Israel, and the Rev. G. A. Browne, whose alterations were said to have been made at the request of the Duke of Sussex (cc, 416). In any case our present Royal Arch ritual is probably very different from that adopted at the Union of 1813 (t; 31).'

The Chapter of Promulgation finished its work in 1835 (nn, 27), and Anglican Parson Browne and the Master of a Hebrew Lodge gave us a ritual and ceremony which some think Jewish and others think Christian. Ward votes for the Jews (j, 11); Mackenzie and Holmes-Dallimore for the Christians (t, 16 and ii, 63); the Jews have the banners, ensigns and traditional history; the Christians have the allegorical interpretation.

There is no reference to the triple tau in Royal Arch Regulations of 1796 (f, XXIX: 25). In 1817 T over BY is given (not old-face type, but Doric or straight type, but still T over BY. But Richard Carlisle (1790-1843) refers to the triple tau in his “exposure” of 1825 (PP, 97, 98). By 1831 we find it on a jewel presented by Mount Zion Chapter and, in 1841, on the Royal Arch apron of the Earl of Zetland. By 1848 it makes its appearance in Royal Arch regulations, Dr. Oliver having explained its signification a year earlier. Old rituals used to say “T.H.” or Triple Tau,” but by 1870 it becomes ”Triple Tau” or ”letter T” (kk, 228), and ”mysterious
So now let us deal with the theories of the triple tau as a keystone, as derived from the Craft, as a Hebrew symbol, as a development from Ankh and Hammer, as a Christian cross symbol, and as I.H.S.

Is the tau an ancient keystone? This view was sustained by Brother E. J. Eaton at Sydney in 1920 (II, VII: 65). He described the tau as "the ancient keystone seen in the arches of very ancient temples, as distinct from the wedge keystone of a later period." In 1993, shortly after the author's death, an article supporting this theory appeared from the pen of Brother H. J. Whymper (VI: 92), and referred to the tau-keystones of Kashmir, dating from B.C. to the tenth century. I have also read of one in Java.

This theory would ally the Royal Arch to the Mark degree. A coincidence of the tau-keystone theory is the set of stories forming the symbolic catenary arch in our Royal Arch chapters. The seven stones bear the letters F-I-A-T-L-U-X, so that the center stone of the seven, the keystone, is marked with a T (fig. 66).

There is a widespread view that the triple tau is in some Way derived from the symbols on the apron of an installed Master. It seems reasonable that as the Royal Arch completes the third degree; its symbol should connect with, collect and combine those of degrees one to three. It is true that a triple tau can be made of the three apron symbols; but what do these apron symbols represent? We have already noted a number of suggestions: the three gavels, the three r ... s, a triple Lewis, the three Great Lights.

Another suggestion is that each symbol is composed of two squares (fig. 14). On June 26, 1725, the Grand Lodge of Ireland sat at a "mystical table" made in form to represent two mason's squares' joined (III, XXIII: 126 and 128). The symbol could also be a combination of the working tools (fig. 1S) (II, VII:2), but the more usual theories are that the three symbols on the apron of an English Installed Master represent footing-stones, levels, or tauts. A "footing" (fig. 13) is a well known building word, operatively described as "a projecting course of stone without the naked superincumbent part, which is laid in order to rest the wall firmly on its base" (WW, 328). The laying of the footings was superintended by the Operative sixth-degree square masons—corresponding to our Past Masters. An objection to the theory that the apron symbols are footing-stones is that they did not appear on our aprons until about 1796 (II, VII: 50), which is a late date for an operative-speculative transition.

The apron symbols may be levels. It has been noted that a level signifies judgment (II, VII: 61), a necessary quality for the Master of a Lodge; but this view has found little support. It has also been said that levels were put on the aprons because they resembled tauts.

The apron symbols are probably tauts, but 'You may ask, Why invert them? The direction, however, of a symbol is immaterial, and the tauts may have been inverted for convenience or aesthetics. The point is that, whatever, the symbols on the apron of an Installed Master represent, they can be combined to make a triple tau.

Now let us go back to the Hebrew tau, or T. The modern Hebrew tau is as fig. 31. Our pronunciation comes from the Greek letter; the Hebrew is tov or tav. A modern Hebrew tau forms part of the coat-of-arms of Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge. The ancient form of the tau was a T or a cross.

In the ancient Phoenician alphabet and on the coin of the Maccabees the cross form was used (u, 110). When the Moabite Stone was discovered in 1868 it was seen that the Hebrews of the time of Ezekiel and Solomon knew this cross-tau, but the T form was more usual, and this is how we shall refer to it in this paper.

Obviously such simple figures as T's and crosses would be used by primitive peoples for many purposes, so the tau came to mean a sign, a mark, a cross. When we say, "Put a cross against it," the old Hebrew would say, "mark it with a tau." We are told that it was used for marking camels, cattle, and captives, though how such a common mark could distinguish ownership we fail to see. Many modern signatures are little better than marks, and the old form of signing with a cross would, in many cases; be just as satisfactory. Children and lovers who end their letters

The Vulgate renders Ezekiel, IX: 4, "Mark the foreheads with a tau." Calmet (circa 1700) wrote that Job, XXXI: 35 should read, "Behold, here is my tau." David, feigning madness and scrabbling on the doors of the gate, made marks or tauts. Was the tau stamped on the forehead of Cain, and marked on the lintels of the Israelites' houses in Egypt?

Our letter T is derived from the Greek tau, which corresponds with the Hebrew. The Greeks took the T from the Hebrews and
the Romans copied it. Small letters came into general use in the twelfth century, and we found ourselves crossing a t (fig. 35), and making the sign of the Cross out of a tau.

The tau is the last letter of the Hebrew twenty-two-letter alphabet; thus "Alpha and Omega" corresponds in Hebrew to "Aleph and Tau," and various fanciful comments have been made. Thus Shelley wrote in Peacock (August, 1819), "Social enjoyment is the alpha and omega of existence."

The Hebrews valued the tau as a symbol of Tosh (the Law). It was widely venerated in the ancient world; it has been found in Nimrod ruins, in old Mexican temples, in the remains of ancient India—on the breasts of Egyptian mummies, and was painted on the foreheads of medicine men. Davies says in his Celtic Researches that the Gallicum tau was a symbol of the supreme God of the Druids. As a similar emblem, it suggests the ankh of Egypt. As an emblem of power, it suggests the Hammer of Thor.

In the Amharic alphabet the letter sha (fig. 24) is not unlike a triple tau (v. 23), but the Hebrew letter shin has been proposed as a triple tau origin for several mystical reasons.

As the initial of Shem Hamphoreth (the unutterable name) and also of El Shaddai, one of the substitute names of Jehovah, the Jews engraved the "shin" on their phylacteries. The Shaddai has a Royal Arch reference, for it is used by operative Masons who place a "shin" in the center of their swastika symbol (w. II: 410). We find it also on the cross of the eighteenth degree. The Scottish Arch places a "shin" on the side of the altar as the initial of Solomon (Shelomoh). The "shin" is called "The Teeth." The three teeth are thought to resemble taus, and so may be thought to resemble a compound or triple tau.

Half a 'century ago the only lady contributor to A.Q.C. (v, 84) wrote: "In the mythology of the North, the tau was held to symbolize Mjolmir, the formidable cross-shaped Hammer of Thor."

The "Thorshammer," figured as No. 21, is copied from a small silver ornament in Copenhagen Museum. Like the tau and the Christian cross, the Hammer of Thor was evidently used as a talisman. Vikings made the sign of the hammer over their drinking cups (a. LXII: 63), possibly as a charm against poison, reminding us of some signs of the cross which have more than a suggestion of incantation, as, for instance, the story of Saint Nicholas making a sign and bringing to life a brace of roasted partridges!

Saint Patrick invoked the "Strong Name of the Trinity" in much the same way as Norsemen invoked Thor; and as the Jews, "The King Name." Danes today are named Thor; Thorvaldsen, famous Danish sculptor, bears a Thor surname; we commemorate Thor every Thursday of our lives, as it is "Thor's-day. The Soviet hammer (though some object) probably was inspired by Thor, who with his irresistible hammer shattered mountains, slew giants, and even challenged the earth-encircling serpent, Medgard. As the Northern tau equivalent, Thor's Hammer has a place in the study of triple tau origins.

According to Ward, hammer, gavel, and tau were originally the same, signifying God, power or authority: It is easy to go on to the gavels of the Master and Wardens, which, combined, may be said to represent a triple tau. Dr. Oliver associated Thor's Hammer with the ankh (x, 295). Others associate it with the swastika, and others remind us that our Grand Master was killed with the blow of a heavy maul.

We have said that the T-shaped tau of Jewry was a well known sign of life. Now we turn to the famous Ankh of Egypt, key of life, "Crux Ansata," handled cross. Old Egypt was the home of symbolism. Even our two pillars are to represent Osiris (strength) and Isis (establishment).

Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson suggests that the original of the ankh was a nilometer, and that its presentation to an Egyptian King at his coronation signified the bestowal of supreme power that of regulating the life-giving waters of the Nile.

The early Christians of Egypt preferred the ankh or tau to the more usual form of the cross, and the T cross came to be known as the Egyptian cross, or the cross of St. Anthony. Anthony of Thebes, the Egyptian saint of the famous temptations (circa 251355), is said to have had it embroidered on his cope. Athanasius was Anthony's biographer and Constantine was his friend. It is curious that the heraldic tau (fig. 36) follows the lines of the ankh and of the Hammer of Thor.

The ankh had its place in Masonry. It figures on the jewels of the twenty-fifth degree and in the American ceremony of the eighteenth; is called the "Keystone of the Temple" and is a symbol of the occult. Author's Lodge incorporated it in its Past Master's jewel, and the Philatethes Society in its badge. It was carried over into Christianity and worn by Italian ecclesiastics as late as 1509 (g, 102). Mr. H. G. Wells titles his book on the Roman Catholic
Cases occur where the T is placed under the H, as in fig. 25. There can be little doubt that the T.H. sign developed into our present triple tau.

The "printer's devil" is blamed for much, not excepting the triple tau. It is suggested by some that the T and H were joined in error or for convenience and that, when straight Roman style was employed instead of Old Style (with serifs), the resemblance of the figure to three T-shaped taus was too good to be missed by imaginative ritual-makers. There is, of course, nothing wrong in a good symbol having an accidental origin; neither does it mean that we should not moralize on the triple tau because we may not believe in its antiquity.

Let us now turn to the Christian theories of the triple tau the principal of which are its descent from the ancient Hebrew tau through the ankh and St. Anthony's Cross, its possible descent from the Chi Rho and its marked resemblance to the I.H.S. First we must explain how the figure T can be called a cross, because, strictly speaking, the noun "cross" requires an adjective, its simple meaning being stake or tree. The Greek New Testament word for 'cross is stauros (a tree, pole or pile). The Roman patibulary crosses generally listed are crux simplex (a simple stake), crux commissa (St. Anthony's Cross), crux decussata (a saltire or St. Andrew's Cross, fig. 32) and crux immissa or capitata (fig. 34). The Greek Cross (fig. 33) is a Latin cross with the lower limb shortened to make the figure symmetrical. The fact that we commonly use the word "cross" to signify a symbol like a saltire or Greek cross is a tribute to the popularity of these two forms, but a fair question is: Was the cross of Cavalry a tau?

According to H. V. Morton the condemned, in many cases, carried the cross-bar only, not the complete cross, to the place of execution (aaa, 431). If t.1is were true, in the hundreds of crucifixions performed during the Roman occupation of Palestine, it is obvious that the cross-pieces could have been fastened to stakes in various forms because the callous, mercenary soldiers would be entirely indifferent to formal arrangements for the crucifixion of a condemned Jew.

Heralds, symbolists, artists and other imaginative persons are responsible for many beautiful crosses, but, stripped of its ecclesiastical mysticism, the cross of Cavalry was a gallows or gibbet. The cross is glorified; its primitive horror and rudeness are forgotten in gold and gems. We collect crosses as we collect coins and postage.
are shown in fig. 40. The general outline is a "Maltese" cross with a tau in each arm, the ends branching into Latin crosses. Another famous example is the Maya Crosses of Palenque, Guatemala (La Prensa, Buenos Aires, 21, IX:47). The cross outline is drawn in fig. 41, for the ancient peoples of Central America also venerated all forms of the cross (jjj, 238). The cross called "Maltese" is a Phoenician symbol and was found cut in Malta rock (g, 42). We may safely say that pre-Christian crosses are traceable all over the world (jjj, 237). Brother Fort Newton calls the cross "the supreme symbol of the race." It has ever been a sign of life and death, a mark of power, a defense and a charm. All crosses were primitive sun signs, but more especially a Greek cross within a circle (fig. 42). In the art of the Greek Church a St. Andrew's cross with a line drawn over it, the whole within a circle, was called "the seal of God" (fig. 43) (e, 112).

It is easy, of course, to see symbolic crosses where no symbolism was intended; figs. 44 and 45 are Anglo-Saxon and Norse runes for N and G, A and N, nothing more. Greek and tau crosses have been found on painted pebbles of the Neolithic age. Cross forms are too simple to be exclusively mystical and religious. There is some evidence that the instruments of Calvary suffering—crossthorns, spear, nails—did not easily pass into the veneration which they now generally hold. Hundreds of churches boast of pieces of the Cross. The Iron Cross of St. Stephen, guarded by the North Americans at Munich, is said, to be made partly from one of the nails. Notre Dame, Paris, treasures the Crown of Thorns and the Sacred Spear, "found" during the Crusades where its appearance gained a famous victory. It is exhibited each Good Friday at St. Peters. John Donne (1644) wrote of the Spear, that it had ever been called dirum macronem (dreadful weapon). Certain Gnostic sects literally "despised the cross," considering the means by which Jesus was slain a loathsome thing. In the High History of the Holy Grail (circa 1220) King Hermit says of a priest who "bringeth a great rod and beateth the cross" that "he who beat the cross did so because it had been the instrument of bitter pain and anguish ... " Even saintly George Herbert (1593-1633) called it a "strange and uncouth thing."

It was many years before the dreadful cross of Calvary suffering became the mystic rood of Christian theologians. Even the site of the crucifixion was not at first considered a sacred spot (aaa, 62). An ancient symbol of the crucifixion was not a cross, but Pilate
stated that our Grand Master once wore a silver' fish as an ornament (f, XXX:ll8).

Fish-god cults were popular in the ancient world. We remember Noah, Dagon of the Philistines, Krishna, who once appeared as a fish (g, 3), Buddha, who was called "The Fisherman," and Isis of Egypt, whose image in a Liverpool museum is surrounded by a fish (g, 1). Friday fish days are much older than Christianity."

An ancient fish symbol with Christian and Masonic connotations is the "Vesica Piscis" (fig. 39). This derived from the "Sistrum of Isis" (fig. 50) surmounting the tau, produced the ankh, a modern variation of which is the orb surmounted by the cross, a symbol of sovereignty (g, 47). The Episcopal mitre is reminiscent of the "Vesica Piscis." A Bishop may be said to be "clothed like a fish." An opinion of some writers is that the "Vesica Piscis," is the key to the Gothic arch and vaulting, of which the inverted arches at Wells Cathedral are good examples (circa 1340). We often use the "Vesica Piscis" symbol in Masonry, for Ladies Charity badges, the seals, of Grand Lodges (e.g., Quebec) and badges of Provincial Priors of Knights Templar. Figures of saints, particularly female saints, are often enclosed in the "Vesica Piscis" and it is often seen over the doors of the west porches of churches.

What transpired to turn the dreadful cross into the "venerable and truly precious rood" of the Emperor Justinian (527-565) of the sixth century? Did Christianity capitalize the crosses of antiquity, the tau, the ankh and the Hammer of Thor? I see no wrong in Christian adaptations of ancient symbols; in fact, I see a good deal of wisdom. Temples became churches, gods became saints. In Cuzco an altar stands over the spot where the emblem of the sun-god was guarded by the high priests. The Virgin is often pictured, crowned with the sun and with the moon under her feet. Constantine recommended Sunday as the weekly Christian festival, calling it the "venerable day of the sun" (l,204). Greek churches frequently show a cross above a crescent (g, 14).

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The story of St. Helena is told in the Degree of Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. The badge of the degree is a cross potent (fig. 59), which is also prominently used in the thirty-three degree system. Potent is an old word for crutch, hence the term "crutch-cross." It is easy to see that the cross potent is composed of four taus and we have already presented a theory that the triple tau might be a delimitation of it. The cross potent of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre combines the tau with the Christian cross (jj, 42). The diminution of a cross is a well-known heraldic device; the half-brethren of the Teutonic Knights were permitted to wear a half-cross and the Donates of the Papal Order of St. John wear three limbs of a Maltese cross which becomes a triple tau. The demi-badge of the Serjens of Sir Robert Peats' revival of the Order of St. John, in England (j), was a Maltese tau (fig. 60).

As a foot-note to the subjects of Constantine's "Vision" and his Mother's "Invention" to illustrate the manner in which symbols sometimes develop, tradition tells us that when the true cross was found, the footrest was displaced, as shown in fig. 61. This form was adopted by the "Raskolniks" (Russian "dissenters") and is widely used in Russia to this day. The crooked foot-rest gave rise to the tradition that Jesus was lame and, to support it, the words of the prophecy "He bares our infirmities" were produced.

The connection between the Chi Rho and the Triple Tau is that it is often said to have developed from the ankh and the tau and that it is connected with the I.H.S., with which I shall now deal.

We get the Chi Rho from the Vision of Constantine. We are told that a luminous cross appeared in the sky in broad daylight with the Greek words (fig. 5) for "In Hoc Vinces" (in this conquer) and that, on the following day, Constantine won the decisive battle of Saxa Rubra by the inspiration of the vision. After the vision the standard of Constantine was changed to the famous "Labarum," a golden crown enclosing the monogram "XP," the Chi Rho. The American degree of Red Cross of Constantine combines the Chi Rho with the I.H.S. as shown in fig. 52. Before dismissing the story of Constantine's vision as fable we might remind ourselves of the extraordinary Aurora Borealis of November, 1948, which stirred most of Europe (l, 202); the celestial phenomena seen in Chile in September, 1946; the well-known vision of Wyrmapper on his ascent of the Matterhorn in 1865 (Life, September, 1947); and the "fogbow," seen by Wyrmapper and his companions, sketched as fig. 53.

We have special interest in Constantine because he was born, also proclaimed, at York and his mother was British. In spite of his colored wigs and frequent vacillations he has been well called "the last great statesman of the ancient world" (r, 119) and his evidence deserves careful attention.

The cross symbol of Constantine's famous "Labarum was what we would call a St. Andrew's Cross combined with a letter P. The Chi (English X) and the Rho (English P) represent the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ (XPSTOS). Possibly the I, which also can be deduced from the Chi Rho monogram, is the initial of the Greek word for Jesus, Insius (fig. 56). The words of the vision are perpetuated in the communion bread of the Russian Church on which is inscribed "ICXC NIKA" (Jesus Christ conquers) (fig. 57) (k, 31).

Thirteen years after the vision of Constantine, his mother, St. Helena, went to Jerusalem as a result of a dream, excavated the site of Calvary and, after a year's work, found three crosses. The "Invention" [finding] of the Cross is commemorated on the third day of May. The feast of the "Exaltation of the Cross" is held on the fourteenth day of September because, on that day in the year 335 it was exposed to the veneration of the people.

An interesting list could be made of I.R.S. interpretations. It may represent the first three letters of the Greek word for Jesus (fig. 65). It may have been suggested by the Greek word for fish, Ichthys. It may be derived from the Latin Jesus Homium Salvator (Jesus, Savior of Men). It may be a reference to Constantine's vision In Hoc Signo (In this sign). It may mean In Hoc Salus (In this [sign] is Health [or Salvation]). It may be an abbreviated...
derivation from the Greek for Jesus Christ. To go farther afield, it
could be derived from the Greek inscription on altars of Bacchus,
"Iota, Eta, Sigma" (signifying "Yes" or "Savior") (PP, 100), and it has
even been said to represent "I Have Suffered" and "In His Steps."
Most Christian references and allusions were eliminated from
English Masonic rituals shortly after the union of 1813, but some old
Lodges considered this to be a mutilation, and used Christian prayers
and Christian figures of Faith, Hope and Charity for years afterward.
To such brethren, the Triple Tau would be considered a hidden-
Christian reference, for the view must not be lightly dismissed that the
Royal Arch might have been an attempt by conservative Masons to
strengthen the Christian tradition of Masonry. The Royal Arch Central
Banner of the Triple Tau, flanked by those of Lion, Man, Ox and
Eagle, would mean to them "Christ supported by the Four
Evangelists," while to Hebrew Masons it would mean "Jehovah amidst
Patriarchs and Prophets." The Triple Tau might well be a substitute for
the I.R.S. of other than Christian Masonry.

To sum up, we have noted many triple tau theories and ask, Can all
except one be wrong? May not the triple tau have grown from many
roots? We must agree that the same symbol has been invented at
different times, in different places, by different people and given
different meanings. The Russian Church makes the sign of the cross
with a sign we would call Masonic (k, 27), but why should one be a
_copy_ of the other? Any member of one of the great world religions
could enter a place of worship of any other religion and claim some of
the symbols as his own.

The Triple Tau may be modern, but it is not the less valuable. It may
be ancient. We should then venerate it the more. It may be both
ancient and modern, which: would only widen its appeal. Why not
agree that it probably has many meanings? Freemasonry is universal
and ageless, and it is right and proper that it should collect the wisdom
of every century and every land.

The Temple of Truth may be reached from many points and by
various ways. We may arrive early or late; early, with the singing of
birds, or late, with only the stars for guidance. We may arrive afoot or
by horse; afoot, in exhaustion and weariness; or by horse, gaily
swinging through the gate. Our road may be torturous or straight;
torturous, full of hesitations and uncertainties, or straight, with only
time and distance between us and our goal. The path may be rough or
smooth; rough ways, tending to occupy us with

our hurts, and smooth, tending to facilitate decisions. Narrow or
broad may be the road; narrow with little company or distractions,
broad with delaying gaieties and temptations. The galloping
horseman should not despise the plodding pedestrian. Who knows
who may tire the first, with no time to look over the hedge and
bandy sarcasm with those seeming to travel in wrong directions, nor
time to scorn the poor equipment of fellow travelers? We may see
the Temple from afar or despair in the Valleys of doubt. It is not an
easy task to arrive at Truth, but there is great pleasure in the finding.
Weariness will be all forgotten in the welcome, and satisfaction will
always reward the search.