



## Nugget

# Five Noble Orders of Architecture

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The development of Five Noble Orders of Architecture as described in the lectures are explored.

### **Summary**

An exploration of the development of Five Noble Orders of Architecture, all taken from the Classical Era; as described in our lectures.

### **Keywords**

Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Composite

## Five Noble Orders of Architecture

Freemasonry prospered on the back of a cultural Renaissance. There was a reverence for the ancient world; the era of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. From surviving texts, it was clear that their cultures were in many ways more advanced than those which followed.

In the architectural world, development had been mainly in Church architecture, castles and grand houses and nowadays we are impressed by Norman architecture with its rounded arches, and Gothic architecture with its pointed arches, and perhaps disappointed by the Brutalist school of modern architecture; despite being occasionally impressed by a piece of exceptional design. Our forebears looked wistfully back to classical architecture with its elegance.

What is an 'Order' of architecture? The best answer is that it is a rulebook. It enables a builder to create a building knowing that the various components will be strong enough and each will be proportionate. When we think of an order, we normally think of how the capitals on the pillars are ornamented. But the rules extend to the ratio of the height of a pillar to its girth, to the construction of the roof and the design of the portico, to the shape of the floor plan and so on. They were based on functionality and the strength of the materials available for use.

There was the strong and minimally ornamented Tuscan Order of the Romans, the slightly more elegant Doric Order of the Greeks, who also developed the Ionic and Corinthian, which were increasingly elegant and ornamental. The fifth was again Roman and is known as the Composite as it takes elements from the others to provide an Order which the lectures to the First-Degree describe as displaying elegance, strength and beauty. It might be noted that rounded arches and domes, although they were built, were not considered a part of these orders. Architecture, like most areas of human ingenuity and endeavour, evolved over time, both in terms of the aesthetic and taste.

Another theory may be that we derive our lectures from the learning of 'square masons' rather than from that of 'arch masons', which required additional skills and were considered to be at a higher grade.

It is obviously the case that masons would make references to the construction of stone buildings. It is also natural that they would make reference to elegant and beautiful buildings, which enhanced the reputation of their craft. The restriction of our masonic lectures to the Classical Era will have had less to do with operative masons, and more to do with speculative masons and the Renaissance.

But, of course, we are not operative, but speculative masons, and so should contemplate on the moral lesson, which is there to be unveiled. In the lectures there is a lengthy description of the evolution of the five noble orders of architecture. The allegory relates to the development of civilisation, with the ever improving knowledge of man. The lectures say, *'in the history of man there is nothing more remarkable than that Masonry and civilisation, like twin sisters, have gone hand in hand. The Orders of Architecture mark their growth and progress'*. The lectures also explain how the architects of this world gained their inspiration from what happened around them.

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##END##

## Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; *though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.*
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

**For further nuggets and other learning materials visit 'Solomon' at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>**

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