PRINCE OF THE TABERNACLE TWENTY-FOURTH Degree

Based on Translation of 2005 online Spanish Edition of Bridge to Light by Rex R. Hutchens

The Band is broad, pale scarlet worn from right to left. On the front a winged globe is embroidered in gold and below it a beetle, and then a brilliant butterfly; all of them are symbols of immortality.

The Belt is light green supple leather edged with gold. From this belt hangs the Jewel of the preceding Degree, a silver incendiary and the Jewel of this Degree, the Phoenician letter Aleph.

The apron is made of white lambskin, with a scarlet reverse and bordered in light green. In the center an Arab gold shop is represented.In the light blue tray there is a violet Myrtle tree, too emblem from immortality.

The Jewel is the Phoenician letter A (Aleph), suspended from a short necklace of narrow cord, pale violet in color. It is another manifestation of the pentagram, or five-pointed star, because the star, seen from any angle represents the letter A. As A is the initial of one of the main names of the Deity, Adonai, or Lord, this star is a symbol of intellectual omnipotence and autocracy.

DUTIES: to work unceasingly for the glory of God, the honor of your country and the happiness of your brothers.

LESSONS: the power of Faith in Deity and its promises. The soul is immortal.

There is one, true God who is pure, absolute intellect and existence.

FOR REFLECTION: Is the doctrine of soul immortality a comfort to you or a source of threat and despair or merely superstition?

IMPORTANT SYMBOLS: Touches of the Apprentice, Companion and Master Mason, the Five Pointed Star and the character Caleb.

Having received the instruction from the Head of the Tabernacle in the 23rd Degree, an adaptation of the ancient Initiation to the Lesser Mysteries, we are now on the threshold of the Greater Mysteries. The previous Degree presented the Lesser Mysteries almost exclusively as a Hebrew or Judaic tradition. The Mysteries were not confined to the Hebrews and here we find Deities from the most advanced cultures and countries of the past.

**Ceremony**

There are two different apartments or decorations. The first is called the Hall and decorated like a Master Mason Lodge with the Samaritan (or ancient Hebrew) letter Yod hanging in the East instead of the letter G, but retaining the same meaning. The decoration of the second apartment is virtually the same as in the 23rd Degree with the addition of the pentagram, with the Greek letters Alpha and Omega on it.

Despite the decoration depicting the Tabernacle in the desert camp of the twelve tribes of Israel, we are not reduced here to the Hebrew tradition of the Mysteries. The geographic range of our interest is greatly increased to show the universality of the initiation and the philosophical pursuit. We also find a more elaborate interpretation of some of the symbolisms of the three Degrees of the Symbolic Lodge.

The main members of the Tabernacle Court of Princes are Moses as the Honored Leader, Eleazar as the Venerable High Priest, and Ithamar as the Excellent Priest. Eleazar and Ithamar

They are both sons of Aaron and according to the Hebrew Law qualified to be priests. The other officers represent Levites. This distinction between descendants of Aaron as priests and the Levites as their assistants was explained in the 23rd Degree. The candidate represents Phinehas, the son of Eleazar and the House of Aaron. According to the Hebrew Law, he must be a descendant of Aaron to be initiated as High Priest and Religious Leader; but despite Phinehas's claim to the title of High Priest, he seeks another, Prince of the Tabernacle and Prince of Masonry. Therefore he will impose on himself secular and sacred duties, since a Prince of the Tabernacle must serve God, his country and his fellow men.

The candidate, dressed simply in an unadorned white robe, is greeted in the lobby, which represents a Master Mason Lodge. Caleb is a Biblical character who represents the incorporation of foreign blood into the tribe of Judah. He was particularly appreciated as a Servant of the Lord and as someone who has a different spirit and has followed the Lord completely (Numbers 14:24; Deuteronomy 1:36). Through the character Caleb, we are reminded of the acceptance of all good men in Masonry and its Universality.

Before receiving Masonic instruction, the candidate makes a solemn vow to repair whatever evil he has caused and still remains. This vow symbolizes the act of purification of the ancient initiations. Because the candidate is authorized to continue the Ceremony with only his promise to make the repair, we are reminded of the sincerity and trust that characterize the true Mason.

The foundational instruction in the Lobby is designed to prepare the candidate for the lessons that will follow. We learn that being Initiated into the Mysteries is not just learning the great truths. Initiation is a process designed to develop in the candidate those human qualities that are part of the Divine. The three groups of lights on the Altar represent: Reason, a ray of the Divine Intellect and a science that we must learn to use; Freedom or self-control, the knowledge to defend ourselves against instincts and a right offered to all that must be conquered; and Faith, a gift from God and a power that must be possessed by each one. Knowing, daring, wanting and keeping silent is the work to be done with an intellect illuminated by study, an unprecedented audacity, and an unbreakable will, and an incorruptible discretion. We are instructed to “listen and learn… seek and discover”, because to know the Mysteries is to be face to face with God.

Thus advised, the candidate must endure the tests of fire, water, earth and air, the four elements recognized by the ancients. They correspond to the agent that transforms matter (heat or

fire), and to the three states of matter: liquid (water), solid (earth) and gaseous (air). These tests are carried out in the east, north, south and west respectively, and as such they represent the four cardinal points of material existence and also of spiritual life. In addition to instruction of a spiritual nature on the omnipotence, benevolence, and omnipresence of God, moral instruction is given with each trial. The acid test should remind us to assume only those responsibilities for which we are prepared. This association of fire and fitness for certain responsibilities comes from the Biblical story of Nadab and Abihu who were destroyed for offering strange fire before the Lord (see Leviticus 10: 1 and Numbers 26:61). The water reminds us of the ancient teaching that only the pure in heart can enter the Tabernacle in heaven and that rectification and repentance wash away sin. The test of the land in the south reminds us to be generous as is the land that blesses even those who do not deserve it. In the west, the test of air reminds us to be generous and liberal like God, who freely gave the gift of air, necessary for the lives of all men.

The candidate enters the Tabernacle in deep darkness and silence, a reminder of death. Hear the wailing and groaning associated with the deaths of selected Deities - Osiris of Egypt, Kama of India, Mithra of Persia, Atys of Phrygia, and Thamuz of Phenicia. These deaths symbolize the temporary victory of darkness and evil over light. The mythologies associated with all these Deities tell us about death and resurrection.

In the Tabernacle the brothers, dressed in black, represent Osiris who symbolizes the Sun, light, life, good and beauty. They reflect how the earth can once again be glad for your presence. Attempts are made to revive the dead Osiris with the Apprentice's touch, symbol of Science, and with the Companion's touch, symbol of logic. Both logic or law and science or reason fail, because with them we cannot discover evidence even of the existence of the soul, much less of its immortality. The third attempt using the Master Mason touch, symbol of faith, is successful. Faith is a deep conviction within our intellectual and spiritual beings that enables us to somehow understand God and to know and believe that we are to live after the body dies.

We turn now to three important philosophical aspects. First, there is a True God who is pure absolute intellect and who is the soul and spirit of the Universe that he created with a thought. Everything for Him is here and now, He is unchangeable, unchanging, just, wise and powerful. His punishments are but the inevitable results of the laws of cause and effect. Second, the soul is immortal and is a part of the universal soul and, if it pleases God, it will be absorbed back into Him. Third, the battle in the nature of every man between the divine will implanted in him by God and the natural will caused by the fragility of the flesh, is constant and one with the whole Universe. This battle is the Law of Harmony in action, reconciliation and agreement between the spiritual and material nature of man.

PENTAGRAM DRAWING (P 205)

These three lessons are symbolized by the pentagram or star with the Alpha and Omega imposed on its surface. She is the symbol of the divine in man. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet and Omega the last; hence they mean complementarity, the beginning and the end and everything in between. The five-pointed star with a single point facing upwards represents the divine. It also symbolizes man since its five points allude to the five senses, the five limbs (head, arms and legs) and the five fingers of each hand, which signify the touching that distinguish Masons.

Finally, the new Prince of the Tabernacle is presented to the Brothers to be further instructed and prepared to fulfill all his duties in the fragile Tabernacle of Life. The phrase "to be" infers that with additional instruction provided by reading Morals and Dogma, you will be better prepared to fulfill the duties of a Prince of the Tabernacle: to work unceasingly for the glory of God, the honor of your country and the happiness of his brethren so that he may be exalted on the day of counting to the Tabernacle of Eternity.

Lecture

Continuing the focus on the Ancient Mysteries, a wealth of detail is provided on the Greater Mysteries of Egypt, Greece, Persia, Syria, Phenicia, Chaldea, Arabia, India, China and Japan. By drawing the ideas from the details, we learn the purposes and lessons of the Greater Mysteries, all of which to some extent taught: “… the truths of primitive revelation, the existence and attributes of a God, the immortality of the soul, rewards and punishments in a future life, the phenomena of nature, the arts, sciences, morality, legislation, philosophy and philanthropy, and what we now call psychology and metaphysics, with animal magnetism and other occult sciences (p. 372) ”.

The lessons transmitted through the Mysteries are presented in a comparative way. Pike argues for its universality and comes to an understanding of primitive truths long known. Over time these became corrupted or took refuge under various veils of symbolism. The parallel ideas that emerge from this comparative analysis point to the Orient as the origin of these primitive truths. Pike claims that Hindu philosophy gave birth to the Egyptian Mysteries and the Chinese and Japanese Mysteries. Thus he sees these primitive truths spread from India across thousands of miles and a multitude of cultures.

The method of instruction employed by these various cultures to convey these sublime lessons was symbolism. Pike tells us:

There has always been an intimate alliance between the two systems, the symbolic and the philosophical, in the allegories of monuments of all ages, in the symbolic writings of the priests of all nations, in the rituals of all secret and mysterious societies. ; there has been a constant series, an invariable uniformity of principles, originating from a vast, imposing aggregate truth, composed of parts that fit harmonically only there (p. 372).

The selections that follow emphasize the purposes and lessons of the Ancient Mysteries, not the details associated with them. As Scottish Rite Masonry uses symbolism as its method of instruction and teaches philosophical, moral, religious, and political lessons, this reading invites us to compare the teachings of Masonry with those of the Ancient Mysteries.

The methods and purposes of the Ancient Mysteries

Symbolic instruction is recommended by the constant and uniform use of antiquity; and she has retained her influence through all ages, like a mysterious communication system. The Deity, in his revelations to man, adopted the use of material images for the purpose of reinforcing the sublime truths; and Christ taught through symbols and parables (p. 372).

The Initiation was considered a mystical death; a descent to the infernal regions, where all pollution, and the stains and imperfections of a corrupt and bad life were purged ... (p. 373).

The purpose of all mysteries was to inspire all men with mercy, and to console them in the miseries of life. That consolation, so sought after, was the hope of a happier future, and of passing, after death to a state of eternal happiness (p. 379).

It is easy to see what the great objective of the initiation and the Mysteries was; whose first and greatest fruit was, as all the ancients testify, to civilize the savage hordes, soften their ferocious ways, introduce them into the social fabric, and guide them towards a life more worthy of human beings ... and teach them the true principles of morals, which initiate man to the only kind of life worthy of him (pp. 380-381).

By initiation, those who were previously only citizens, became brothers connected by a closer nexus than before through a religious fraternity, which, bringing men closer together, united them more strongly… (p. 386).

Initiation dispelled errors and banished misfortunes: and after having filled the heart of man with joy during life, it gave him the deepest hopes at the moment of death (p. 386).

The Important Lessons Taught in the Ancient Mysteries

The object of the Mysteries was to procure for man a real happiness on earth through virtue; and towards that end he was taught that his soul was immortal; and that error, sin, and vice must produce, by an inflexible law, their consequences (pp. 382-383).

… The great moral lesson of the Mysteries, to which all their mystical ceremonials tended expressed in a single line by Virgil, was to practice Justice and reverence the Deity; thus reminding men of Justice, connecting it with the Justice of the Gods, who demand it and punish its infraction. The Initiate could aspire to the favors of the Gods only because he respected the rights of society and humanity (p. 391).

It was not enough to be merely initiated. It was necessary to be faithful to the laws of initiation, which imposed duties on man in consideration of his nature (p. 391).

We are only concerned with the great fact that the Mysteries taught the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and that somehow suffering, pain, remorse, and agony always follow pain as its consequences (p. 392).

Death, says the author of the dialogue Axiochus, included in Plato's works, is a step to a happier state; but one must have lived well, to achieve that most fortunate result. So the doctrine of the immortality of the soul was comforting to the virtuous and religious man only; while for all the others she meant threats and despair, surrounding them with terrors and alarms that disturbed their rest throughout their lives (p. 396).

In the Mysteries the division of the Universal Cause into an Active and a Passive Cause was also taught; … These two Divinities, the Active and Passive Principles of the Universe, were commonly symbolized by the reproductive parts of man and woman; to which, in ancient times, no idea of ​​indecency was associated; … The Hindu lingam was the union of both, as were the boat and the mast and the point within a circle: all of them they expressed the same philosophical idea about the Union of the Two Great Causes of Nature, which concur, one actively and the other passively, in the generation of all beings… (p. 401).

There is another division of Nature that in all ages has impressed man, and that was not forgotten in the Mysteries; that of Light and Darkness, Day and Night, Good and Evil; that are confused with and collide with and pursue or are pursued with each other throughout the Universe (p. 402).

… The Mysteries also represent the candidate, by sensible symbols, the invisible forces that move this visible Universe, and the virtues, qualities and powers attached to matter, and that maintain the marvelous order observed in them (p. 414).

The world, according to the ancient philosophers, was not purely a material and mechanical machine. A Great Soul, diffused everywhere, vivified all the members of the immense body of the Universe; and an intelligence, equally great, directed all his movements, and maintained the eternal harmony that resulted from there (pp. 414-415).

The Soul, a simple substance, when disconnected from matter, a ray or particle of divine fire whose house is in heaven, always turns towards that house, while it is united with the body, and struggles to return there.

Teaching this, the Mysteries remind man of his divine origin, and point out the means of returning there. The great science acquired in the Mysteries was the knowledge of man himself, of the nobility of his origin, the greatness of his destiny and his superiority over the animals that can never acquire this knowledge, and to whom he resembles insofar as it does not reflect about its existence and know the depths of your own nature (p. 417).

Such they were the Mysteries; the human mind still speculates on the great Mysteries of Nature, and still finds its ideas anticipated by the ancients, whose deepest thoughts are to be sought, not in their philosophies, but in their symbols, by means of which they endeavored in expressing the great ideas that vainly struggled to be understood in words, since they announced the great circle of phenomena, Birth, Life, Death or decomposition, and the New Life from Death, for them the Elders Mysteries (p. 434).

FIGURE P. 211 The Temptation in Eden by Albrecht Durer

As the first of the Degrees of the Greater Mysteries, this Degree teaches the paradox of the existence of good and evil in a universe created by an infinitely beneficial Deity. The story of the Garden of Eden in Genesis is, in the Western religious tradition, the explanation of the origin of evil in man. This story teaches that, as a result of disobedience to God, man must now continually struggle with his evil nature. In the wood carving illustrated above from the 16th century the tempted is Satan in the form of a serpent. There is no evidence that the early Israelites conceived of the serpent as a form of Satan. One such interpretation is Christian and derives from descriptions of Satan as a serpent or dragon in the New Testament (Revelation 12: 9; 20: 2).