

the body of the master in a rubbish pile, and returned at midnight to remove it to a place west of the temple, where they buried it in a grave and planted an acacia plant to mark the spot. Solomon, discovering that the master builder was missing and called the craftsmen together to investigate. The twelve who had recanted of the plot told Solomon about the conspiracy and the king sent them out to search for the culprits. One party discovered the grave and apprehended the murderers, who were summarily executed as oath-breakers. Solomon then ordered the body to be raised and removed from the grave. As the body had been buried for fifteen days it was in a state of decomposition. Solomon ordered that since the Master Word had been lost upon the death of Hiram, that the first word spoken upon the raising of his body and the first sign made would substitute for the lost ones until the originals could be rediscovered. Hiram's body was then taken to the temple where it was buried near the Holy of Holies.

The Master Mason ritual generally re-enacts these events with the notable addition that when the body is raised out of its grave — the body represented by the new initiate — a hoodwink is removed from his eyes and the one lifting him up (representing Solomon, the Wise) whispers the (substitute) word into his ear. These latter elements, which extend the legend into its ritual purpose, provide the experience of rebirth in a new state of being — as a Master Mason.

In many ways the Master Mason ritual is simply one of the many death and rebirth initiation rites found in many cultures around the world. The main purpose of such rites is to provide the initiate with a *rebirth* in a new form and status in life. Often too there is the reception of a new symbol or teaching. The fact that the initiate possesses this information provides a hidden "certificate" of achievement which, as a "password" allows others who have undergone the same experience to recognize one another, while their identities can remain completely secret as far as outsiders are concerned.

In the history of humanity all initiatory rites, rites of passage, or rites of transformation as they are often called, follow a specific structure. The must first occur a **separation** of the subject (initiate) from his normal or present state of existence, then a **transformation** of the subject takes place while his is in the separate existence, and finally the subject is **reintegrated** into the normal environment, but he now exists in a new form or state of being. In rites of death and resurrection, the subject dies, is transformed while in the realm of the dead and then returned to the world a "new man." this kind of initiation is very common in warrior societies. Part of the function there is to teach the warrior not to fear death.

As the history of Masonry and the history of the myths and legends of the indigenous peoples of northern Europe became increasingly well-known in the nineteenth century many scholars, Masons and non-Masons alike, saw a striking parallel between the Masonic Master Ritual and the myth of the Norse god Baldur. Some were so struck by it that it became the overt underlying myth of the ritual. This myth is recorded in a number of Old Norse poems and the motifs surrounding the myth, or one very close to it, can be found in various artistic pieces from as early as 450 CE. In the nineteenth century the Baldur myth was generally thought of as a "nature-myth" — one about a dying god who represented the powers of nature which "died" in the winter and were reborn in the spring. That such myths exist and are important cannot be denied. However, the Baldur myth is not one of these. The name Baldur refers to bravery and boldness, and the myth is more typical of a warrior rite of passage than it is of a cyclical death and return of the powers of the sun and nature in the cycle of the year.

Here is a brief summary of the myth of Baldur:

Baldur had dreams which foretold of his coming death. His father Odin went to the realm of the dead to discover the roots of these dreams and learns that Loki is planning to have Baldur killed (apparently out of jealousy) but that he will try to use the blind god, Hödr, as his "patsy." Baldur's mother, Frigg, in an effort to make Baldur invulnerable to all possible mishaps tries to exact an oath from every substance in the cosmos not to harm the god. She is successful with all sorts of substances such as metal, rocks, diseases, and so on — only the mistletoe was overlooked because it seemed too insignificant. After this the gods began to play a game with Baldur and hurled all sorts of things at him to attempt to "kill" him, knowing that nothing could really harm him. But Loki discovers the fact that the mistletoe was neglected and fashioned a shaft of the little sprig. He then went to the god Hödr and directs him to shoot the missile at Baldur, who is hit by it and falls dead. This myth of invulnerability is a common one in warrior societies. Frigg sends Hermod to the realm of Hel on Odin's eight-legged steed, Sleipnir, to discover Baldur in Hel to see if he could be raised. There Hermod meets the goddess Hel — Death — herself and she says that if everything in the world, living and non-living, can be made to weep for Baldur, then he can return. Ambassadors were sent out to try to exact this action on the part of all beings — but one giantess named Thokk (thought to be Loki in disguise) refused to do so — and therefore Baldur remained in Hel. However, in the process of the "judgment of the gods" — the Ragnarök — Baldur is avenged by the god Váli, whom Odin engendered especially for this purpose. It is explicitly stated in the Völuspá that Baldur does return out of Hel after the world