

# The Royal Road

## Arcanum 9: The Sage

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### Arcanum 9: The Sage

Arcanum 9 pictures a man walking uphill.

The path is strong with golden coins.

Cactus grows along either side.

The man wears a helmet on his head,  
and leans on a staff as he walks.

With a blanket falling from his left shoulder,  
he shields a lighted lamp held in his left hand.

He gazes steadily at the vision of a castle  
he sees in the sun.

Symbolism and Philosophy: This card shows the condition  
of the Conqueror (now called the Sage) who has  
forsaken the path of blind belief and steadily,  
day by day, treads the overcoming way.

Ripe with wisdom, born of many experiences with the  
power of God, he leans heavily on the staff of faith,  
symbol of that power.

Held in his right hand signifies that he consciously  
and actively relies upon it to direct his life.

The headdress he wears symbolizes the "helmet of salvation."

Covering the head, symbol of the mind, it shows trust  
and a power beyond his own limited  
and faulty reasoning faculty.

In his left, or receiving hand, he holds the  
traditional lamp of wisdom burning brightly.

He is shown guarding it carefully with the blanket  
falling from his left shoulder.

In the oldest versions of the tarot cards,  
this blanket appears in a square form.

Most writers consider the sage as withholding  
the light of the lamp from the gaze of the profane,

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as he determines who is or who  
is not worthy to receive wisdom.

We find it hard to accept such a view.

It smacks of supreme egotism.

Who but God can determine anyone's worthiness or  
unworthiness to acquire the light of heaven, and  
even He does not withhold it from the earnest seeker.

A more correct interpretation, we believe, would be that man  
shields his own God-consciousness within the folds  
of his own fourfold human nature.

Even though he walks in the brightness of the noon-day sun,  
the Sage knows that physical sunlight cannot  
illuminate his upward overcoming path.

As he continues to walk the Royal Road of faith,  
however, the inner light of God's spirit  
burns ever more brightly.

It enables him to see and evaluate the treasure  
of golden coins of spiritual wisdom  
lying at his feet.

It is a lonely, a solitary way, at first,  
the way of the Hermit, as this card  
is sometimes titled, but the further he progresses,  
the more company he finds along the way.

Even though he did not suspect it,  
he discovers that many others are also walking  
the Royal Road, and this discovery strengthens his  
at times wavering faith and hesitating feat.

The New Jerusalem pictured in the sun  
serves as a beacon light to guide him.

This is not a literal, but a figurative city,  
where dwell those whose lives are directed by God.

It is the kingdom of heaven in the human heart,  
as Jesus described it.

Even though outwardly we may walk through desert waste,  
inwardly the light of the Father illumines our being.

Astrology:  
Arcanum 9 corresponds to the sign Aquarius,

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ruled by the planet Uranus, and indicates altruism,  
brotherhood, cooperation, knowledge of all kinds,  
invention, discovery, electricity, radio, television, etc.



Human Anatomy:

Arcanum 9 indicates the lower limbs, locomotion, the greater motor nerves, the membranous investiture and white matter of Schwan that covers the membrane, also nerve substance.

Masonic Ritual:

Arcanum 9 corresponds to the Secret Master degree.

At the building of King Solomon's temple, the architects feared that it might be destroyed if the children of Israel disobeyed the law.

They expressed concern that the knowledge of the arts and sciences, the models of the temple and the oral law would be lost.

To prevent such a tragedy, they built a secret vault to the west of King Solomon's apartment, deep underneath the Holy of Holies.

They divided this vault into nine arches.

The ninth, or lowest, they set aside for storing duplicate copies of the temple blueprints contained in the Sanctum Sanctorum above and for holding the meetings of the Grand Council.

This part of the ritual expresses the ancient Hermetic axiom, "as above so below, as within so without."

If we consider God as the first arch and the sevenfold nature of man as the next seven, that makes eight.

The Earth, as the lowest vault, then corresponds to the ninth arch.

In "Paradise Lost," Milton speaks of nine days

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fall from heaven to Earth's utmost pole.

Buried deep within our being, as we travel over the span of the ninth arch, reposes an exact copy of God's plan for us.

The re-discovery of that plan eventually rewards the faith we exercise on our overcoming journey.

To impress the seriousness of this Great Work upon the mind of the initiate, the ancient ritual required that he impersonate Izabud, the friend of King Solomon.

The king neglected to give him proper warnings, and Izabud, being overzealous, entered the ninth arched unauthorized.

There he was informed by his judges that only three could be employed in each arch, the number being already full.

Finally, the judges decided to execute the guard, Ahishar, who was asleep at his post, and allowed Izabud to pass unchallenged and to permit Izabud to live and fill the slain guard's place.

While the ritual as it has come down to us says that King Solomon (representing God) neglected to give Izabud (representing the wayward Prodigal) proper warnings, in all probability it said in its original form that Izabud himself neglected to heed the king's warnings, and entered the ninth arch of physical life unauthorized by God.

That puts the blame for the woes of the human spirit where it belongs: on man, not God.

Always keeping in mind the clue of the Prodigal Son allegory helps to dispel our mental fog.

Remember, the Prodigal left home, God did not send him.

When he entered physical-animal life and closed the door behind him, the Prodigal entered the final phase of spiritual death.

But when the promptings of his awakened conscience pass judgment on, or figuratively slay the guard

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of self-will, he begins to live once more as he did before he left God.

He becomes ever more aware of God's love and wisdom guiding and directing him as he journeys.

The ritual says that only three can be employed in each arch.

Only the triune spirit can properly function in each arch, or grade, of wisdom.

The fourfold human nature can have no directing voice in the Great Work.

The furniture used in the lodge for this degree further emphasizes this lesson.

Three triangular tables are arranged in a row.

A lighted candle burns at each of the corners, and in the center of each table lies a triangular plate of gold.

Thus the candidate is told with triple emphasis, that his threefold spirit must forever seek the golden light of God's wisdom (9) as he walks the upward path of the Royal Road.

The Bible:

Zechariah (8:4) gives a clear description of the symbolic picture of Arcanum 9: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; there shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff and his hand for very age."



The Jerusalem spoken of in this text is not the city of the name in Palestine.

There are two Jerusalems: a physical and a spiritual.

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The Apostle Paul gives us the meaning of this allegory in his Epistle to the Galatians (4:21-31).

He explains that Abraham's son, Ishmael, born of the Egyptian slave Hagar, represents the Jerusalem that now is, that is those in bondage to the law of self-centered life.

His son Isaac, born of promise, corresponds to the Jerusalem, which is above and which is free, the divine mother of us all.

Sarah, Isaac's mother, typifies the spiritual city, (Greek, "polis," meaning "policy"), or divine soul, that gives birth to the reborn Son of God.

The 21st chapter of Revelation extends Paul's definition by describing in great detail the measurements of the city called new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God (verses 15-17) in particular give the clue and show us that while this city lies foursquare (built in the physical world) it is not a literal city.

To measure it or understand it properly, we have to use a golden reed (the Tarot's magic wand) symbolizing spiritual perception.

Using that yardstick, we find the wall measures 144 cubits.

Adding this number crosswise gives Arcanum 9, which (verse 17) tells us is the measure of a man.

While on the road to Damascus, Paul saw the spiritual sun pictured in Arcanum 9.

He described it in these words:

"At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me." (Acts 26:13).

Note that this light was greater than that of the physical sun.

Further evidence that the New Jerusalem is not a literal city is found in Revelations 21:23, where we read:

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"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light (lamp, margin) thereof."

The Lamb is allocated to the sign Aries, which rules the head.

The head is the seat of consciousness.

Thus it is God-consciousness rather than self-consciousness, that lights the city (or policy) of our lives when the glory of God lightens them.

The true New Jerusalem, which the Sage and Arcanum 9 sees, and toward which he walks corresponds to the glorified spiritual body that God builds for him.

It does not refer to any so-called millennium that students of prophecy expect to arrive in the near future, with literal Jerusalem as the headquarters of God's reign on earth.

The only place God ever reigns on Earth is in the human heart.

And history tells us that obtains only an individual scattered here and there, never in great masses.

For God to rule physically from the Jerusalem in Palestine, or anywhere else on Earth would mean that millions of rebellious men would reject His rule, and He would then have to become a dictator to control unwilling subjects, an unthinkable idea which violates all that Christ taught us about God, whose only law is the law of love.

That law rebel mankind cannot, or rather will not, embrace until it repents of its stubborn pride and self-will and says, "I will arise and return unto my Father."

Mark 6:7,8 also refers to the message of Arcanum 9: "And he (Jesus) called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two, and gave them power over unclean spirits."

"And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only, no script, no bread, no money in their purse."

This command Jesus gave historically not only to his twelve disciples, but to the twelve types of men born under the twelve signs of the Zodiac, whom those disciples typify.

And the journey he mentioned referred not only to that which His disciples took in spreading the gospel, but to the overcoming path that Arcanum 9 pictures, which every man must ultimately walk.

And on that path, neither bread nor money nor any other physical substance can sustain him.

He must rely not on earthly but on spiritual values represented by the staff of faith.

He must rely not on himself, but on God.

Psalms 119:105 refers to the picture of Arcanum 9 in these very specific words: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

That Word consists of the love, wisdom, and power of God.

It does not reside in any book.

The book may talk about the Word, but in itself it is not that Word.



The apostle John tells us that God and the Word  
are one and the same.

He is the Word that the Sage must listen to as  
he walks the upward way of the Royal Road.

Aphorism:

"Remember then, son of Earth, that prudence is  
the armor of the wise.

The overcoming path calls for unselfish devotion and  
service to your fellowmen.

This leads you to wisdom.

Wisdom leads to light.

Light leads to liberty.

And liberty is God's reward for your faithfulness."

Keywords and correspondences:

Arcanum 9: The Sage.

Sound: TH (diphthong).

Keywords: wisdom, understanding.

Human Experience: Prudence.

Bible: Zechariah 8:3,4; Mark 6:7,8.

Astrology: Sign Aquarius, the Water Man.

Key Phrase: I Know.

Physical: assemblies.

Emotional: original, argumentive.

Spiritual: brotherhood.

Mythology: Deucalion, king of Thessaly.

Alchemy: preparation.

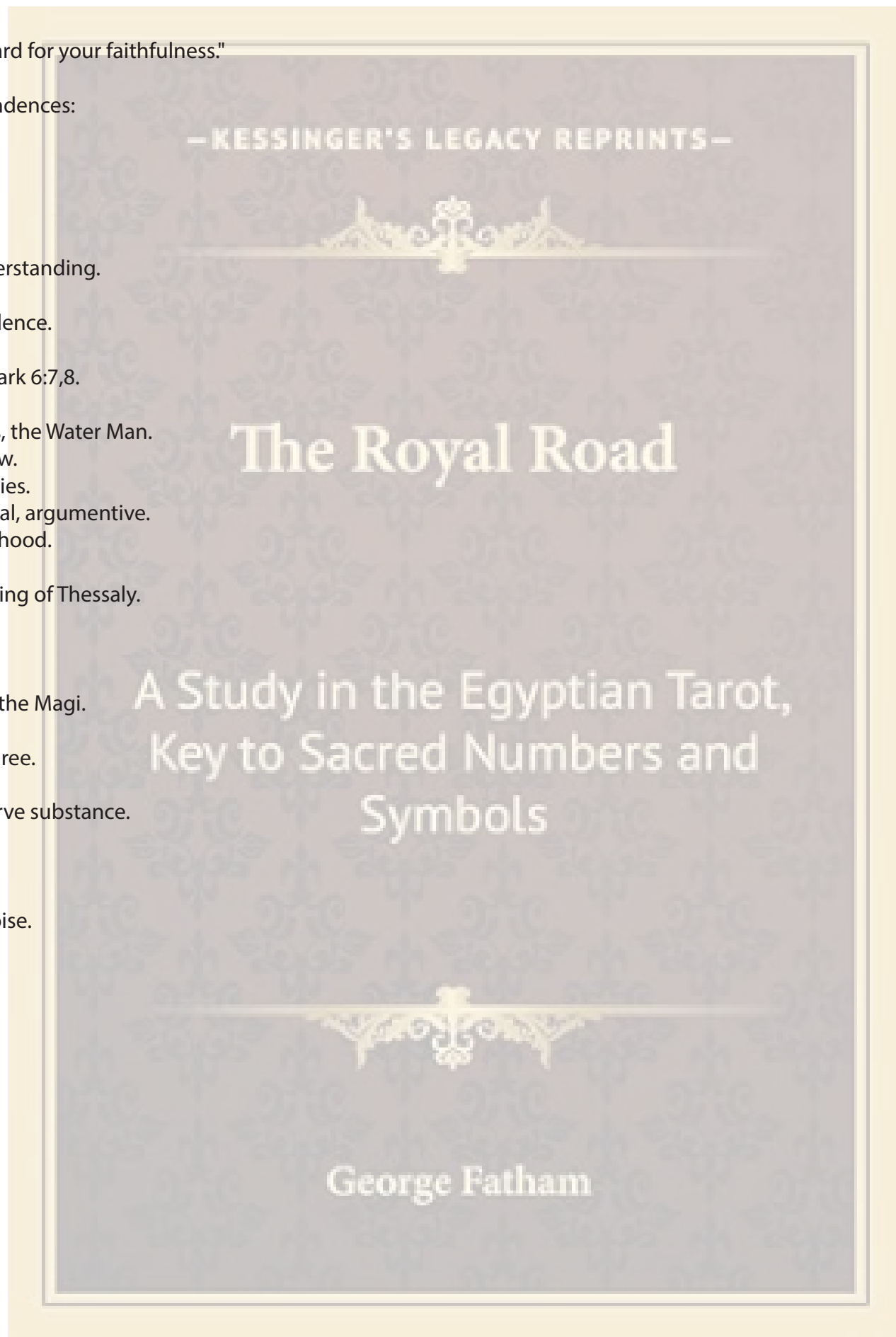
Symbol: the Ninth Arch, the Magi.

Ritual: Select Master degree.

Anatomy: lower legs, nerve substance.

Gem: sapphire.

Color: sky blue or turquoise.



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