

The Palladium

26th Degree Essay

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Albert Pike uses the word Palladium in his ritual of the 26th Degree. The word does not appear elsewhere in the Scottish Rite rituals, nor is it to be found in the lectures contained in *Morals and Dogma* (Pike, 1871).

Pike's original Degree rituals were published in his *Magnum Opus* (Pike, 1857). In that work the Palladium is said to be a statue clad in red, green and white. The statue is said to represent Truth and is identified as, "the Palladium of the Order" (Pike, 1857, p. XXVI í 1). Pike also identifies one officer of the Chapter as the guard of the Palladium. The role of the Guard of the Palladium in the ritual of the Degree seems to be limited to that of a Tyler. No scenes are described in which the guard refers to the Palladium or does anything with the statue or its covering.

One of the great lessons taught in the Degree concerns truth. The lesson is that truth is "absolutely certain" and, "all good men are tending toward it." (Pike, 1857, p. XXVI í 17)

The Chief Prince of Mercy of the Chapter is styled, Most Excellent. After the candidate is marked with the Tau cross on his forehead, the most Excellent declares him devoted to the Truth. The statue is then stripped of its red, green and white covering and the candidate is told to: "Behold the Palladium of the order." (Pike, 1857, p. XXVI í 18) The candidate is also told that the statue is not an image or idol to be worshipped nor is it a mythological goddess. Instead, the statue is said to be: "an emblem of Purity and Truth, - Truth which here we worship." (Pike, 1857, p. XXVI í 18)

It is apparent that Albert Pike intended for us to understand the Palladium of the Order to be a reference to the statue of Pallas Athena. Pallas Athena was a statue in Troy that was believed to symbolize or project the safety of the city.

There is an interesting issue to address when comparing Pike's Palladium of the 26th Degree with the Trojan Pallas Athena. The Trojan statue of Pallas Athena was fully clothed. Pike's stripping of the Palladium in his 26th Degree of its tri-colored covering must have been intended to emphasize a "naked" truth. But what is a naked truth? One interpretation of naked truth is a truth that is plain or evident. To understand this we would interpret the stripping to serve to make truth more evident. Another interpretation is that the naked truth is a truth that is unconfirmed or not validated. This definition of naked truth makes use of the word naked as it is used in a legal sense. Albert Pike was a lawyer, which may lend some substance to the interpretation of the bare or naked truth to mean a truth not confirmed.

The idea of truth protecting something is the concept conveyed by Albert Pike in his early (1857) use of the name, Palladium; as is the notion that the truth is not confirmed. A few years later, Albert Pike published his *Liturgy* (Pike, 1878). In the *Liturgy*, Pike states that the Palladium is: "a statue or statuette of white marble, the naked figure of a virgin draped with thin white gauze." (Pike, 1878, p.127) Pike further states that: "This (statuette) represents Truth, and is the Palladium of the Order of Princes of Mercy." (Pike, 1878, p.127) No evidence of a stripping of this sheer gauze covering is found in

the Liturgy. Thus we conclude that Pike had discarded the notion of an invalidated truth and added an emphasis on purity and virginity in its place. This would suggest that truth itself has a character of purity and virtue.

Before completing our discussion of the coverings of the statuette it should be noted that the color white used in Pike's first description (Pike, 1857, p. XXVI ¶ 17), referred to: "candor, purity and truth," when used as a robe. White was also one of the three colors of the fabric covering the statuette. And, when used to refer specifically to the fabric covering the statuette, the color white represented: "Sincerity, Candor and Purity." (Pike, 1857, p. XXVI ¶ 19) Finally, in the writing of the Liturgy, Pike refers to the color white as representing Divine Harmony. (Pike, 1878, p. 147) Hutchens (2006, p. 213) confirms that the color white represents divine harmony. Although there is a divine harmony to be found in pure truth, it is doubtful that Pike had this in mind when choosing white as the color of the gauze covering of the statuette of truth.

What is the origin of the Palladium and why did Albert Pike choose the Palladium to represent Truth in the 26th Degree?

A palladium is any object considered essential to the safety of a community or organization; a safe guard. Such is the dictionary definition. I am not personally aware of any examples of palladia. The singular form of the word derives from Palladium which in Greek and Roman legends was a statue of Pallas Athena originally within the citadel of Troy. The Greek word, Pallas may stem from *pallake*, which means maiden. Athena was the goddess of wisdom and war, and the patroness of the arts and crafts. The Roman Minerva was equivalent to Athena.

The statue was said to have been thrown down by Zeus from heaven when Ilus founded the city of Ilium. Odysseus and Diomedes carried it away from the Temple of Athena making the capture of Troy possible. (E.B., Vol.17, p. 149) The notion of the statue being thrown down may have been the source for confusion that some have between Athena with Diana. The statue of Diana in Ephesus was said to have been made from a meteorite. The meteorite, being black, resulted in a statue with black face hands and feet leading to the title of black Madonna.

Athena was also the protector of Athens. Three well known statues of Athena are believed to have been constructed by the famous Greek sculptor and architect, Phidias. [The Golden ratio (1.6180 ¶) is represented by lower case phi (ϕ) in honor of Phidias (480-430 B.C.)] Phidias used wooden frames overlain with bronze plates, in turn covered with gold and ivory plates. It is interesting to note that the statues by Phidias reveal Athena as thoughtful, firm and resolute – an expression perhaps more masculine than feminine.

Statues of Athena and the Palladium of Troy did not hold weapons such as swords. Instead they were with shields and helmets and in some cases with a lance. Thus, one might suppose that their protection was accorded through wisdom and foresight rather than armed might itself.

The Princes of Mercy worship truth, which is symbolized by the Palladium (statuette) of the Order. The Trojans no doubt worshiped wisdom and perhaps even the human arts, similarly. Of course neither worshiped the symbols themselves.

Pike's Palladium of the 26th Degree holds a silver arrow, with red and green feathers and a point of gold. The point of the arrow is placed on the candidate's heart (according to Hutchens, 2006, p. 217) or the candidate's temple (according to Pike, 1857, p. XXVI ¶ 19). The arrow is intended to remind the candidate to be: "ever frank, honest and straightforward in all thou sayest and doest, in word and deed" (Pike, 1857, p. XXVI ¶ 19)

References

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