

EIGHTEENTH DEGREE

KNIGHT ROSE-CROIX

INTRODUCTION

History of the Degree: This degree is one of the most important in the AASR and the one that can trace its spiritual lineage back to the most ancient and highest initiation traditions in the West. This degree was the crowning of Masonic initiation in the Scottish Rite for a long time. It is indeed a major milestone in the Mason's spiritual progress. The original version, made official in 1821 by the Supreme Council of France, was Christian and based on Jesus Christ's Passion to deliver a specifically Christian esoteric teaching. Then, over the following century, the ritual was modified, and often substantially and regrettably simplified and adulterated, with a view to making it shorter and more "universal". Eventually, Alchemy and Kabbalah, already present in the XVIIth Degree, gave this Degree their own flavor.

The Rosicrucian spirit originates from the Jewish-Hellenistic School of Alexandria which has been conveyed through Antiquity and the Middle Ages by Hermeticists, Gnostics, Pythagoricians, Neo-Platonists, Kabbalists and Alchemists. They indeed advocated spiritual alchemy and the "Emerald Table" by Hermes Trismegistus provided the doctrine and ascetic methodology. We hear about Rosicrucians from 1600 in England during the religious civil wars and from 1622 in France. They are likely to have infiltrated Speculative Masonry, in particular through the Royal Society, and been instrumental in the development of the Master's Degree and several higher degrees among which the XXVIth (Prince of Mercy), XXVIIIth (Knight of the Sun) and this very XVIIIth which bears their name.

The Major Topics of the Degree: The Rosicrucian esoteric doctrine boils down to the following: (a) The "Fall" of Man resulted in the atrophy of a number of his original divine faculties. It was a cosmic catastrophe dragging the whole universe into a state of degeneration. (b) However, a number of "Elus", with a natural mystical disposition, can receive an initiation, a training that reinstates, reinvigorates their original faculties. This "transfigures" them, that is to say it enables them to be reborn or "resurrected" in spirit in the same body through transcendental contemplation or mystical ecstasy in divine communion. This is similar to "enlightenment" in the Buddhist sense, that is immediate intuition of the inner workings and essential reality of themselves and the universe. (c) Under the guidance of these "elus", all men are called to become active members of the new spiritual Temple of Mankind ("The New" or "Celestial Jerusalem") in which divine Wisdom and Love would prevail, as they did in "Paradise". This general definition is reminiscent of Heraclitus, Socrates, Plutarch, Pythagoras, as well as Oriental philosophies focusing on the search for Truth, the study of Nature and medicine, and individual perfection at the service of Mankind.

It is through the **fire** of zeal for these ideals, the fire of the fight against Evil in oneself and in the world, the fire of suffering, that the pure gold of Man's divine original nature is extracted from the dross of the vile metal ore into which he "fell". Hence the prime meaning of "Igne Natura Renovatur Integra" given by AASR Masons, following Alchemists, to the tetragram **INRI**. This purifying fire, the transformation force and principle of life in all sentient beings, is the fire of **Love** which overcomes hatred, selfishness and violence. This alchemical principle of fire also conveys the cosmic concept of progressive evolution through a ceaseless cyclical process of death and renewal expressed by Teilhard de Chardin's spiral ascent from Alpha to Omega, the Buddhist concept of reincarnation through a continuous disintegration and reintegration process, or the symbol of the Phoenix constantly reborn from its ashes. Hence, the prevalence of black and crimson red in the decor of this degree.

This fire, even in deepest sorrow and suffering, is kept ablaze through **Faith, Hope and Charity**: **Faith**, not as blind creed, but as a state of tension keeping the mind naturally focused on the search for Truth in all its revelations, especially the Great Book of Nature; **Hope**, as the naturally ingrained archetypal feeling enabling Mankind to bear its perennial misery, suffering and failures, and to continue, against the worst odds, its painful progress towards perfection; **Charity**, not only as compassion for Mankind's misery and pain, but also and above all, as a concept of **cosmic unity**, materialized in the impulses of Love, whatever

their form, that is a potent impulse to be one with all that vibrates with life; to be one with the eternal divine masterpiece of cosmic harmony, abundance and bliss; to be one with the universal redemption process, the recovery of the Golden Age, the recovery of the Lost Word.

Therefore, the major topics of the XVIIIth degree are (a) the recovery of the Lost Word, that is the right concept of God and oneness with God; (b) realizing universal fraternity through Love; and (c) reaching the highest degree of Knowledge by the fusion of Man's mind with the Absolute through higher levels of consciousness. Above all, the Degree proclaims the New Law, the Law of Love, as announced by Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament or Gospel (The Good News) after centuries of spiritual and intellectual darkness bringing no hope, happiness and peace to the world. The main message is the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. This praiseworthy message is to be received in the Masonic spirit of **tolerance** for Man's diverse philosophical and religious beliefs and interpretations of the universal symbols it contains.

SIGNS, TOKEN AND WORDS

Signs:

Sign of Order or Sign of the Good Shepherd: Cross the arms on breast, left arm over right arm, with hands extended and eyes raised to Heaven (Find God within your inmost self)

Sign of Recognition: Raise right hand with forefinger pointing upward

Answer: Point downward with forefinger of the right hand (Hermes: "As above, so below")

Sign of Help: Cross legs, the right behind the left.

Answer: Cross legs, the left behind the right

Token:

Face each other under sign of good shepherd and bow

Give sign of recognition and answer

Place right hand on the other's right breast and the left hand on the other's left breast

Pronounce Password by syllables, alternating with each other

Sacred word: I.N.R.I.

Password: EMMANUEL Answer PAX VOBISCUM

Battery: Seven (7) raps in Six (6) raps followed by One (1), usually followed by the sign of recognition and "Hosha" acclamation repeated three times.

Age: Thirty-three (33) years

Hour: The labor never ends. Its either **resumed** at the time when the Word is lost, or **suspended**, or the Chapter is **called off** at the time when the Word is recovered.

ESOTERIC SYMBOLISM

Lodge Decor

There are three apartments: (a) The **First Apartment** is the **Chamber of Darkness**.

The floor is strewn with broken columns and fragments of Masonic working tools. There are **three triangular white columns**, respectively in the East, South and North bearing the words "Faith", "Hope" and "Charity", respectively written in violet (Divinity), scarlet red (Zeal) and sky-blue (Selfless purity).

The words are seen when the inside lights are switched on. In the East, is an **altar** to which one ascends by three steps. It is covered with a black cloth strewn with white flames, as a symbol of grief. An **ebony crucifix** stands with a crucified human figure on it. There is a yellow candle on each side. The altar and

canopy are hung with black tapestry fringed with white. A **black veil** reaching the ceiling conceals them, but can be opened by the middle, representing the veil of the Temple torn apart when Jesus Christ died. In front of the curtain, is a **triangular table**, covered with black cloth, on which are a Square, Compasses, an ebony passion-cross with a red rose on it, a black collar and a black apron with a red passion-cross embroidered on it, for the candidate, and a Triangle, the sides of which are black, red and white, to symbolize the alchemical processes of dissolution, extraction and purification, preceding transmutation into gold. The apartment is lit up by **33 candles** in (Jesus Christ's age at crucifixion).

(b) The **second apartment** is the **Chamber of Reprobation** representing the infernal regions with the punishments and terrors of Hell (as described by Milton and Dante) pictured on the black walls. The room is small and square. On each side of the door, on the inside, is a human skeleton with an arrow in its right hand.

(c) The **third apartment** is the **Chamber of the Chapter**. The hangings are crimson red. It is lit by **33 candles** in 3 candlesticks of 11 candles each, respectively in the East, South and West. Under the canopy, in the East, is a resplendent **Blazing Star**. Below is an open **empty sepulchre** (Jesus Christ's resurrection). On the left of the Master, stands the white **banner of the Order**, fringed with gold, displaying the side of the jewel, showing the pelican. Above the banner are the words "**Lux e Tenebris**" (Light out of darkness) and below, the Greek words "Pistis" (Faith), "Elpis" (Hope), and "Agape" (Charity, Love). The main theme of the degree is indeed Light born again from the bosom of darkness thanks to the three theological virtues. On the right of the Master, **three crosses** are pictured. At the intersection of the middle one, taller than the others, there is a red "**Mystic Rose**" surrounded by a **crown of thorns** (Jesus's trial and crucifixion). On the other crosses, are a skull and crossbones. The apartment is adorned with garlands of flowers and foliage. On the altar, hung with **white** and **crimson red**, fringed with **gold**, are the Book of Constitutions, the Square and Compasses and a **Crux Ansata** of gold. On this cross, are written the black and white coded letters "**I**", "**N**", "**R**", "**I**". In front of the Master, are **two white square columns** with the words "**Immortality**" (on the right) and "**Infinity**" (on the left). In the West, stand **two similar columns** with the words "**Nature**" and "**Reason**". These words are visible when the inside lights are switched on. The various historical interpretations of this INRI tetragram are:

- "**Igne Natura Renovatur Integra**" (Alchemy): Entire Nature is renovated by fire
- "**Igne Nitrum Roris Invenitur**" (Alchemy & Hermeticism): By fire the nitre of the dew is revealed
- "**Iammim** (seas, water), **Nour** (fire), **Ruach** (air), **Iebeschah** (dry earth)" (Kabbalah)
- "**Insignia Naturae Ratio Illustrat**": Reason explains Nature's characters
- "**Infinitas Natura Ratioque Immortalitas**": Nature reflects infinity, and reason, immortality
- "**Ineffabile Nomen Rerum Initium**": The Ineffable Name is the beginning of all things
- "**Iusticia Nunc Reget Imperia**": Now justice rules over empires
- "**Indefesso Nusu Repellamus Ignorantiam**": By ceaseless efforts do we repel ignorance
- "**Intra Nobis Regnum Jehovah**": God's realm is within us
- "**Iustum Necare Reges Impios**" (Jesuits): It is lawful to slay irreligious kings
- "**Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum**" (Romans): Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews
- "**Ignatii Nationum Regumque Inimici**": Ignatius's disciples are the enemies of nations and kings

Regalia:

The **Jewel** is suspended from a crimson red collar on the chest. It is a pair of compasses with the points open to sixty degrees, resting on a segment of a graduated circle. On the lower part, on one side, is an eagle with its wings extended and head depressed; on the other side, is a pelican piercing its breast to feed its seven hatchlings through seven lines of blood. Above the eagle, is an effulgent crimson red cross; above the pelican, there is a **sprig of acacia** and a **crimson red cross** bearing a **crimson rose in bloom** at

the intersection of its arms. On the summit of the compasses, is a **crown**. On the graduated circle, on the pelican side the word "INRI" is written in coded letters; on the eagle side, it is the word "EMMANUEL". The jewel is of made of **gold**, except for the birds which are of **silver**: This is to remind us that the dualist, dialectic world should be transcended by Man in his struggle for wisdom and love.

The **cross**, in particular the Passion-Cross", refers to Jesus-Christ for Christians and symbolizes self-sacrifice for the sake and redemption of Mankind. However, in earliest Antiquity, the cross symbolized, inter alia, (a) the action of the active principle over the passive; the transcendental, creative, conceptive vertical principle fecundating the generative horizontal principle, to produce life and consciousness in Creation; (b) infinity and eternal Nature pointing to the four corners of the universe; and (c) stability of the whole universe and fixity of natural laws.

The **rose**, with its five petals (Human perfection), is a universal symbol of fire, love and beauty. It also refers to the circle and its innumerable potential radiuses, the universal wheel of life, with its innumerable creative spokes, the ceaseless rotation of which enables Man to take part in the evolution of the whole Universe towards perfect harmony and equilibrium, symbolized by the three columns. It is also an ancient emblem of the Sun and Light, as it was the emblem of Aurora, the Greek goddess of dawn. As such, it symbolizes hope in a new awakening, renewal, resurrection of life, and subsequently immortality also symbolized by the sprig of acacia.

Therefore, the **cross** and the **rose** together (Rose Croix) symbolize faith and hope, the dawn of eternal life, immortality won through sorrow and suffering.

The **pelican**, piercing its breast to feed its seven hatchlings, symbolizes devotedness, selflessness, **compassion**, altruism, self-sacrifice for Mankind, ultimate charity, also symbolized by Jesus-Christ's passion.

The **eagle**, the emblem of the Egyptian god Mendes, or Menthra made one with Amun-Ra, the Logos, the Sun king, symbolizes **wisdom**, supreme intelligence and reason, as "its wings bear it into a purer atmosphere, high towards the Light, away from the clouds".

As for the **compasses** surmounted by a crown, they symbolize equality and remind us that the highest Mason is always a "primus inter pares", the first among equals. They also symbolize equity and impartiality. The crown also reminds us of the sovereignty of the People, the right of self-determination and self-government.

The **apron**, on one side, is of white satin bordered with crimson red and embroidered with the pelican side of the jewel; the flap is also white and bordered with red; the other side is of black velvet with a large red passion-cross. The sash of the apron is red. The colors white and crimson symbolize light and dawn and represent Faith, Hope and Charity. For others, they represent purity and the blood of the pure in heart, shed for the defence of their values. The black side and the red passion cross symbolize the opposite: Death, murder, sorrow, despair, doubt and the darkness of destructive ignorance.

The **cordons** is of crimson red silk on one side, and black with a red passion rose over the heart, on the other side. It repeats the symbols of the apron.

All knights are dressed in black, with black gloves and they wear swords. In the first apartment, they wear a short white **chasuble** edged with black with a red passion cross over the heart as a symbol of grief over murderous, destructive violence.

Ceremony:

The first apartment for the reception of the candidate represents the world in chaos under the tyranny of **Evil**, following Man's "fall". The columns are in shattered ruins and the working tools are idle and scattered. The officers express deepest dejection, sorrow and despair, as the Sacred Word is again lost in the sense that reason, intellect, moral sense and the true conception of Deity have disappeared from the human scenery. Darkness, error and false philosophies are like the wrecks of the old system. The black crucifix represents evil and darkness and the persecution of those who fight for Truth. "Man has made not

only God, but also the Devil in his own image". Ignorance, hypocrisy, arrogance, oppression, injustice, misery, poverty prevail. It is a time when "the pampered capitalist stops his mills" and when "world labor is the slave of capital and the slave is fed as long as his work is profitable to the owner of the human chattel". These words by Albert Pike are reminiscent of the struggle between labor and capital during the industrial revolution in late XIXth century.

Against all odds, the candidate agrees to go in search of the Lost Word and immediately three "**constellations**" appear on the three pillars on which the words **Faith, Hope and Charity** are written to guide the candidate out of **doubt, dismay and despair**. Then, the constellations disappear and darkness rules again to symbolize the dialectics of the world where faith and distrust, hope and doubt, light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice alternate like day and night, Summer and Winter.

The search continues in the second apartment, in the North, the traditional place of darkness, which presents the **punishments and terrors** of hell resulting from sin and vice and the fiery passions they generate in the human heart. "Lament the sad condition of the human race in this vale of tears. The calamities of men and the agonies of nations, the darkness of the bewildered soul, oppressed by doubt and apprehension!". Some people think these punishments and terrors are actually inflicted on those who break God's Law; others consider them as the automatic earthly fate and punishment following the Law of cause and effect, or Karma.

However, the search goes on for the Lost Word and for an explanation of the "**great enigma of the universe**": How to reconcile the concept of a **good fatherly God, omniscient** (knowing the past, present and future of his Creation) **and omnipotent** (able to stop evil at anytime as He did with the Flood, to give Mankind a second chance, although He should have known from the start that Man would "fall") **and the ceaseless existence of sin, wrong, pain, suffering and injustice** in the world with the prosperity of the wicked and powerful, the poverty and persecution of the good and gentle, and the useless emptiness and superficiality of many religious creeds, unable to correct this state of matters. **Why does evil exist**, natural evil, such as famines, droughts and earthquakes, and moral evil, such as tyranny and murder, which afflict the wicked and the innocent indiscriminately? Masonry makes no judgment on whether evil is the shadow of good, the malignant influence of a personified principle (Satan, the adversary) or an opportunity for the practice of virtue in the face of adversity. The existence of evil is one of those mysteries that philosophy, religion and Masonry cannot explain. Man can only recognize that it exists and can be overcome by simple human exertion. Unfortunately all men cannot be heroes!!

Then, the candidate is encouraged by another "**constellation**" which appears in the four corners of the Lodge, with the words "**Infinity**", "**Nature**", "**Reason**", and "**Immortality**" corresponding to the letters "**I. N. R. I.**" originally used as the Romans' mockery nailed on the top of Jesus's cross (Jesus Nazareus Rex Judaeorum). **Infinity** is a natural concept in Man's mind, showing the divine spark in the human intellect. **Nature** is God's open book for Man to learn His teachings and understand the mysteries of God's creation through science, the highest expression of religion. **Reason** is God's gift that separates Mankind from the other forms of life and give it its superiority in the scale of Creation, as Man alone possesses this divine intellectual spark. **Immortality** is another divine concept and the hope of Mankind, naturally ingrained in Man's soul. These divine gifts are intended to give strength and courage to the candidate in his quest.

In the third apartment, the universe and Man are freed from the insolent dominion and tyranny of Evil. The Lost Word has been recovered. The universe is illumined by the Supreme Deity's true Light and freed from the principle of Evil maintained by philosophers and theologians of the past whose debates about the above mentioned enigma of the universe gave no hope, wisdom or peace to Mankind. On the other hand, Man's only reasonable attitude in front of Evil is to resist it as much as he can and make of this world the best of which Man is capable. This brings us back to the **Law of Love** recognized as the simple but sublime expression of divine nature. God is not a tyrant that Man should fear, as in the Old Testament, but as a father who is infinitely wise and good, merciful and loving, whom Man should love and whose attributes he should try and emulate as much as he can.

PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS:

1. **Religious Freedom and Masonic Teachings:** However Jesus of Nazareth may be considered, as a prophet, or a revolutionary, or the Son of God, or the Messiah, or a Bodhisattva, or simply a legendary figure, he is “the expounder of the New Law of Love”. In the Sermon on the Mount, he addresses the pure in heart, the peace-makers, the humble, the poor, the distressed and the pariahs of the world. “He taught and practised a pure and elevated morality, even at the risk and ultimate loss of his life”. Except for the Dalai Lama, very few people have taught to love one’s enemies, as they help you practice your own virtues, especially patience, courage, selflessness and self-knowledge through trials and ordeals. Jesus brought a message of faith, hope and charity at a time when “the old religions and philosophies had failed to give happiness and peace to the world, and the philosophers doubted of everything and had faith in nothing”. It is not his fault if his message, like those of other religions, was put to a bad use ending up in intolerance, violence and persecution led by “the cruelty of the priesthood and the ignorant ferocity of the mob”. This is why, “as a lover of all Mankind, laying down his life for the emancipation of his brethren, Jesus should be to all an object of gratitude and veneration”.

It is up to each individual Mason to apply degree symbols and traditions, whatever their origins, to his faith and creed and no Mason has the right to interpret these symbols and traditions for another, still less impose his own truth. Hiram Abif’s death, for instance, was interpreted as Jesus Christ’s sacrificial suffering, Jacques de Molay’s or Charles I’s execution, Charles Edward Stuart’s loss of his kingdom or the Sun’s descent at Winter’s solstice. Masonry “belongs to no one creed or school”, but recognizes that “in all religions, there is a basis of Truth”. Masonry indeed teaches the common core of wisdom and love found in all religious and philosophical attempts at discovering the essential reality and attributes of God and Man as well as the inner workings of society, with a view to improving it.

Therefore, “all good men of all creeds can subscribe to **Masonry’s teachings**” which focus on the following principles: (a) **God’s essence:** God is a single, absolute, infinite, uncreated, immutable and eternal Being or Principle, the “Zeruane Akherene” (Time without limit) in the Zend Avesta or the “Ancient of Days” in “Revelation”. He is the source, the sustainer and the law of all that exists; the “infinite Reason which is the soul of Nature”. He gave “Life which is the Light of Men, shining in darkness” (Re: Royal Arch symbolism). (b) **Soul:** Man has an immortal soul of identical nature with God, free will, reason and a right to freedom of thought and action; (c) **Men’s Equality:** “All men are equal brothers in God’s sight”. Therefore, all men of all religions can enlist under the Masonic banners to war against evil, intolerance and wrong”. (d) **Ultimate eradication of Evil.**

Hence, the basic universal tenets of the Degree: **Faith** in God and Mankind’s ultimate perfection; **Hope** in ultimate victory over Evil, Mankind’s recovery of its original divine nature and immortality of the Soul; and **Charity** to relieve Mankind of all wrong and suffering, and return to spiritual oneness with all Mankind and God.

2. **The Word or Logos:** God is ineffable (Aínsoph). He is **infinite and eternal**. He is also **constant universal motion under fixed laws**. “God was, is and will never be inert”. He is the primordial Being, the primordial Light that fills and penetrates all space. “There is no empty space”. Under those conditions, it is impossible for the human mind to conceive how God could **create**, that is to say **project Himself outside of, and within, Himself at the same time**. The same difficulty occurs when it is said that the universe is expanding, as it can only expand within itself! John’s Gospel expresses this difficulty when he says that the Logos was “near God” and “was God”. A Kabbalistic image tries to solve the quiz as follows: When God “decided” to create, “He withdrew within Himself and, in the void thus created around Him, He shot forth His “first born, His first emanation” who manifested God’s attributes and powers. This was the Word, the Logos (Christ, Ormuzd, Noüs, Sophia), that is “God’s conceptual and generative power which penetrates everything and without which nothing could subsist for an instant”, “the vehicle by which God projects and acts on the Universe”. This is a concept similar to the Platonic “Idea” which shaped the reality of the universe. The Logos organized the Chaos that preexisted “Creation”. “Ordo ab Chao”. Chaos is similar to the Buddhist concept of “Emptiness” or “Shunyata”, the formless, undifferentiated, infinite, eternal whole

which contains all that is and will be, in potential. Thus, "the Universe is the uttered Word of God, the thought of God pronounced". The Logos is also the first representative of the human race, the "Son of Man", the "Adam Kadmon" of the Kabbalah. He is "God's only way of making Himself accessible to human intelligence". However, the question remains: Why did God "will" to create, to project Himself instead of remaining within His own infinite, eternal unity and self-sufficient harmonious bliss? The only answer is: "The mysteries of Nature are beyond our finite comprehension".

3. **Dialectics of Creation:** All this implies that God, the primeval Unity in which all was in unison and harmony, had to split into two, Himself and His projection or Creation. This generated **duality** (distance between two points) and **dialectics** (opposition and complementarity of analogous contraries). Indeed, contraries are not antagonistic, as they appear to be, but simply complementary opposites like the Oriental Ying and Yang. The tension between opposites is the "grand law of creation" necessary for motion, the essence of life and consciousness. Nature also teaches us that its general equilibrium and balanced movement and harmony, precisely results from the interactive opposition of its innumerable contrary forces. "Harmony is the result of an alternating preponderance of forces". This applies to Man who, through his conscience, morality and willpower, can master and reconcile his own conflicting tendencies in order to establish equilibrium within himself between such dialectic forces as passivity and activity, female and male tendencies, right and duty, justice and mercy, authority and liberty, darkness and light; science and belief; reason and faith.

4. **Faith and Reason:** "Blind faith, imposed by education and circumstances" explains nothing: God, soul, immortality, infinity, eternity are mere words. However, "faith must flow out from some source within us". "Faith must, after all, have a foundation either in consciousness", as testified by spiritual teachers and holy books. As for **reason**, it avoids explaining the ultimate source of intangible phenomena such as light, energy, love, life or consciousness. It predicates that everything results from self-organizing matter, which does not explain thought generation, dream, conscience, memory, planning, devising, communication which exists even in animals. The word "instinct" to explain intangibles in animals is unsatisfactory. Reason cannot prove the existence of Man's immaterial soul. "It cannot measure the arcs of Infinity and Eternity". "It will deviate from the Truth if it believes nothing but that which it can demonstrate". For instance, "looking for a cause of Creation implies the necessity of a cause for that cause" ad infinitum. Therefore, looking for the first cause is an absurdity for reason and logics. Only a non-debatable arbitrary axiom, an article of faith, can solve the quiz by dictating that God is the "first cause" without a cause, since He is infinite and eternal. Reason and faith, like science and religion, are two different complementary domains which do not apply to the same reality and which are practiced through different means of investigation. Faith and reason are opposites in equilibrium, not antagonistic and hostile to each other". Reason and intellectual knowledge are often the necessary (but insufficient) bases for faith which is rather similar to spontaneous mutation. Therefore, faith and reason should never be mixed: "Faith succumbs to reasoning, just as science perishes when it is established, not as a temporary hypothesis, as it should, but as a religious dogma like the materialistic and rationalistic science that prevailed until the theory of relativity and quantum physics appeared.

5. **Evil and Suffering:** Dialectics is the source of the "great enigma of existence" which relates to the principle of Evil and subsequent suffering within Creation. All religions acknowledge Evil either as (a) the other face of a **dualistic God** (Manicheism), just as one and the same coin has two sides, one bright and the other dark, depending on the location of the source of light and the position of the observer; or (b) the **destructive principle**, one of the three attributes of the One God, the bases of the cyclical essence of universal life, namely creation (birth), duration (existence) and destruction (death), respectively personified by Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, the three aspects of the one God, Brahman, in Hinduism; or (c) the "**Adversary**" (Seth, Typhon, Ahriman, Lok, Satan, the Devil), a creature of divine proportion, endowed, like Man, with free will, the attribute of his superiority among all creatures, having chosen rebellion rather than humble obedience to the Law. (d) Evil is also often assimilated with **brute matter**, the body, as opposed to the Spirit. Only "a Devil indeed could relieve God of the odium of being the author of sin"! However, the philosophical question remains: How to comprehend the coexistence of "a God of infinite love and beneficence ruling the universe and "some great remorseless (blind, merciless) Fate

and necessity making Mankind's suffering and sorrows". How to reconcile the principle of One infinitely good, omniscient, omnipotent God and the principle of suffering, particularly, the suffering of the innocent, starting with the food chain: For instance, the lion is innocent since it is not of its own deliberate will and conscience that it is naturally attracted, for its own survival, by the flesh of the still more innocent gazelle. Its teeth are specifically made to tear the flesh of the gazelle which thus dies in excruciating pains. Both torturer and tortured are innocent. This is so absurd and vicious that it cannot be a good God's will. But whose will is it then, if ever the word "will" applies?

The Buddhist principles of "**suchness**", "**karma**" and "**reincarnation**" give an apparently more rational, though still unsatisfactory, axiomatic explanation: "**Suchness**" means that everything is what it is and nobody will ever know the original cause and reason of it all. It is from the death and rot of seeds that new flowers are born. Therefore, Man's only reasonable attitude should be to confront reality as it is and struggle to alleviate suffering through active compassion and loving-kindness for all sentient beings. As for **Karma**, it implies that suffering is not a punishment, but the automatic result of evil thoughts and actions, according to the inflexible and blind universal law of cause and effect, and the only way to make the culprit realize the pains he/she has inflicted on others in present and past lives. Such painful realization over a sequence of **reincarnations** is the only way to improve oneself gradually and eventually become perfect and liberated in Nirvana.

Albert Pike attempts at presenting a **justification** for human suffering as follows: "Evil furnishes Man with the means of exercising his free will" that ensures his superiority among God's creatures. "God is a good, kind, beneficent, merciful and loving father, who feels for us and sympathizes with us, and sends us pain and want and disaster only that they may serve to develop in us the virtues and excellences that befit us to live with Him hereafter". "Future life is to be attained by purification through trials and successive states of reward and punishment". "The trials of life are the blessings of life in the sense that they trigger the best that Man can be and do by reacting to these trials.

Albert Camus, the French novelist, whose works focused on absurdity in the world, would probably have found these justifications for suffering at least cynical, if not sadistic. It is as if one justified knocking one's head with a hammer as the only way to feel how good life is when one stops!!

6. Doubt and Fear: These philosophical speculations often fail to convince and Man's mind continues to experience **despair, dismay, doubt and fear**, "the darkness of the bewildered soul, oppressed by doubt and apprehension" in the first apartment. Albert Pike traces the origin of suffering in Man's vanity, cruelty, hypocrisy and selfishness.

Man's vanity: "Man's vanity causes him to pretend to himself that he is like unto God in intellect, sympathies, powers and passions". "He creates a God out of himself". "The **vulgar** imagined the attention of the gods to be continually centered upon the earth and Man". "No Sage has ever believed this popular creed". A pure Summer sky and some knowledge in astrophysics tend to demonstrate Man's unimportance in the scale of Creation. Are not religions and philosophies after all but the delusions and fantastic creations of human vanity and self-conceit?

Man's cruelty: Are masses of men wiser or better than animals? Animals do not torture, exterminate or kill for pleasure other animals or living beings below them, as men have always done. "Men enjoy agonies inflicted on those whose opinions are contrary to his own, upon subjects totally beyond their comprehension. "There has not been a moment when the whole world was ever at peace". "The gloomy and dreary records of the old dead and rotten ages" demonstrate that Man's history is a permanent (most often self-inflicted) martyrdom. "Men fabricate the infernal enginery of their own destruction" and "Mankind is drunk with blood and drenched with gore".

Man's hypocrisy: "The New Law of Love is accepted by only a small portion of Mankind after 2000 years". Instead, men are "thanking their God of Love for victories and carnage". "Press and pulpit exult universal murder". "God is thanked in the churches for bloody butcheries, and the remorseless devastators,

even when swollen by plunder, are crowned with laurels and receive ovations" (e.g. the statue erected in Whitehall honoring Royal Air Force Marshal "Bomber Harris" famous for ordering the destruction of Dresden with phosphorus bombs which killed over 80,000 civilians and refugees in two nights, which made him worse than Air Marshall Goering in Coventry). "The whole Christian world (where the New Law of Love came from) was (and is still) watered with blood (Constantinople, Ireland, World Wars).

Man's **selfishness and greed**: "Advance in civilization increases selfishness which rules supreme": "Universal pursuit of wealth becomes the whole business of life. It dethrones God and pays divine honors to Mammon and Baalzebub". "Advance of freedom leads to license and anarchy" or, paradoxically, to political correctness, which is intellectual terrorism. "Increase of population and commercial and manufacturing prosperity lead to destitution and debasement" and "everywhere in the world, labor is, in some shape, the slave of capital, to be fed only so long as his work is profitable to the owner of the human chattel" (Albert Pike).

Under those conditions, no wonder the reasonable Man is filled with **despair and doubt**: Is there indeed in Man any capacity for indefinite individual or collective improvement and progress? "Are men a spark of essential Light and Reason?" "Are they really suited for an immortal life?" "Why would death change the base nature of a base soul"? By what right can Man "hope for luxurious enjoyment of sensual beatitudes in Heaven?"

7. The Concept of the Redeemer: Individual Man can be instrumental in his own salvation. However, he does not seem ever to be strong enough to change the fate of Mankind as a whole. Hence, the necessity felt by many for another article of faith, a divine redeemer (Jesus Christ, Krishna, Horus, Balder, Kioun-Tse). For Christians, the Logos is the Redeemer par excellence: He is indeed endowed with the power of miracles, purity (generally with a virgin birth), humble sanctity (washing his disciples' feet), suffering a most painful death (Osiris, Jesus Christ), universal knowledge (having descended to Hell as well as ascended to Heaven). All this entitles him to free the Universe and Man from duality and sin, regenerate them and reestablish primitive harmony and unity. However, the question remains: Why all this long-lasting trial and universal martyrdom to go back to square one, where Mankind already returned once after the Flood, according to the legend?

8. The Mystical Way back to Paradise Lost: After reviewing these hopeless efforts at finding a philosophical solution to the great enigma of the universe, let us consider the only escape offered by this Degree. "In opposition to the anthropomorphism of Jewish Scriptures, Alexandrian Hellenistic Jews tried to purify the idea of God from all admixture with the human". Aristotle also complained that men had given human forms to their gods. For Philo of Alexandria as well as for Neoplatonists and Gnostics, God was no personal deity, but a transcendental Spirit or Principle whose immediate self-manifestation could be obtained by men, the Sons of God, through mystical contemplation and meditation in their Souls. Anyone indeed that has ever deeply concentrated in peaceful solitude on the great riddles of the universe must have felt that his **contemplative Soul** is "the silent inner word of the Spirit", to quote Apollonius of Tyana. The Soul is indeed "the pure principle in Man, the immortal Spirit, proceeding from the Supreme Being", illumined by Divine Intelligence, whenever it ascends toward the sublime treasures".

The Soul is indeed the vehicle for Man's **mystical ascent**: "No Soul can rise, except by the loftiest flight of contemplation", "the highest end which Man's spiritual life can reach". "The Supreme Entity can indeed be known only by an intuition of the mind, transcending itself, emancipating itself, through meditation and contemplation, from the limits of the material envelope of the body to attain pure consciousness, the intuition of the Absolute Being". "The Soul and its divine life, thus released from the bonds of matter and seeming to die to the world, can be reunited with the one Divine Essence. Would not this be the real recovery of the Lost Word?"

CONCLUSION:

Let us not bother about the ultimate cause of causes pre-dating the Big Bang. The world is what it is and let us focus on how to deal with it so that Good and the New Law of Love may prevail, whenever! This requires a constant fight within ourselves and in society since our Masonic objectives are eradication of Evil, purification of Man, development of Knowledge through arts and sciences exploring the Great Book of Nature, and relief of Humanity. Hence the basic principles of the Degree, namely: **Faith** in God and Mankind, which is **Wisdom**; **Hope** in the eventual victory over Evil, Mankind's return to its original divine nature, and immortality of the Soul, which gives **Strength**; and **Charity** towards all living creatures through respect of life, tolerance, trust, and selflessness, which is **Beauty**. This requires self-control, liberality, peacefulness, cheerfulness, friendship and loving kindness, and avoiding impurity, hatred, selfishness and, last but not least, intellectual and spiritual stagnation.

Regrettably indeed,"the great majority of Mankind makes little or no use of its divine gifts", Soul and Reason, "choosing rather the simple life of physical or other utilitarian labor, punctuated by trivial hobbies and passive recreation". "The masses of men care only, at worst, to wrangle, hate, envy and think of themselves alone and, at best, to eat, sleep, be clothed and wallow in sensual pleasures. They sleep like peasants on the lava slopes of the Vesuvius". "Those who care for nothing beyond the interests and trivial pursuits of this life are uninterested in the great existential problems. The swine also are indifferent to the great riddles of the universe".