

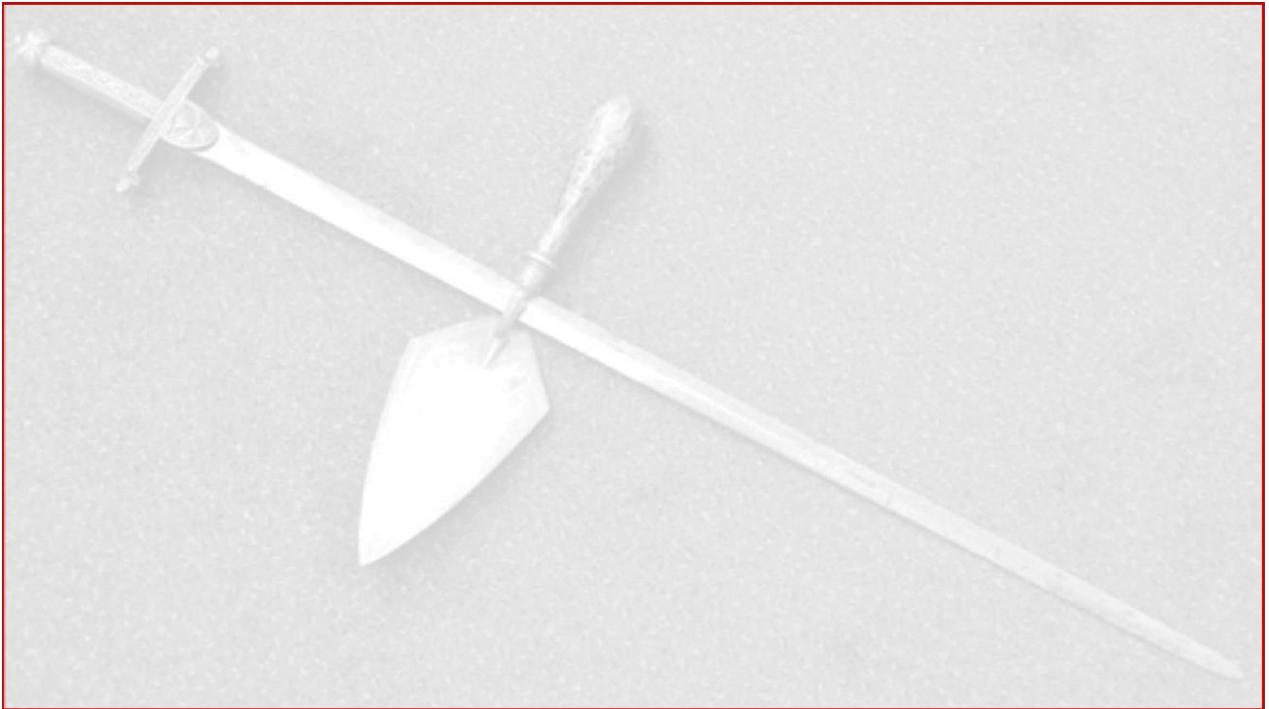
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As Scottish Rite masons the work we must do to engage our Brothers in a quest to eliminate ignorance, intolerance, fanaticism, superstition and un-charitableness within our ranks is a work to increasingly embrace learning, toleration, love of freedom, science, and philanthropy within ourselves and in our actions towards our brothers. In turn, it is our duty to establish good will and duty towards self that begets a change in the other based upon conduct, admonition, reason, good intention made moral through consensus of the way. It is acceptance, submission and service to the other in accordance with universal law; in this way, self-renunciation and noblesse oblige transcends entitlement and self-righteousness and overturn tyranny and superstition. Nicholas Roerich elaborates on worldly difficulty, universal law and truth in his 1937 work *Brotherhood*,

“Even the best additions to the concept of Brotherhood have only lowered it and made it difficult to attain. It has been linked with liberty and equality, but this trinity was conceived in the earthly meaning under conditions in which neither freedom nor equality do exist.

The loftiest freedom can be realized in the Supermundane World, where laws are understood as a beautiful and immutable reality. There, too, equality of the seed of the spirit is understood, it being the sole measure of liberality and balance. Usually the earthly statues depicting liberty are furnished with wings or torches, thus reminding us about the higher spheres and conditions.

About images representing equality there is this anecdote: When a sculptor once received an order to execute a thousand statues depicting equality, to be used to decorate a triumphal avenue, he made one statue and proposed casting all the others from it.” (Roerich,1937)

For Scottish Rite mason’s, rational contemplation of scenarios and treatment of each other is further symbolized in our moral plays and the concerted reflection of their meanings; the motive of duty and degrees is not to change others who do not make a choice to change of their own volition, nor to interpret for them what is best characterized as an abstraction and ineffable truth, as it would be an immoral and coerced will as opposed to a collective and individual consensus. We are taught to cautiously advance and take advantage of adversity as symbolized by the trowel in one hand and sword in the other. Roerich elaborates,

“Self-sacrifice is one of the true paths to Brotherhood. But why then is it enjoined, “Guard your strength?” There is no contradiction in this. The Golden Path, the combining path, affirms both qualities—achievement and caution. Achievement is created in full consciousness and responsibility. Again, someone may suspect a contradiction; but a higher devotion, an all-conquering love, can teach the combining of higher qualities. Madness does not bring achievement. Faint-heartedness cannot answer for true cautiousness. The conscious realization of duty prompts the right use of energy. Let people reflect about the concordance of qualities.” (Nicholas Roerich, 1937)

In the Scottish Rite ritual monitor and guide it states in the synopsis of the 15° ,

“Confronted with the reality of polarity, or opposition in all things, we are forced to seek a solution in apparent enigmas. We must ask, “Why are there opposites?”, “Can they be reconciled? and “If so how?”
(De Hoyos, pg. 393, 2010)

Indeed, as Scottish Rite masons it is important to deliberate, act without ulterior motives and create a purity of will and harmony amongst another as our intention; To be introspective and alert, to forgive the fallibility of self and Brethren and to understand that perfection is best sought by first realizing imperfection and acquiring knowledge of self as a means of recognizing what us in the hearts of others what also lies in us. It is to recognize the human condition and rectify our conduct in hopes of being all noble and at the same time workers. It is to embrace interdisciplinarity and interchange, intellectual commerce and ideas, and defend against those who violate the rights of others. It is to understand that that which is worth working for is integrity, loyalty, and liberty in the defense of good-will by performing our duties for the sake of duty, imperfect duties of which we should strive for, and abiding Universal Law. (Dudley, W. et al., 2014).

The 15° asks us to avoid being corrupted by worldly desires, guard against those whose motivations are unworthy and self-interested, without derailing our own progress. It is to distinguish from healthy forms of dissent or criticism amongst those with whom we build, from those who would never allow questioning to be asked amongst their peers and wish to destroy. It is humbling ourselves before G-d and man, and acknowledging that which we do not know between that which we do unsullied by superstition, prejudice, and assumption in a world that

divides as much as it multiplies and subtracts as much as it adds. It is to live amidst the paradoxes of life with the freedom to disseminate between positive and negative choices personally, define morals collectively and held to the higher standard of avoiding the negative influence of others.

As Knights of the East we are a culmination of the maxims inculcated in the Lodge of Perfection. As Knights of the East we assume the duties of chivalric aspirants, squires, and that of spiritual warriors, philosophers, and caretakers for we are beseeched to witness that the labors in this world reflect our spiritual lives hereafter. Are we to make odious comparisons of each other only to beget envy, covetousness, and folly? Or is it better to form a semblance and appreciation of our unique intellect, intelligence, and sentience as a group and as individuals? Masonry is attitudinal, curative and preventative, self-preserving and sustaining in its nature for it embraces universal truth and law and respects the individual and group. Figuratively we are to build ourselves anew in this phase of our Masonic progress. We chip away and unlearn that liberates us from our own personal shackles and compels learning and humility that leads us to Brotherhood. In this interaction, we collectively bargain with each other, nature, and the creator. During our own increasing proximity to G-d and progress is not to inculcate odious comparison nor to err and judge our brethren nor ignore authority.

It is not to impose upon others our manners, or demand them to change, but to compel positive change through self-refinement and consideration. In turn, with individual accountability and self-refinement we as a group begin to foster mutual respect and greater equilibrium and appreciation for the aptitudes, differences, and skills we possess. It is to allow each other *Liberté De Penser* or “Freedom of thought” so as not to infringe upon the established rights of others. It is to build bridges and be pontiffs. And yet amongst our differences we must also distinguish certainty and ascertain to the legitimacy of others' creed, wherein we can reflect and let the whole

assembly be the judge of what is true for the human race. (Volney, pg. 96, 1802) This form of reciprocity in that we are peaceable and love our neighbors and treat them as we would want to be treated demands a consensus and democracy so that dialogue can be fostered, disciplines can be learned, and conduct can be defined from the basest of actions to the highest. In this way those who might feel the other needs to change or adapt in a new way forget the fail safes built into masonry that disallow for blind rule or the despot to take power and respects and protects our differences through its allegorical nature.

In conclusion, self-sacrifice and service to others is what is inculcated in the Rose Croix Degrees. We in turn are told in the 15° to not be tempted by earthly fortunes to betray our trust and spiritual principles we have amongst our brethren should we arise like a phoenix anew. (De Hoyos, pg. 162, 2010) Roerich corroborates this stating,

“We strengthen our listeners with all the qualities necessary on the path to Brotherhood. It is not enough to possess only certain separate qualities, it is needful to realize their complete combination. The symphony of qualities is like the symphony of the spheres. If one quality develops beautifully while others are straggling, there results a destructive dissonance. Dissonances can be weakening or irritating, or even destructive. Equilibrium of qualities is achieved through great tension of consciousness. The shepherd must carefully tend his flock, and likewise man must cure an ailing quality” (Roerich, 1937)

We in turn, must try to keep authority and liberty in balance. We are instilled with a need to respect religious and political freedoms, public justice, devotion and honor of others, and truth to not be usurped by kings, priests, and nobles nor the platitudes and perceived and deceitful rewards of tyranny or to allow our countries to lose its realization of liberty as inherited since its inception. We should be tolerant and love another, and what upholds freedom is authority, law, order and subordination and rule of the people, for the people by the people. The = American Declaration of Independence’s concept of a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness is made manifest when people are treated as ends and the principals are staunchly masonic and bolstered in this degree as it is our duty to protect and serve freedom, overcome error, violation

of human rights and law. How we can combat ignorance and intolerance with our brothers starts with a simple good deed and intention and receptivity to what they believe, know, and feel to be love and truth.

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