

# The Royal Road

## Arcanum 1: The Prodigal

The Royal Road by George Fathman.  
Recorded by Josh Yates on 10/11/2020.

Page 20

Page 19

Arcanum 1, The Prodigal:

Arcanum 1 pictures a man dressed in a white robe.

A golden band encircles his head.

In his right hand, he holds a golden one directed towards a four pointed star.

From the star stream three rays toward heaven.

With his left hand, the man points towards Earth.

From the leathern girdle around his waist hangs a triangular apron with six folds tapering downward.

A quadrangle weights it down.

Before him lies a cube, upon which are a cup, a gold coin and a sword.

An Ibis amidst rays of light, plus a border of black and white squares, adorns the front side of the cube.

Symbolism and philosophy:

Arcanum 1 illustrates the principle of unity.

The man has many titles: Magician, Jugular, Initiate, Devotee, Pilgrim, Neophyte, Prodigal.

In our opinion, he is best named as the Prodigal Son who tired of his own self centeredness, repented his folly of Arcanum Zero-22, and uttered the significant words, "I will arise and go to my Father."

The Fallen four-pointed star indicates the gate of generation through which the spirit of man enters physical life.

The three rays leading upward represent the trine spiritual nature joined to its fourfold earthly vehicle.

This symbolism tells us that the seven factors compose our being: three divine, four earthly.

The three-four division repeats itself many times throughout the tarot cards.

These two numbers provide important

keys to help us understand properly the symbolic message.

The Prodigal's white robe typifies the original purity of his spirit before its separation from God.

He stands in an attitude of action, determined to confess his sin before God and walk the upward path of the Royal Road.

The golden band encircling the head typifies a capacity for the highest spiritual thoughts about eternal principles that must guide him on his homeward journey.

It also typifies the Philosopher's Stone, which many believe has the power to turn to gold any object it touches.

That touchstone is Truth.

The golden wand or scepter held in the right (positive) hand with the circle of spirit mounted on its tip symbolizes the mind, Aaron's rod that budded with Jacob's staff with which he crossed over Jordan.

It represents the spinal cord, which buds into a globe called the medulla oblongata, symbolic seat of the Spirit in flesh.

Pointed upward, it looks to God for strength and understanding.

The index finger of the left (negative) hand points to the ground. This indicates that all "left" or self-willed forces active in man's nature must be consigned to the oblivion of forgetfulness.

The leather girdle fastened around the waist is the symbol of immortality.

It matches the Masonic "Cable Tow," or the biblical "silver cord" by which the soul grounds itself to the Earth.

Some versions of the Tarot cards show a serpent around the waist swallowing its tail.

The serpent, as a symbol of generation, also indicates the means by which the soul unites with the body upon Earth.

The apron suspended from the leathern girdle

Page 21

corresponds to the well known Masonic emblem.



It has six folds tapering downward.

This calls attention to Arcanum 6, which main keyword is temptation.

As the apron covers the region of physical generation, this symbolism tells us that temptation to indulge the pleasures of sensuality is one of the chief bonds that holds us back from the walking the Royal Road.

It also tells us that human love carries within it the seed of that higher love born of God.

The combined triangle and square shape of the apron again reminds us of our sevenfold being: the heavenly three joined to the earthly four.

In symbolism, a cube represents the new dimension the Spirit gives to the square of matter.

Wherever seen in the tarot, it signifies the Spirit consciously building the Temple of Truth.

The planet Venus, allocated to Arcanum 6, is said to be the goddess of love, beauty, art, music and all the delicate, refined factors of life.

But she has another aspect to her nature seldom noticed.

The six sides of the cube unfold form a cross.

When man's spirit incarnated, it "crossed over" from an eternal to a time-bound consciousness; from God to self; from heaven to earth.

It embraced the fourfold cross of time, space, matter and motion.

It figuratively hung itself on the cross of temporal limitations and confinement.

It became "crossified."

At this stage of man's journey pictured in Arcanum 1, he repents of his self-will and consciously turns his face to the light from whence he came.

He begins the process of folding up the temporal cross, until it once more becomes the eternal cube.

When completed, it no longer tabernacles

-----  
Page 22  
-----

him in flesh, but houses him in the temple of the mystical New Jerusalem.

The cup lying on top of the cube has a dual message.

It corresponds to the Harlots Cup of Revelation 17, which contains the brew of man's filthy abominations.

He brews its dregs by abusing his animal instincts, passions and emotions.

It is also the cup from which Jesus had to drink.

It portrays the heart of self-willed man which, as the prophet Jeremiah says, is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

When turned upside down and its contents poured on the ground, this cup becomes Abraham's tent where tabernacles the Spirit of the Lord.

It typifies the heart, the crucible in which the base metals of our being are transmuted into the pure gold of the Spirit.

It is the Holy Grail, the cup of the Last Supper holding the new covenant blood or wine of spiritual life which we must now drink regularly.

The heart is the fulcrum used by God to pry us loose from the failure, folly and mistake of our self-centeredness.

The sword on The Cube symbolizes the strife and stress of the world.

It also represents the "sword of the Spirit," which we must use to hew our way through the jungle of temporal difficulties.

The Apostle Paul says that the sword of the Spirit is the Word (or power) of God.

As long as we use the sword in the world's way we come under the law of which Jesus gave warning: "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

But when held by the blade, the sword becomes instead the cross that leads to eternal life.

The gold coin inscribed with a cross signifies compensation for work done.

Gold denotes spirit and spiritual values as well as internal principles.

-----  
Page 23  
-----

The Bible says that the wages of sin (self will) are death (loss of spiritual power), but when we take up our cross and follow the way of life shown us by Jesus, we receive true spiritual wages for the living service we render to one and all.

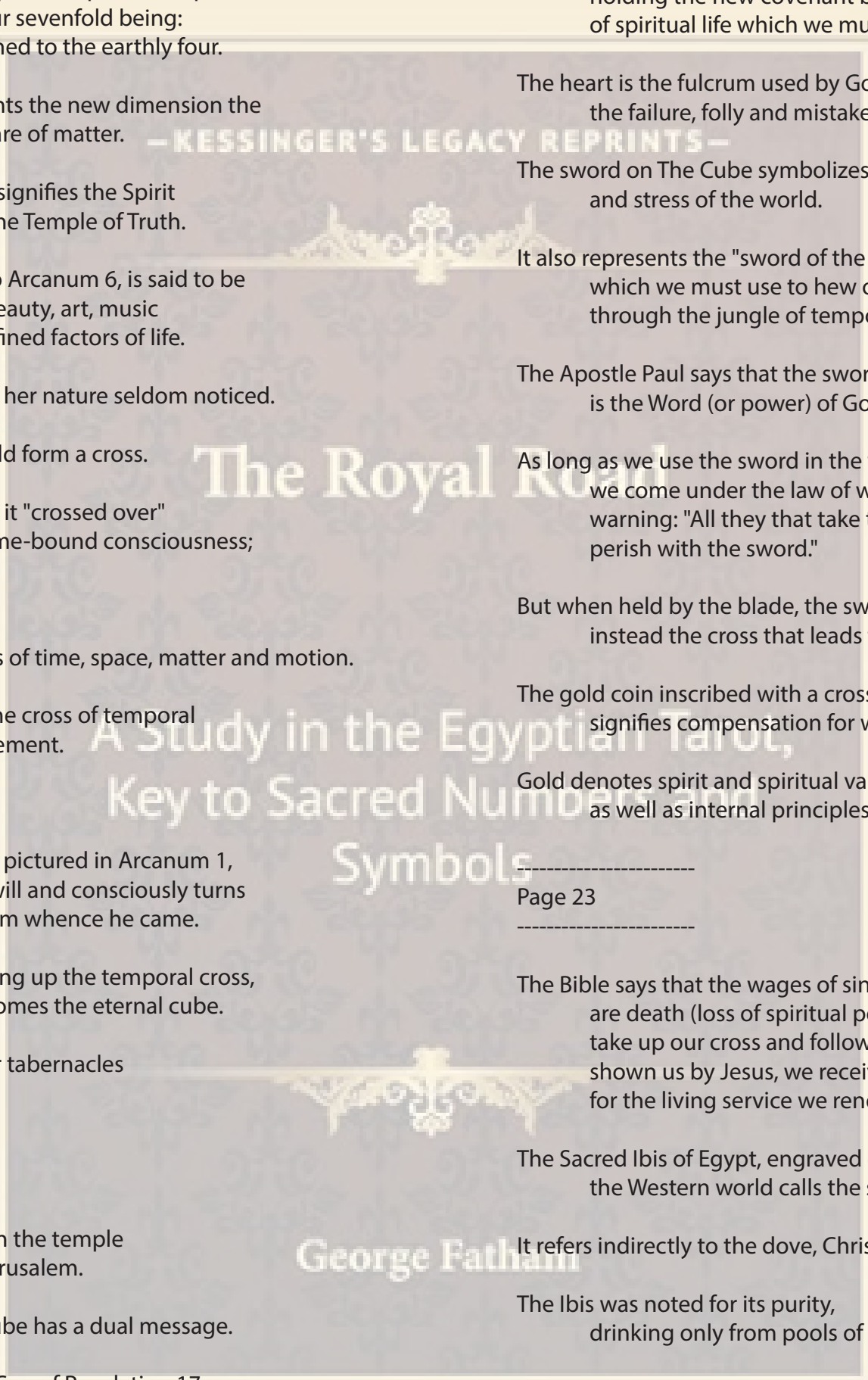
The Sacred Ibis of Egypt, engraved on the front of the cube, the Western world calls the stork, heron, or crane.

It refers indirectly to the dove, Christianity's Holy Spirit.

The Ibis was noted for its purity, drinking only from pools of purest water.

The ancients believed its feathers had power to kill the crocodile in the River Nile.

They also considered the bird strong enough to deliver Egypt from the winged serpent and other reptiles that came from Arabia.





The God Toth (Hermes, Spirit of Good) when pursued by Typhon (Spirit of Evil) escaped the monster's clutches by transforming himself into an Ibis.

In symbolism, a bird signifies the mental principle in man.

By turning his mind (wand) upward, man can cooperate with the Spirit of God, who overcomes the evil of his ignorance, egotism and self will, and the emotional terrors typified by crocodiles and serpents.

The rays of light surrounding the Ibis suggest the new (heavenly) source of the prodigal mental illumination.

The black and white squares on the Cube symbolize the checkerboard of good and evil on which man must plan his every move in the game of life.

Astrology:

Arcanum 1 corresponds to the planet Mercury, winged-footed messenger of the gods.

He rules the signs Gemini and Virgo and the function of thought.

He governs writing, travel, talking, clerical work, accounting, lower education, publishing.

Human Anatomy:

Arcanum 1 indicates the brain and nervous system.

It refers specifically to the right side of the brain, and to the left side of the central nervous system, particularly the cerebrum, and indirectly to the motor nerves.

Masonic ritual:

Arcanum 1 corresponds to the Entered Apprentice degree.

It shows the candidate admitted to the lodge, presented with the implements of his craft, and prepared to undergo initiation into the mysteries of life.

Here he begins to labor as a mystic temple builder at his work bench by polishing the rough ashlar of his character.

He juggles the positive forces of good and the negative forces of evil.

He begins to fight the inner "Battle of Armageddon" before his altar of sacrifice.

He begins to give up the self-centered drives that prevent him from entering the New Jerusalem.

Ultimately, he wins this battle, then good triumphs over evil, and the altar of sacrifice becomes the throne of his redemption.

The Bible:

All references in the Bible to the work of the Holy Spirit, the messenger of God, embody the symbolism of Arcanum 1 through the new and breathing of the Spirit, the Heavenly Father brings us into the knowledge of all truth.

Page 25

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth."

Arcanum 1 as the renewed mind, or "mind of Christ," is found in such text as: Philippians (2:5), Ephesians (4:23), Colossians (3:9,10).

An indirect mention of the Ibis on the cube appears in Matthew (3:16): "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, and lo, the heavens were open unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him."

At this stage of the Royal Road, the Prodigal gets his first glimpse of the true nature of his problem.

His turning from God to self, the Bible allegorizes as "the fall of man."

Revelation (8:10-12) depicts this tragedy as follows: "And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning, as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters."

"And the name of the star is called Wormwood, and the third part of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the waters because they were made bitter."

"And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the Sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of them was darkened, and the day shown not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."

The number three refers to the eternal spirit of man.

The number four to his time-bound earthly vehicle.

The name Wormwood means "bitter."

The three rays in Arcanum 1 symbolize the threefold spirit entering earth through the fourfold gate of birth, symbolized by the four-pointed star.

This running

Page 26

away from God embitters the waters of the soul, and buries it inside self-centered desires.

Aphorism:

Remember then, son of Earth, that man, like God, should act without ceasing.

To will nothing and do nothing is more fatal than to will and do ill.

Guided by the Spirit, press forward to your high calling in Christ, knowing that he will preserve you while you battle the perils of the way.



Keywords and Correspondences:

Arcanum 1: The Prodigal.

Sound: Ah, as in star, bat.

Keywords: will, intelligence, unity.

Human Experience: Repentance.

Bible: Luke 15:11-32; John 1:1-19.

Astrology: Planet Mercury, ruler of signs Gemini and Virgo.

The Intellectual urge.

Physical: Propaganda.

Emotional: Control, Wholeness.

Spiritual: Mind of Christ.

Mythology: Hermes, wing-footed messenger of the gods.

Alchemy: Formulation.

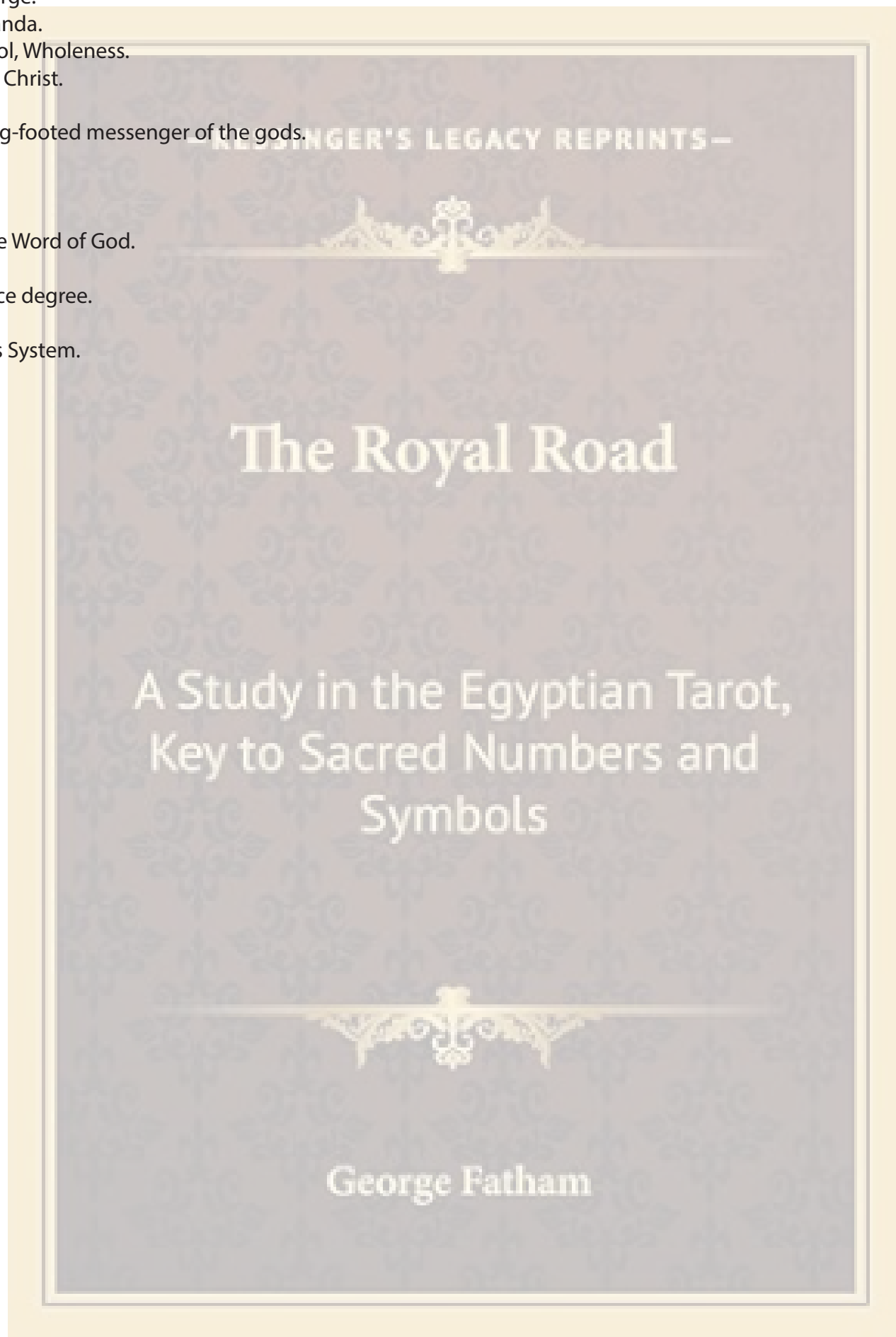
Symbol: Gavel, Wand, the Word of God.

Ritual: Entered Apprentice degree.

Anatomy: Brain, Nervous System.

Metal: Quicksilver.

Color: Light Violet.





# The Royal Road

## Arcanum 1: The Prodigal

