



Virtual Degree Communication The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry



Southern Jurisdiction, USA

These materials are intended to provide for the communication of all the degrees of the Southern Jurisdiction, but ONLY with prior approval by the applicable SGIG or Deputy.



REUNION INTRODUCTION



Welcome to the **[your valley]**, of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States.

The lessons you are about to receive do not materially differ from those of the Blue or Symbolic Lodges. Like the Third Degree, the Scottish Rite Degrees are presented in both ritualistic and dramatic form. The conferral of each of these Degrees requires the active participation of an Exemplar. Therefore, many or all of you will have an opportunity to participate as a Candidate. Whether or not you are actually in a particular drama, each and every one of you will remain an active participant.

The teachings of the Scottish Rite are a course of instruction in comparative religion, philosophy, ethics, morality, history and mythology, all taught through the medium of allegory and symbols. As well, they contribute a deeper understanding of the Blue Lodge symbols. The goal of every Masonic Degree, of whatever Rite, is to inspire the individual pursuit of knowledge. The Scottish Rite Degrees also portray the history of man's search for truth. We do not assert the accuracy of the legends or offer an interpretation of the lessons of the Degrees. We only present them as worthy of consideration.



INTRODUCTION (cont'd)



The structure of the Scottish Rite is naturally progressive, though the lessons taught and the virtues inculcated in one Degree are not superior to those of another. You will observe that the Degrees are not strictly chronological, although their moral and intellectual teachings become progressively comprehensive. The Scottish Rite employs symbols borrowed from many great religions of the world, but it does not assert the superiority of the Lost, or Ineffable, Word of the Hebrews, the True Word of the Christians, or the Sacred Word of the Hindus above those of other religions or each other. These are issues each must decide for himself.

The Scottish Rite Degrees are among the most dramatic and instructive in all of Freemasonry. They derive from a very productive period in the creation of Masonic ritual. It is known that French and German Masons, influenced by the ideals of the Enlightenment, created additional Degrees which they superimposed upon those of Craft Masonry. Several of these developed into the so-called higher grades or Degrees that, in fact, expanded the lessons and symbols of Ancient Craft Masonry. Eventually, some of these reached America where they were organized into the present Scottish Rite. In 1801 the first Supreme Council of this Rite was formed in Charleston, South Carolina. All Scottish Rite Supreme Councils are descended from this original Masonic Body. Thus, we are honored to be members of the Scottish Rite under the Mother Supreme Council of the World.



Explanation of the Scottish Rite Bodies



The Fourth through the Fourteenth Scottish Rite Degrees are known as the “Ineffable Degrees” because these Degrees treat the rediscovery of the ineffable name of God. By “ineffable” we mean “incapable of being expressed in ordinary language.” The Degrees are contained in the Lodge of Perfection, which is so named because they bring to conclusion the story commenced in the Blue Lodge, teach the quest for light, and inspire the awakening of one’s moral and intellectual nature.

The Fifteenth through Eighteenth Degrees are conferred in a Chapter Rose Croix. The first two in this series focus on the legend of rebuilding Solomon’s Temple. The last two relate the story of the imminent coming of the Christian Savior. In the Eighteenth Degree, Jesus of Nazareth is portrayed as an example of the messiah or savior described in many of the world’s faiths.

In connection with this, Brethren, it is important to remember that Freemasonry cannot and will not advocate or teach a belief in the creeds or ideologies of any one religion. It does not presume to tell its members what to believe. All good Masons may receive the Scottish Rite Degrees. They are presented as drama, not as dogma, for the purpose of instruction. Its ritual, among other things, recounts man’s search for truth and his attempt to find his place in the universe.



Explanation of the Scottish Rite Bodies (cont'd)

The Nineteenth through Thirtieth Degrees comprise the Council of Kadosh. Kadosh is a Hebrew word meaning “holy” and/or “consecrated.” These Degrees are philosophical, mystical, and chivalric. They are designed to further explore the moral and ethical lessons taught in the Lodge of Perfection and Chapter Degrees.

The last two Degrees you will receive at this Reunion are presented by a Consistory of Masters of the Royal Secret. The Thirty-First Degree reminds us of the ultimate task of man’s self-examination. The Thirty-Second Degree teaches us that the search for perfection is ongoing.

You will find all of the Scottish Rite Degrees fascinating and no doubt be surprised to see familiar stories cast in unfamiliar settings. You will, for example, witness the capture and execution of the murderers of the Master Hiram in a manner derived from the old French rituals. It will be strikingly different from the legend you were taught in the Craft Degrees, which came to us from Great Britain.



The Meaning of the Chivalric Degrees



The chivalric Degrees lead us to a metaphor often misunderstood by both Masons and non-Masons alike. As the knights of the crusades sought the liberation of the Holy Land, we seek to liberate ourselves from the bonds of intolerance, prejudice, and ignorance. Thus, in some Degrees, we are styled “Knights.” We believe that when man is unfettered from these chains, he will naturally seek to work with his fellowmen in the great causes of humanity. The pinnacle of chivalric symbolism in Scottish Rite Masonry is the Great Masonic Camp.

It is composed of nested polygons whose significance will be unfolded to you. Superimposed upon these nested polygons are symbolic camps representing the Degrees of Craft Masonry and those of the Scottish Rite. The banners shown contain symbols that will be explained after you have been properly prepared to receive them.

We present it here as a hint of the symbolism of the 32nd Degree.





Scottish Rite Degree Origins



The sources of the lessons and symbols of the Scottish Rite are many and varied. They derive from such sources as early Christian traditions, symbolic alchemy, and a special form of Jewish mysticism known as the Kabbalah. In fact, the Kabbalah is asserted by many scholars as the source of much Blue Lodge symbolism.

Contrary to popular belief, the Kabbalah is not a system of magic or divination, but is rather a branch of esoteric Jewish philosophy seeking to interpret passages from the Bible. For example, early students of the Kabbalah noticed that the phrase “And God said.... and it was so” occurred ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. They believed that as the light flows outward, or emanates, from the sun, so the energy of creation flowed from God by His Word and created the universe. Three of these emanations were called Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, the metaphorical supports of the Blue Lodge. The Lord’s Prayer also mentions three: Kingdom, Power, and Glory. The Kabbalah and its connection to Masonic symbols will be further explained in some of the Degrees you will witness. As well, other sources of Masonic symbolism will be provided.



Scottish Rite Symbology



Symbols may be employed for several reasons: first, metaphysical and spiritual concepts, such as descriptions of God, cannot be expressed readily in ordinary language; second, symbols can provide a metaphorical garment to present ideas on several levels, according to the fitness of the student to receive the knowledge; and third, symbols help us remember the instruction we have received. The great Masonic scholar of the nineteenth century, Albert Pike, called symbols “the soul of Masonry.”

Since we welcome all good men of whatever faith and practice tolerance, a distinction between Masonry and religion must be made. Religion, of necessity, asserts dogmatic authority, while Masonry simply counsels reflection on the great mysteries of the human condition. Masonry cannot—and will never—assert authority as to creeds, submit prophets for judgment, offer writings from God, or reveal divine truths beyond simple virtue and morality.

It is essential to remember that Freemasonry does not pretend to offer salvation of the soul. Each Brother must return to his Church, Mosque, Synagogue, or other place of worship to discover for himself the means of his salvation. Masonry is concerned with the here and now, and attempts to make this world a better place to live and us better people while we are here.



Your Requirements



Participation in a Scottish Rite Reunion does not require any memorization. Rather you are being presented simple lessons of practical morality and the sublime teachings of religious philosophy so that you may live them and teach others. You will also be presented with several resources for self-study, so that you can continue to learn even after your Reunion has ended.

Sometimes Valleys may find it necessary to dispense with the full dramatic presentation of the Degrees and they may be communicated by a brief summary of the lessons contained therein. Such a communication is not to be considered a reflection of the relative importance of the lessons of the degrees.

By your participation in this Virtual Reunion, your only subsequent requirements are that you attend a regular reunion at your earliest opportunity, and that you are mindful of the obligations you are about to undertake as a true and just Scottish Rite Mason.

May God bless you and the members of the Supreme Council.

So mote it be.



Continuing Your Journey



This Virtual Reunion is not the completion of your instruction in Scottish Rite Masonry; rather it is the beginning. The continuation of your Masonic learning will be left in your own hands. It is expected that you will perform faithfully the responsibilities enjoined upon you in the receipt of these lessons. You have been prepared to receive them in your Symbolic Lodge. Here, indeed, shall the attentive ear receive from the instructive tongue the knowledge which should be deposited in the faithful breast.

You may enhance your understanding of the Degree by reading the appropriate chapter in the book, *A Bridge to Light*. We also recommend taking advantage of the *Master Craftsman Program*, which will take you step-by-step through some of our most important Masonic teachings, including *Albert Pike's Morals & Dogma*.

And now your teachings begin with the *Lodge of Perfection*....



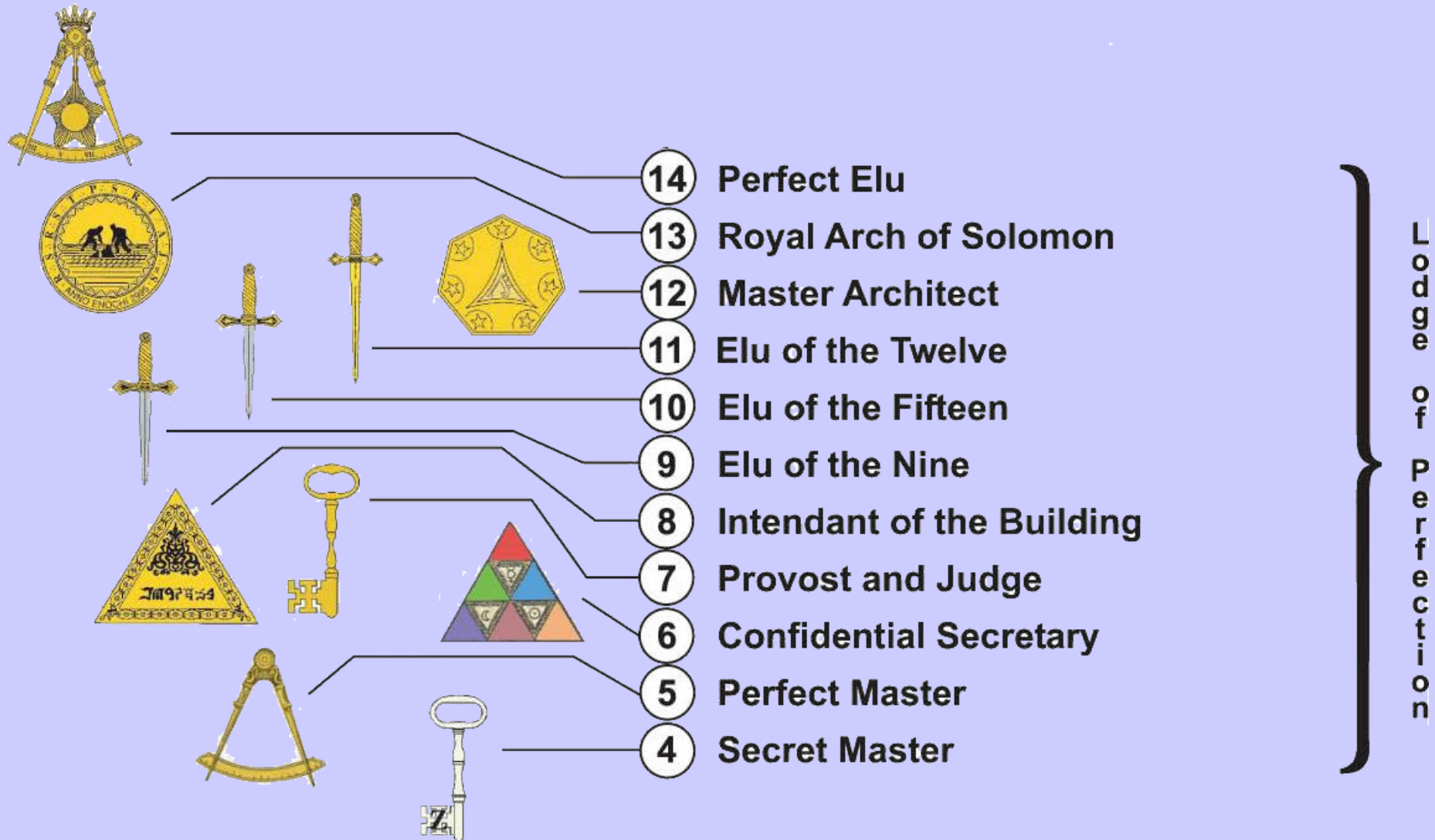
LODGE OF PERFECTION*



As mentioned previously, the Scottish Rite is composed of four constituted “bodies.” The first of these is known as the Lodge of Perfection.

The Lodge of Perfection governs a group known as the Ineffable Degrees. They begin with the Fourth Degree, and culminate with the discovery of the “Ineffable Name of God,” or The Lost Word of Freemasonry, which is discovered in the Thirteenth Degree. Its explanation and meaning will be presented in the Fourteenth Degree, also known as the Degree of Perfection.

LODGE OF PERFECTION*

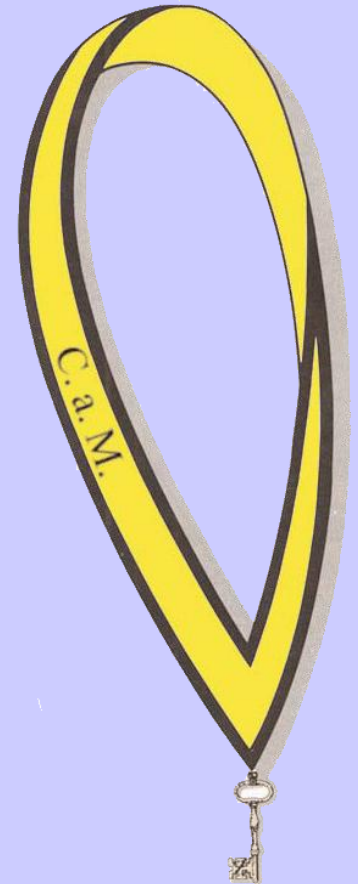
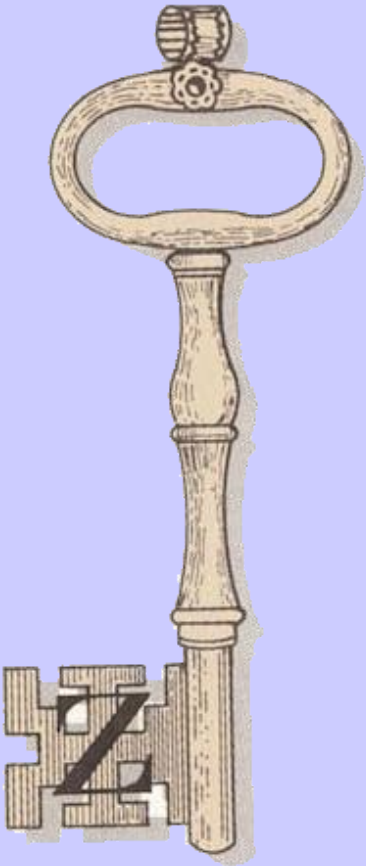




4TH DEGREE SECRET MASTER

MANDATORY

DUTY FORMS AN INDESTRUCTIBLE FOUNDATION





SYNOPSIS*



The Fourth Degree opens in the sadness and sorrow that followed the untimely death of our Grand Master Hiram Abif. In the course of these circumstances the candidate learns that a man is not fit to commence the ascent toward the heights on which Truth sits enthroned without first appreciating and embracing the value of Truth itself, and of Virtue. We learn of Duty, of our mission as Masons to serve our fellows, our country and mankind, and of the nine great Masonic virtues built upon three great pillars: Truthfulness, Endurance, Independence, Justice, Mercy, Equity, Silence, Devotion, and Attainment. You are given the key to self-knowledge, and your feet are set firmly upon the path which leads there, and the way to achieve that goal is pointed out.

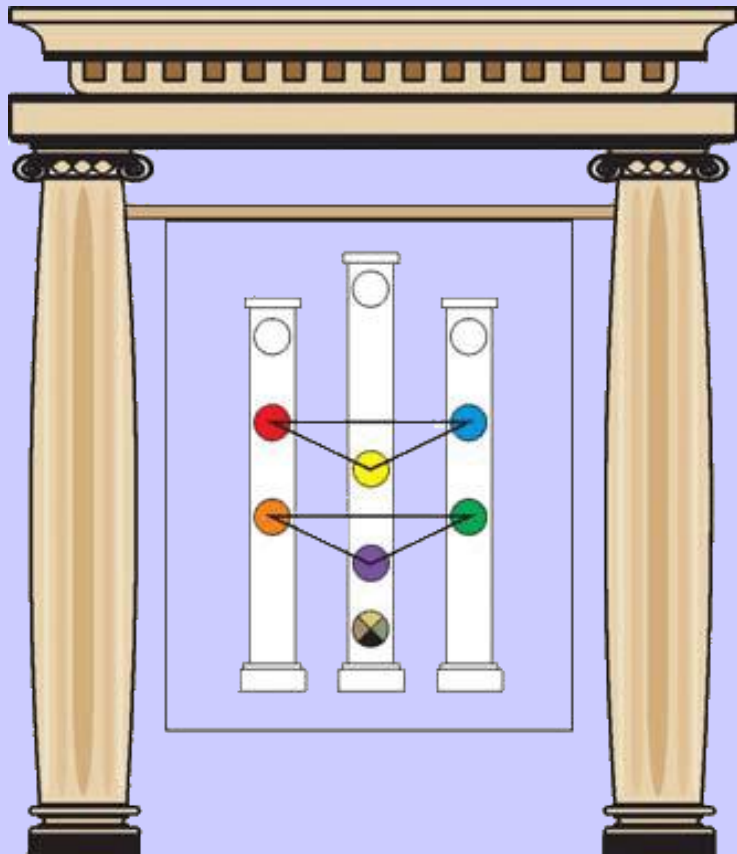
You must learn to work for the work's sake, without desire of approbation or reward. Work and action have their own rewards. It is the duty of a man who seeks and accumulates greater knowledge to know and practice those ethical and moral principles which demonstrate Man's highest, and most noble nature.

As you begin your climb to the skies of spiritual knowledge, your eyes are anointed to discern truth from error. You are given the Key to the Mysteries, and it devolved upon you to discover its use. You will be introduced to the Kabbalah as a system of mystical thought, and shown the glyph, or map, used by the Kabbalists to illustrate the world and all its marvelous parts. It is also introduced as a key to the symbolic language necessary for reading and comprehending the deeper meanings of Scottish Rite and Masonic symbolism in general.



SYNOPSIS*

Just as ideas may be vocalized in different languages, abstract and esoteric concepts may be represented by different symbols. The Kabbalah, originally an ancient Hebrew system, is here introduced as a flexible yet comprehensive means for categorizing information—be it cosmic processes, psychological states of mind, or Divine virtues. It is presented as a symbolic system, not as a religious one.

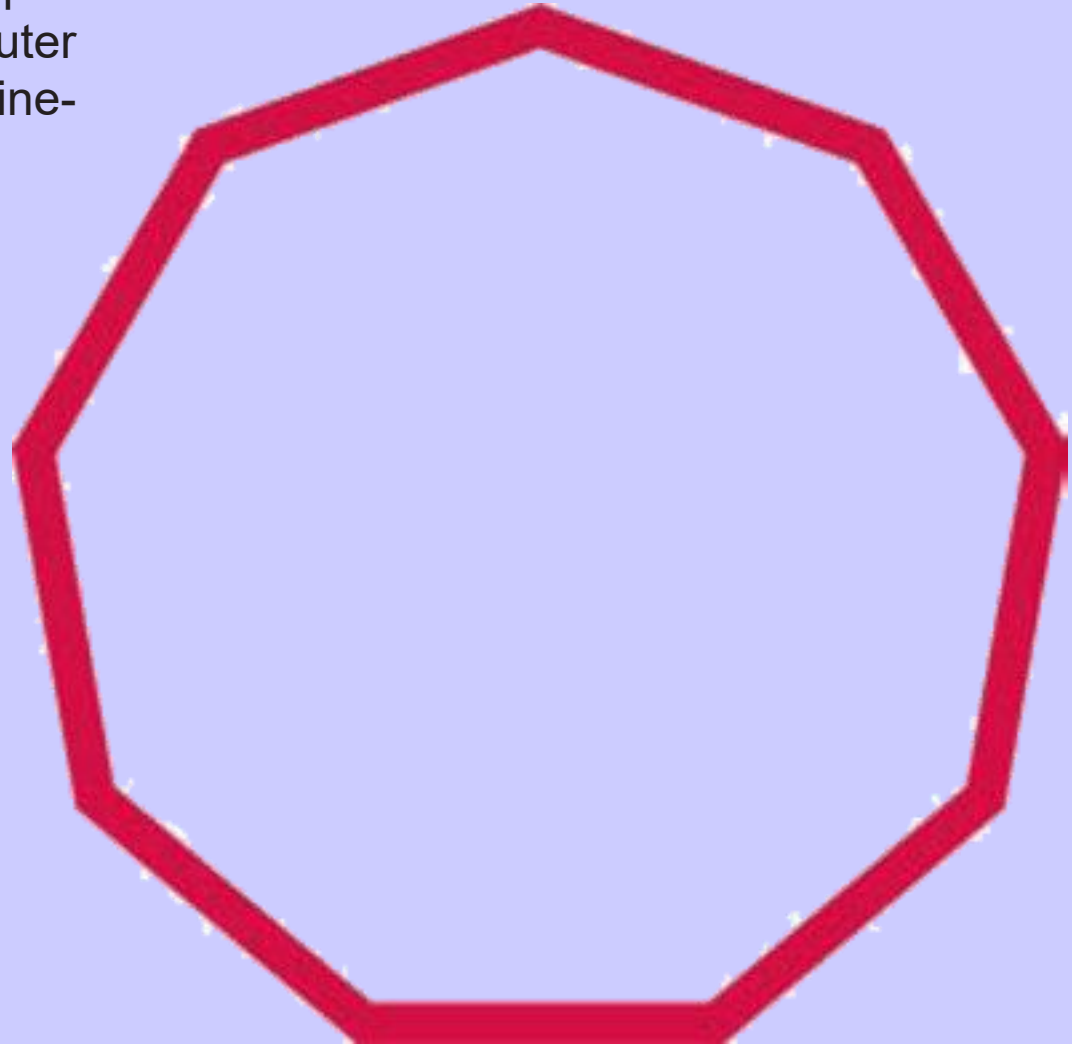




SYNOPSIS*



Recall the great Masonic Camp shown in the prologue to this Reunion. Its outer perimeter is that of a nonagon or nine-sided figure. It is a symbolic foundation on which you will build as you progress through the Scottish Rite.





COMMUNICATION



We will recall that the third degree of the symbolic lodge treats of the death of the architect of King Solomon's temple. Therefore, as we begin to learn the lessons taught in the Scottish Rite, we find this allegory continued and the lessons taught by it enhanced. The first eleven degrees are those of the Lodge of Perfection. These degrees are also called "ineffable", since they are concerned with the inexpressible nature of deity, symbolized by the name which was forbidden by the priests of ancient Israel to be spoken.

The first of the ineffable degrees, properly called the fourth degree, is titled Secret Master. By the receipt of its lessons, one is passed from the square to the compasses; That is, he begins to rise above earthly concerns and seeks spiritual knowledge. For there, and not upon the earth, are truth and the lost word to be found. This degree is bestowed so that we may at once begin the performance of more exalted duties

The death of the Master Hiram is a continual reminder of our own mortality and that we must constantly labor lest death overtake us before our spiritual building is completed.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Great Architect of the Universe and of the Brethren now here assembled, do most solemnly and sincerely covenant with them, and bind myself by vow to Him, that I will never reveal any of the secrets of this Degree to any person in the world not entitled to them.

I furthermore promise and vow that I will- bear true allegiance to the Supreme Council of the Inspectors General of the Thirty-third Degree, for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States, so long as I continue to reside or be within its jurisdiction, and will pay due obedience to its Regulations, Statutes, and Edicts.

My steps shall ever be guided & directed by the Nine Great Lights of a Secret Master, and I will extend and increase the virtues thereby represented.

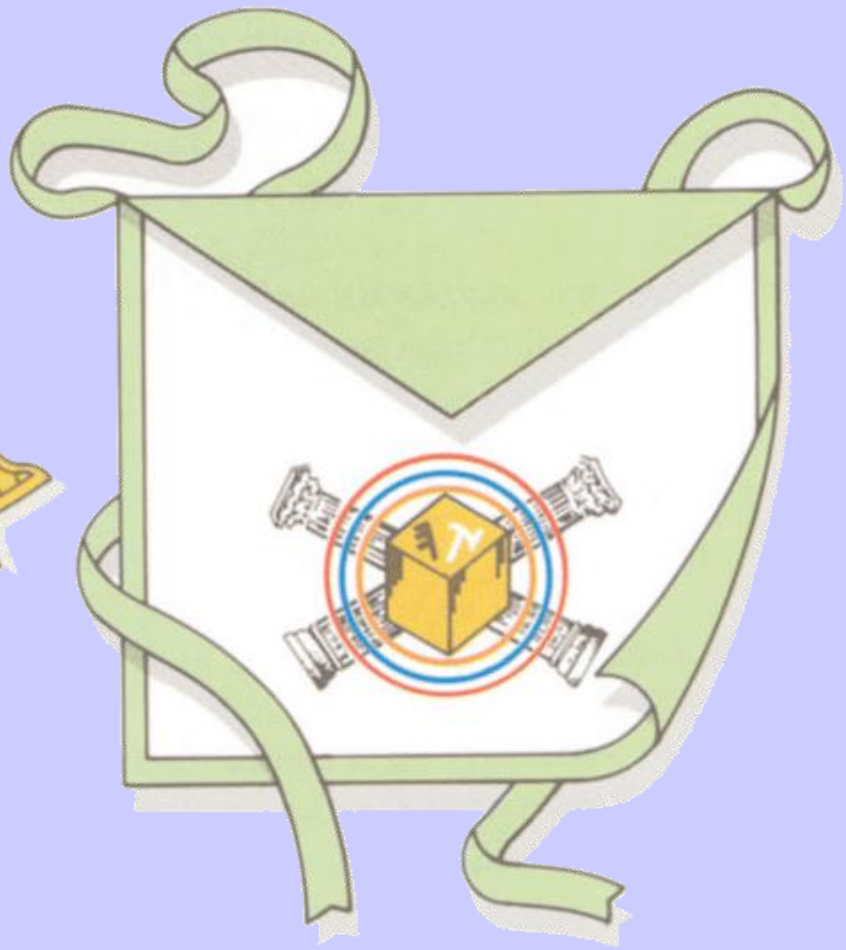
I furthermore promise and vow that I will strive to be faithful unto death to every trust confided in me and to every duty required of me.

All of this I do most solemnly and sincerely vow, binding myself under the no less a penalty than feeling a genuine remorse for having shamed the honor of all true Freemasons, should I willfully violate this, my solemn obligation as a Fourth Degree Secret Master.



5TH DEGREE PERFECT MASTER

DEATH IS THE PORTION OF EVERY MAN





SYNOPSIS



As the Second degree in the Lodge of Perfection, we continue with the legend of our Master, Hiram. In the exemplification of this degree, the drama portrays the funeral of Hiram Abiff, the architect of King Solomon's temple. It will be recalled that the Third degree of the symbolic lodge portrayed Hiram's murder before his work could be completed. The funeral ceremony teaches us of the inevitability of death and of our need to be prepared for it. Which may come to us at any time. For us, Hiram is a model of human perfection, preferring death to the loss of his virtue—his is an example well worthy of emulation.

The symbols of this degree are already familiar to you: the urn in which his heart, the seat of the affections, was deposited; The coffin which contained his, and shall contain our, earthly remains; And the sprig of acacia, a symbol of immortality. Here we are named Perfect Masters, not because we are perfect, but because we seek to attain that perfection or completion of character so nobly attained by that Great Architect.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



The Fifth Degree commemorates and recounts the funeral ceremonies of our Grand Master Hiram Abif, and in so doing, it teaches the sobering lessons of Death. We are admonished that death may take us at any moment, and that life is fleeting. We do not have time to tarry by the wayside. As well, we have a duty to our family and our loved ones to see that our affairs are in order, and those whom we love are well taken care of when we depart this life.

In a sense, be contemptuous of Life. Be always ready to die for a great principle, to not regard death as the worst end that can befall a man. Always be encouraged towards self sacrifice in the case of duty, or as honor shall require it. The most excellent rewards of human virtue are the approbation of good men. You are reminded to do that which is right because it is right.



COMMUNICATION



Man's mortality makes the practice of virtue a demand more than a choice. Virtue is the light that shines outside the shadow of death. Our bodies may be taken by death, but it cannot touch the memory of us which we leave as a heritage to our family and our brothers.

Even so, indeed, we lament the passing of our brothers whom God has seen fit to take from among us. Their cares are over, ours stand yet before us. We must remain simple and dignified in our expression of grief and readily take up the cause of virtue in their stead. Thus will the memory of our virtues, in turn, be an example for those who succeed us.

We must take care that death does not surprise us, or that we leave behind unfulfilled obligations and worthless memories. The eulogies of our friends should need no more substance than the simple truth that our words were promises; Our promises were contracts; We took no wages before they were earned and withheld from no man his due.

Prepare yourself now to take the obligation of this degree. By it you will assume those virtues which distinguish us as perfect masters; Industry, honesty and plain-dealing.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, In the presence of the Grand Architect of the Universe and this Lodge of Perfect Masters, do hereby promise that I will hereafter practice that which befits the character of a Perfect Master;

And especially, that I will be honest in my contracts, sincere in affirming, frank in bargaining, and faithful in performing, with all men;

That I will pretend not what is false, nor cover what is true;

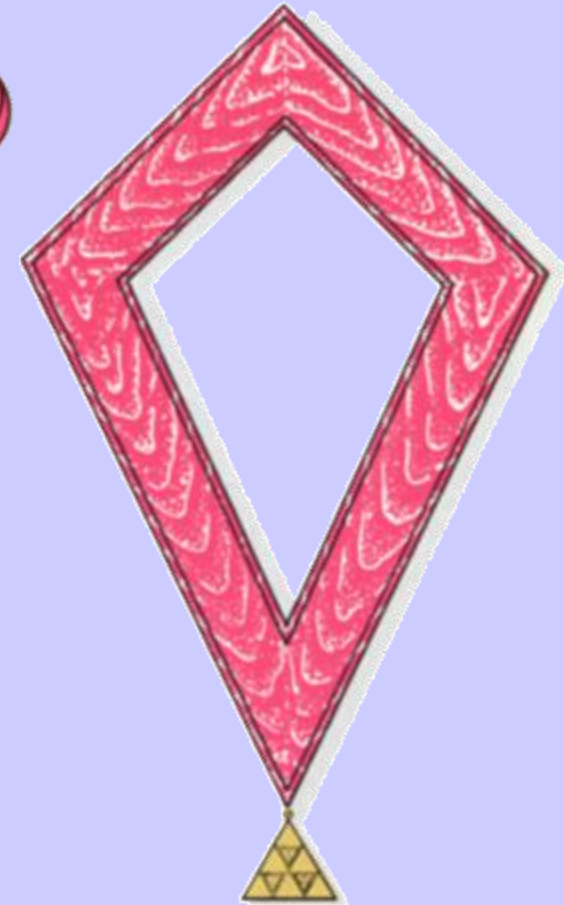
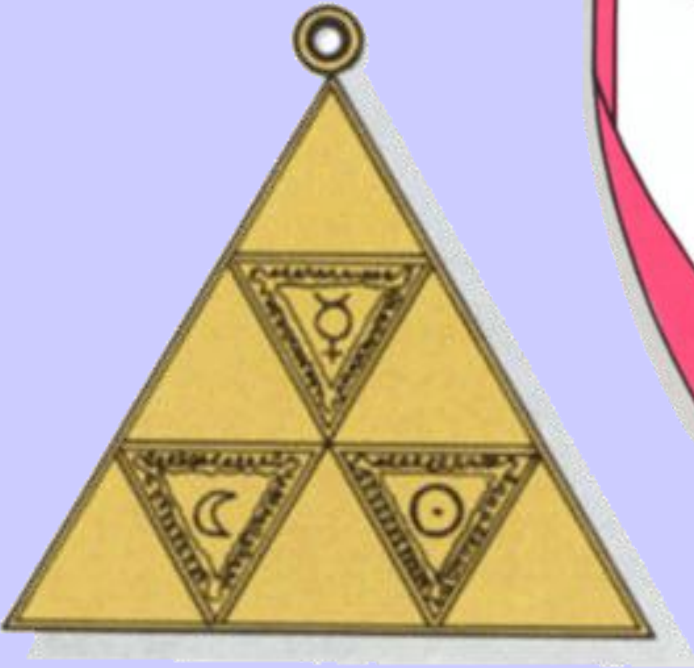
And that the measure of my affirmation, or denial, shall be the honest understanding of the person with whom I contract, in any matter whatever.

Unto all of which I do pledge my faith and honor as man and Mason.



6TH DEGREE INTIMATE SECRETARY

ZEAL MUST BE TEMPERED WITH DISCRETION





SYNOPSIS



In the Sixth Degree we discover Solomon and Hiram of Tyre in a private discussion. In the course of the discussion, Solomon's friend Zabud is thought to be eavesdropping and threatened with punishment. In the drama that follows you will be taught the excellence of disinterestedness and generosity; that it is the duty of every true Mason to heal dissensions and differences, and to restore Peace, Concord and Harmony among men. You are taught the necessity of good faith, fidelity, self-sacrifice and generosity. You are shown the value of self-control, of never rushing to judgement, and the nature of true friendship. Zeal for service is encouraged, reminding us to be zealous in our services to God.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



This degree takes place in the audience chamber of King Solomon where Hiram, King of Tyre, has come in anger to complain about the dilapidated condition of the cities which Solomon gave him in return for his assistance in the building of the temple. Solomon's faithful servant, Zabud, overhears the argument, not recognizing King Hiram and fearing for Solomon's safety, he remains to listen. Discovered by King Hiram in this act, interpreted as eavesdropping at best and spying at worst, he is nearly slain. Only the cautious words of Solomon save his life. When it was discovered that his motives were pure, he is rewarded rather than punished.

This simple story teaches us the importance of zeal tempered by discretion. We also receive the counsel of King Hiram given to Solomon. "Obey not only the letter, but the spirit of the law." We hear also of the priceless gift of friendship whose worth exceeds all earthly things.



COMMUNICATION



Zeal in the service of another is the noble expression of selflessness. Generosity as a Masonic virtue is more than charity. It is a commitment also of time and talent, sacrifice and dedication. Do not give measure for measure, but rather return abundantly to repay the smallest favor.

The man who is owed gratitude keeps the scales in his favor. As men we were created to care for and nourish one another and thus we are counseled to be zealous in the practice of that truly Masonic tenant: Brotherly Love.

Zeal without discretion is fanaticism. The fanatic is ruled by his passions rather than by his reason; He is led by emotions rather than judgment.

The wise Mason is a peaceful man, avoiding violence and argument. When our brethren are in disagreement, we should not take sides and incite more argument. Let us instead seek that common ground which unites men of reason and respects honest differences of opinion.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, Do hereby promise that I will be ever zealous in the service of Masonry;

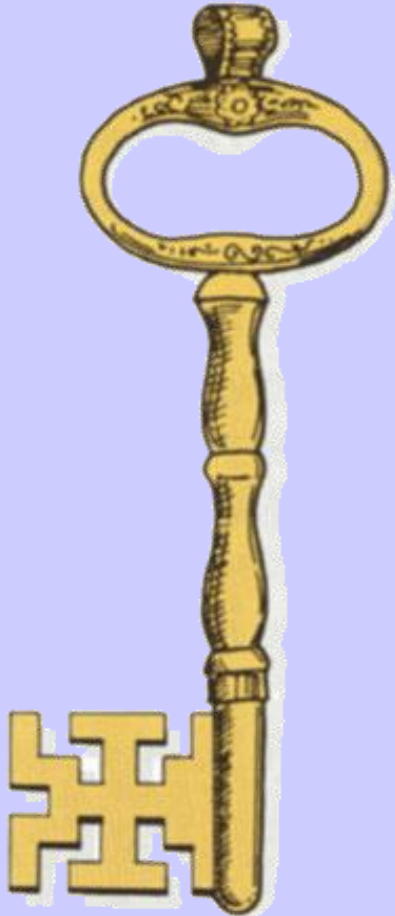
That I will, at all times, endeavor to heal all dissension, settle all disputes and reconcile all quarrels among my brethren under honorable circumstances for all concerned.

To this, I pledge my honor as a Mason, so help me God!



7TH DEGREE PROVOST AND JUDGE

"NONE ARE GUILTLISS IN THE EYES OF GOD"





SYNOPSIS



In the Seventh Degree King Solomon's Temple is under construction. A dispute among workers arises that requires arbitration. The degree teaches you to be Just, without which no man is fit to be free. Above all else, the degree teaches Reverence and Administration of the Law with Justice, Equity and Impartiality. It teaches that it is an unjust man who assumes powers that are not his own, and that Justice and uprightness alone can unlock the mysteries contained in the higher degrees, enabling your advance towards Perfection.

It also teaches that an independent and upright executive branch of government is indispensable to freedom and equality of rights. The administration of law is a sacred duty, and the only stable foundation of free government. An unjust man (and government) is the architect of his own swift ruin.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



It is said that after the death of the Master Hiram, King Solomon appointed seven judges to settle disputes that might arise among the workmen in the temple. These judges formed a tribunal which heard appeals from the decisions of a single one of the judges. They applied the same law to Hebrew and Phoenician alike and thus exemplified the concept of equality before the law. This, the Seventh degree, re-enacts the events which led King Solomon to appoint the judges. It illustrated the proper attitude of one who is called to judge another. Here we are admonished to perform this task with justice and mercy.

It is these two traits which distinguish the just judge. Justice may demand retribution, mercy counsels forgiveness. Justice and mercy are opposing forces which, acting in harmony, produce equity.



COMMUNICATION



No man may be given a greater moral burden than the judgment of someone else. Who can hear of another's failings without being reminded of his own? And yet in the society of laws, justice must be administered. In this degree you are reminded of the awesome responsibilities attending this duty. As a Mason, you may call a man "brother". But as a judge, you know him not. Stern justice must be tempered with mercy, for none are guiltless in the eyes of God.

The Latin playwright Terence, in the second century B.C. Said that, "the strictest justice is sometimes the greatest injustice." And our Brother Albert Pike has warned us that, "many men think themselves better, in proportion as they can detect sin in others."

Justice, equity and impartiality must be the characteristics of any who would possess this degree. Let the symbol of the balance be ever before our eyes to remind us of our Masonic duty to admonish with friendship and reprehend with justice.

As you now take the vow, and assume the obligation of a Provost and Judge in the Scottish Rite, engrave these words upon your heart that you may never forget your duty.



OBLIGATION

I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Great Architect of the Universe, promise that I will decide justly and impartially whatever matters of difference may be submitted to me, whether in or out of the lodge, without fear or favor or the hope or promise of reward.

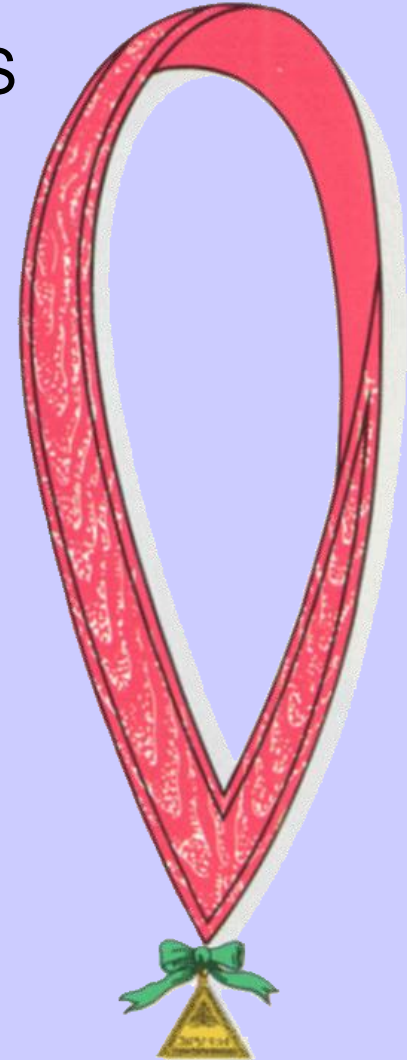
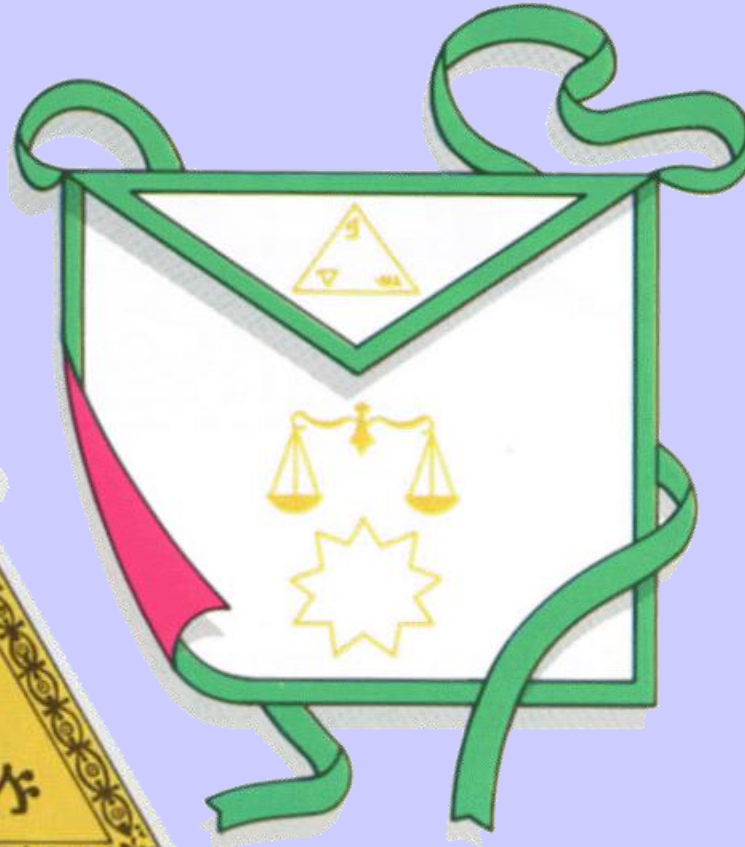
Unto all of which I do pledge my honor as man and Mason.





8TH DEGREE INTENDANT OF THE BUILDING

EDUCATION BINDS GENERATIONS





SYNOPSIS



The setting of this degree is the audience chamber of King Solomon. The wise King seeks the counsel of the High Priest. Hiram's murder has suspended the work, and the great king knows of no one who can continue the task. The High Priest can offer no assistance but one of Solomon's servants reveals that the Master Hiram had taught his skills to several of his best workmen. These devoted students of the Master are given the responsibility of finishing the temple. They are honored by their receipt of this degree.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



The performance of the work, whatever it is, is what is important. The reward of diligent work is advancement. Dignity and importance are attached to work, and those who perform it. You are taught the rights of the laboring classes, and your duties toward them. It is especially impressed upon you that every laboring man is your Brother, entitled to your regard and assistance.

When dealing with those with whom you work, always practice the rules of Benevolence and Charity. Never deal harshly with those in your employ, or those with whom you labor. You will not make false, unjust or unreasonable claims against them. Aid him and his family, recognizing all mankind as your brothers. Capital and labor must not be adversarial, but complementary, and respectful. They must cooperate to produce harmony. This provokes reflection in respect to the necessity of an elective and independent legislature.



COMMUNICATION



The theme of this degree is education; That is, the transmission of knowledge and skill from one generation to the next. Without a commitment to education no society can endure. We therefore see the responsibilities of our deceased Master Hiram given to several of his best craftsmen that the mighty work of building the House of the Lord might be completed.

During the ceremony we are also counseled to be fair in contracting labor and always to imitate Hiram as an illustrious example. We are also taught the importance of Brotherly Love.

An Intendent of the Building is the Chief Architect of the Masonic Temple. As we learned in the symbolic lodge, the Masonic temple we are to erect is our own spiritual growth.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Great Architect of the Universe, do hereby solemnly promise that I will endeavor faithfully to perform the duties of benevolence and charity;

That I will not deal hardly with a laboring man in my employ, nor make unjust charges against him, but will always remember that he is my brother.

Unto all of which, I do solemnly pledge my faith and honour;

And may our heavenly father so deal with me, as I deal with my brother!

Amen!



9TH DEGREE ELU OF THE NINE

ENLIGHTENMENT COMES FROM MORAL KNOWLEDGE





SYNOPSIS



The ensuing three degrees continue the tale of the Hiramic legend of the Third Degree. Based on old French rituals they portray the discovery and punishment of the three ruffians, which are seen as symbols of vice. In these degrees you become pledged to the cause of true Freedom, of the People, as distinguished from the mob and populace. You will promise none should repent relying on your resolves, your word and your profession. You are shown the virtues which should be displayed by one in the pursuit of Justice: Disinterestedness, Courtesy, Devotedness, Firmness, Frankness, Generosity, Self-denial, Heroism, and Loyalty.

You are exhorted to labor to instruct, inform and enlighten the people when called upon to do so, and to devote yourselves to the honor and interests of your country.

Finally, you are reminded that everything that appears in these degrees is a symbol of something else. You are called upon to reach beyond the surface of appearances, and seek for deeper meanings.

You close swearing eternal vigilance against those special enemies of Freedom, in this degree represented by the Master Hiram: Intolerance and Persecution.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



We begin the teachings of this degree with the theme of retribution -- the consequence of evil acts. It is not the vengeance of man that the assassins fear but rather the pangs of their own consciences and the sure retribution of Divine Justice. Unlike the allegory of the Third degree in the Symbolic Lodge, the Scottish Rite teaches a slightly different version which portrays the capture of the third assassin first. He was the most guilty and is therefore used as a fit symbol of the ignorance which leads many men to vice.

This degree also teaches bravery, devotedness and patriotism. The Elus of the nine bravely search for the murderers of Hiram, thus showing devotion to their deceased Master, serving king and country against vice and corruption. Nonetheless the elimination of ignorance is the great lesson for an Elu of the Nine. All the symbols shown here point to this chief of vices in its various forms: the assassin shows us that ignorance may father many vices, including murder; the cavern symbolizes the imprisonment of the human soul by ignorance; the feeble lamp before the cavern represents the pale light of spiritual despotism which feeds on ignorance like the candle flame upon the wax; the fountain reminds us that fraud and falsehood flow from ignorance as water from the rocks. Thus, an Elu of the Nine should be consecrated to education and enlightenment.



COMMUNICATION



To oppose ignorance demands action. This is the principal quality of the Elus represented in the degrees of the Lodge of Perfection. The word 'elu' means 'elect' and as this title is received each must devote himself to actively oppose ignorance in all its forms: Greed, for treasure may be lost; Lust, for pleasure is but a moment; Pride, for fame passes away. Knowledge teaches us to seek the regard of our brothers, the love of our family and the gratitude of our nation.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, do unto God the All-Father, vow that I will henceforward aid, so far as it may be in my power, in instructing and enlightening the people;

That I will to that cause always cheerfully give my vote, and contribute my means; And in every way strive to eliminate error and disseminate truth.

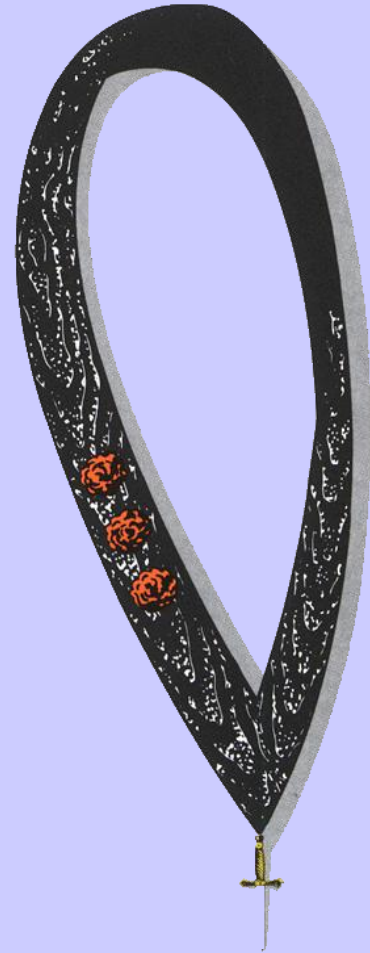
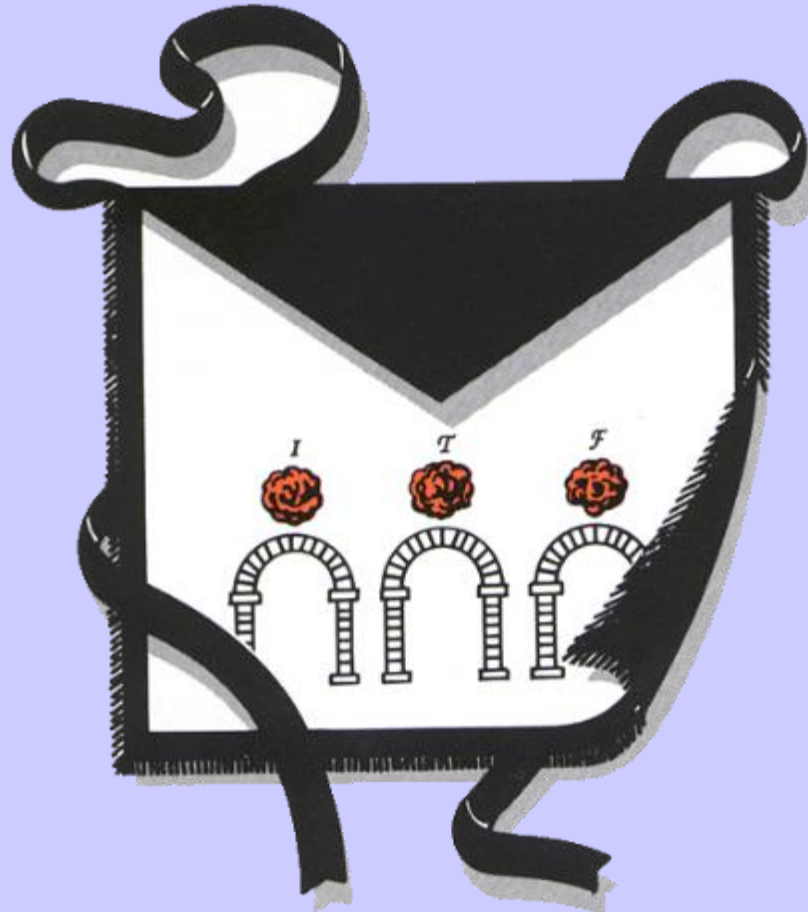
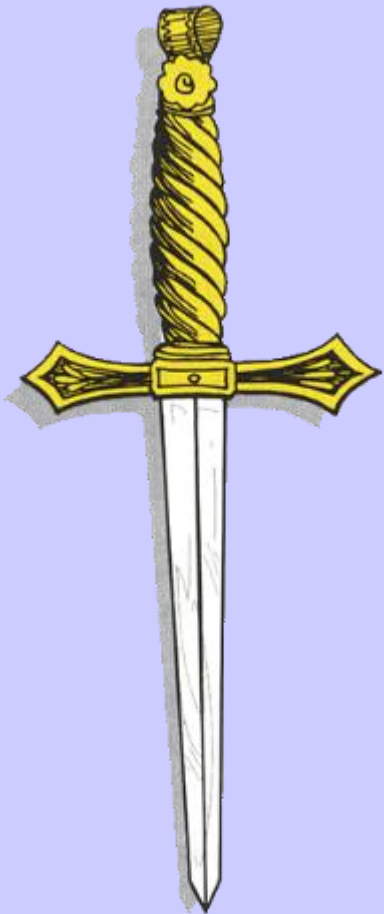
So help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same!

Amen!



10TH DEGREE ELU OF THE FIFTEEN

AVIDLY OPPOSE FANATICISM AND AMBITION





SYNOPSIS



This degree, Elu of the Fifteen, relates how the Master Hiram's two remaining assassins were captured. Though they have fled from Jerusalem into Gath, their identity is nonetheless discovered. King Solomon selects six Perfect Masters by lot to accompany the nine Elus into Gath to capture and return the miscreants. They are tried, convicted and executed. The heads of all three are placed upon the gates of the city as a deterrent to crime. Thus are the demands of justice satisfied.



COMMUNICATION



As the third assassin, captured in the preceding degree, represented ignorance, so the two remaining assassins are fit symbols of ambition and fanaticism. Taken together, these three vices are the chief enemies of political freedom. Ignorance impedes, ambition denies and fanaticism imposes. Ignorance impedes the cause of human progress; Ambition denies equal opportunity in political affairs and fathers tyranny or despotism; Fanaticism imposes, by force or otherwise, beliefs upon those who do not wish to share them and is therefore the mother of intolerance.

An Elu of the Fifteen voluntarily devotes himself to oppose these vices and signifies his willingness to do so by the following obligation:



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Grand Architect of the Universe, do most solemnly vow, to devote myself to the cause of the oppressed against the oppressor everywhere, and of toleration against fanaticism and persecution.

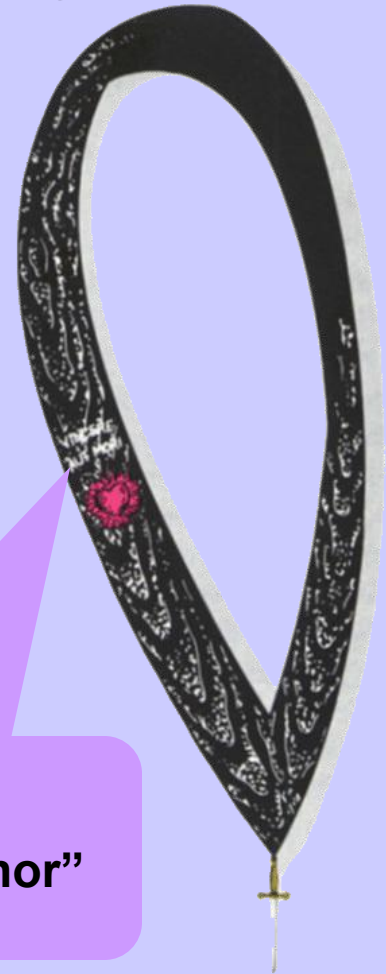
I irrevocably devote my hand, heart and intellect, under the same penalty invoked in the preceding degree.

So help me God! and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same.



11TH DEGREE ELU OF THE TWELVE

DEFEND THE WEAK AGAINST OPPRESSION



“Vincere aut Mori”
“Death rather than Dishonor”



SYNOPSIS



Continuing the tale of the Ninth and Tenth Degrees, the Eleventh dramatizes the capture, trials and fates of the three assassins of Hiram the Builder. We are particularly reminded that revenge is ultimately by the hand of God, though we must pursue evil to its deepest recesses in our efforts to defeat it.

We are taught to deal fairly with all men and see that none are subjected to extortion or the unjust imposition of burdens. Neither fear nor fault of your own may permit harm to fall upon your country or its people.

The value of trial by jury is extolled, without which liberty, and immunity from wrong and oppression cannot be guaranteed. We are shown herein how an Independent Judiciary is the third leg upon which a stable and just government stands.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



No sooner has King Solomon dispensed with the demands of justice in the matter of the death of Hiram Abiff than he must turn his wisdom upon another problem in his kingdom: there is corruption in the collection of taxes and many complaints have reached the ears of the king's chancellor who dutifully reports them. King Solomon selects twelve from the fifteen Elus and appoints each over a province with the solemn charge to administer fairly and protect the people from political abuse.



COMMUNICATION



The twelve Elus who are appointed governors are given the title of Princes Ameth. 'Ameth' is a Hebrew word meaning 'truth'. This title is particularly fitting since truth is the great protector of man and as we read in the holy writings, "is sharper than any two-edged sword."

These twelve Elus, dedicated to truth, may also serve to remind us of the twelve who sit on a jury and by the exercise of truth either free by acquittal or, by conviction, deliver up the guilty for punishment.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Great Author of the Universe, do hereby sincerely vow that I will, with all my power, protect the people against illegal impositions and cause the burdens of government to be equally distributed in proportion to the benefits received therefrom;

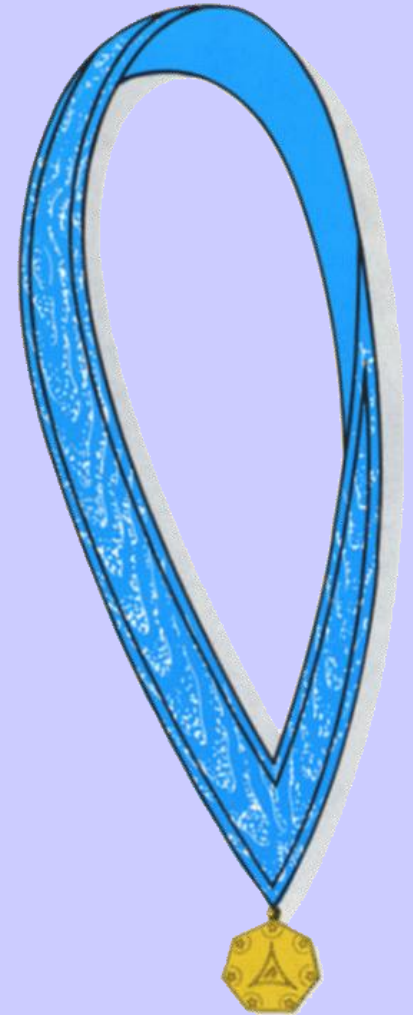
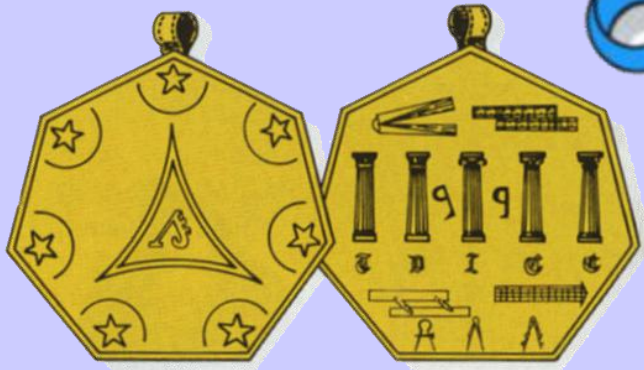
That I will be firm in adhering to my purposes and promises, so that those who rely upon me may not be disappointed.

Unto all of which, do I pledge my faith and honor, and may our Father in heaven punish me as I deserve if I prove faithless and disobedient to the law of Masonic duty.



12TH DEGREE MASTER ARCHITECT

SEEK WISDOM





SYNOPSIS



The Twelfth degree teaches that, having ceased to work with the instruments of the laborer; The square, the level, the plumb and the trowel, we now assume the working tools of the architect and geometrician: the protractor, plain scale, slide rule and parallel ruler. By their use we advance beyond right angles and horizontals. Both points of the compasses being above the square, the mathematics of the heavens are before us. Thus we now advance from the realm of morality to that of true philosophy. From now on we shall deal with spiritual problems rather than the material ones represented by the working tools of the Masonry of the Symbolic Lodges. The Master Architect approaches the symbolic Sanctum Sanctorum or Holy of Holies, and begins to understand what Masonry really is.



SYNOPSIS

The ceremonies of this Degree are brief, but its significance is profound. Here you are taught the symbolic meanings of the Master Architect's tools, the most important of which instructs us to solve the great problems presented by the universe, to know and understand the lofty truths of philosophy and to communicate it freely to others, particularly by our actions. Only the best and wisest in us and among us should rule. For if it be any other, the low and the ignoble will presume, and soon prevail.





COMMUNICATION



The human soul ever travels toward the light of God. It never wholly loses the sense of its own powers, but there are many facilities within us of which we are only dimly conscious. Truth is the most divine object of all human progress. Masonry strives to develop truth as a living virtue and to induce men to accept it as their guide. Life is what each man makes of it, the optimist turns every trial into a blessing, the pessimist sees only ruin and disaster. All our earthly transactions and institutions are based on faith in our fellow man. How much more so must we believe in God? The belief in a supreme being is an instinct in all races.

No man can suffer and be patient, can struggle and conquer, can improve and be happy without faith in a just, wise, and beneficent God.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Grand Architect of the Universe, do solemnly promise and vow that I will strive to practice all the virtues of which the various geometrical instruments are the symbols.

Further, that I will strenuously endeavor to conduct myself in a manner befitting the character of one who assumes to walk in the footsteps of the great and good wise men ennobled by service done for humanity, in the ancient ages of the world.

So help me God, and aid me in the due performance of the same!



13TH DEGREE ROYAL ARCH OF SOLOMON

HUMAN VIRTUE IS THE LIGHT OF GOD





SYNOPSIS

This Degree, together with the Fourteenth, represents the capstone of the Lodge of Perfection, and culminates with your descent to the floor of the Ninth Vault where you saw without knowing it, the Lost Word, the Great Symbol of Freemasonry. It is revealed to be the Tetragrammaton of the Hebrews – The letters Yud He Vau He – rendered as “Jehovah” in the King James Bible. It is called Ineffable because its true pronunciation has been lost. Similarly, the degrees of the Lodge of Perfection are termed “ineffable” because they communicate truths and concepts that cannot always be expressed by words alone. In this Degree you are solemnly devoted to Honor and Duty.





SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



In this Degree you will witness a symbolic descent into the earth, where the remains of a temple are discovered. The descent may represent many things. It may be emblematic of the difficulties encountered by those who endeavor to discover the truth about God and the world around us. Or, it may represent the self-exploration each of us must make in our quest for Truth. Self-discovery was the purpose of all true ancient initiations; hence the Greeks adorned their temples with the words “Know Thyself.”

The Cubical Stone, an ancient Masonic symbol, will be presented for the first time. If you give serious contemplation to this symbol you will discover that its significance was foreshadowed in the Craft Degrees, where it still occurs in many foreign jurisdictions. This symbol is also found in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. From here it was introduced into Alchemy, and from there, into Freemasonry.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



The 'Arch' as a symbol in Freemasonry has existed since at least before the middle of the 18th century. The symbolic opportunities are very great as the arch both supports and connects the various parts of a building. Being both aesthetically pleasing and architecturally sound the arch figures in the earliest gothic cathedrals. Little wonder then, that all major rites of Freemasonry have had a 'Royal Arch Degree', although the settings and lessons may differ. In the Scottish Rite this degree takes place in the audience chamber of King Solomon and in the subterranean vault constructed by the patriarch Enoch. It is in this vault that the true word of the ineffable degrees is found, surrounded by a golden triangle, embedded in a cube of agate. This priceless Masonic treasure is removed from where it was hidden and placed in an earthly sanctuary so that the light of wisdom it represents might shine upon, or instruct mankind.

In addition to the many esoteric interpretations, which may be given to the arch, it also represents liberty and its keystone symbolizes the constitution of a free people.



COMMUNICATION



The cube of agate represents the earth and nature; The golden triangle imbedded in one side is the great symbol of the Creator of the Earth and the Author of the Laws of Nature.

The word engraved within the triangle is the name of deity given to Moses on Mount Sinai. This name was believed by the ancient Hebrews to possess great power. To us it is a reminder of those attributes of God which we model in our virtues and which we see exhibited in the various forces of nature.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Creator of the Universe, do vow and pledge my faith and honor to my brethren;

That I will live honestly, soberly and virtuously;

Act fairly, frankly and with generosity;

Be compassionate, tolerant and forgiving;

Without envy, malice or covetousness;

To lead none into evil ways or habits by my example, and to be useful to my fellow-man.

Honor and duty shall be the lights by which my course shall be directed during my whole life.

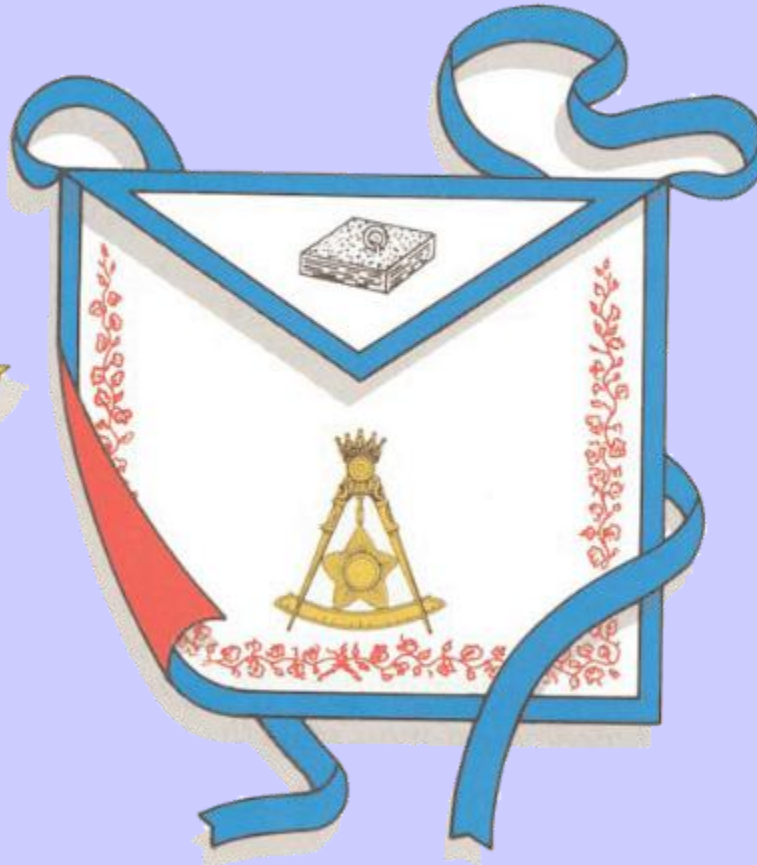
So help me God and keep me steadfast in this, my solemn pledge of honor.



14TH DEGREE PERFECT ELU

MANDATORY

FAITH JOINED WITH REASON IS POWERFUL





SYNOPSIS



In the Fourteenth Degree the most profound philosophical Truths are presented as axioms, without being discussed, inciting you to pursue studies into their meaning on your own. You will be put in possession of the Lost Word, and pointed in the direction towards the application of this new-found knowledge. You are consecrated to Truth, and more deeply bound to your Brethren, the Fraternity, and the ideals and truths it hopes to promulgate.

The Degree of Perfection is both a celebration of the revelation received in the Thirteenth Degree, as well as an examination of your worthiness to possess it. Knowledge without its application is of little or no value. With knowledge comes responsibility, and one must prove oneself worthy to possess it. The mere possession of knowledge is not a virtue. Yet knowledge, properly applied, results in wisdom, which the Biblical Proverbs say was coexistent with creation.





SYNOPSIS(cont'd)



The ancient initiate could not have arrived at the hidden vault of Enoch had he not also mastered all the requisite lessons, and mastered practical application in his personal life of the lessons taught. The reward of the practice of virtue and upright living is what was discovered. What remains for you, as an inheritor of this ancient system, is to learn how to apply what you have discovered.

You will be symbolically purified and consecrated to living virtuously, acting worthily, and deciding justly. You will obligate yourself to strive hereafter to speak truthfully.

The Temple, the abode of the Living Presence of God (represented by the Ark of the Covenant placed in the Sanctum Sanctorum), has been built. Its most obscure recesses have been discovered, and that which was discovered has been secured.

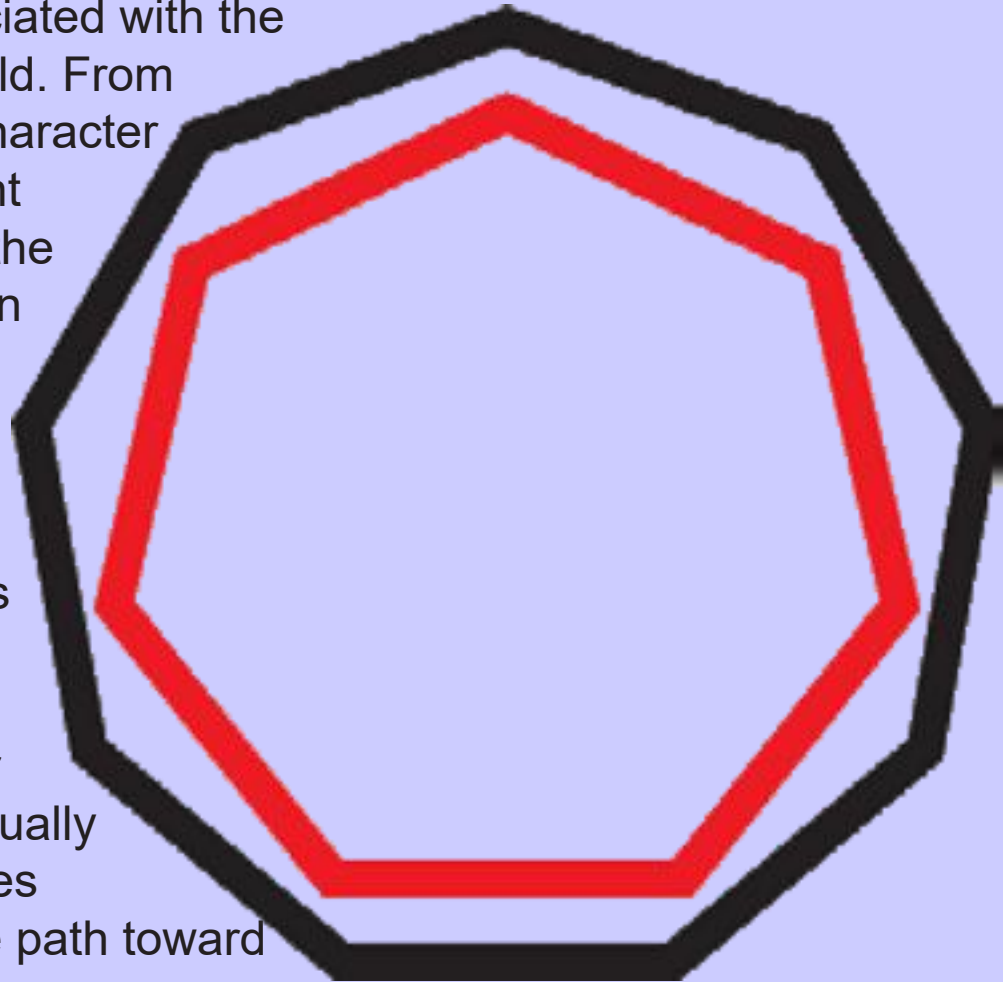
The Word, which has been discovered, represents the limited utterance of the Grand Architect of the Universe. Here we arrive at the Perfection of the Master's degree of the Symbolic Lodge with the discovery that Knowledge of God is of His invisible nature, revealed to us in the Created World. Hence we say, "The Glory of God is to conceal the Word."



COMMUNICATION



The number seven has been associated with the seven planets known to the ancient world. From these seven planets came the mystic character of the number seven itself. We represent that mystic number by the heptagon of the Great Masonic Camp, shown here within the nonagon you saw in the Fourth Degree. The symbolism of the seven planets is no trivial astrology. The ancients used the seven planets to orient temples. The word temple derives from the Latin word *templum* which signifies a place to get one's bearings. The planets, therefore, remind us of our responsibility to reorient ourselves spiritually and morality in conformity with the virtues inculcated in every Masonic Lodge. The path toward wisdom requires constant adjustment.





OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Great Architect of the Universe and of the Brethren now here assembled, do most solemnly and sincerely covenant with them, and bind myself by vow to Him, that I will never reveal any of the secrets of this Degree to any person in the world not entitled to them.

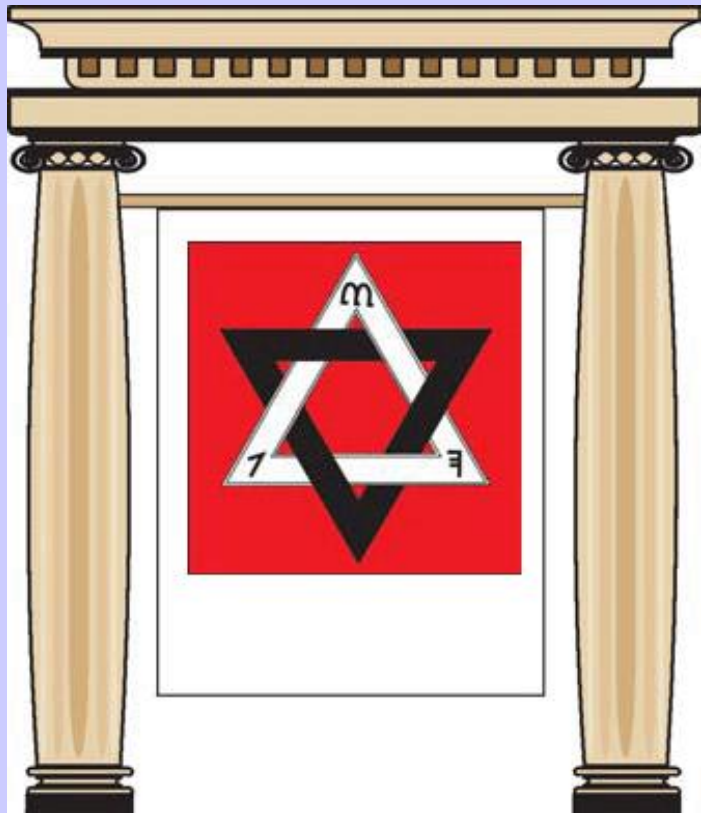
That I will be true to the principles of Scottish Rite Masonry and at all hazards defend free government in the country in which I live.

That I will always endeavor to deserve the title of Perfect Elu: doing, sustaining, and approving in public and private affairs that only which is just, right, and true without regard to expediency, danger, success, defeat, honor, or reward.

All of this I do most solemnly and sincerely vow, binding myself under the no less a penalty than feeling a genuine remorse for having shamed the honor of all true Freemasons, should I willfully violate this, my solemn obligation as a Perfect Elu.

CLOSING LODGE OF PERFECTION

We now close the degrees of the Lodge of Perfection with that of Perfect Elu. Here will be given profound instruction on the ancient name of God as understood by the Hebrews. This name was so revered that it was uttered but once a year and then, only by the High Priest. The principle symbol of the Perfect Elu is the compasses. The two arms are united to remind us of the unity of faith and reason, the most important lesson of this degree.



The word 'perfect' in this degree more precisely means 'complete'; But it does not complete all of your Masonic instruction in the Scottish Rite, only a portion of it.

The Perfect Elus maintained their integrity even in the face of their king's lost faith, as we should in the face of earthly temptations.



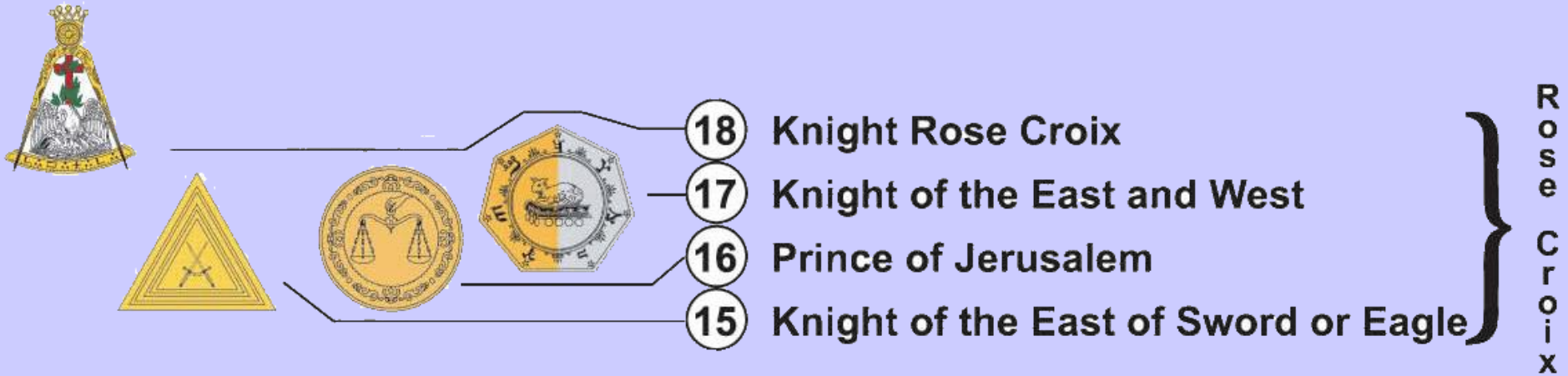
CHAPTER ROSE CROIX



The Fifteenth through Eighteenth Degrees comprise the Chapter of Rose Croix. It commences with the trials of those who have acquired Knowledge, and who wish to climb to yet higher truths. The Chapter of Rose Croix presents Faith, Hope and Charity as sure guides for our actions, and as the safest paths through adversity. We are instructed to follow them in their highest form of human expression: as Compassion and the Law of Love. By this means, we will arrive at a solution to one of the great enigmas of Nature and the manifested world.



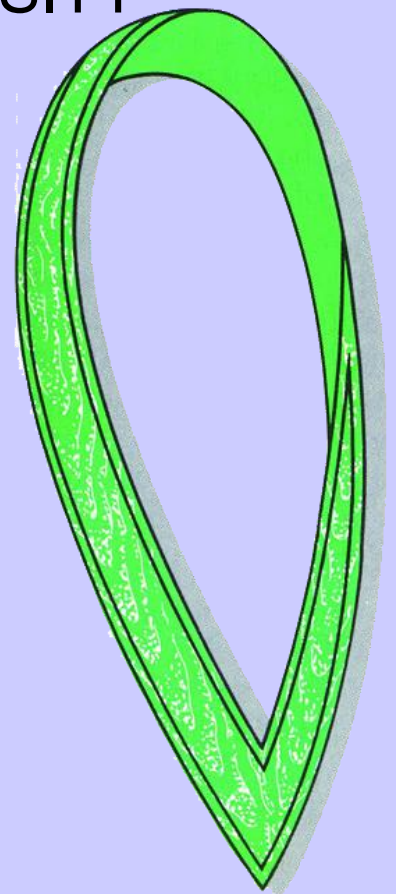
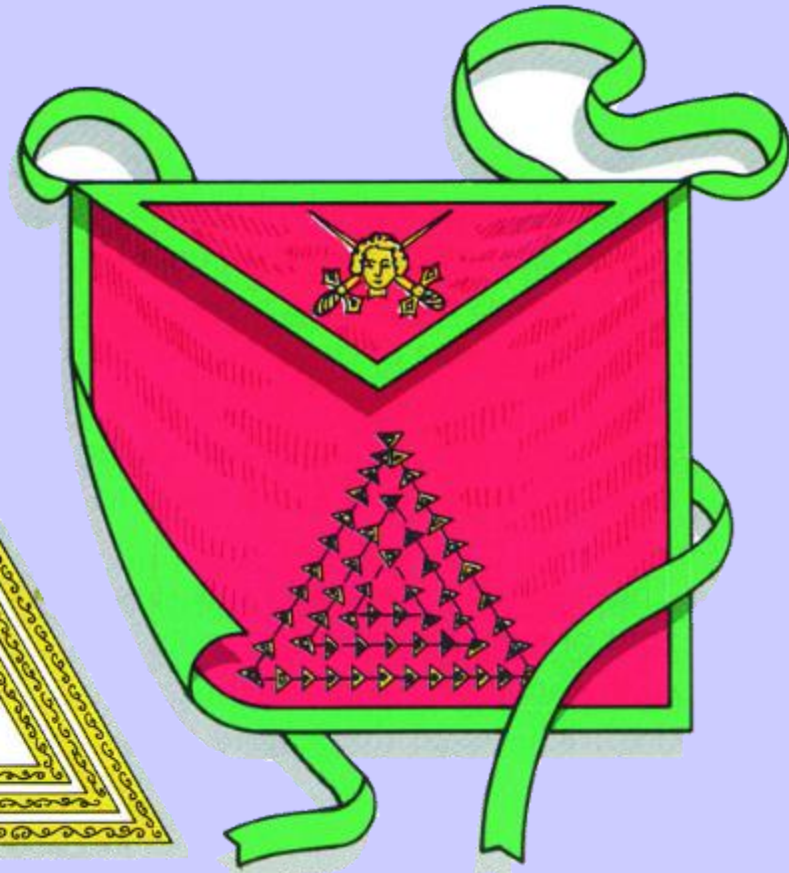
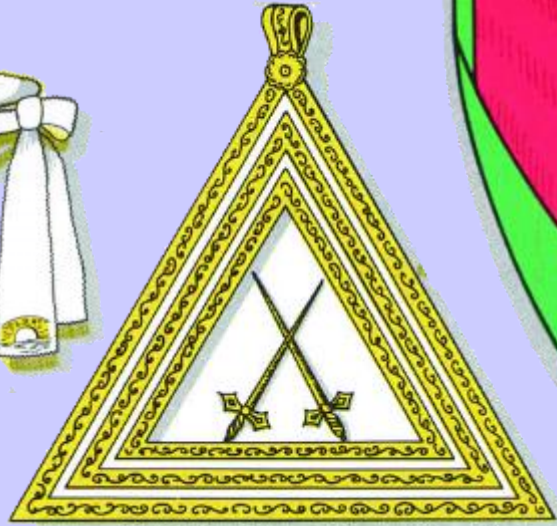
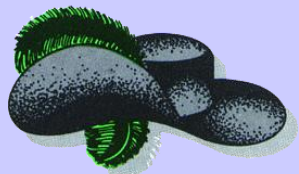
CHAPTER ROSE CROIX*





15TH DEGREE KNIGHT OF THE EAST, OF THE SWORD, OR OF THE EAGLE

PERSEVERE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY





SYNOPSIS



This Degree opens upon the ruins of the Temple of Perfection that you believed so secure in the previous Degree. It is in ruin, and must be built again. This teaches that there is a great Law of ebb and flow in Nature. The full Moon begins to wane the moment it reaches fullness. By example, Nature teaches us that perfection is not a static state but an ongoing process—a process of gradual and cyclic progression towards greater perfection. This process requires unceasing work, effort and vigilance on the part of every individual lest he stray, for whatever reason, from Truth and what is right.

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?”

Great swords are made by repeatedly plunging their blades into the extremes of hot and cold. By analogy, we here learn a lesson that foreshadows the reconciliation of opposites: we are taught to make advantage out of adversity. This reconciliation is one of the secrets of the Eighteenth Degree.

We are especially taught that, above all things, we must remain faithful adherents to the Truth and practice correct behavior. Integrity is extolled as the rule and bylaw of our personal code. By the words “Liberty of Passage” we mean freedom of thought and conscience, and Political and Religious liberty.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



The Chapter of Rose Croix opens with this, the 15th degree. The people of Israel, having followed Solomon into the worship of lesser gods, find themselves abandoned by the Lord and living in captivity under the Babylonian king, Cyrus. The city of Jerusalem is in ruins and Solomon's temple to the Lord has also escaped not the unsparing ravages of barbarous force. Thus we begin a new allegory not based on Solomon's temple, but the one erected to replace it.

From among the people of Israel comes Zerubbabel, a type of Perfect Elu. He is incorruptible, maintaining fidelity to trust, honor and duty. He is a leader who perseveres in the face of adversity and discouragement.

Zerubbabel beseeches Cyrus to free his people and allow them to rebuild Jerusalem and the House of the Lord. Cyrus agrees to grant his request if he will impart to him the secrets of that order founded by King Solomon, and when that condition is resisted by Zerubbabel, Cyrus counsels him to consider what he may be giving up, including the freedom of his people and the rebuilding of the House of the Lord. Zerubbabel insists that honors and rank earned by violation of vows are worthless. He then reminds Cyrus of his own oaths as a follower of Mithra. Cyrus acknowledges Zerubbabel as a Master of the Light and grants his requests; But not all that is worthily deserved is easily earned.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



In spite of the Lord's assurance that Zerubbabel has laid the foundation of the second temple by the merit of his virtue and in spite of the Lord's promise that his hands shall finish it also, the Hebrews are frustrated in their purpose and must await a new king to gain the necessary support to complete the task.

These troubles and the ultimate success of the enterprise will be more particularly spoken of in the Sixteenth Degree.



COMMUNICATION



A Knight of the East may also be called Knight of the Eagle and as such is a Knight of Liberty, for the eagle is symbolic of freedom. Liberty is not only those freedoms inherent in a constitutional government, but also includes that special sense of freedom which knowledge brings. And, so Masonry wars against ignorance, intolerance, fanaticism, superstition, and error. A Knight of the East understands that the obstacles are many, but the symbolic temple will and can be built, provided we work as the warrior-masons of Zerubbabel did, with the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other. And now, my brethren consecrate your life to the pursuit of freedom with this vow:



15° Knight of the East, Sword, or Eagle Commentary



Be devoted to the holy cause of civil, political, and religious freedom; freedom of thought, freedom of the conscience, political, and religious liberty. Liberty must be fought for, and the battle is not always obvious. Few things seem so typical of society as its desire to take decisions out of the hands of individuals. But if a man cannot make meaningful decisions, he is not free.

DUTIES: Rebuild the Masonic temple of liberty, equality and fraternity in the souls of men and of nations.

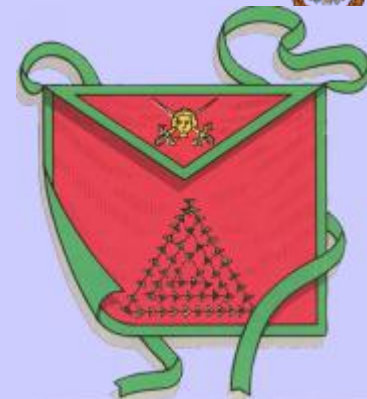
FOR REFLECTION: Is equality the basis of all freedom?

IMPORTANT SYMBOLS: Green predominates in the regalia of the Fifteenth Degree. Green symbolizes the immortality of the human soul and the transcendent nature of Masonry.

The apron represents the duty to oppose and defeat arbitrary limitations on intellectual, spiritual, and political freedom. On the apron are three triangles, one inside the other, formed of chains with triangular links. They represent the three great limitations on, or enemies of, the human intellect—tyranny, privilege, and superstition.

Those three enemies of humanity are opposed by the three great virtues, represented by the three nested gold triangles on the jewel of the Degree. The triangles represent liberty, fraternity, and equality as well as law, order, and subordination.

At the end of the sash is embroidered an arched bridge on which are the letters L.D.P. The original meaning of the letters is *Liberté de Passer* (Liberty of Passage) and Pike adds *Liberté de Penser* (Liberty of Thought). To be true and complete, liberty must include both the body and the mind—one must be free to move, to do, and to think.





OBLIGATION

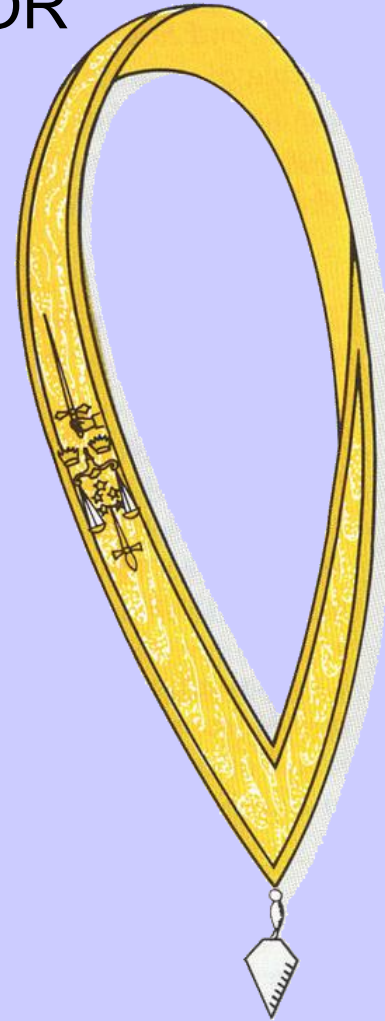


I, <state your name>, do solemnly promise and vow that I will zealously assist in rebuilding the Holy House of the Symbolic Temple of Freemasonry, and will at all times and everywhere be the advocate of rational and well-regulated liberty, and the defender of the rights of conscience against all adversaries, so help me God, and keep me steadfast!



16TH DEGREE PRINCE OF JERUSALEM

TRUTH SHALL BEAR AWAY THE VICTOR





SYNOPSIS



The 16th Degree continues the legend of the building of the second temple. The work moves painfully and slowly because of the constant interruptions by adversaries. And now the authority obtained from Cyrus for the Jews to rebuild the temple is under question.

Hope sustains the effort and finally, Zerubbabel is chosen again to meet with King Darius, a successor of Cyrus. He distinguishes himself in the eyes of the king as wisest of men. He asserts truth to exert the strongest force of all. Truth, always enduring, makes possible justice and good, strength and power and royalty and majesty through the ages.

Zerubbabel and his traveling companion are remembered as fellow initiates into the mysteries and as men who had treated their captive brethren with mercy and generosity. With Darius' full support, the second temple is completed.

We, as Princes of Jerusalem, are to build the symbolic temple in our hearts and throughout the world with the tools of justice and equity. The foundation of the symbolic temple is truth, its walls are virtue and its roof, brotherhood.

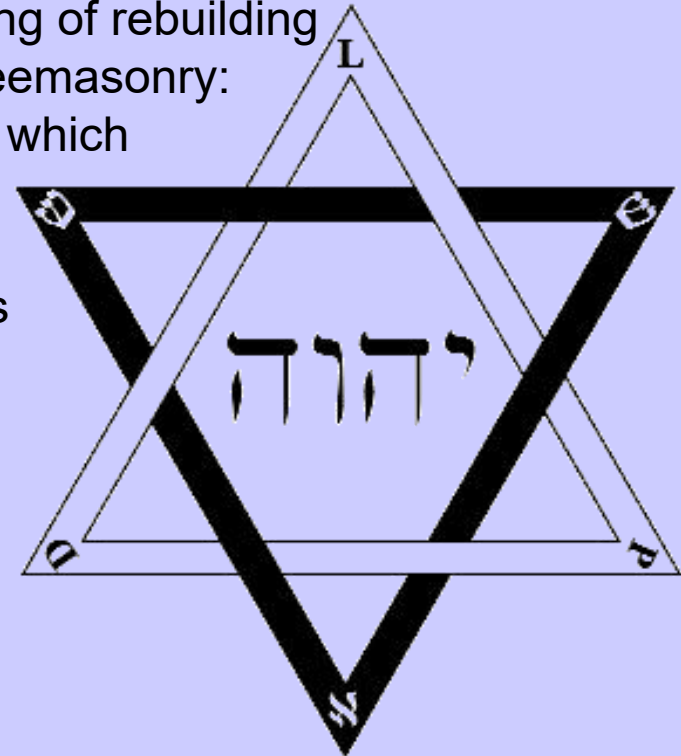


SYNOPSIS



This Degree continues of the lessons of the Fifteenth Degree with a particular emphasis on the belief that God aids those who pursue a good work, are faithful and can practice the virtue of Wisdom.

Righteousness and the impartiality of Justice are again demonstrated to you, while being shown how difficult it is to rebuild the Temple of Liberty once it has been overthrown. You are taught the symbolic meaning of rebuilding the Temple, and the purposes of the Scottish Rite Freemasonry: Religion founded on Love and Toleration; Philosophy which springs from Faith in One God and Hope of a future life; Morality which embodies the Wisdom of all ages; and a political Creed which rests on three great pillars of Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood.





COMMUNICATION



Each of us must become a soldier of truth armed with the sword of courage and the trowel of untiring labor. Truth will provide the route for us to follow. For some, the path winds through the public eye, but for most of us, it twists and turns through an ordinary life. Neither path is nobler than the other and each abounds with opportunity. Seize the opportunity to become a better man and leave to those who follow you a noble heritage, an example of a life well lived, a life of gentleness and patience, kindness and wisdom, justice and mercy, morality and virtue.

Now, join with us and become a Prince of Jerusalem:



16° - Prince of Jerusalem Commentary



This degree emphasizes the fact that one must use every means to be beneficial for the society in which one lives. We not only set our own example for our society, but we enlist the aid of our Brothers. Together, Masons are custodians of freedom. Our charge is to leave a noble heritage to those who follow us in this world. We build temples of the Living God in our hearts by following the truths of justice, equity, morality, wisdom, labor, fidelity and Brotherhood - so that the collective liberties for mankind can be protected.

DUTIES: To direct and aid those who labor to build the Symbolic Temple. Judge equitably and fairly. Provide aid of whatever kind to fellow Princes of Jerusalem. Keep faith in the justice and beneficence of God. Press forward with hope for the persecuted and oppressed.

FOR REFLECTION: Will you leave a noble heritage to those who follow you in this world?

IMPORTANT SYMBOLS: The color saffron, the Seal of Solomon, the colors white, blue, red and violet, five steps to the throne, the scales or balance.

The apron is of crimson, lined and edged with the color saffron. On the flap is an equal balance, held by a hand of justice. In the middle of the apron is a representation of the Second Temple, on one side of which is a sword lying across a buckler, and on the other, a square and a triangle. On the left and right sides are the Phoenician letters equivalent to the Greek letters Alpha and Theta.

The colors, crimson bordered with that of the dawn (saffron), are symbolic of faith in the justice and beneficence of God, and of the dawn of hope for the persecuted, proscribed and oppressed. The equal balance, held by the hand of justice, is a symbol of righteousness and impartiality in judgment and of that equilibrium which the Deity maintains throughout the universe.





OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, In the presence of Him that is, was and shall forever be, do promise and solemnly vow that whenever I am called upon to decide between my brethren, I will do so justly and equitably, and without favor or affection.

That I will endeavor to reconcile all differences between brethren of any degree, and will use all my influence and spare no pains to restore kindly feelings between those who may be estranged from each other, and to prevent estrangement.

And that I will never forsake a brother Prince of Jerusalem, if he be worthy and keep his own vows, in whatever adversity he may be, in combat or in sickness, in danger or in distress, in prison or in escape, by day or by night, in political controversy or in civil war;

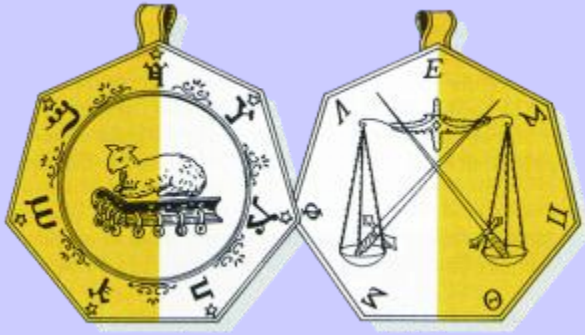
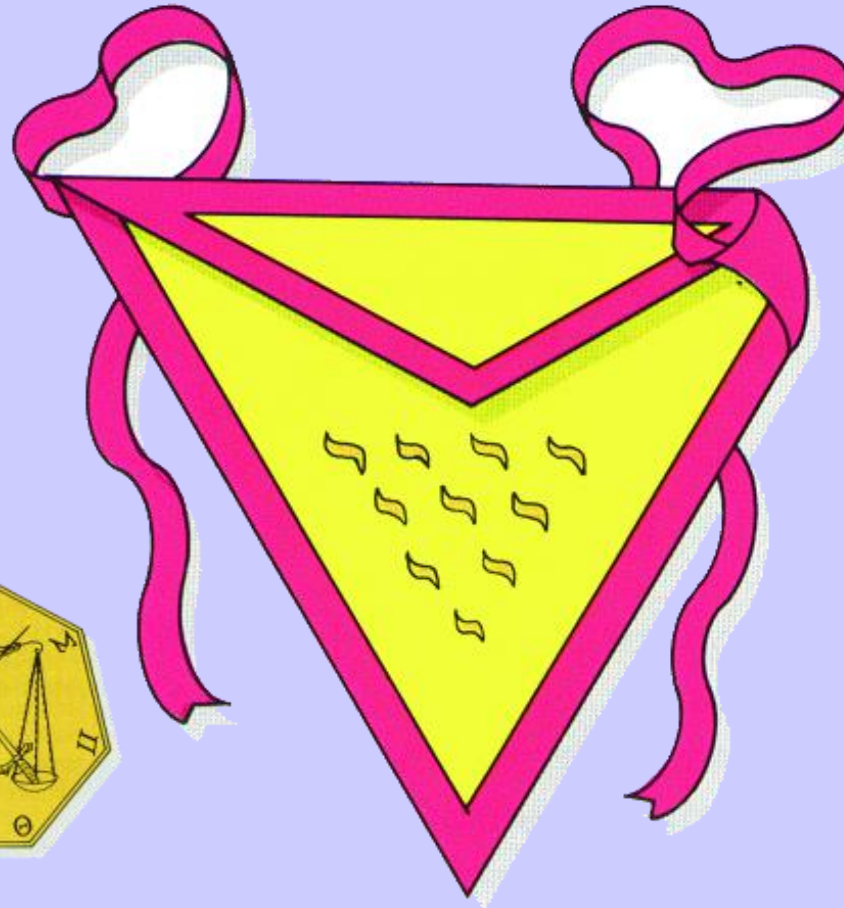
Nor will I censure him in the hearing of the profane; But will aid him everywhere with counsel and advice, with influence and money, with arms, if need be, and at all hazard of loss and blame.

So help me God!



17TH DEGREE KNIGHT OF THE EAST AND WEST

EVIL WILL PERISH





SYNOPSIS



The ceremony of the 17th Degree, Knight of the East and West, is framed by the writings of St. John the Evangelist in his book called 'Revelation' or the 'Apocalypse'. Though Christian in character, this magnificent allegory of man's redemption has its roots in both Jewish and Persian doctrine. It assures us of the immortality of the soul and the destruction of evil. By its lessons we are taught the importance of inward as well as outward, virtue.

Innocence and a pure heart are the prerequisites to these mysteries. Our example is St. John the Baptist, forerunner of Jesus. He taught us that inward virtue was itself expressed in outward action, symbolized by the earthly baptism of water. But he also warned us of that spiritual baptism to come, the baptism of fire, expressed by the adversity of life.

We have such examples as John the Baptist before us that we may learn rectitude, not the mortification of the flesh. We are not, as Masons, to become monks or mendicants who shun the earthly life of pain and pleasure. We learn here that the dead who fall in the cause of virtue are blessed and, most importantly, that the reward of virtue may not be instantaneous but is nonetheless certain. Good and evil are but the reflection of the duality of the universe: generation and production, light and shadow, active and passive, force and stability. Hidden within these contraries is another great secret, or mystery, of Scottish Rite Freemasonry which shall be unfolded to you soon. Be patient and wait.



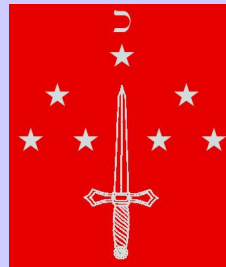
SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



In the first section of this Degree you will witness a confrontation between King Herod II and John the Baptist, which results in shameful murder of the latter. The tale, borrowed from the New Testament, has much to teach.

In one regard Herod represents the man who, having achieved rank, allows his pride, sin and folly to prevent him from achieving his spiritual aspirations. Unable, or unwilling to yield his pride, he succumbs to weaknesses of the basest character, ultimately, to his own condemnation. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his soul?

The second section borrows symbolism from St. John's apocalyptic vision of the end of time. Used metaphorically, we see the self-weary of unprofitable speculation, of barren and diseased logic, and of empty and soulless form setting out in search of the True Light that shall give it peace.





SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



You are again commended to the virtues of Union, Honor, Duty, Loyalty, Courage, Discretion and Silence. You are instructed that your life must mirror your spirituality, and that the knowledge of the name of God, revealed to you in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Degrees must be applied knowledge; for once one realizes a truth, one must live in conformity with it. You are informed that Innocence and Purity of Heart are prerequisites to the revelation of Great Mysteries, preparing you for the New Law in the Eighteenth Degree. You will be consecrated to Truth, Justice, Virtue and Benevolence, and purified by Fire and Water, acknowledging your conscious passage through a world of seemingly contrary natures.

Informed that the path to the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge you seek is not an easy one, perhaps fraught with pain, suffering and great service, your resolve to proceed is firmly tested. If you pass, you will learn that evil works bear evil fruit, and those who are true to God persevere.



COMMUNICATION



A Knight of the East and West is consecrated to the service of truth, justice, virtue and benevolence. His duties are to work, to hope for that day when God shall overcome evil and to teach the truths that are hidden in allegories and concealed by the symbols of Freemasonry, to practice virtue in the midst of a life of ease and indulgence is a slight matter; To practice virtue in the face of adversity is the true measure of our spiritual worth. Some have sought to increase their virtue simply by increasing their suffering: we teach no such path. This world provides opportunity enough for the practice of virtue, the foundation of Masonry.



17° Knight of the East and West Commentary



In this degree, Masonry says only one thing: differences in religions will not matter, and these differences will not hinder people to live together in peace if all people gather sincerely around the belief and concept of the Great Architect of the Universe. It is sufficient only to keep one's heart pure, to believe in God, and to respect the religious feelings and ideas of others. In this way, people who meet, respect and love one another will not find it difficult to understand that no one is lying, that truth prevails in people's words and deeds.

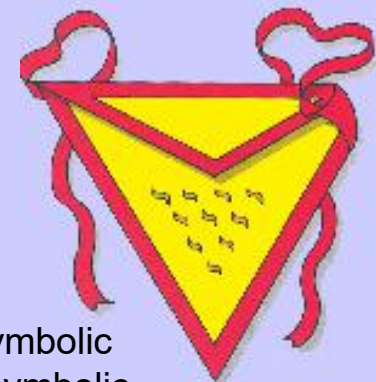


DUTIES:

- ✓ To work, to reflect and to pray.
- ✓ To hope, to trust and to believe.
- ✓ To teach the truths that are hidden in allegories and concealed by the symbols of Freemasonry.

FOR REFLECTION: Can Masonry teach religion without being a religion?

IMPORTANT SYMBOLS: East, West, John the Baptist, number 7*.



The body of the apron is decorated with the Tetractys, formed of 10 Yuds. They are symbolic of the ten manifestations of God found on the Tree of Life of the Kabbalah and, thus, symbolic of God's action in the creation and maintenance of the universe.

There are two cordons, one of black and one of white, which are worn from shoulder to hip. Since change or transformation is a major theme of the 17°, precursor to the 18° as its central character, John the Baptist, was precursor to the central (if unseen) character of the 18°, Jesus of Nazareth, the crossed cordons may serve as a symbolic alert to the theme of transformation—in this case the transformation of vital but unrefined spiritual power into the focused spirituality of the Law of Love.



*In Pike's Morals and Dogma 17th degree discussion, multiple examples of the number 7 are presented. The Hebrew letters found on the heptagon jewel are: Loving-kindness, Strength, Harmony, Victory, Splendor, Foundation, and Kingdom. The letters correspond to the lower seven Sephiroth of the Kabbalah's Tree of Life.



OBLIGATION



Therefore, take now this vow and dedicate your life to its lessons:

I, <state your name>, In the presence of the one God, and calling upon these brethren as witnesses, do, upon this sacred book, most solemnly promise that I will never fight or combat with a brother of this degree, except in the most extreme and clearest case of self-defense;

And that I will, at all times, when he has justice on his side, be ready to aid and support him against any who seek his life, or to destroy his honor, reputation, peace of mind, or estate;

That I never will slander, revile, or speak slightingly of a brother, or endeavor to bring him into contempt or to cast ridicule upon him nor suffer others to assail his character in his absence.

And that I will on all occasions respect his honor and his interest. So help me God!



CHARGE



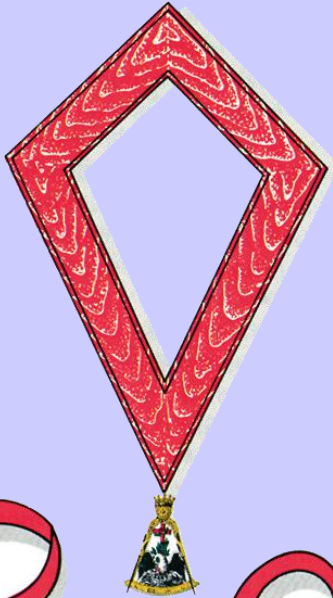
My brothers, arise! I accept and receive you as a Brother of this degree; And I now further devote you to its duties and to Masonry. Your brain, sight, speech, passions, hearing, and powers of work and action instruments to man for good or evil I hereby forever devote to good; And charge you hereafter to let them aid in no base, dishonest, or vicious thought, word or action!



18TH DEGREE KNIGHT ROSE CROIX

MANDATORY

THE LAW OF LOVE
SHOULD GUIDE OUR LIVES





SYNOPSIS



This Degree has long held a special place of honor. As one of the most philosophical and practical Degrees in Freemasonry, it encourages earnest thought and introspection. You will here be presented with that great enigma of the universe: the question of opposites, and reconciliation of sin and wrong, and pain and suffering, with the theory of the unbounded and unwearying beneficence of God. The Degree both reveals and conceals one of the great secrets of Alchemy, and unfolds the knowledge required preparatory to receiving the Royal Secret. Here, you will be given the True Word, and offered a solution to the great paradox of good and evil. It sheds light upon the way to understanding the reconciliation of opposites, a requirement of equilibrium.

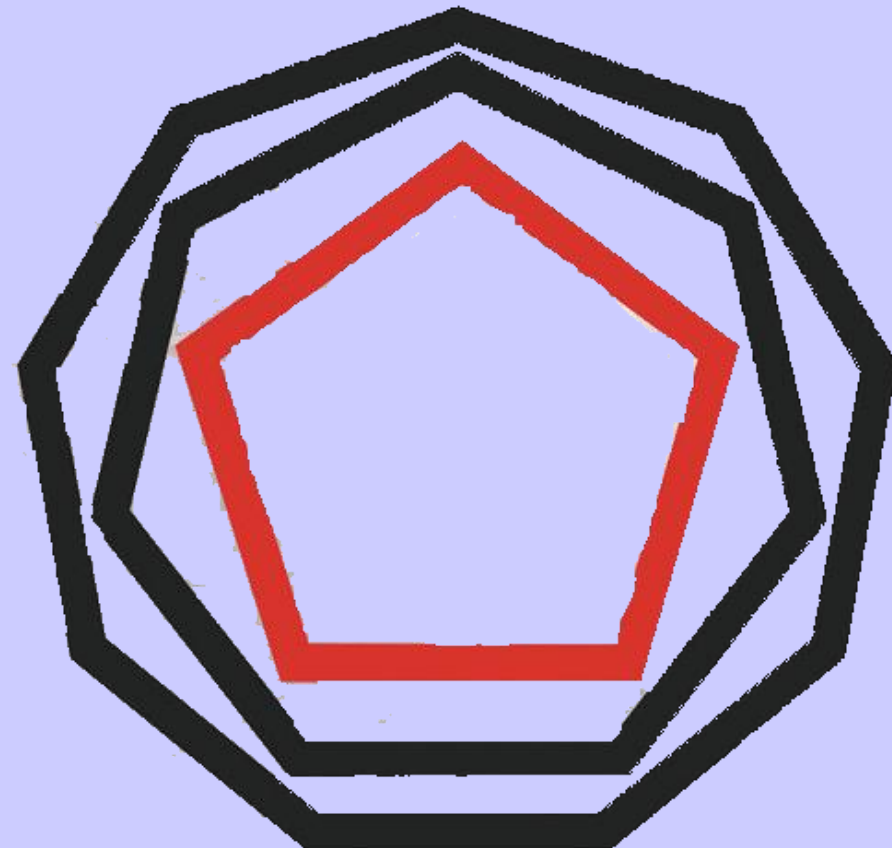
You will declare that you accept all good men of whatever creed and faith as your Brethren, and understand that Freemasonry may teach great truths that do not exclusively belong to any one particular religion. If you interpret any one of the symbols used in any of the degrees as having a special reference to your own particular faith, you have no right to insist that another must accept your interpretation. Such understanding is necessary to be able to live according to the mandate of the New Law of Love.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



You will learn that when the True Word is recovered, the Cubical Stone is changed into the Mystic Rose; the Blazing Star reappears in its entire splendor, the columns of the Temple are reestablished, and the Working Tools of Masonry are restored. The True Light will dispel the Darkness, and the New Law will rule upon the Earth.





COMMUNICATION



You are taught to honor every reformer who has offered up his or her own life for the benefit of all humanity. You will be obligated to exercise charity towards other's opinions, and your breast will be anointed to be the receptacle of pure and virtuous principles, making you truly a Knight of the Rose Cross.

In the Fourteenth Degree the Lost Word was revealed to you, and in this Degree the True Word of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite will be revealed to you. As a symbol, it is a key that may unlock the gates of the temple of philosophy and explain the mighty enigma of existence. It declares that Nature and Reason unite in demonstrating the Infinity of God and the Immortality of the divine essence in Man. An esoteric meaning will also be entrusted to you.

We are further informed of God's infinite love and taught that reason is a reflection of the Supreme Intelligence, and we arrive at this great truth: reason deciphers nature's hieroglyphics, which may be read, or its symbols interpreted, in the Great Book of Nature.

The Knights Rose Croix practice Charity in all its aspects and they derive strength to labor in the cause of Humanity from Faith and Hope.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the Great Architect of the Universe, and the Brethren now here assembled, do most solemnly and sincerely covenant with them that I will never reveal any of the secrets of a Chapter of Knights Rose Croix to any person in the world who shall not be entitled to them.

That I will be tolerant & of charitable opinion toward all Brethren.

That I will hold Scottish Rite Masonry to be above all controversies of Churches, Parties, States, or Nations and will never countenance persecutions, or the reviling of others because of their perceived differences, or their political, philosophical, or religious opinions.

That I will labor to extend and propagate the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite and extend its principles among men. I will countenance no changes of its ancient usages, traditions or landmarks.

That I will obey & respect the statutes & regulations of any Chapter Rose Croix of which I may be a member and do my duty as a good Knight should.

All of this I do most solemnly and sincerely vow, under no less a penalty than feeling a genuine remorse for having shamed the honor of all true Freemasons should I willfully violate this, my solemn obligation.



CLOSING OF CHAPER ROSE CROIX



Knight Rose Croix is the apex of the Chapter degrees. The Christian knight will see in this portrayal many allusions and symbols that are significant in his faith, those of his Redeemer who has come. Our Jewish brethren will see the portent of their Messiah yet to come, and others will see portrayed the general belief of many creeds of a coming savior who will deliver mankind from the bondage of evil.

This degree opens amid shattered columns and broken working tools, which symbolize that the sacred word is again lost. The virtues of faith, hope, and charity capture our attention. Hope may be crushed by despair, and love shattered by hate, but faith, justified by reason, will ultimately give man victory over evil.



The Council of Kadosh



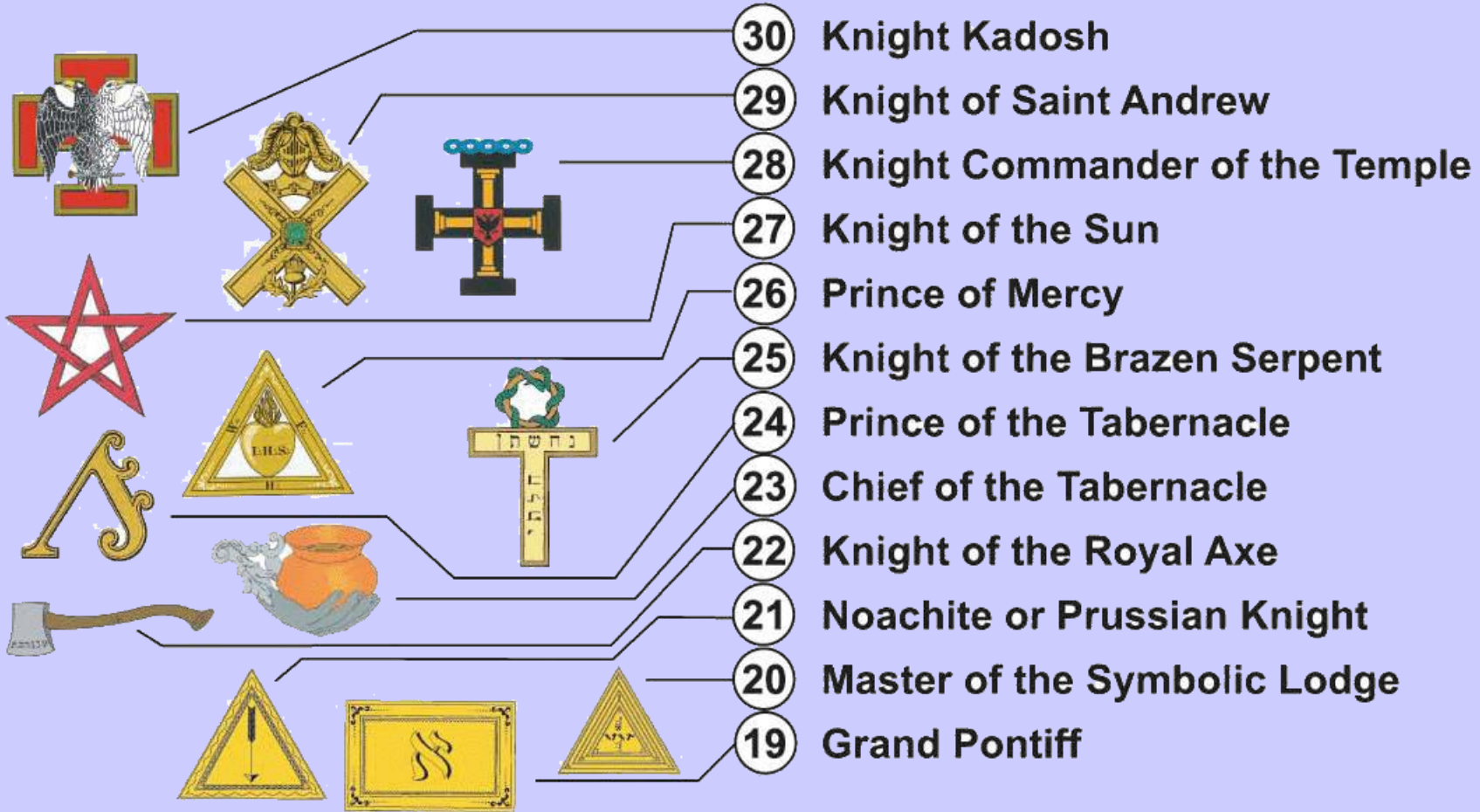
The Council degrees exemplify various philosophical and religious traditions, as well as Orders of Knighthood, as embodying principles and ideas promulgated by our Rite. Their precepts, teachings and ideas illustrate what must be encountered, understood and employed on the path to greater Truth and Knowledge.

This Degree particularly shows how the great moral principles inculcated in the preceding degrees lead up to their application in various schools of religious, philosophical and civil thought.

Once enlightenment and proper conduct free a man from the bondage of servile and base behavior, the structures of the old and faulty systems of belief are shattered and destroyed, symbolized by the Angels pouring their vials. For when evil, symbolized by darkness, destroys itself, naught is left but the Light. Truth alone endures, because it is real; all else is illusion.

The Degrees no longer speak of building the Temple, but of building the New City, referring to the day when all Mankind live together according to the principles extolled by Masonry. You will be made a Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, meaning that you should assume these priestly qualities: virtue, sincerity, equitability, truth, justice and tolerance. Be true and faithful to God, to duty, and to yourself. This entitles you to be called a Pontiff, or bridge builder, able to make your way in the labyrinth of life.

COUNCIL OF KADOSH*

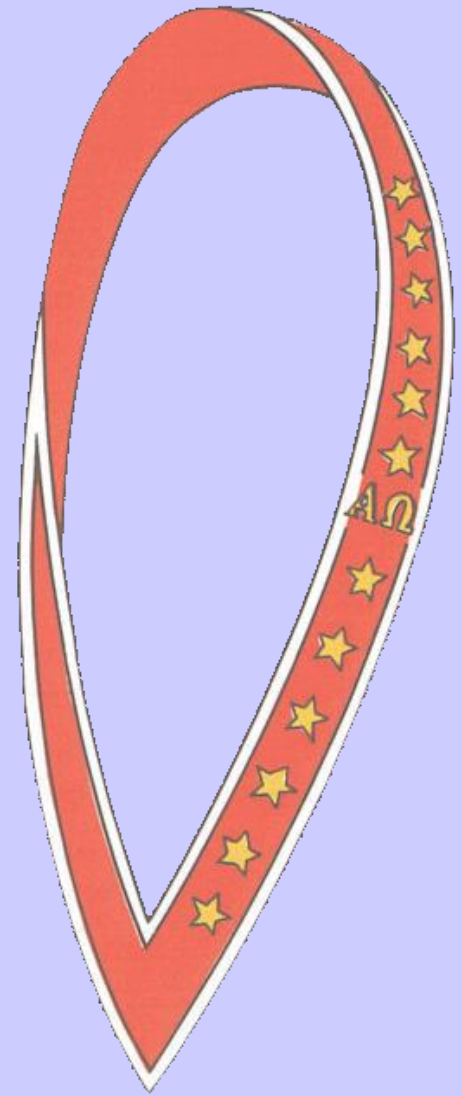
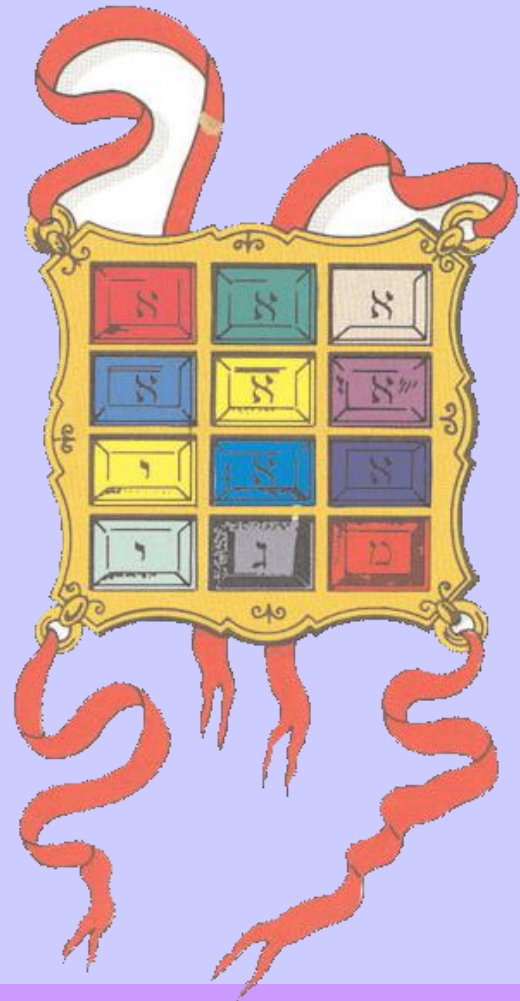


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19TH DEGREE GRAND PONTIFF

LIVE FOR THE FUTURE





SYNOPSIS



With this degree, we enter the Council of Kadosh. Being the first of the philosophical and chivalric degrees of the Scottish Rite, the Nineteenth degree is particularly important. Its name does not derive from any earthly religious leader but is rather derived from the Latin words for 'bridge' and 'to make'; Hence pontiff means 'bridge-builder'. As a bridge builder, he who holds the Nineteenth degree conducts his life with the consequences of his action ever before him.

The chief symbols here are the twelve columns upon which are written the initials of the Tribes of Israel, each representing a particular condition of humanity that shall come to pass when certain conditions are fulfilled. For example, the Tribe of Simeon represents man who shall be reconciled to God when intolerance no longer persecutes and bigotry no longer hates. Similarly, the twelve apostles are used as fitting symbols of those who have labored to reform, instruct and elevate mankind.

The mystical message of the Book of the Apocalypse, or Revelation, first given a Masonic interpretation in the Seventeenth degree, is elaborated here. Babylon, that great city of wickedness, is, to us, a symbol of intolerance. This vice, more than any other, chains mankind to the errors of the past. Similarly, the new Jerusalem is a symbol of the perfection toward which we strive as Masons and toward which the entire human race is tending.



COMMUNICATION



We can recall the great leaders of the past who continue to influence us today: Moses, Solomon, Confucius, Jesus, Mohammed, Alfred, Napoleon, and Washington. From the conditions of their lives, all of them have contributed to the great lessons which now guide us in our struggle for self-improvement.

A Mason knows that God brings about great results by slow processes and therefore does not necessarily expect to sow and reap in his own lifetime. Since the work of today may only bear fruit tomorrow, a Mason waits patiently and works on. In *Morals and Dogma* we are told that the true mason labors for the benefit of those who are to come after him and also for the advancement and improvement of all humanity. Since our influence survives us, it is a form of immortality.

The special charge of a Grand Pontiff is to defeat intolerance in himself by meditation and reflection, and to bridge these in others by instruction and reproof. This duty should be performed with hope and faith. The exalted character of Masonry enables us to look forward to a future symbolized by the new Jerusalem. Since Masonry teaches the great lessons from the past for the future, it too, is a bridge-builder.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, believing in the justice and mercy of God, do hereby promise that I will devote myself, my heart, my hand, my speech and my intellect, to the cause of justice, truth and toleration;

And will endeavor to do something for the benefit of my country and the world that shall live after I am dead;

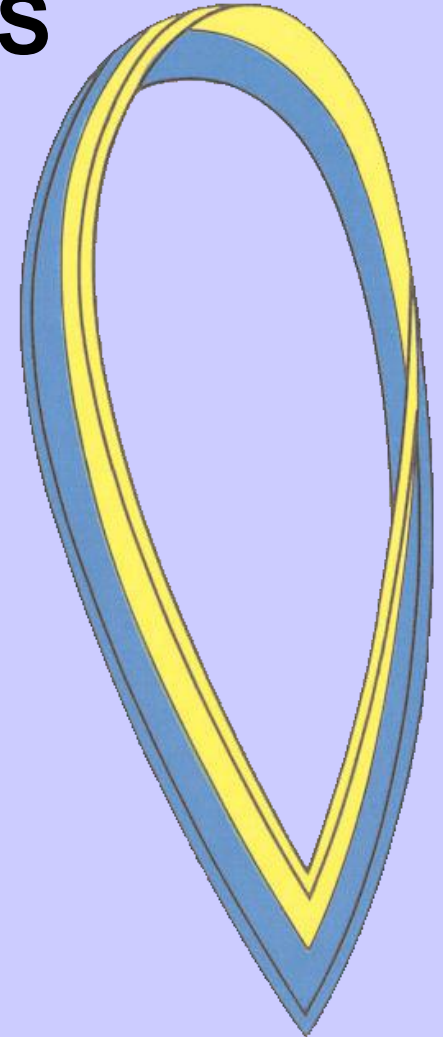
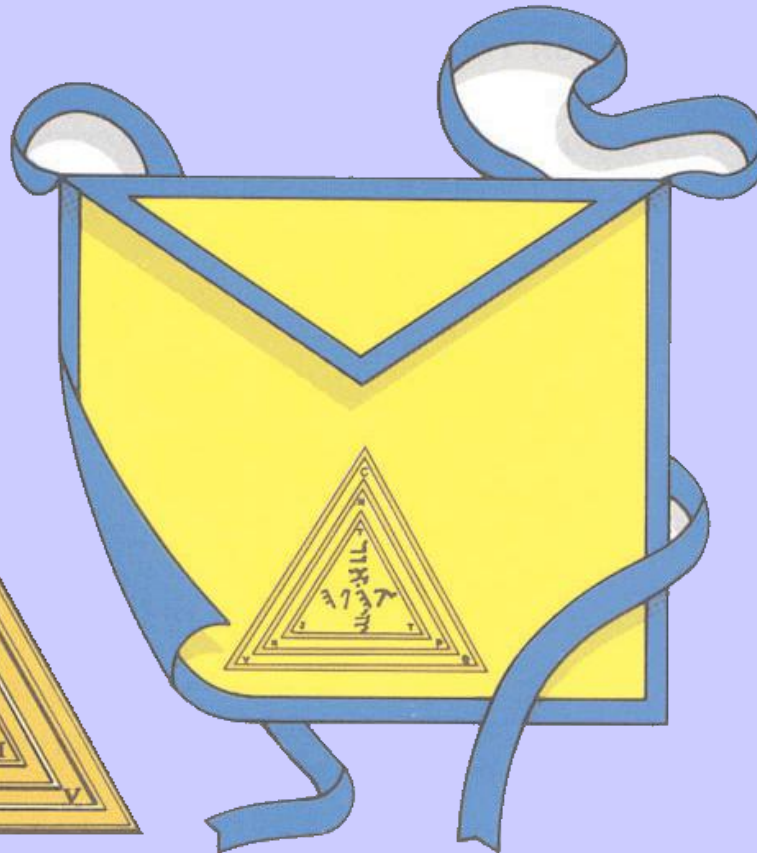
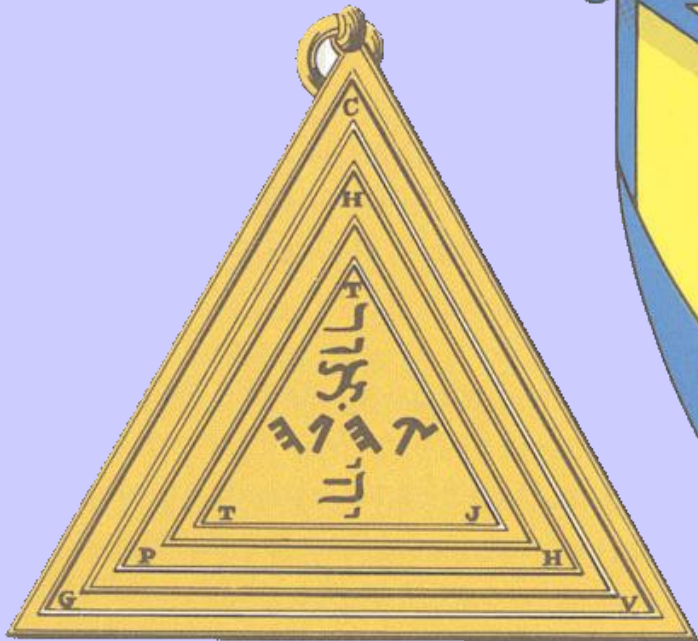
And that I will henceforward consider only what is right and just, and noble and generous for me to do; And not whether any benefit to myself will result.

So help me God! And keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same!



20TH DEGREE GRAND MASTER OF ALL SYMBOLIC LODGES

TEACH BY EXAMPLE





SYNOPSIS



The lessons of this Degree include the admonition to make your life count. You are introduced to the great Lawgivers—men who having learned great truths and devoted their lives to the betterment of their all Mankind.

You are given advanced teachings on how one should conduct one's self in dealing with your fellowman. In all ways maintain dignity, listen patiently, weigh all things deliberately and dispassionately, and decide impartially. Live knowing that you represent the Fraternity at all times.



“yehi aur”

“Let there be Light”



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



This degree is a dramatic statement of the primitive purity in Masonry. From its earliest beginnings Masonry advocated fraternity in the light of Deity. The principles of toleration, justice and truth are the three great supports of the Lodge of Masters.

Of great significance is the number nine: there are nine lights arranged in three concentric triangles, and the nine special virtues taught in this degree: veneration for the Deity, Charity, Generosity, Heroism, Honor, Patriotism, Justice, Toleration and Truth. Each of these virtues is represented by a light which will be carried into the world.

The major symbol here is an octagon on which are raised five squares and three triangles. All of us are admonished to practice the 29 virtues represented by the corners of the squares and triangles. The tools and implements of Masonry seen in this degree are familiar to all. Although they are exclusively the symbols of the first three degrees, they nonetheless serve to remind us in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite that any advancement is dependent upon the humble labors of the symbolic lodges and that we must never lose sight of the lessons taught there.



COMMUNICATION



To be Master of the Symbolic Lodge we must take these 29 virtues into our hearts. We must manifest them in our daily lives. These are not virtues suited to be practiced only within the lodge. To carry these virtues with us is to make the world a better place for all. We should be leaders and teachers, both in the lodge and in the world, dispensing light and knowledge by example.

Here we also learn the elusive nature of truth. No man can say that he possesses truth as if it were property. A man may know only a portion of that divine truth which God sheds upon man as he will giving much to a few, and little to many. For just this reason tolerance is taught to the Mason, who may not impose upon anyone his understanding of right and truth. We must respect all proper forms of worship and tolerate all just political and religious opinions. The only religion we expect of a Mason is a veneration for the Deity, the religion of good works and a grateful acknowledgement of God's blessing.



OBLIGATION



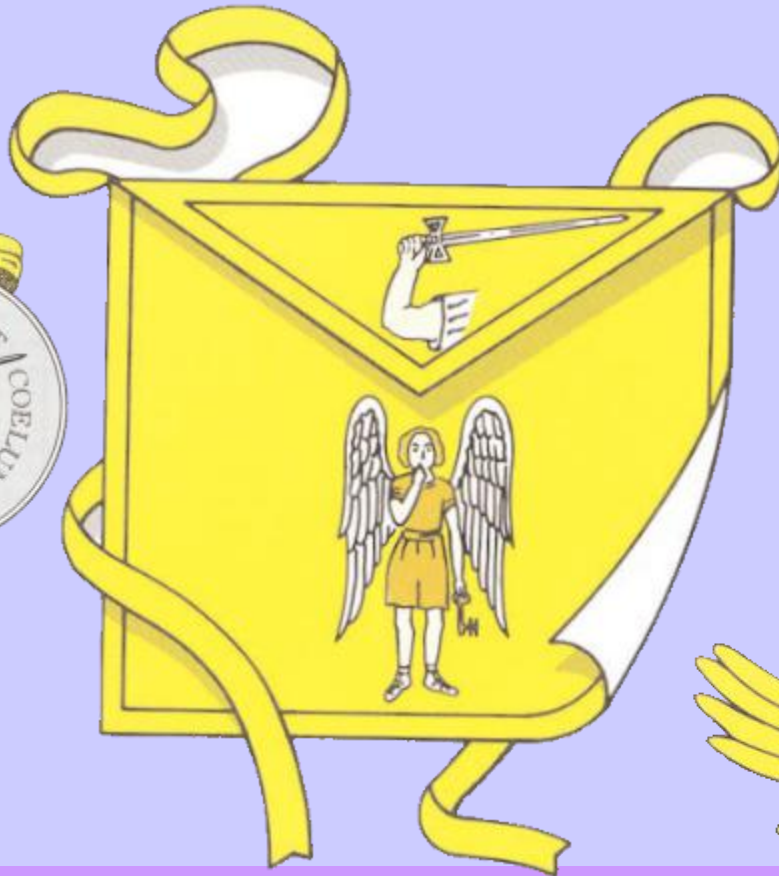
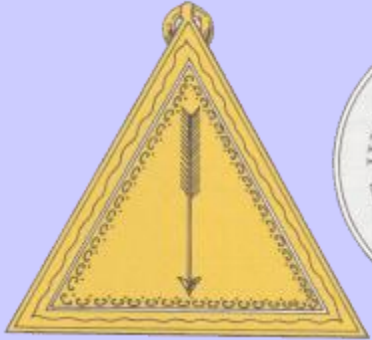
I, <state your name>, promise that I will endeavor to make those virtues which compose the five Masonic squares and the three Masonic triangles of this lodge the rule and guide of my life, conduct and conversation; and will endeavor, by all means in my power, to extend and increase the practice of them among men; and particularly, that my steps shall ever be guided and directed by the nine great lights of a Master.

I furthermore promise that I will not govern any lodge or other Masonic body, over which I may be called to preside, in a haughty or arbitrary manner; but with gentleness, urbanity and courtesy; and that I will use my best endeavors to preserve peace and harmony among the members thereof and all Masons everywhere. So help me God! Amen.



21ST DEGREE NOACHITE OR PRUSSIAN KNIGHT

GOOD WILL PREVAIL





SYNOPSIS



In medieval Germany the Holy Roman emperors were unable to effectively control their lands and feudal warfare brought increasing disorder. To help control this lawlessness there emerged in Westphalia near the end of the 12th century an extra-legal but efficient criminal tribunal, called the Vehmgerichte [pron: fame geh-rikht-eh], or “holy Vehm” [fame].

They presumably received their original jurisdiction from the royal courts. Combining old traditions with new legal forms, they filled an important gap in German medieval criminal law. Operating where ordinary territorial justice failed, they became increasingly secret after the 14th century. They operated in so-called “holy bands” which were sworn to secrecy on pain of death.

They also employed their own secret language and had secret signs. Some of their surviving documents bear the mysterious letters S.S.G.G., which are thought to be the initials of words stock, stein, gras, and grein, meaning “stick, stone, grass and woe,” alluding to the tortures and punishment one could obtain. Accusations were made mysteriously, often by nailing a notice to a tree, and failure to appear for trial was punished by death. The possible trial verdicts were hanging or acquittal. They were most powerful in the 15th century. Thereafter increasing corruption and abuse, and the consolidated power of the petty princes, brought a general move against them, and in the 16th century the Vehmgerichte largely disappeared; they were entirely eliminated only in the 19th century.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



In this Degree you are to be devoted to the cause of everyone who has been wronged by the great or oppressed by the powerful, those unjustly accused, those who have suffered from bribery, or corrupt judges, the widow, the orphan, the distressed and the destitute.

You are instructed that you cannot have honor as a Knight unless you earn it. Learn that laziness is degrading, and inactivity shameful. Be ever vigilant, seeking opportunities to perform good deeds. Be loyal in both word and deed.

Be charitable with the goods that God gives you, keeping always in mind the poor and the needy. You shall, by generous giving, liberate yourself from the illusion that the accumulation of wealth is the purpose of life. Let not your tongue make mischief between other men, by speaking flattery or gossip.

It is certain that Truth, in the end, will always win, and the right prevail. Do not be impatient when God, for a time, allows falsehood and wrong prosper and overcome, for their day shall never be long.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



A secret tribunal of judges is employed to teach the lessons of this degree. It is modeled after a German judicial system of the middle ages. The shroud of secrecy and power represented by this institution should remind us that we do not know the character of those who may judge us nor when we might be called to be judged for our actions.

In the drama even a common man is able to bring a complaint against a powerful political authority. The contest demonstrates the permanence and universality of divine justice - truth and good will always prevail, if not now, then later. The Mason is to be humble and modest before God and men. The word 'Noachite' in the name of this degree refers to an older version of the ritual based upon the descendants of Noah who attempted to build a tower that would reach to heaven. Called the Tower of Babel, it has become a symbol for human arrogance and boldness.



COMMUNICATION



Those who act boldly and with conceit may or may not be brought to justice on this earth by their fellow men, but the surest fate which awaits such men is that orderly, and perfect, divine justice. The Noachite or Prussian knight should believe and trust in God, certain of the downfall of evil and certain that rectitude of life and honesty are always rewarded. Such faith will enable us to be steadfast and courageous in the face of adversity.



OBLIGATION



And now join as brethren in this obligation:

I, <state your name>, upon the Sacred Word of a Master Mason and Knight Rose Croix, promise that I will keep punctually, and in both spirit and letter, all the promises I have made here.

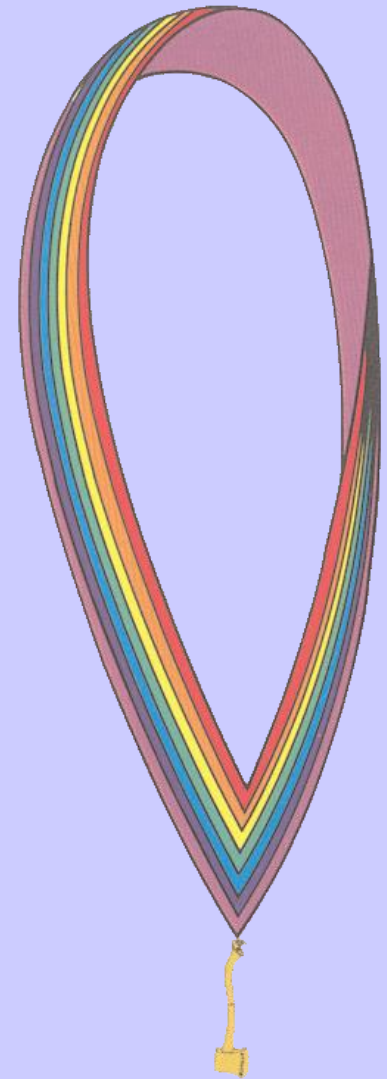
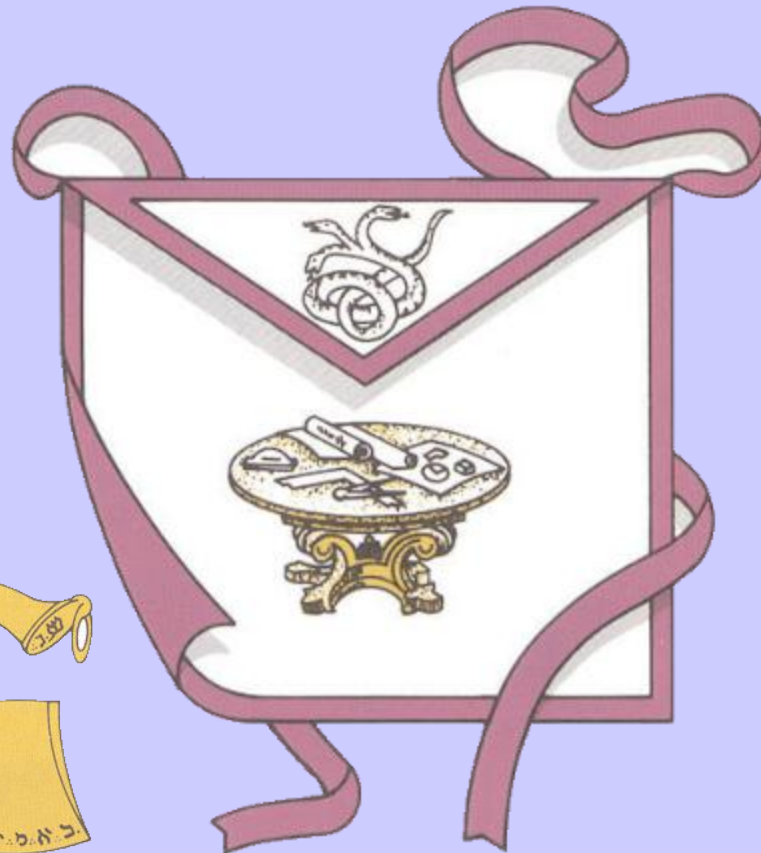
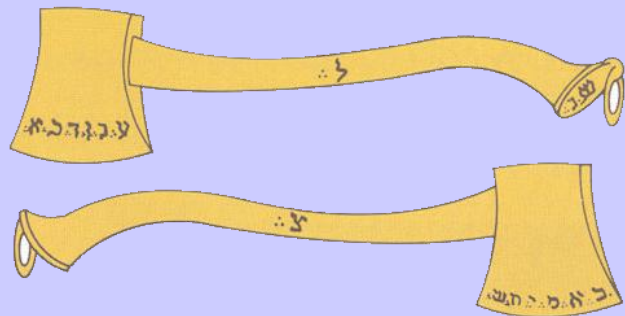
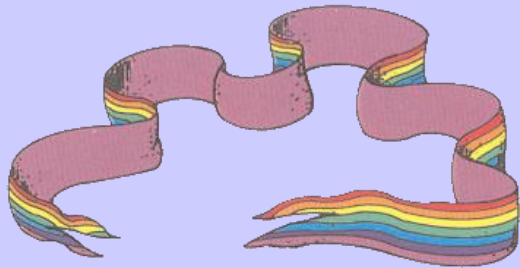
I furthermore promise and vow to be merciful and compassionate; And ever to remember that I am a man, and that all men are brethren. And furthermore, that I will be humble and modest in all my conduct, and carefully avoid all haughtiness and insolence in my demeanor and conversation.

So help me God and keep me steadfast to perform faithfully this, my vow!



22ND DEGREE KNIGHT ROYAL AXE OR PRINCE OF LIBANUS

LABOR IS THE GREATEST MERIT





SYNOPSIS



Idleness is a deadly deterrent to advancement. Life is a process of never ending refinement, resulting ultimately in the achievement of perfection. Toil, the effort we expend to reach a goal is the force which drives us to that perfection. There is always another lesson to be learned, always a new vista or horizon opening before us, and if we apply ourselves as if our lives depended on it, both as individuals and as a society, there is no limit to the heights we might climb.

This is symbolized by labor and by the proper application of tools. Knowledge can destroy as readily as it can create, as a tool in a careless hand may cut the operator.

You are taught how to apply yourself in overcoming obstacles and learn that the only way to defeat evil is to make energetic progress in the good.

The Scottish Rite teaches that Freemasonry is labor. The exercise of this labor is the practice of virtue. By this labor man has raised himself up from the animals to become a little lower than the angels.

Physical labor tempers the body and the spirit and is not to be shunned by any good Mason. Mental labor strengthens the mind and is a discipline of the spirit. These two forms of labor, in harmony, are the exercise of the well-developed man



COMMUNICATION



We symbolize these labors by the felling of the forests of Lebanon whose graceful trees have enriched many noble works. Thus is the axe a fit symbol of the progress of civilization both in the development of its elegant architecture and in the production of its sublime literature. By the plane we are reminded of our duty to act upon the level toward our brethren planing down the imperfections in our character. The saw teaches us fortitude and determination mitigated by patience. Wherever our talents are, there we should toil.

Whether hewers on the mountains or in the quarries, we must never lose sight of the truly Masonic edifice that we must first construct in our heart, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Neither noble birth nor rank is a means to avoid labor. Either is a resource for which a Mason is but a steward. Nor is noble birth or rank a sufficient prerequisite to become a Prince of Libanus. Privilege must be earned by work and the respect of our fellow men. Respect between men is a mutual condition to be respected; We must respect others.



OBLIGATION

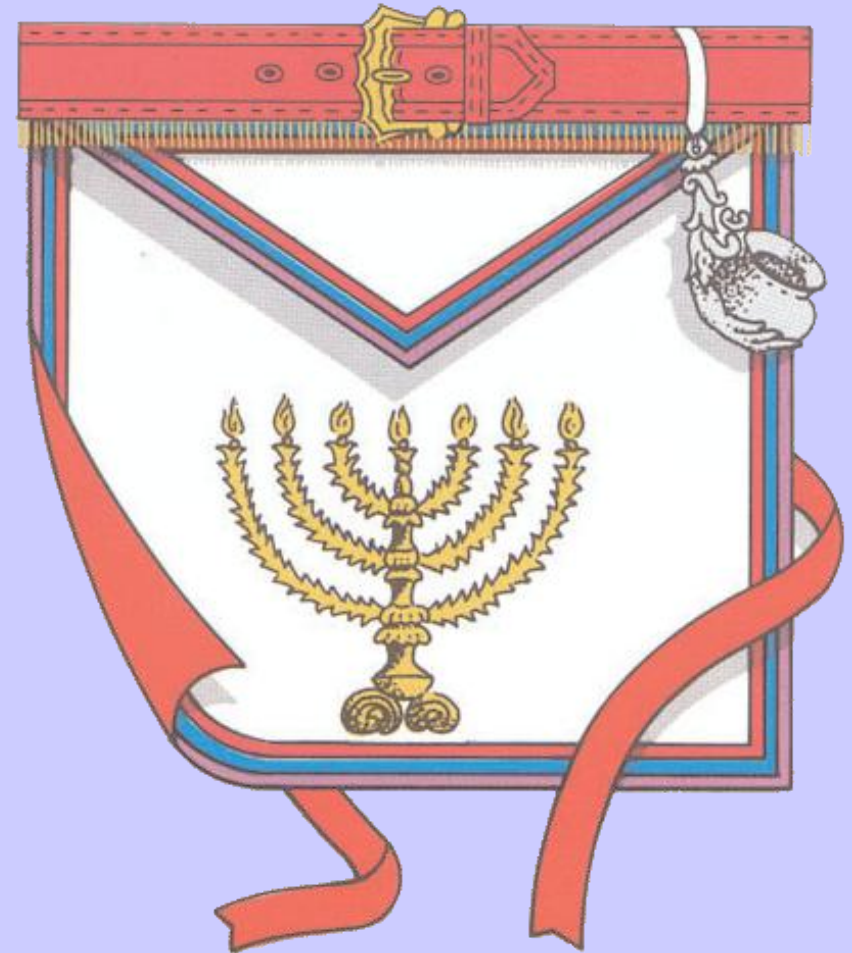


I, <state your name>, Promise that I will hereafter use my best endeavors to elevate the character of the laboring classes and to improve their condition; To disseminate the blessings of education among their children, and to give to themselves their due social and political weight; And that, recognizing labor as honorable, I will regard the laboring man as my peer and equal, so far as his honesty, virtue, and intelligence may entitle him to it. So help me God; And aid me to keep and observe the same!



23RD DEGREE CHIEF OF THE TABERNACLE

GOD IS BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION





SYNOPSIS



With the 23rd degree, Chief of the Tabernacle, we begin our study of the mystery degrees. The Masonic equivalent of the ancient mysteries will be our concern from the 23rd through the 26th degrees. In these four degrees our attention will be focused on the ancient mysteries of three of the predominant religions of the world.

We begin with the lesser mysteries, that is, knowledge that all may know. In this degree, the teaching of the lesser mysteries takes place in a Hebrew setting. Remember the point of this setting is to teach those tenants of the Hebrew doctrine that are common to many faiths. Remember, too, the ideas you will hear are not Masonic doctrine; The purpose of presenting them is twofold: first, to discover beliefs held throughout the major religions of the ancient world and then, to encourage reflection and thought.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



You are to be consecrated to the service of the Children of Light, and shown the Tabernacle in the wilderness, which we are told is a symbol of the universe. In the eyes of the ancients, man was considered a microcosm, or reflection of the universe; hence the Hermetic dictum, "As above, so below." We draw upon it allegorically to represent the establishment of a rebuilt mind and character according to the plan as laid out on the trestleboard of life by God. The tabernacle is a tent, a temporary dwelling place for the spirit of God, represented by the Ark. When the Tabernacle was ordered built by God, he promised a permanent dwelling place would eventually be made.

Sancta sanctis, Holy things for the holy! Great truths must be approached with reverence and piety. Hence you are purified in a brazen laver, in preparation that you might shine among men, blessing all and returning good for evil.



COMMUNICATION



The chief symbols in the 23rd degree are the tabernacle erected by Moses in the wilderness following the flight of the Children of Israel out of Egypt, and the standards of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Together these symbols represent the Deity within the universe. The essential instruction concerns the attributes of Deity within the limits of human understanding.

To become a Chief of the Tabernacle, one must repent of his sins and express his sincerity to serve God and his fellow men. Our purity, generosity and devotion are acknowledged by symbolic purification with water, an ancient rite common to many of the religions of the world.

Initiation brings to us knowledge of the Deity - chiefly that God is one, eternal, and unchanging. The world we see and the forces of nature are but examples of his omnipotence and creative powers. God is infinite and incomprehensible and his attributes are beyond human understanding, God is the soul of the world, separate from and superior to the universe. God is not jealous or revengeful; He is ever in serenity and repose. The universe is a great whole in which all tends to good result.

And now, my brothers, reflect and meditate on the nature of Deity by always keeping this obligation:



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, Promise and vow that I will be obedient to my superiors;
That I will keep my body pure, and receive submissively the doctrines and
mysteries of this order;

And that I will henceforth, to the best of my ability and knowledge, obey the
laws of God, and labor to do good to my fellow men.

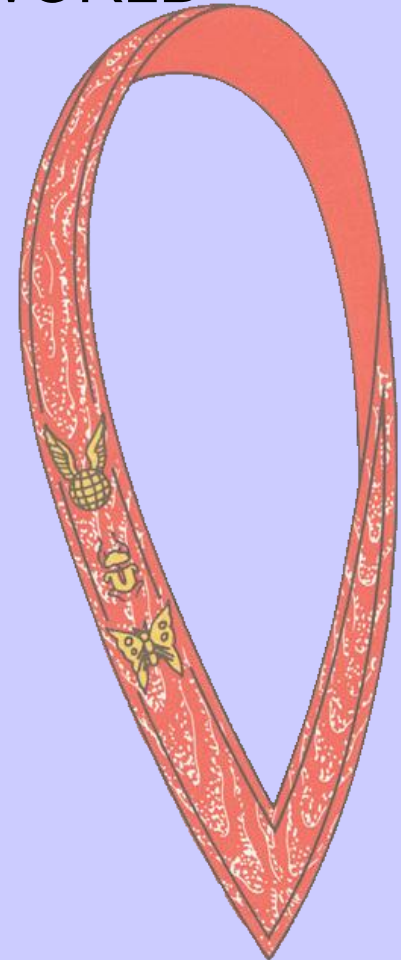
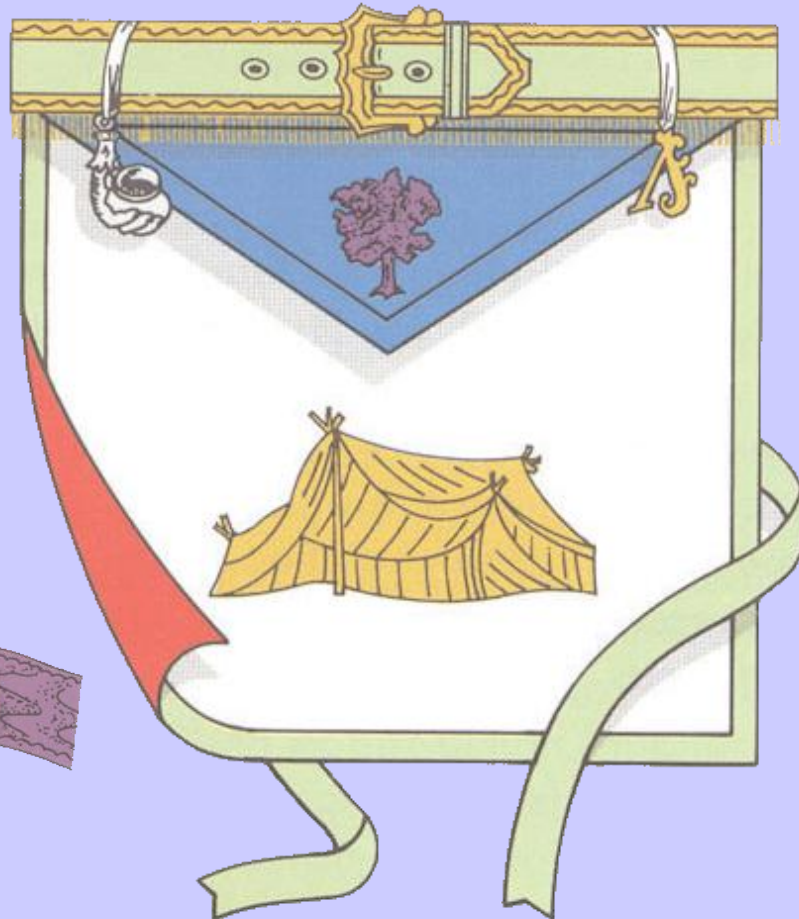
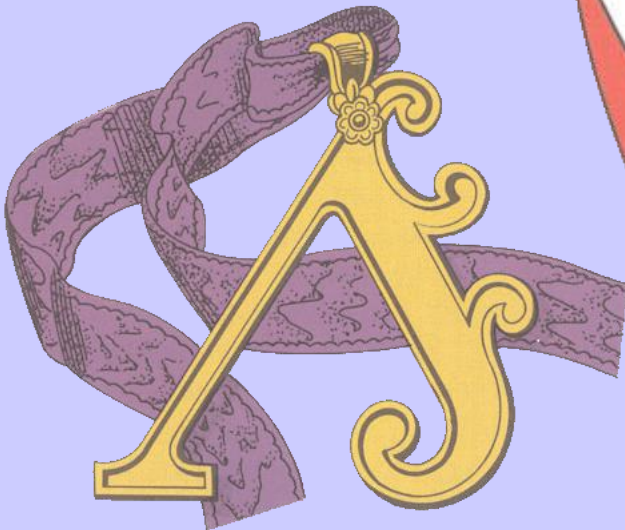
So help me God!

Amen.



24TH DEGREE PRINCE OF THE TABERNACLE

BETTER ACTION WILL MAKE A BETTER WORLD





SYNOPSIS



Having progressed to this degree we may now begin to understand the importance of symbolic instruction. The lessons of the Scottish Rite are taught by symbols because it is the most obvious mode of instruction. Nature itself is but a set of symbols, which teach sublime lessons. The mystery religions of the past transmitted their teachings by symbol so that they could remain hidden to the uninitiated.

The mysteries taught the doctrine of death and the resurrection; Each bringing to this greatest of mysteries its own understanding of mode and significance. We leave such interpretations to the heart and give no instruction on this matter. All the world's great religions have alike expressed the confidence that the true adherents of their faith could be recognized by the kind of life they led. Virtue has been the standard of righteousness from the beginning of time. Therefore we teach only those virtues which unite all men in a common purpose to make a better world through better action. Even in the ancient mysteries, as now in Masonry, it was not enough simply to be initiated; One had to accept the duties that came with such initiation. These duties correspond to the virtues taught in our lessons and had the same objective -- the improvement of the character of the individual.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



This Degree illustrates the common features of some of the world's major religions. The unity of thought that exists in all faiths, binding all mankind as one family, is the search for Divine Truth. The object of Masonry is social unity, by the alliance of Reason and Faith. However men may differ in their private beliefs, there can be but One True Origin of all Things. There can be but One True Creator. This fact alone makes all men Brothers.

To advance further you are told that an initiate must possess many qualities and attributes. Intellect enlightened by study, audacity which nothing checks, will that nothing can conquer, and discretion that nothing may corrupt or intoxicate, these are the qualities which identify a true Adept. To Know, to Will, to Dare, to Be Silent – these are fit rules of conduct for one who has attained or arrived at the knowledge of its practical application, a Master of Reason, and a Master of the Regenerating Fire.

Masonry, like Nature, teaches by symbols. Application of the ideas put forth in the Eighteenth Degree lead to this truth: Harmony, or Equilibrium, consists of the reconciliation of opposites. For this to be achieved there must be separation and reunion as the Alchemists said, solve et coagula [pron. sol-way et co-ag-you-lah], “analyze and synthesize.”



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



You will be introduced to the great principle of rhythm, and the great cycle of Birth, Death, and Regeneration, or Resurrection as a theme known the world over in many cultures and times. One lesson there points to the truth that from death and darkness does the Light eventually rise reborn as the Phoenix from its ashes, as a tree is nourished by the leaves which die and decay at its roots.

You accept your position as a novice in the Mysteries, prepared to fill your duties of life and of your private religion, that you may be raised, on that great day of account, a monument to God's glory.



COMMUNICATION



We may understand, as Josephus did, the symbolism of the tabernacle as representing the world -- the three parts of the tabernacle represented the earth, sea, and heaven; The twelve loaves of shewbread, the twelve months of the year; The candlestick represented the twelve signs through which the planets run their course; And the seven lights, those seven planets; The four colors, the four elements of the ancients --air, earth, fire, and water.

We may also understand the tabernacle as a visible embodiment of the holiness of God who is to be worshipped "in his court;" That is, the world itself. It is also a witness to the further truth that man is called to enjoy a real, but still restricted, communion with God.

One other attribute of the divine nature receives characteristic expression in this degree by the arrangement of the furniture of the sanctuary. This is a demonstration of the harmony of the character of God. Symmetry, harmony, and proportion are also the three essentials of the aesthetic in architecture; The aesthetic sense in man allows him to enjoy the beauty and harmony of the universe. These qualities are reflections of the harmony and perfection of the divine nature and are a part of the divine in each of us.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, in the presence of the true God, do most solemnly and sincerely promise and vow, that I will remember and heed the lessons which I have received in this degree;

That I will be generous and liberal to the poor; Just and impartial in public and private judgment, even when deciding between myself and another;

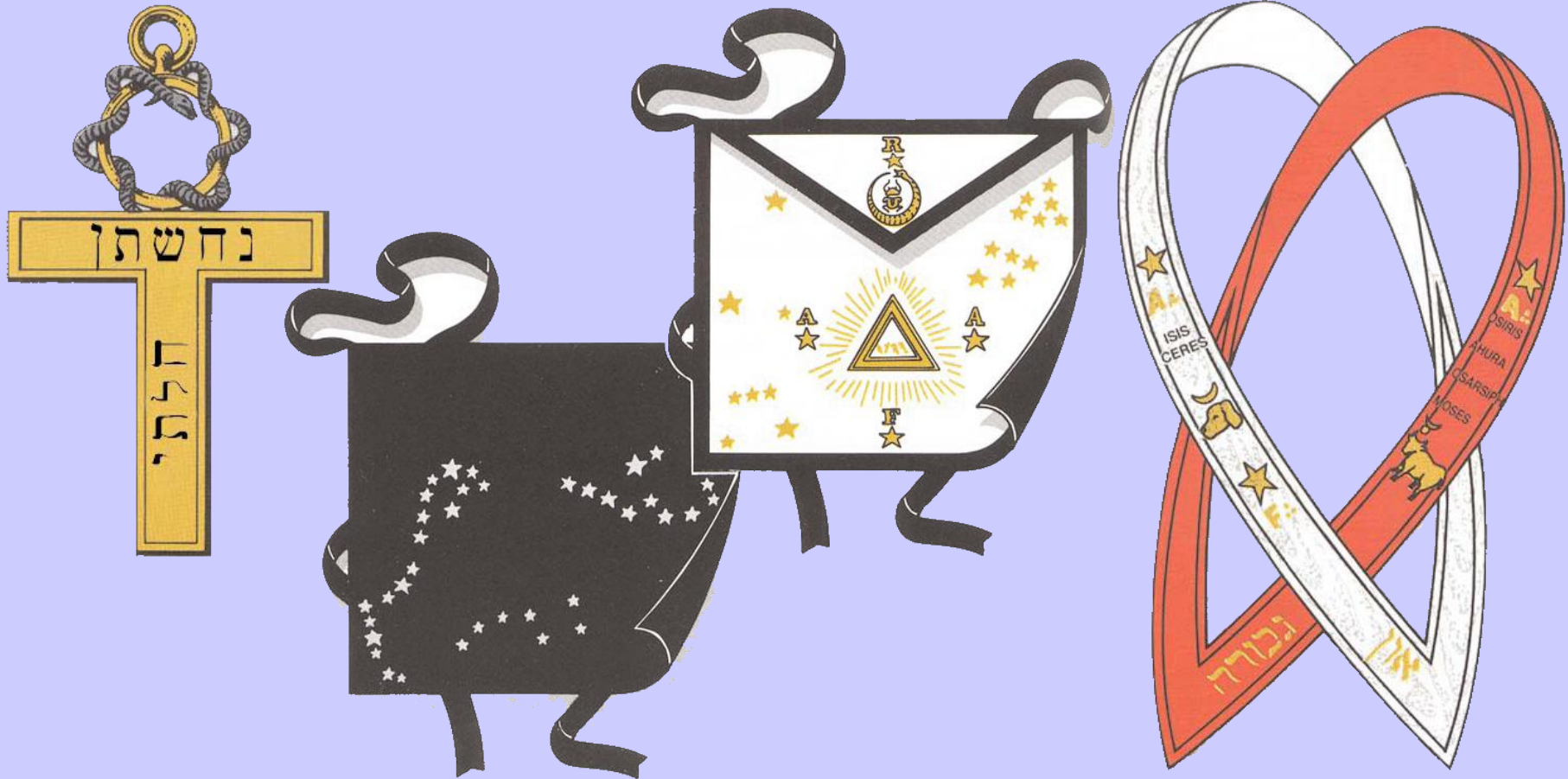
That I will not harbor malice nor seek revenge, but will love my neighbor like myself.

May God aid me faithfully to keep and perform this, my obligation.



25TH DEGREE KNIGHT OF THE BRAZEN SERPENT

ONE IS PREPARED TO RECEIVE THE
MYSTERIES BY OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF DEATH





SYNOPSIS



This Degree introduces you to Sufi teachings and traditions, and gives us clues on how this esoteric branch of Islam might help overcome the difficulties encountered in our attempts to advance as novitiates in the mysteries.

It first asks us if we have truly performed all we have promised. This is a question we must frequently ask ourselves. In our Masonic careers we have assumed obligations to the performance of many duties. These obligations are real. If we have agreed to live by them and do not do so, we are hypocrites and dishonor the Fraternity. The Perfection that was idealized in the Fourteenth Degree reveals itself to be elusive, and the path to it requires constant attention.

Knowledge, the Truth, and opportunities for service often come to us in forms which are at first unrecognizable, and may seem at first sight, unacceptable. Truth may appear to us in a guise we find unrecognizable, or even foolish. By withholding premature judgment and by applying mature reflection we learn to recognize Truth, and in so doing we broaden our horizons of understanding, which leads to greater wisdom. As you have discovered throughout the Degrees, philosophical truths are not as easily digested as are children's primers. We must vigorously apply ourselves to learning, and be prepared to do so at all times.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



The candidate in this degree represents a religious leader among the Druse of Lebanon. These people were an ancient sect of Islam, a major religion in the world. We hear the supposed doctrine of the Druse recited from simple apartments named for astrological symbols recognized by these people -- the houses of the earth, the planets, the sun and moon, and the light. The many lessons teach us of the threefold nature of man -- our flesh, our souls, and our intellects. When cultivated properly, the voice of God may be heard in the human mind and heart.

The name of the degree is derived from the biblical account of an event in the history of the Hebrews. As the Hebrews wandered in the wilderness of Sinai following their flight from Egypt, they became discouraged and began to worship other Gods. As a punishment, were attacked by venomous serpents and many died. By God's command Moses erected a serpent of bronze or brass upon a pole and any that were bitten could look upon it and live. Thus, as by idolatry they became separated from their God, so by a visible image they were brought back. So striking was this experience that the brazen serpent survived to remind the people of their transgression for over eight hundred years.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



When the great pyramids of Egypt were built, the northernmost constellation was the great serpent, now called Draconis or 'the dragon'. As well, the constellation now called a scorpion was, in those days, seen as a serpent and its rising in the night sky heralded the coming of winter. Hence we may see the reasons for the dominance of the serpent in the mythology of the ancient near east.



COMMUNICATION



The theme of this degree is frankly astrological. It recalls the importance of the heavens to the ancients. Upon that brightly sprinkled slate was written their mythology and their calendar. The constellations received their names, not in a petty imitation of their shapes but rather from their actions in the sky as they accorded with the history and traditions of the people. The Hebrews were not alone in their reverence for the wonder of the stars. The Babylonians perfected astrology as a science and the Egyptians bent the stars to their own practical ends and used this art to predict the flooding of the Nile. The Persians wrote upon the vault of heaven the details of their history and the dogma of their religion, as did the Hindus to the east.

God has created the void that he may fill it. Ignorance is enlightened by knowledge; Weakness is sustained by force; Purifies evil and overcomes it; The day loves the night and pursues it around the world. These are the tensions of opposites that demonstrate the working of the great force of balance in the universe.



OBLIGATION



Promise us, Knights of the Brazen Serpent, with the most inviolable oaths and assurances, that you will never divulge our secrets;

That you will never aid or assist anyone, whoever he may be, against us; That you will never lay any snare for us;

That you will speak to us nothing but the truth, on all occasions;

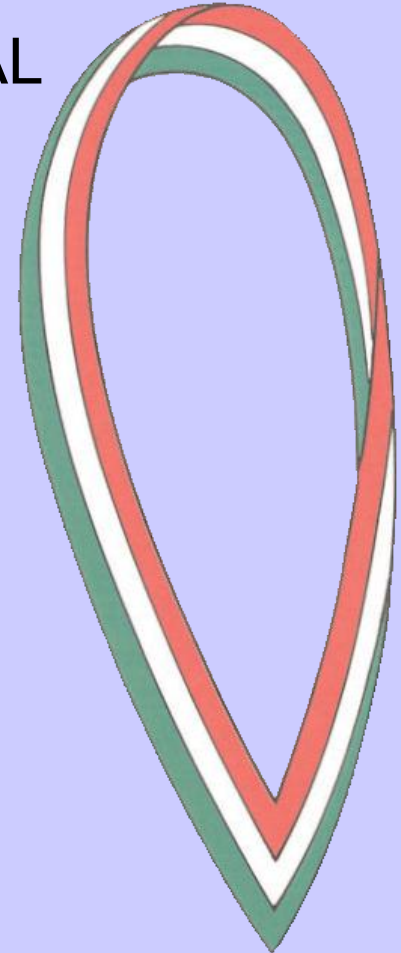
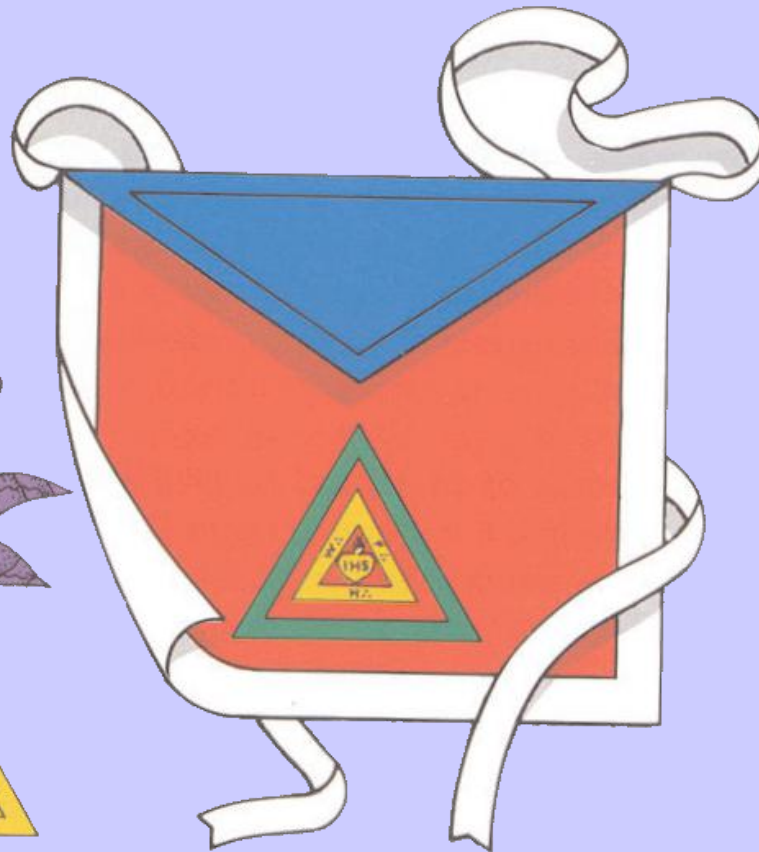
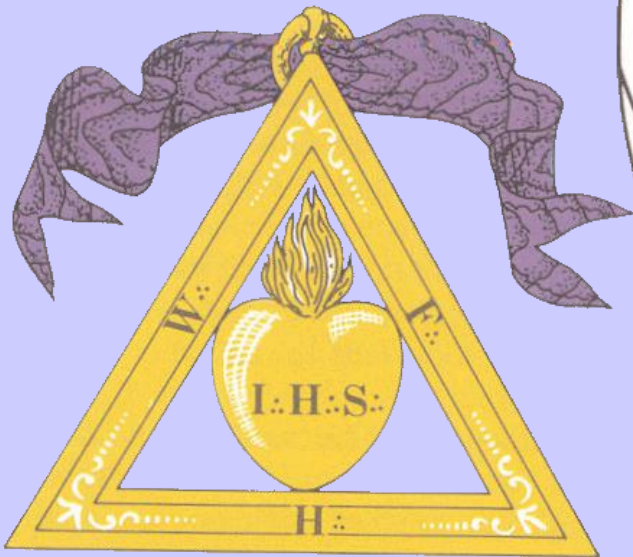
And that you will honestly endeavor to deal and act and refrain from doing, according to the lessons that have in our houses received.

Do you so engage yourself?



26TH DEGREE PRINCE OF MERCY OR SCOTTISH TRINITARIAN

TRUTH IS ETERNAL AND UNIVERSAL



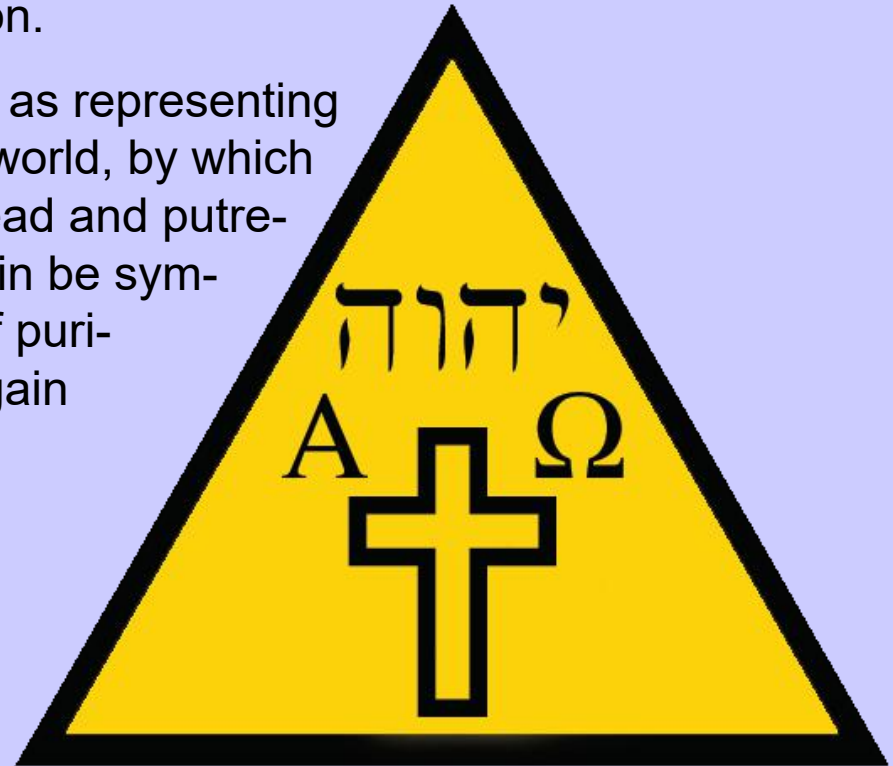


SYNOPSIS

This is the third and final of the novitiate of the Mysteries Degrees, in which you will represent one of the faithful and the elect.

The early Christian mysteries are introduced, and some of their ideas are expounded upon, as were the early Hebrew mysteries in the Twenty-fourth and the Islamic mysteries in the Twenty-fifth Degrees. Their grades were Purification, Initiation, and Accomplishment, or Perfection.

The Grip of the Lion's Paw is identified as representing the mental grasp of a new definition of the world, by which man is raised in consciousness from the dead and putrefied state of mental ignorance. You will again be symbolically lustrated with water as a symbol of purification by suffering and sorrow. You will again share food and wine, remembering that we are fellow travelers on the path, and that we are united in our pursuit of Truth.





SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



In every place and time men have gazed at the wonders of the natural world with reverence and awe. Stunned by the beauty and order around them, it is no wonder that they originally fashioned gods from physical things. As superstition evolved into religion so did mans' conception of Deity evolve from an earthly foundation to a spiritual realization. Ancient symbols have taken on new meaning and we have risen from base idolatry to philosophical meditation. Blind faith has been alloyed with reason and the result has been the equilibrium of wisdom.

Too often this search has also met with frustration rather than fruition, and men have fashioned mental idols to replace those of gold or marble, changing rather than improving, their spiritual condition. To bring man into touch with the eternal, this degree teaches the nearly universal belief in the triune nature of God. Long before the Christian concept of the trinity this belief flourished. Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and Hindus, all saw their Deity as a threefold division, reflected in the natural world. The Hindus, for example, had Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva, deifications of the natural processes of creation, preservation, and destruction.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



Men have always judged the worth of the religion of others by its correspondence to their own. The Romans were simply bewildered when they found no image in the temple at Jerusalem, and early Christianity was judged atheist because it had no temples, images, or sacrifices.

Men are most likely to possess the religion of their culture and it can seldom be said that one has actually freely and objectively chosen his religion. He will usually have the religion of his parents and defend it as the absolute truth to the death. Thus, during the crusades, did the sons of many mothers slay each other, Moslem and Christian alike, in their devotion to the truth and to possess a city built by a religion both of them despised.



COMMUNICATION



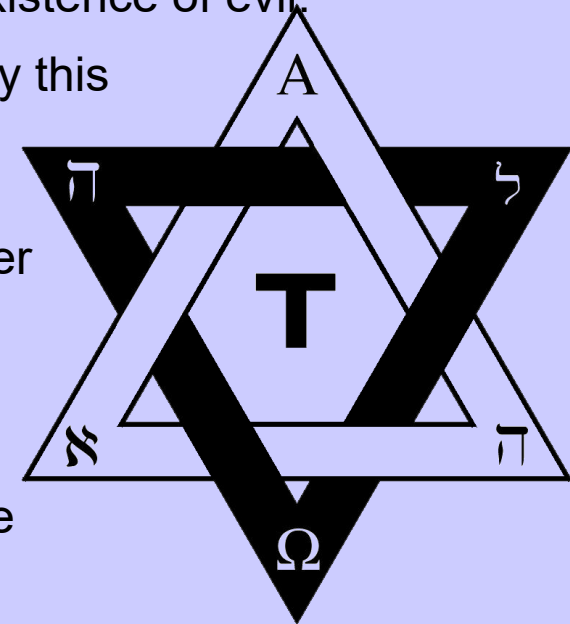
Peering through the misty silence of perished centuries we seek the threads of common belief that unite the religious traditions of mankind.

The greatest minds have laboriously devoted themselves to the great problems of the human condition: pain, suffering, and the existence of evil.

The idea of the Infinite and the Absolute is expressed by this symbol, formed of black and white bars, the letters black and white, which is the Grand Hexagram of this degree.

Within this symbol is a hint of the meaning of the number three in Masonry. If God were but one, he would never be Creator or Father. If he were but two, there would be antagonism or division in the Infinite; and that would be the division or death of every possible thing. Therefore, he is three, to create from Himself, and in His image, the infinite multitudes of beings and numbers.

So He is really single in Himself, and triple in our conception. This causes us likewise to see him triple in Himself, and single in our intellect and in our love.





OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, of my own free will and accord, in the presence of the Great Creator of the Universe, do most solemnly promise that I will be merciful and tolerant, and will endeavor to obey the new commandment by loving my brother.

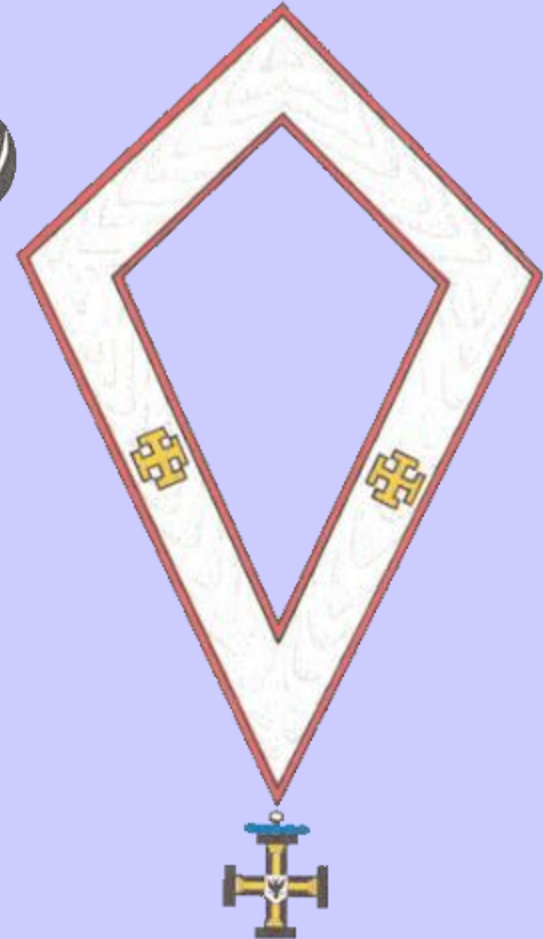
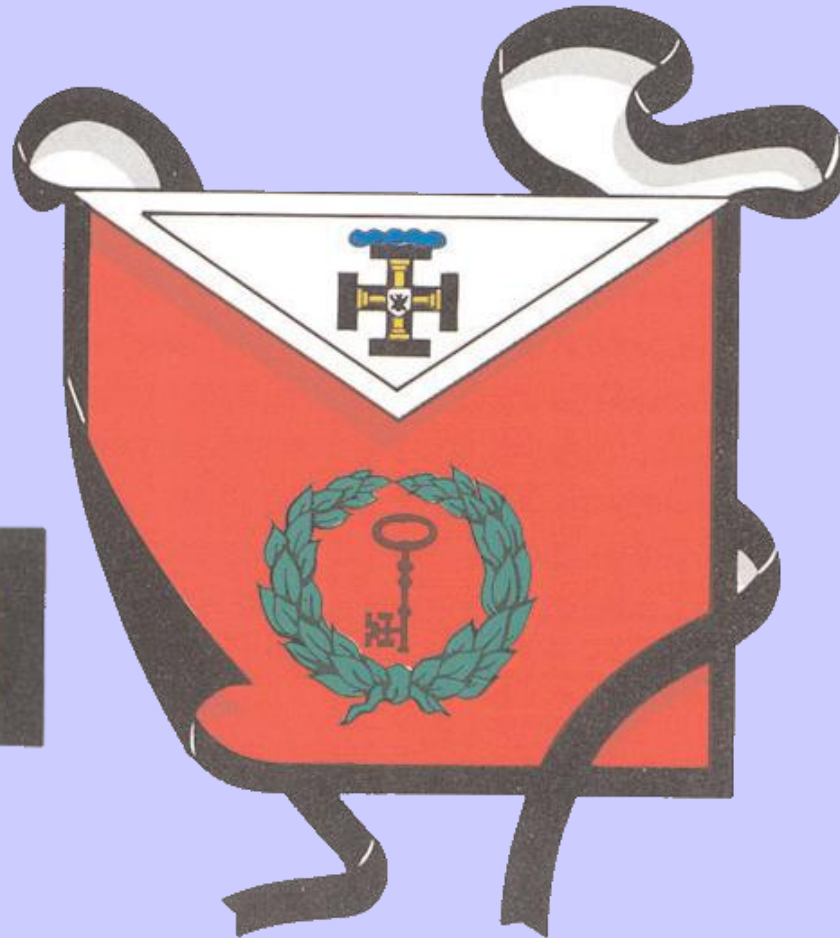
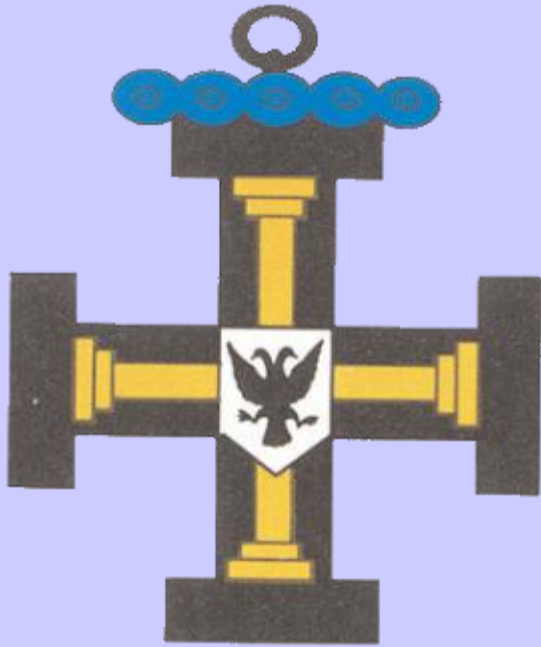
May our Father who is in heaven keep me from the guilt of perjury.

Amen.



27TH DEGREE KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE TEMPLE

KEEP FAITH AND OVERCOME TEMPTATION





SYNOPSIS



This is the first of the three Chivalric Degrees. Having made yourself familiar with some of the great truths common to some of the world's great religions, and firm in what you have learned in all the Degrees up until now, you assume the vows of Knighthood and take up arms against injustice, falsehood and oppression. The five excellent qualities of a Knight are Humility, Temperance, Chastity, Generosity and Honor.

You realize fully that you have no time to waste, as death draws nearer upon you with every breath. You vow to guard the honor of women, not neglect the sick and suffering, live to serve your fellow man. You will endeavor to exemplify all the principles inculcated in the Rite, and never harm another as a result of base motives.

A firm and steadfast willpower is needed on the part of every initiate, so that he does not deviate from the path, no matter how strong the temptation. When one sacrifices personal desires for nobler and higher ends, or for the benefit of humanity at large, then one is worthy of the highest rewards.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



The drama of this degree portrays a vigil. Prior to his full admission to knighthood, the aspirant was often required to maintain a vigil over his weapons and armor in a small chapel for an entire night. The purpose of this vigil was discipline and meditation. The weapons and armor of a knight were symbolic as well as practical; The armor was righteousness; The shield, faith; The sword, truth; The helmet, salvation and, therefore, courage; The spurs, fortitude. Reflection upon these attributes prepared a knight for the difficult sacrifices, which attended his admission into the order.

In the ceremony, temptations are placed before the candidate to test his resolve as the world places temptations in our path.



COMMUNICATION



This is a purely chivalric degree whose purpose is instruction in the knightly duties of obedience to proper authority, esteeming your own poverty for the needs of your brethren and honoring the virtue of women.

When the knight commanders meet, their assembly is in the form of a circle denoting equality and is called a Chapter. Chapters are lit by two sets of lights; The first is a candelabrum of twenty-seven lights arranged in groups of twelve, nine, and six; The second set is of five large lights which form a passion cross, the sign of the order.

These five lights also represent the five excellent qualities of a knight which all should possess to merit the favor of receiving this degree. These are: humility, temperance, chastity, generosity, and honor.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, about to be invested with the dignity of Knight Commander of the Temple, do vow that I will defend, not only with my lips, but also with all my strength, the free exercise of the work of Masonry, the rights of conscious, and the great principles of free government;

That I will, at all times, be prepared to take up arms for my country, to defend her safety and honor, and even, in case of need, to pass the seas in her service;

That I will not permit the power of the order to be perverted to evil uses, or made the instrument of private ambition or of private greed;

That I will never surrender my principles in order to purchase safety; That I will never refuse to my brother knights any aid I am able to afford them;

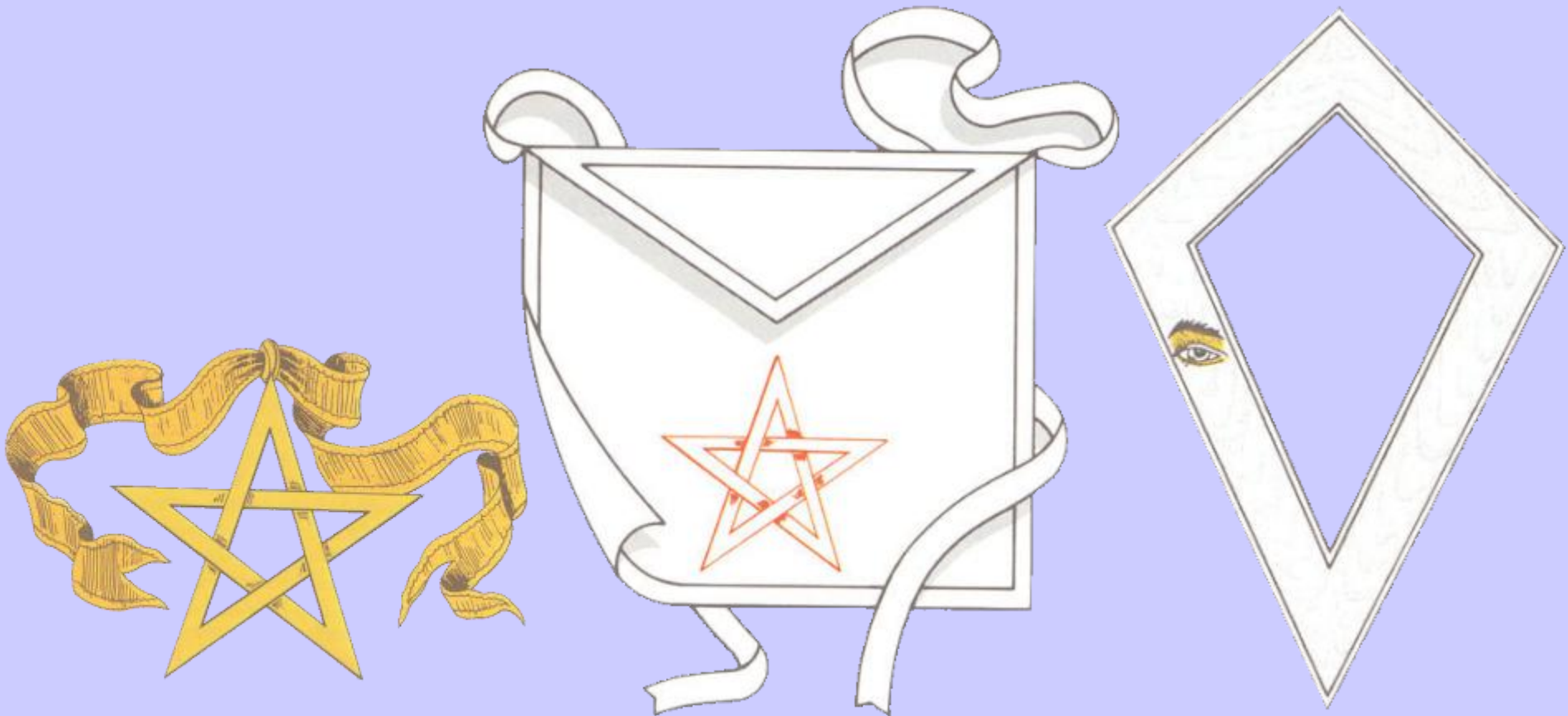
But will assist and defend them, by words, by arms, and by all sorts of good offices;

And in sincerity, and of my own free will, I vow that I will observe all these things! So help me, God!



28TH DEGREE KNIGHT OF THE SUN OR PRINCE ADEPT

LEARN, THAT YOU MIGHT LIVE





SYNOPSIS



This Degree will instruct you in the nature of symbolism. It will show you what symbols are, and how to read them. Symbols are used because many abstract, philosophical and profound truths and realizations cannot be expressed by words alone.

In the past Degrees you learned something of the ancient mysteries, and were provided with an esoteric interpretation of the Master's Degree. The divine origin and nature of the Self has also been alluded to. You have been introduced to the Kabbalistic philosophy of the Hebrews, and were shown methods by which the ancient initiate investigated the nature of the universe. You are given to understand that the accumulation of knowledge is gradual. It builds upon itself with unceasing labor. It requires great patience and determination. In this Degree you are admonished not to confuse the symbol for the thing symbolized, a practice which leads to confusion and folly. You are also informed that it is the nature of a symbol to both conceal and reveal information. “Revelare” [pron. ray-wellar- ay], the word in Latin, means to veil anew.



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



You are taught that you must emulate Nature in your efforts to digest what you learn. Everything in Nature follows a great cycle. All living things, after fulfilling the measure of their creation, return to the earth only to become part of a new form of life. To express this in the symbolism of Alchemy, you must “analyze and synthesize.” That is, you must be able to take apart what you have learned, and put it together in new and useful ways. That which was alluded to in the Eighteenth Degree, you will hear clearly spoken: those who can read the symbols of the Book of Nature are truly Princes among Masons and Adepts among Men.

The chief duty of a Knight of the Sun is learning. You will be called a Knight of the Sun because the light of the sun represents to us, as Masons, that pure knowledge which emanates from the Deity and is the eternal treasure for which we must continually seek. The measure of our success as Scottish Rite Masons is the slow but steady accumulation of understanding that comes from study.

The objects of our inquiries in this degree are the threads of knowledge that lead back to the remote past. There we find the great lessons of mankind, which have stood the test of time. These lessons may, even today, provide us with proper examples of Masonic conduct much of this knowledge is hidden and may only be discovered by great effort. Great is the reward of those who persevere; Equally great will be their contribution to the betterment of the fraternity and humanity



SYNOPSIS (cont'd)



The alchemists of the middle ages are said to have sought the secrets of wealth and eternal life, but the true alchemists did not seek earthly wealth; Rather they sought moral worth. They veiled their teachings in words that were misunderstood so that only the most worthy might receive them properly. These men were called "adepts" and so the other title of this degree is "Prince Adept". In receiving this degree one does not become a prince over other men, but a prince, or master, of himself; That is, to achieve a mastery of the self by will and works. The mastery of the self is the great end of our institution.

Our minds and senses must both be controlled and directed to learning. By this route, and there is no other, we may become teachers and examples for our brothers.



COMMUNICATION



A Knight of the Sun is both king and priest. These names are but symbols for knowledge and virtue. We become, by receiving this degree, kings of science and priests of truth. Just as earthly knowledge will make a better world, so will the practice of truth make a better man.

From Judaism we learn of the equilibrium of the contraries of justice and mercy as infinite attributes of Deity; From Christianity we learn of the hope of redemption; From Islam we gain insight into the oneness of God; From the many mystical arts, the Kabbalah, alchemy, astrology, and numerology we learn the importance of symbol in moral instruction; Finally, from the ancient mystery religions of the world, we learn the essential unity hidden in the diversity of religious expression.

By a lack of faith and refusal to reason, man blinds himself to the wonders of nature and an understanding of man's place in the universe. So too, some knowledge, like a light too bright, blinds rather than enlightens. Thus it is with many of the lessons of this degree: silence, equilibrium, unity, duality, trinity, change, reason, faith, cause, and effect. These are but words to the uninitiated. If you will learn their true meaning it will only be by a lifetime of commitment and study.

You will now, through the obligation of this degree, assume its duties and thereby merit its benefits.



OBLIGATION

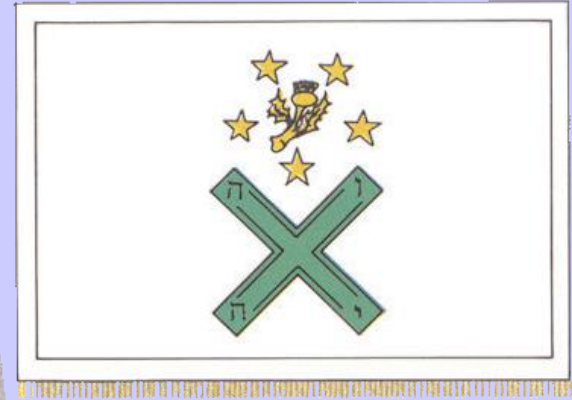
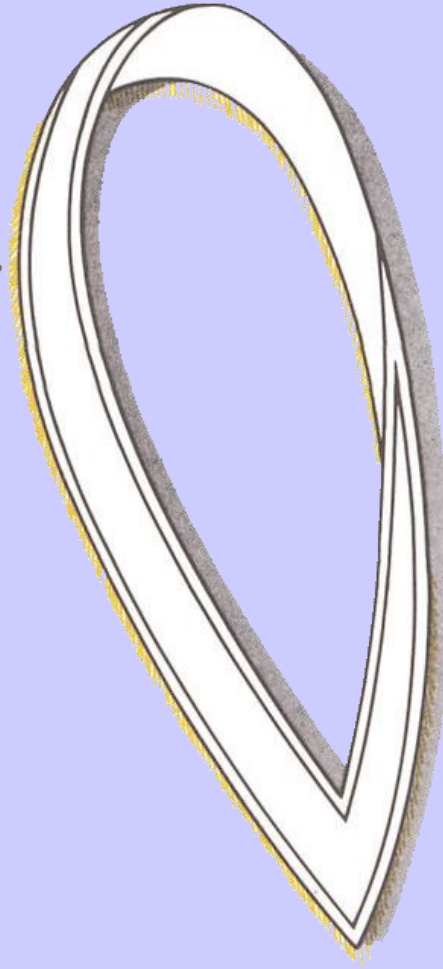
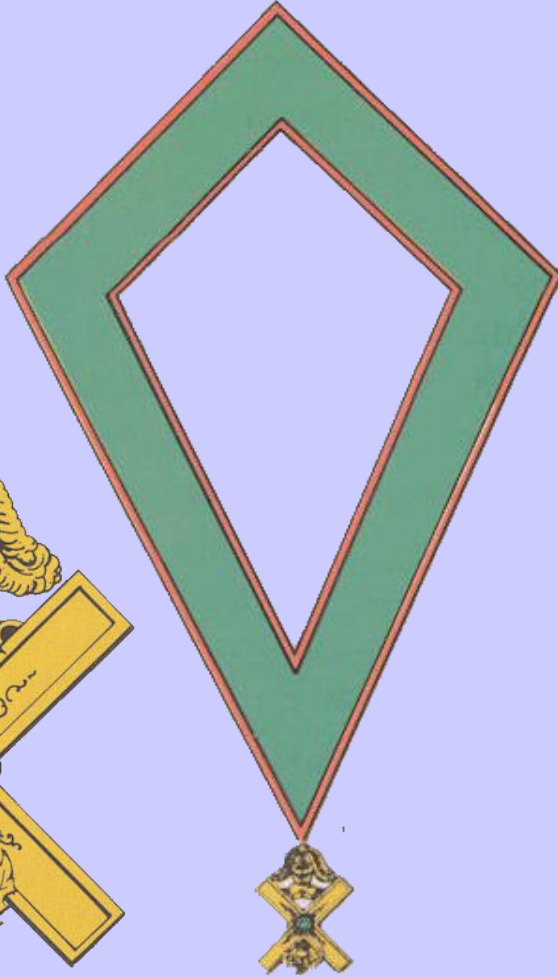
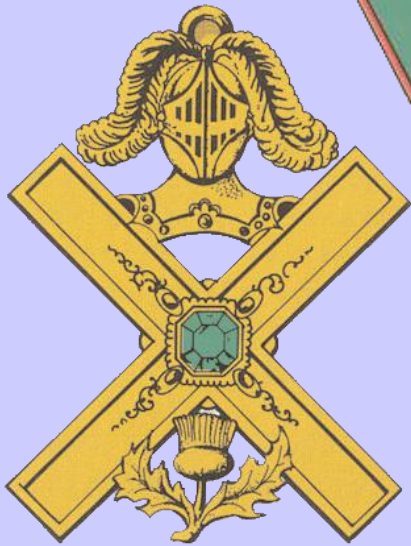


I, <state your name>, do solemnly promise these brethren that I will ever be earnest to vindicate the truth, assert freedom of opinion in matters philosophical and religious, discountenance persecution, and endeavor to eradicate error, and to seal this my sacred obligation, I do now taste this salt; *[he does or they do so]* and should I ever violate these vows and pledges, or prove faithless, false or disloyal, may it become a deadly poison in my blood, and as the water of bitterness of the Children of Israel! So help me God! Amen!



29TH DEGREE KNIGHT OF ST. ANDREW

TOLERATION IS THE PROTECTION OF FREEDOM





SYNOPSIS



A Knight of St. Andrew is devoted to deeds of active charity, practical philanthropy and to the principles of toleration and free government.

The principle symbols of this degree are the banner of the order and the cross of St. Andrew. The banner represents free government and we are all charged to its protection. The cross of St. Andrew is in the shape of an 'X' and has many meanings. Traditionally, it is the form upon which St. Andrew was martyred. Since St. Andrew is the Patron Saint of Scotland, we see this shape on the flag of that country.

We also see here the symbol of the serpent with his tail in his mouth to remind us of the cycle of time. This cycle is revealed to us in the changes of nature, which promise the same renewal of life beyond the veil of death.



SYNOPSIS



Here, in the second of the Chivalric Degrees, you learn anew the value of Humility, Patience and Self-denial. The necessity of a probationary period alludes to the time required for new knowledge to be analyzed and processed, and its application in daily life discovered. The idea is put forth, as was believed in the time of the great Chivalric Orders, that illumination could be achieved by Knightly and Heroic Virtue. Therefore you are once again commended to Humility, Patience, Self-denial, Charity, Clemency, Generosity, Virtue, Truth and Honor.

You are given a brief introduction into the origin of some of the Orders of Masonic Knighthood, departing with the knowledge that no true Mason ever despairs of the final victory of truth over error.



COMMUNICATION



The legend associated with this degree tells us that the Knights of St. Andrew were originally formed by the Scottish hero Robert Bruce from Knights Templar after that order was disbanded by force in the rest of Europe.

Nine lights illuminate a chapter of Knights of St. Andrew as the nine qualities they represent should illuminate our lives: humility, patience, self-denial, charity, clemency, generosity, virtue, truth, and honor.

Institutions and ideas also find favor and suffer disregard but truth, though hidden for a time, will return again as seeds which laid for centuries in Egyptian tombs, when planted, spring forth, their life force unabated.

The nine qualities of a Knight of St. Andrew cultivate the mind and spirit so that divine truth might flourish again in the world.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name> do vow to God and promise these my brethren that I will live and die in the service of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite;

That I will henceforward succor and assist all distressed women and needy orphans;

And that I will be hereafter guided, as far as human imperfection will permit, by the nine great symbolic lights of the chapter.

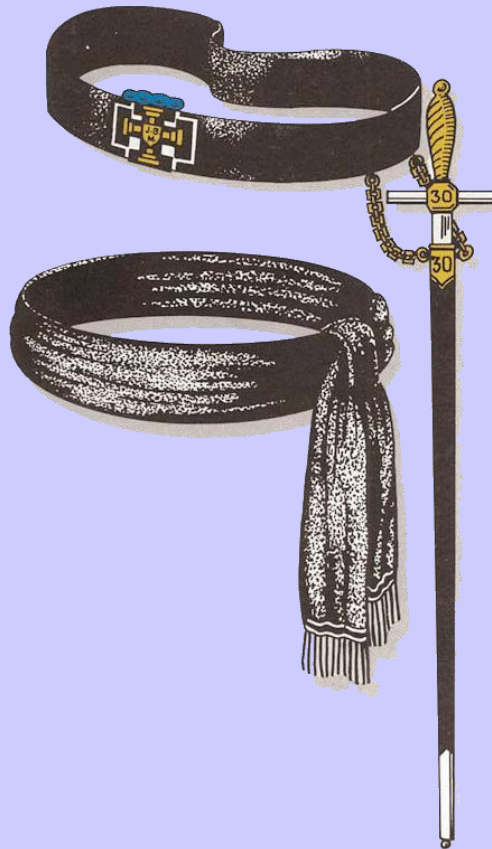
All these things I will perform, so help me God



30TH DEGREE KNIGHT KADOSH

MANDATORY

MAN IS SUPREME OVER INSTITUTIONS





SYNOPSIS



The Degree of Knight Kadosh derives from the same source of the York Rite Degree of Knight Templar, with which it has some affinities. This Degree is the capstone of your experience in the Council of Kadosh, and you will here assume your third degree of Knighthood. You will here discover that you may not ascend any higher in your knowledge of the mysteries until you have overcome the dread of death. Death is inevitable, and in the grand scheme of Great Architect, it is the entrance to another existence. We must all overcome what we fear most in order to fully cross the threshold of self-knowledge, even as death is the gateway to the personal knowledge of God. For the third and final time your resolve to proceed is thoroughly tested.

The mission of the Knights Kadosh is the avenging of a great crime, and we are the sworn enemies of the crimes of oppression, injustice, and usurpation. In token of our willingness and determination to proceed, you are called upon to sacrifice the base emotions of vanity, pride, jealousy, envy and any private grievance that would impede the welfare of the Order or of a Brother.

You are warned that no matter how near to the top you may appear to be you may fall at any moment. Therefore, be ever on guard, and ever vigilant. Many are called yet few are chosen.



SYNOPSIS



You are called upon to verbalize your thoughts regarding your beliefs in all matters Masonic, Political and Religious, which indicates you fully understand the principles of the Order, and are able to teach them to others. The beliefs must be in accord with the following:

Masonic – To believe in being a true Brother, in the performance of Duty, in subduing the passions and in aspiring to virtue.

Political – To believe in being a loyal and peaceable citizen, and in government by the consent of the governed, with equal treatment for all.

Religious – To believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, of Infinite Wisdom, Understanding and Knowledge, who loves Its creations and desires their obedience.



COMMUNICATION

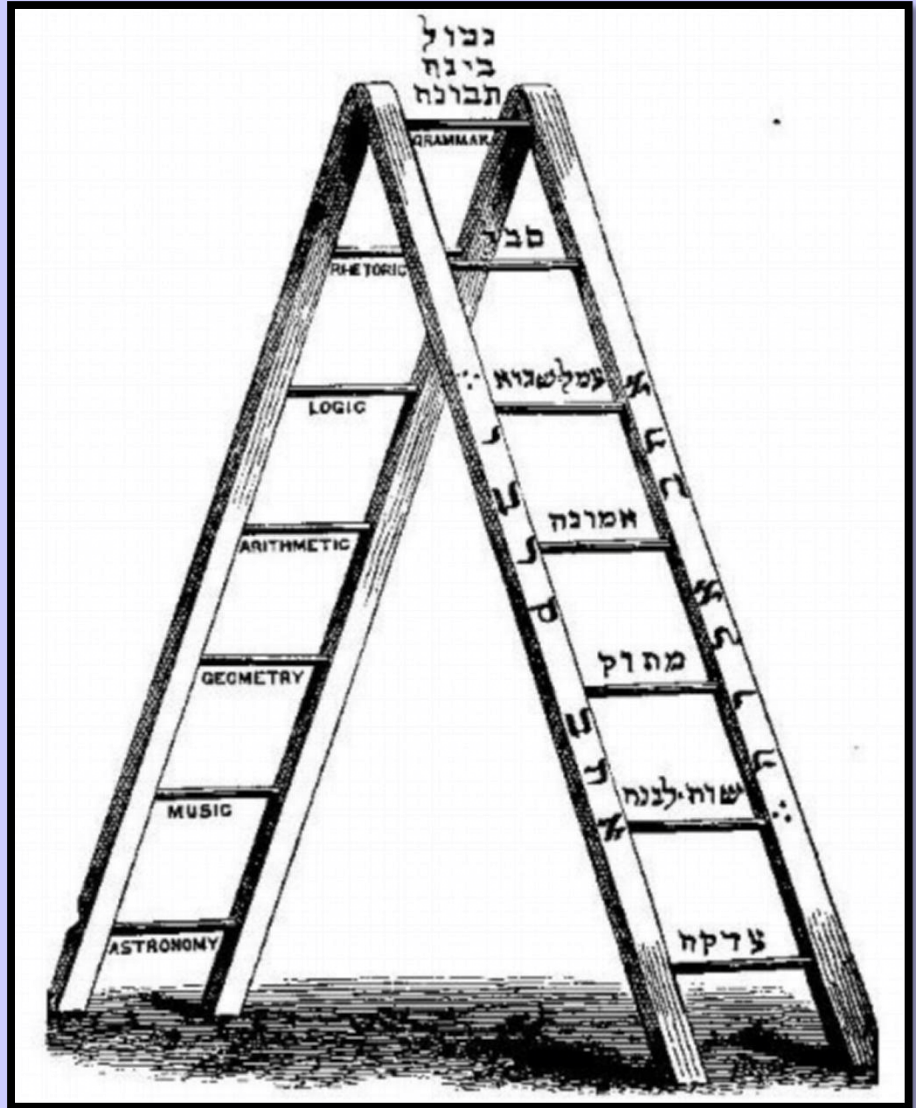


You are presented with one of the oldest symbols of the Scottish Rite degrees, the Ladder of the Kadosh, and given its meaning. Among other things, it illustrates the steps of Attainment: Justice, Perfect Equity, Amiability, Good Faith, Great Labor, Endurance, and Elaboration/Intelligence/Understanding.

In life, temptation is everywhere, and the ability to resist, control and to redirect the will is what distinguishes a Knight Mason from common men.

You swear to always contribute to the propagation and diffusion of enlightened ideas, to always strive to serve the legal sovereignty of the People over institutions, and to always keep separate Church and State.

In closing you are reminded that all knightly virtues are but the tenets of brotherly love, relief and truth manifested in action to the world at large – those tenets first taught you in the Symbolic Lodge.





OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, In the presence of God I do solemnly vow that I will be governed by all the rules and regulations of the order of Knights Kadosh, they shall be my law, and its principles my creed.

I will be temperate in all things, subdue my appetites and control my evil tendencies. I will be faithful to the Order, keeping the secrets of the Kadosh and revealing them to none unlawfully.

After due warning and mature reflection, I do solemnly and sincerely vow faithfully to devote myself to the objects of the Order of the Kadosh and zealously to maintain them by such means as shall be ordered by competent authority. I accept the Apostolate of Truth and of the Rights of Man. I will do my duty as a true Kadosh should.

I sacrifice my vanity, pride, jealousy, envy, and private grievances to the good of the order and my Brethren.

I sacrifice all vicious passions and sensual appetites that are unworthy of a good Mason and Knight Kadosh.

I solemnly promise and vow that I will ever revere the memory of those who died for the cause of truth and the liberation of humanity from the kingdom of oppression. If need be, I will imitate their loyalty, remembering always the example of Jacques DeMolay, the last Grand Master of the Order of Knights Templar.

I furthermore promise and vow that I will contribute to the propagation and diffusion of enlightened ideas and will strive to secure for my Brethren the legal sovereignty of the people.

I furthermore promise and vow that I will defend the right of every Brother to practice his religion or advocate his political persuasion.

So help me God! And keep me steadfast in the due performance of the Same!



CLOSING OF COUNCIL OF KADOSH



The instruction of the Council closes with the degree of Knight Kadosh. Here we learn the great Masonic political truth that the individual is supreme over institutions.

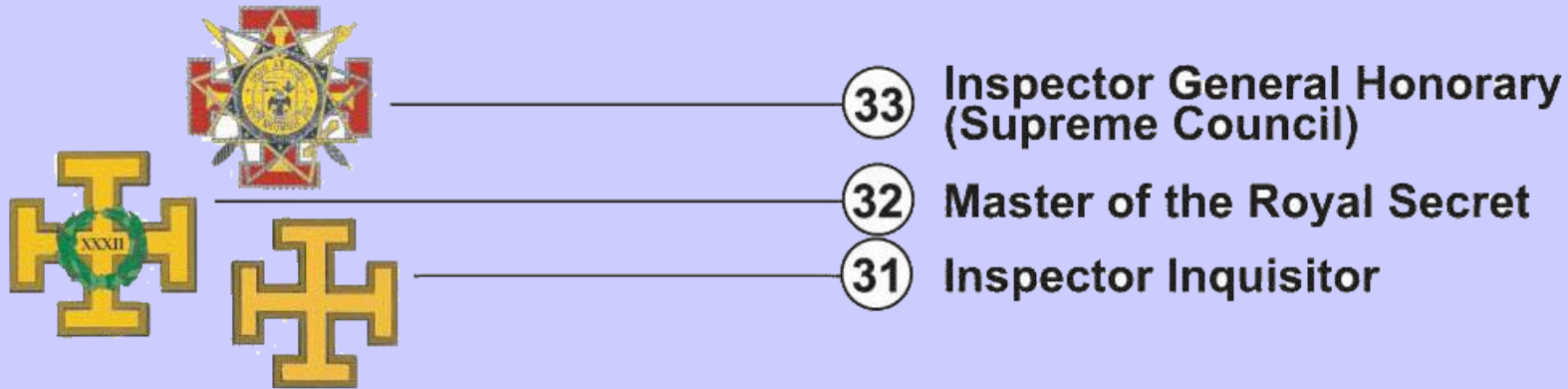
We learn this truth through philosophical pronouncements and historical examples.

There is no greater threat to human liberty than the merger of political and religious institutions; And Scottish Rite Masonry is dedicated to the prevention of even a tendency to this peculiar form of despotism.

Political liberty is achieved by intellectual liberty, which is education. Therefore, the seven liberal arts and sciences of the Fellowcraft degree are given a renewed emphasis and an expanded explanation.

Finally, we are reminded that personal vengeance has no part in Masonry. We war, not against individuals or institutions, but against the vices, which may corrupt both.

CONSISTORY*



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Consistory

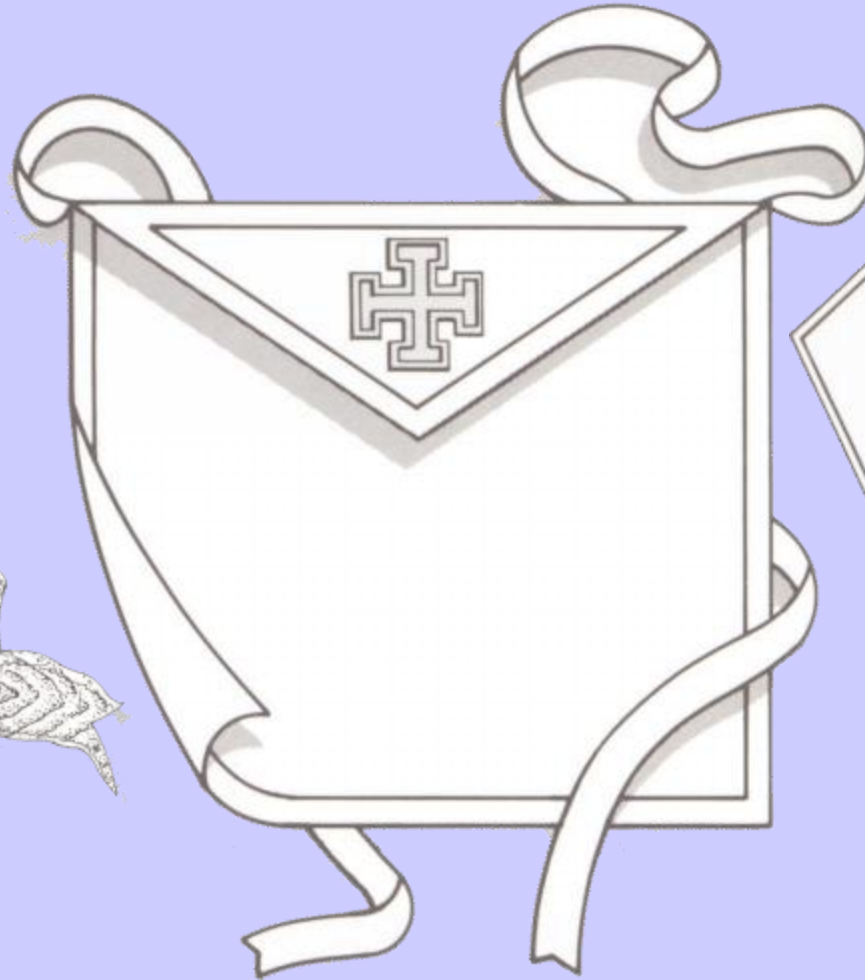


We now begin the sublime lessons of the consistory. When a Scottish Rite Mason receives the Seventh Degree and is made a Provost and Judge he learns the lesson of practical justice. The Inspector Inquisitor learns the more profound lesson of ideal justice -- that justice ordained by God for the control of nature and which should serve as a model for human justice. Man may not be able to achieve perfect justice, so to aim at the best, but be content with the best possible, is the only true wisdom.



31ST DEGREE INSPECTOR INQUISITOR

JUDGE YOURSELF





SYNOPSIS



This Degree presents an allegorical representation of the final judgement common to many world religions. It is portrayed within the context of ancient Egyptian mythology, which shared many similarities with the Judeo-Christian religions. As in other degrees of Masonry, you are instructed to look beyond the mere symbol and discover for yourselves what you can learn from the lesson presented. We do not assert the reality of the Egyptian gods, but see in them the personifications of natural forces and cosmic events. Whatever religious truths you may ascribe to them personally is your own concern. At the very least they are actors in a great play, attempting to convey the lesson that we are accountable for our actions.

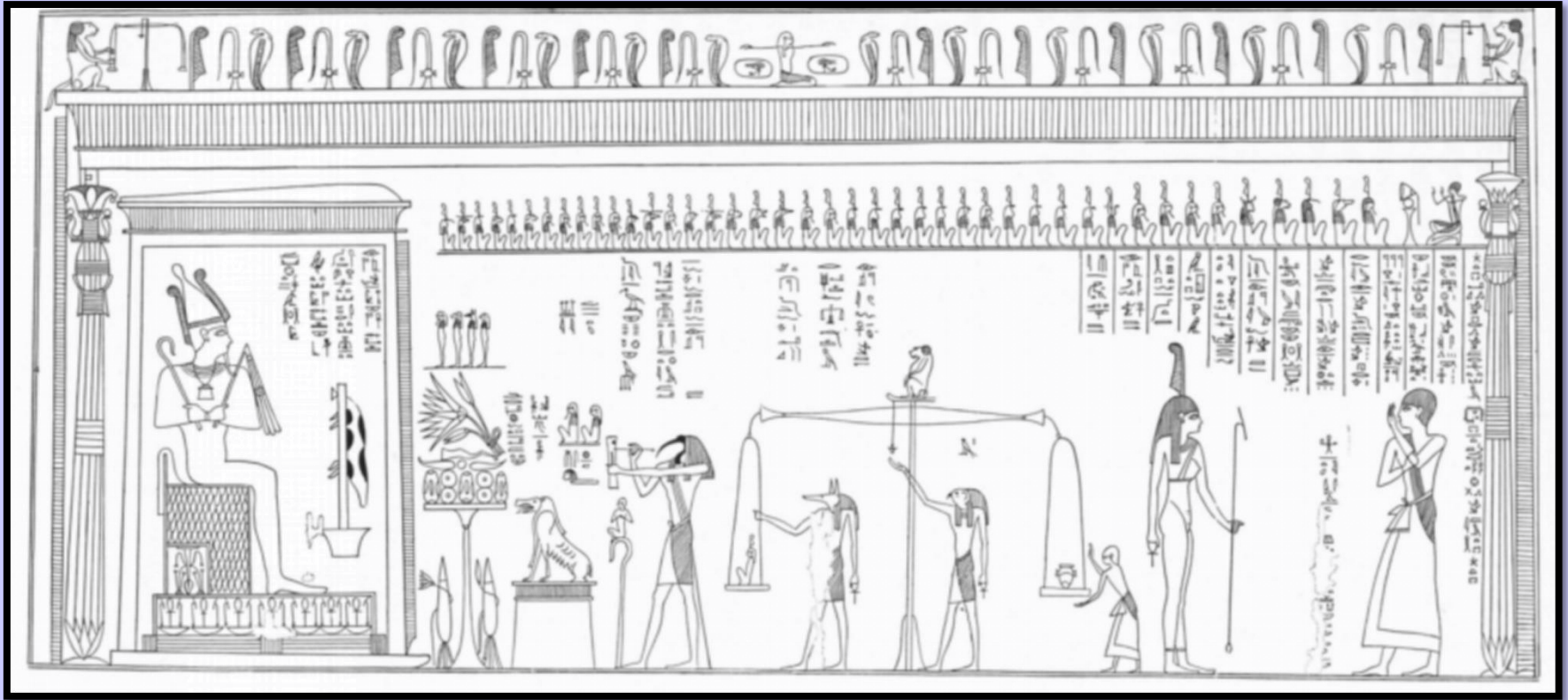
Perhaps the most important lesson of this Degree is that the strong who easily resist temptation are less deserving of reward than the weak who struggle to overcome. To rise and fall again is more heroic than by greater strength never to fall. To do wrong and make amends—to sin and repent—belongs to a nobler nature.

Being human, we all err. Those who hold different opinions entertain them as honestly as you do your own, and you have no right to doubt their sincerity. No man is truly wise who is not kind, courteous and charitable in his construction of other men's motives.

Remember that you represent the Order; that you must maintain its dignity and glory, preserve its Constitutions, and act by its laws. You are ever to bear in mind that what the letter of the law does not prohibit is often forbidden by generosity and decency.



SYNOPSIS



The engraving above depicts the Tribunal in the Hall of Justice, from an Egyptian monument.



COMMUNICATION



Justice has two forms: the lower is earthly, mortal, and transitory; The higher is spiritual, immortal, and unchanging. The standard for spiritual justice is truth, symbolized by the Egyptians with a feather, though so light that it can float on the air, in the balance of justice it can weigh down the heaviest misdeeds.

Absolute justice is a twofold judgment: deeds and intentions. We can judge another's deeds but cannot judge his intentions, except imperfectly. We cannot know the intentions of others as we know our own. Thus spiritual justice is the judgment of the self.

Commander Albert Pike tells us in his lecture for this degree that "...it is time for you to set in order your own temple or else you wear in vain the name and insignia of a Mason, while yet uninvested with the Masonic nature."

The duty of an Inspector Inquisitor is to strive to learn by observation and reflection what the law of God is and to strive to make human law consistent with divine justice.



OBLIGATION



I do most solemnly vow that I will hereafter constantly endeavor to do all right things, under all circumstances, and to avoid all faults and errors which wise men censure and condemn.

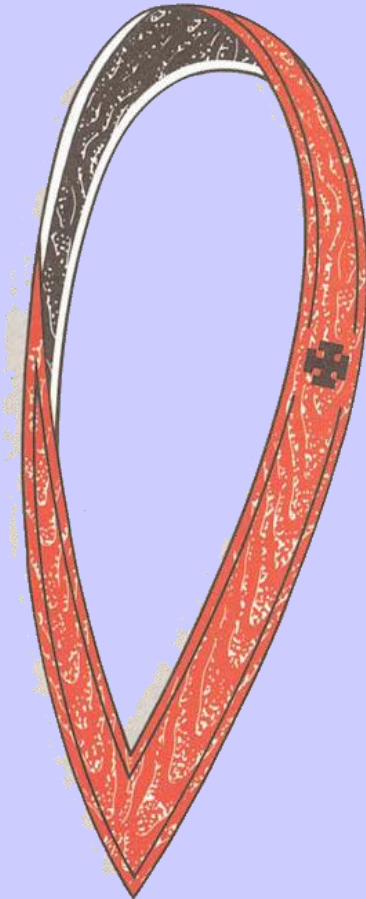
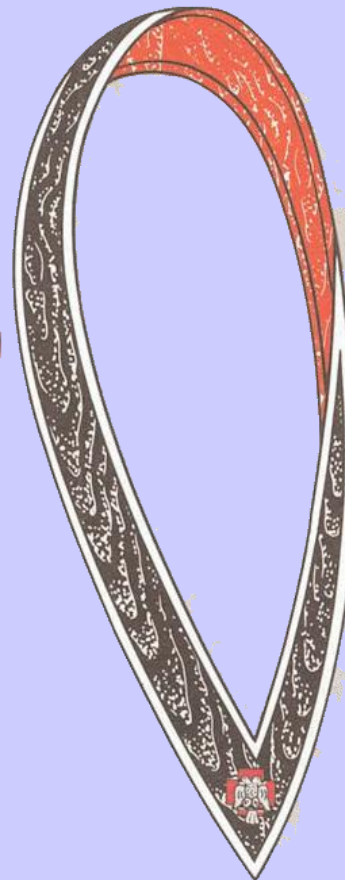
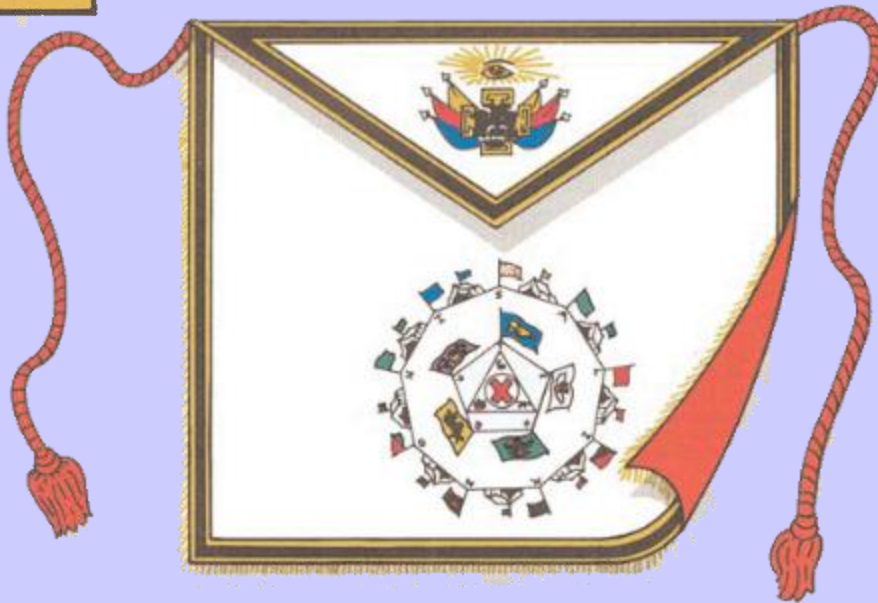
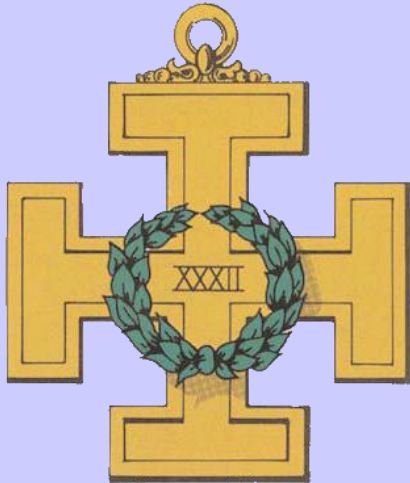
Amen.



32ND DEGREE MASTER OF THE ROYAL SECRET

MANDATORY

STRIVE FOR EQUILIBRIUM





SYNOPSIS



Brethren, all of the preceding instructions, admonitions and initiatory Rites of the previous Degrees have been to prepare you for this Degree, and to enable you to comprehend the Royal Secret and the Holy Doctrine.

The Royal Secret, if lived with perfect comprehension and understanding, elevates mankind to sublime heights and levels of realization. The Great Symbol of the Degree is the Symbolic Camp. It will be presented to you as an emblem of Realization as Achievement.

Some of the most profound truths of the ancient mysteries are spoken as axioms. You are called upon to summon your greatest capacities, and attempt to pierce the veil of the symbolic language in which they are presented. To be truly a Master of the Royal Secret individual realization is required on the part of each and every initiate.

You will assume five final vows, marking you as a Soldier of Light, Liberty, Freedom of Religion, the People, and of Scottish Rite Masonry. In the Fourteenth Degree you received the Lost Word; in the Eighteenth Degree you received the True Word, and soon, in this Degree, you will be put in possession of the Sacred Word of the Scottish Rite.



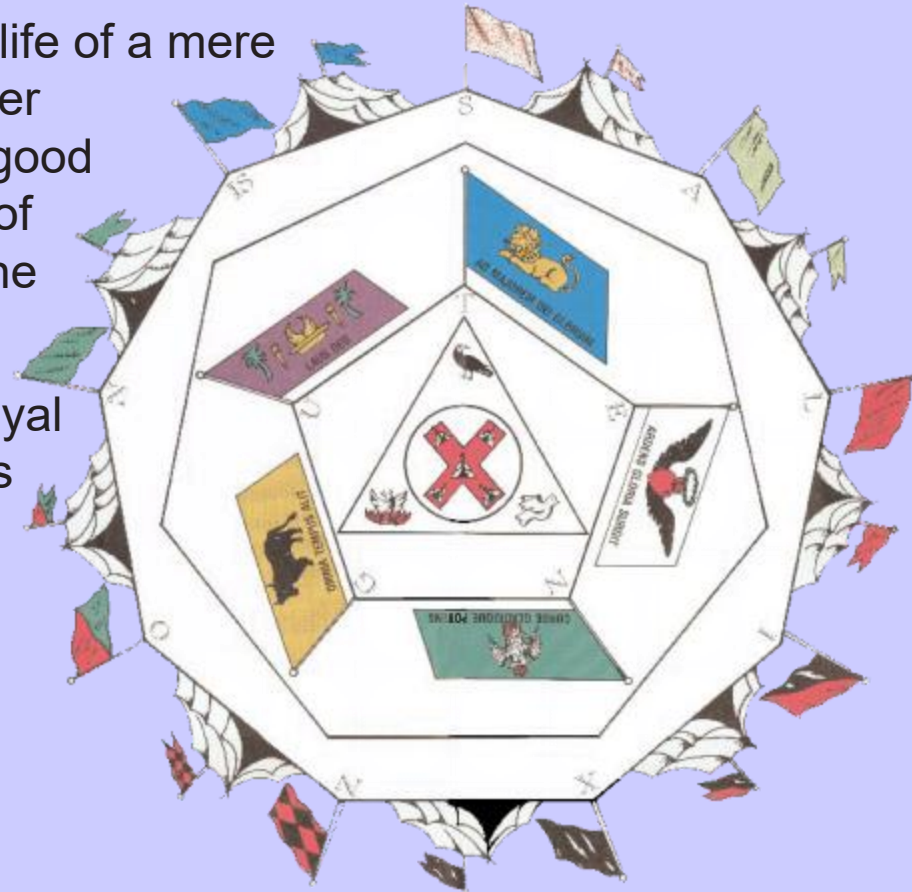
SYNOPSIS



You are about to be given the Royal Secret and put in possession of the Holy Doctrine. It therefore becomes necessary that you take responsibility for this knowledge, and devote your lives to being fit examples of our Rite.

Therefore, will you consent to lead the life of a mere animal? Will you continue to prefer ease over exertion? Or luxury over self-denial for the good of others? Or wealth in money over wealth of knowledge and truth? Or the sensual and the material to the spiritual and the divine?

Brethren, soon to be Masters of the Royal Secret, you are at the point where the roads of life diverge. Make now your decision, and mark well your actions. So mote it be.





COMMUNICATION



When one receives the title of Master of the Royal Secret, he is in possession of the essential lessons of the Scottish Rite. These lessons are, as it were, a map; The guide by which we may venture upon life's journey of learning and growing. Today is the end of nothing, but rather the beginning of everything. Properly received, the instructions given here better fit one as a father, a husband, a brother, and a citizen. They should have strengthened your faith and renewed your commitment to learning; If it is not so, the labor bestowed upon you has been in vain.

The Royal Secret is equilibrium; Not a secret in the ordinary sense of the word, but a mystery; A mystery acknowledged by the world's greatest philosophers and teachers. These teachings are presented as they were expressed thousands of years ago by the ancient Aryans. Interpreted by Persians and Hindus alike, this primitive religion passed eastward and westward and fertilized the cultural traditions of most of the world. We learn here that the universe exists by an opposition of forces and that these forces have their analogies in the human condition. Nature is, therefore a textbook, not only of science but of morality as well.



OBLIGATION



I, <state your name>, do most solemnly vow and promise that I will endeavor hereafter to make other men wiser and better. To that end, I will constantly endeavor to become so myself. I will not neglect to attend the Bodies of which I am or may be a member in this Rite of Freemasonry. I will read and study the books that have been written for instruction in the Rite.

I do most solemnly vow and promise that I will hereafter resist arbitrary power and rule. I will oppose the domineering insolence of those who subjugate free men by manipulating their necessities, passions, or follies. I will demand for the people a free voice and vote in public affairs. That I may do so, I will myself be free and remain absolute master of my own voice, vote, and opinion. I will never permit any person, or body of persons, to dictate to me in matters where I alone am accountable and responsible for my actions, but will rather follow the convictions of my conscience and the judgements of my own intellect.

I do most solemnly vow and promise that I will be hereafter the enemy of all tyranny over the souls and consciences of men. I will resist all efforts to outlaw free conscience and enslave thoughts and opinions. As I may have the opportunity, I will combat superstition with reason and the truth and put bigotry and fanaticism to shame.

I do most solemnly and sincerely vow and promise that I will combat the efforts of all who seek to gain power by unworthy means—the crafty, the unfit, and the incompetent. I will constantly endeavor to incite men to be self-reliant and independent.

I do most solemnly vow that I will punctually, faithfully, and diligently perform all my duties as a Mason of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. I will not neglect, by non-attendance, the meetings of any Body of the Rite without valid reasons. If I cannot attend, I will not withhold my contribution for the relief of the poor. I will always have at heart the prosperity of the Bodies to which I may belong and the advancement of the great purposes of the Rite.



OBLIGATION (cont'd)



Knowing that our actions live after us, I will endeavor to live a life of honor, so that the world may become a better place and that I may bring tribute to the memories of our illustrious forefathers, the founders of Freemasonry.

That I will be true and faithful to the Constitution, Statutes and Edicts of the Supreme Council of the 33rd degree for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America.

I will endeavor to set an example to mankind and demonstrate to the best of my ability the principles and virtues upon which Freemasonry is built by being honest and forthright in my actions and dealings with my fellowman.

I will forever hold confidential the private affairs of the Fraternity from those who are not entitled to them.

And I will not abandon the Scottish Rite for arbitrary reasons but will endeavor to study its teachings so that I can be a well-informed Man and Mason.

All of which I vow upon my word of honor and as a Master of the Royal Secret.

So help me God.



The Royal Secret & The Holy Writ

Brethren, the degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite contain life lessons and eternal truths. We have taught you by metaphor and symbol, and now, to close this final degree, we speak plainly regarding the royal secret and the holy doctrine of the Scottish Rite. The purpose of Freemasonry is to improve the individual and make him a better member of society at large. You have learned that duty is the one great law of Masonry: inflexible as fate, exacting as necessity, imperative as destiny. Perhaps the greatest duty you can perform is to work on yourselves.

Using the working tools of our Craft we labor to bring the material under the domain of the spiritual. Although human appetites and passions are necessary for our survival, we seek habitual mastery over them so that we are in a state of dynamic equilibrium, or perfect balance. Thus, they are not our taskmasters, but in our service. This is the royal secret. It is the achievement of that equilibrium which will allow you to pause, before making quick judgments, and to maturely reflect before acting in haste. It is the lever which places the power of the universe at your disposal.



The Royal Secret & The Holy Writ (cont'd)



At the heart of every religion is the notion that man descended from a Creator of infinite power, whose essence and knowledge is beyond our comprehension. As Freemasons we refer to the Creator of the heavens and earth as the Supreme or Great Architect of the Universe. The holy doctrine of Freemasonry is the realization that the eternal, indestructible part of ourselves is a ray of that Eternal Light, a ray emitted from the Eternal Creator of all things. It is immutable and indestructible.

In his letter to the Corinthians the Apostle Paul said, “Don’t you know that you are the temple of God, and that God’s spirit resides in you?” Thus, God is not far off, but near at hand, as close as the human breast.

All human beings possess this Divine gift. The Divine Light illuminates every man and every woman. Knowing this, what hath light to do with darkness? Consider this when you think of your neighbor: the Divine Light which illuminates your neighbor is the same as that which resides in your breast.

Like rays of light passing through panes of glass, they trace back to a single source of light.



The Royal Secret & The Holy Writ (cont'd)



Brethren, embrace the knowledge that you are children of the Most High, and that He hears your prayers and cares for your welfare.

Strive to be worthy of His manifold blessings, and serve Him by being true and faithful to your duties, and by acting upon the square towards your fellow creatures.

Then, by the achievement of equilibrium, and a knowledge of the holy doctrine, you will truly be Masters of the Royal Secret.