

## **The Essenes: Did this ancient cult influence our early Brethren?**

The Essenes: by W.Bro. Michael Karn

Mike's paper outlines the story of a religious cult - the Essenes - which go back into ancient Jewish history.

They were a community who, in many ways, lived by similar principals to which Freemasons are dedicated, and who observed similar practises: they had various levels of membership, took vows of poverty and wore aprons; they held ritual initiations, and it took three years to become a member.

They also passed through degrees - initiation into such degrees requiring vows of secrecy under threat of punishment - and were examined before being accepted to the next degree.

They dressed in white robes for ceremonies and had particular signs for recognising each other.

The early history of Freemasonry is uncertain and so it must be asked - did the Essenes influence those who first practised Freemasonry?