

Temple Symbolism—Part One

THIS ARTICLE IS DEVOTED to a study of the symbolism in Mount Ecclesia's Healing Temple. *The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language* defines a symbol as something that represents something else by association, resemblance, or convention, especially a material object used to represent something invisible. Two examples would be the *rose* and *cross*. The cross has been a sacred symbol from earliest antiquity. The Egyptian hieroglyphic for the cross stood for life emanating from deity, the eternal life for which we all hope. Among other things, the rose is a symbol for the dawn. Together, the rose and cross represent the dawn of eternal life. This is an example of synthetic symbolism.

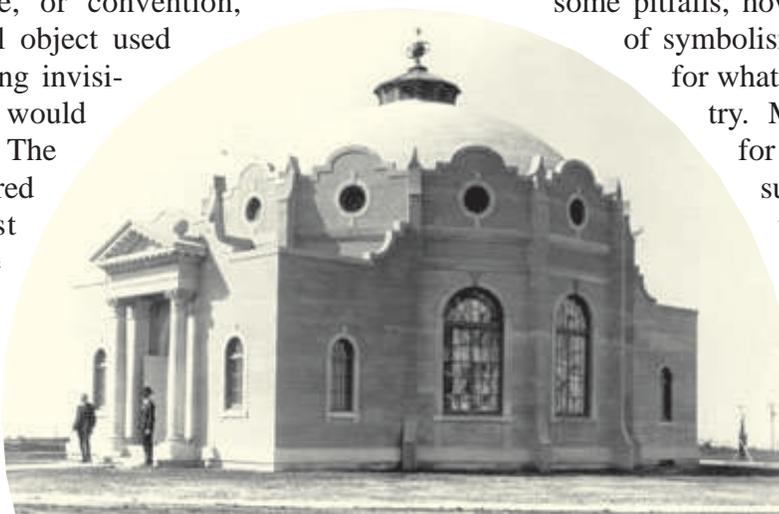
Symbolism is the earliest instrument of education, for it was and is the most efficient instrument of instruction. All religious expression is by symbolism. Religious language, as it applies to mental and spiritual phenomenon in action, must be symbolic, for how else can one describe God? Symbolic imagery may often give a more accurate expression to ideas than can words. Symbols may present an idea to the mental eye more vividly and truthfully than any other method of communication. Symbols, to be truly effective, must excite an

appropriate feeling, for it is through the heart that symbols speak and teach.

We must not be content to merely hear and read of the intriguing meanings of symbols, but we must in all truth study, interpret, and develop these symbols for our own understanding. There are

some pitfalls, however, along this path of symbolism. Taking the symbol for what it symbolizes is idolatry. Mistaking the symbol for the object signified is superstition. When we take our symbols as literal, then we shut our eyes to the spiritual light therein. When we translate our symbols to the trivial and the commonplace, then we have entered the realm of mediocrity, of the ordinary, in which there is little, if any, enlightenment.

With these cautions in mind, let us turn our attention to the Temple (Ecclesia) and symbolically place it on Mt. Ecclesia. Mt. Ecclesia is a symbol. *Ecclesia* itself has four meanings. It can be an assembly of people. History tells us that the old Athenians called their assemblies for effecting public good their *Ecclesiae*. The word can mean the congregation of a church. It may mean a church. It may mean a building. The word *mount* has many meanings. It means to ascend in the sense that we are considering it here—to rise or soar. The words *zenith*, *exalt*, and *sublime* also carry meanings suggested by the the word *mount*.



Ecclesia just after it was completed in late 1920, set on a promontory that commands a panoramic view of the ocean, valley, and mountains.

Symbolically then, Mt. Ecclesia can be either a high spiritual assembly, perhaps the sense in which Mr. Heindel used the term, or a sublime, spiritual or sacred area or place. Both terms are vibrant with spiritual power.

To visualize Mt. Ecclesia as Mr. Heindel first saw it, we must mentally remove all the buildings, roadways and paths, and all the trees, shrubbery, and flowers now growing on these upper grounds. For at that time only low semi-desert shrubs were scattered through this area. Only in the draws leading from the valley floor to the higher flat area was there, as now, heavy growths of vegetation. On the western slope at that time was a large area cultivated for market gardening. This came to be called the bean patch.

As Mr. Heindel viewed this high ground that he was to call Mt. Ecclesia, he saw that it lay in the shape of a great crescent, like a New Moon facing east. The higher or north point of the crescent he called Ecclesia point and designated this as the site of the Ecclesia, the Healing Temple of the Fellowship. On the lower or southern point of the crescent he placed the Founder's Cross. In this area were later added the illuminated Star and the Pro-Ecclesia. Just past the midpoint of this great crescent curved line, between the Pro-Ecclesia and the Temple grounds, the Healing Center was to be built later. Symbolically, we know that at the time of the New Moon, the Probationer grows closer to the spiritual heritage of the Fellowship through service. So then does this great crescent symbolically allude to the reason and the purpose why we are here—to humbly and selflessly work in the vineyard of the Christ, putting into practice the Fellowship's principles and precepts.

Today, as we stand at the most easterly portion of Ecclesia point and face West, we look directly at the eastern half of the Temple. We view its great dome surmounted by a cupola and above that by a golden globe and finally a cluster of lights. The beautiful symbolism expressed by these objects we shall review after we have examined another symbol found in the baldachino, the canopy over the Altar in the Sanctuary of the Temple. As our eyes descend from the Temple dome, they come to the portico—the east entrance of the Temple, which



Portion of the eastern facade of temple showing composite capitols, entablature, pediment framed by elaborate cornice, trinity symbol inscribed by "the eye of God," and the finial directly above right pilaster (behind right column).

consists of the entablature, the columns, and the first of three steps leading to the doorway of the Temple structure.

The entablature is that triangular-shaped structure with its beautiful components that is supported by two columns. Two mystical symbols are contained within the triangular surface (pediment) or face of the entablature. In its exact center is an equilateral triangle, denoting trinity. Within the triangle is the all-seeing eye, ever the symbol of the omnipresent Deity. The two columns, as in all sun temples, represent the sun's maximum declination to the north and the south of the equator at the summer and winter solstices. These columns stand for much more.

In architecture there are five orders of columns. Most experts cite only three, known as the Grecian orders. The Doric has simple capitols and plain shafts. Its keyword is strength. Symbolically this column portrays the masculine principle. The Ionic column has decorative capitols and slender shafts. Its keyword is beauty. Symbolically it portrays the feminine principle. The Corinthian column has

bell-shaped capitols garlanded with acanthus leaves, which



Stylized capitol of south pilaster with double Saturn symbols, signifying the discipline aspect of Aquarian service.

denote immortality. This column has slender, fluted shafts. Its keyword is balance. Symbolically it portrays the perfect blending of the masculine and feminine principles in unity.

There are two Roman orders of columns, the Tuscan, which is a direct copy of the Doric, and the composite, which is similar to the Corinthian column, with the exception that its capitol has four volutes, or spiral scrolls, of the Ionic order placed at its top and at right angles to one another. Thus the appearance of this column is the same when viewed from any one of the four cardinal positions. Symbolically, this column is said to represent the everlasting truth of eternity by the balanced union of the masculine and feminine principles.

The two columns of the Ecclesia are a combination of the order of columns. Their shafts are plain, giving a general appearance of strength and permanence. The capitols are

shaped like inverted bells encircled by replicas of acanthus leaves, which are separated by four deep-centered flowers of five petals each. Four volutes at right angles are displayed at the top of the capitols. Again we are reminded that in some temple symbolism, if we have an understanding of the role of columns, we will have the key to understanding the spiritual laws of the universe. Symbolically, the two columns, representing spiritualized mankind, balanced and perfected, are joined by the entablature, representing Deity. Here is an architectural representation of the union of God and man. Here is a Sun Temple dedicated to a New Age which leads to the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

In ancient temples and in all modern Masonic temples, the two



Capitol displaying four volutes, four flowers, and two ranks of acanthus leaves.

standing columns are crowned with globes called finials, one globe on each column. For some, these globes represent the great lights, the Sun and the Moon; for others, they symbolize the terrestrial and the spiritual

dimensions of life. If we were to extend a line through the center



Capitol of north pilaster bearing the symbol for Uranus, signifying the impersonal love of Aquarian service.

of each of our Temple columns from base to capitol, extend that line through the portico roof structure, there, at that point, where the line pierces the roof, we would expect to find the finial, the globes. And so they are, one symbolizing the terrestrial earth we now inhabit, the other the spiritual earth that we shall in time have evolved to and helped make.

There are three steps between the columns leading to the Temple entrance. As there are three steps within the Temple Sanctuary, we shall defer to the latter in discussing their significance in relation to the Temple structure. As we mount the three outer steps and pass between the two columns, we stand before the entrance of the Temple and between two pilasters which carry the portico as it joins the Temple proper. These pilasters are integral parts of the Temple structure, however they stand



Detail from south (left) door to Healing Temple showing the Aquarius panel subscribed by six astrological symbols.



Detail of north (right) door to Healing Temple bearing the Leo panel with subscription of six astrological symbols.

out from the Temple walls, each showing two faces. They present the same outline of base, stem, and capitol as the columns, except they are square and the columns are round. Their square capitols show one row of acanthus leaves, separated in sections by a five-petaled flower with a deep center. On the inward-facing portion of each pilaster capitol are astrological signs. Uranus is depicted over Aquarius on the right or north pilaster capitol and on the left or south pilaster capitol a double Saturn appears over Aquarius, both markings symbolically alluding to the new Aquarian Age and its dominant signs. We may note that the double sign of Saturn is said to represent both generation and regeneration.

As we pass between the two pilasters we come to the two beautiful Temple doors consisting of three panels each. The upper and lower panels in both are plain, but the center panels are carved in bas relief. The center panel of the north (right) door contains the astrological sign of the Sun once and of Leo twice. It portrays the symbolic figure of

Leo facing inward, standing on the earth globe. The center panel of the south contains the symbol of Uranus once and of Aquarius three times, and portrays the Water Bearer facing inward with the living waters pouring out over the earth globe. At the bottom of each of the center panels are six astrological signs. From left to right, in the Aquarius panel, the signs are Aquarius, Pisces, Aries, Taurus, Gemini and Cancer. In the Leo panel from left to right, the signs are Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius and Capricorn. This grouping, as we shall see, indicates the seating arrangements within the Sanctuary.

The doors symbolically represent the forces flowing from the Lords of Flame, the Leo hierarchy, blended through the Aquarian hierarchy, the angel lifewave, and dispersing the New Age influence over the earth and its humanity. Over the Temple doors we find the first of many lunettes, half-round structures found over its doorways, windows, and all wall recesses. This lunette is of

clear glass. We enter through the Temple door into a small vestibule. It is plain and unadorned except for one symbol over the twin doors leading into the Sanctuary. There are doors to our right and left, one leading to the organ loft and one to an antechamber.

This Temple room in its simplicity corresponds to studentship. The one symbol seen from this room is over the set of double doors opening into the Temple Sanctuary. These doors in the west wall of the vestibule are small and plain, in keeping with the vestibule. The lunette over them consists of two sections. The upper section is of clear glass set in wood framing, the rectangular lower section contains a beautiful stained-glass symbol consisting of a blue field displaying a five-pointed gold star on which is superimposed a white cross garlanded with seven red roses. There is no white rose in this emblem. Symbolically, as the clear glass in the lunette over the Temple doors and the small unadorned vestibule portray the Student just entering into his studies, so this emblem over the doors leading to the Temple proper portrays the Probationer just entering into his life of service as he enters into the Temple Sanctuary to participate in Temple services. So as Probationers we now pass through these doors to enter into that Sanctuary.

Now let us place ourselves midway along the aisle, leading from the east entrance of the Sanctuary to the first of the three steps leading to the Altar alcove and the treasures stored therein. From this vantage point we take note of our surroundings, remembering that symbolically we are now midway on the path from the east entrance of the Sanctuary to the Altar in the western-most part of the Sanctuary. On either side of us are rows of seats with their astrological signs. Of these we will speak later. Immediately in front of us, as we face

west, are three steps leading from the floor of the Sanctuary to the Altar alcove and its appointments. We note that the west wall has been removed. Replacing it there is an Altar alcove. Against the rear wall of the alcove, the reredos, we find the Altar of marble on which rests an open Bible, and on either end of the Altar a vase, each holding a white rose. Above the Altar are the draperies, behind which is veiled the emblem of the Fellowship,

that emblem which we in this, or other lives to follow, shall endeavor to evolve within ourselves.

Framing the Altar and the draperies on either side is the beautiful wainscoting extending upward to the baldachino, the canopy over the Altar. The baldachino is shaped somewhat like a flattened lunette on whose blue field is a gold symbol. This is the highest point in the Altar alcove and its colors signify the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son. The light blue field, emblematic of the Father, on which is framed a blue shield outlined by a dark blue border, consists of nine lined segments or arcs. Nine is the number of humanity, our evolving life wave. Within this blue shield is a gold sunburst, emblematic of the Son, the Christ. Within this

gold sunburst is a blue circle containing the gold symbol of Leo, signifying the Lords of Flame. The blue shield is a symbolic heart representing mankind. The golden sunburst and the golden sign of Leo portray it as a Christed humanity, under the exaltation of the Lords of Flame.

From the lower point of this emblematic heart, a vine spreads to the right and to the left over the blue background. Midway along its two lengths, the vine branches into two sections, one on either side bending upward and back toward the emblematic heart, and each ending in a bright blue five-petaled flower with a gold center. We have seen this vine



View of altar alcove, showing Bible, open at the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, Fellowship emblem, and semicircular baldachino. Roses in vases are not present.



Baldachino or canopy over the Altar, containing “the symbol, the promise of a perfected humanity, a Christed race combining the essence of a selfless intellect as represented by the scroll, with the all-encompassing, passionless love as represented by the Vine of Immortality, springing from the heart of humanity, all blessed with the Divine Love from the Lords of Flame.”

and these flowers before. They are on the capitols of both the columns and the pilasters. This is the Vine of Immortality, now springing from the heart of humanity, a Christed humanity. Under the twining vine, a dark blue ribbon or scroll extends to either side of the blue field. This scroll represents the essence of the intellect of the collective mind of humanity. We find on review that this scroll touches or crosses the vine growing from the heart symbol five times on either side of the heart shield. Five plus five equals ten. So does the sum of the two five-petaled flowers of the Vine of Immortality equal ten. Ten—the perfect number containing all other numbers—the number of Deity, the number of perfection.

Thus, in this simple but beautiful symbol found in the baldachino, the canopy over the Altar, we have the symbol, the promise of a perfected humanity, a Christed race combining the essence of a selfless intellect as represented by the scroll, with the all-encompassing, passionless love as represented by the Vine of Immortality, springing from the heart of humanity, and all blessed with the Divine Love from the Lords of Flame.

When we first stood on the eastern edge of Ecclesia point and looking west viewed the outline of the Temple, we saw the curve of the Temple

dome and over it a golden sphere, and over the sphere a cluster of nine lights. Let us now view this wondrous symbol with the understanding we have gained from contemplating the symbol found in the baldachino. The curve of the Temple dome symbolically represents the path of this earth, as represented by that golden globe, around the center

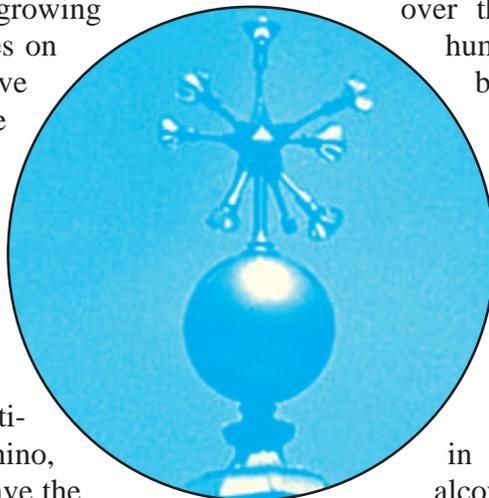
point of the Sun. The cluster of nine lights

over the globe is emblematic of our humanity. When enough of its members have so spiritually evolved that they are adorned in their golden wedding garments, they will float the earth in its orbit. We will then have achieved the day of liberation for our Redeemer and will be ready to enter into the Kingdom of the Father.

These two symbols, one found in the highest point of the Altar alcove, the other at the highest point over the Temple, are emblematic of the destiny in store for all of us, for all the multitude of our brothers and sisters when we have completed the New

Age we are about to enter. Even as the Tabernacle in the Wilderness portrayed the coming of our present dispensation, so these Temple symbols set forth not only the New Age of the Christ dispensation but also His promise of even a higher age to come—the Kingdom of the Father. (Continued) □

—A Probationer



Golden finial above Temple cupola surmounted by a cluster of nine lights.