

Education & Enlightenment

A Special Committee of

The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada



Contemplations of the Lodge of Perfection

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Contemplation 1 - St. John the Evangelist

In the opening of the 14th degree the TPGM names Holy St John the Evangelist. My first response to this was that it was wrong. It's a misprint they must mean the Baptist. The Baptist is as everyone knows a central figure in the art of Caravaggio and Brother Leonardo. But no, the authors of the ritual do mean the Evangelist.

So who is St John the Evangelist Patron Saint?

St John the Evangelist is also known as St John the Apostle, St John the Divine, and St John the Theologian. He is described as intellectual and esoteric. He was a Galilean, the son of Zebedee and Salome, and younger brother of St. James the Great, with whom he was brought up to the trade of fishing. He is said to have been the favorite disciple of Christ and the Apostle of Charity. In Islam he is seen as foretelling the coming of Mohammed and is mentioned in Jewish writings along with the other disciples. The Evangelist lived to a very old age expiring in A.D. 99 of natural causes. He primarily lived in Ephesus Turkey and is buried in the Basilica of St John in that country.

The feast day of St. John the Evangelist is December 27th and arises for the

early Christian custom of commentating the death of a Saint and their birth into heaven.

Why is St John the Evangelist mentioned in the opening of the 14th degree?

There are a number of traditions that speak to this question. One suggests if the Rite did derive from the Stone Mason guilds the Evangelist was one of the Patron Saints of this group and is conveyed to us through that heritage. Another theory is as we may descend from the Knightly orders of the Crusades specifically from the Templars and the Hospitaller's (Knights of St John) we acquired him through this legacy. One of the original charges of heresy against the Templar's was they had left the Roman Church and worshiped in a faith based on the teachings of the Gnostics. A foundation of Gnostic thought is the writings of the Evangelist.

A third perspective and one that I particularly like is we mention the Evangelist because;

1. The writings of the Evangelist focus on Light as the Divine Spirit as a SR Freemason focuses on light.
2. The Evangelist is said to be faithful with enthusiasm to his lessons learned as a SR Freemason is taught to be.
3. The Evangelist performed all his duties utilizing the cardinal virtues, as a SR Freemason must do.
4. The Evangelist focused on and answered the call to work as a SR Freemason does.
5. The Evangelist was the most loyal of the disciples as a SR Freemason is loyal to his Brethren.



The symbol of St. John the Evangelist

Contemplation 2 – What is a Lodge of Perfection?

I was with a group of SR masons, some of very mature age and some recently joining in search of more light. I do not recall why the topic of “What is a Lodge of Perfection” arose. The variety of opinions made me wonder about the diversity of views Brethren obtain when considering joining the Rite. Our history, literature and education tells us what a SR LOP must be.

We are the administrative engine of the Valley. We understand perfection does not mean perfect as we use it in contemporary terms but rather completion in the old English language referring to the completion of the symbolic degrees. We confer degrees from the 4th to 14th amplifying the legend of the Master Mason Degree. Our degrees are called the Ineffable Degrees because their principal purpose is the investigation and contemplation of the ineffable name of Deity. Ineffable comes from the Latin 'ineffibilis' which means something that should not be spoken. These degrees trace our Journey through life and teach truth, industry, honesty, benevolence, justice, toleration, and love of country.

We emphasize the duty and privilege of a special love for members of our fraternity. We fix concerns. We take development and change as a progression towards our Lodge goals. We are patient, helpful and adaptable.

Our degrees impart a collection of reflective philosophical lessons that can be used to grow as both a SR Mason and a member of the human family. They tell us the path to becoming a SR mason is to read, study, reflect, digest, and differentiate. They are a guide and roadmap for an individual's intellectual and emotional understanding of life. They provide intelligence of how man is and has progressed in this world and the moral instruction for behaviour through a complete, and harmonious system. They tell us to focus on our Lodge, our Brethren, our society, our country and our world. They provide a profound philosophical understanding of

the great mysterious of the GAOTU and Nature.

Our Purpose is devoted to mutual instruction, cultivation of social feelings, brotherly kindness and earnest benefice and charity. We build character awakening a Brethren's own spirituality and we assist our Brothers become complete in every way. We labour incessantly for Lodge success and add to the sum of the knowledge of our Lodge paying tribute to all those who have gone before and preparing for those who will come in the future. Our LOP inspires each Brother to improve, refine and complete themselves through knowledge of their character.

We are so much more than an opening, closing and paying of accounts. We are the heart of the Scottish Rite.

Contemplation 3 – Responsibilities of a TPGM

Part of the responsibility as TPGM is training (different than education). He should consider offering training on such topics as “practical skills for acting in a degree” or “Leadership skills for officers, committee members and degree directors” or “motivating members through your enthusiasm”, and perhaps more. Two hour workshops on a normal night of Lodge could be considered, if there are spaces available to do so.

In the Charges and Regulations addressed to the TPGM at his installation the following are identified as the road along which the TPGM needs to travel.

- That he should not make any innovations in the essential and fundamental principles of Freemasonry. That would imply not changing the stated ritual of any kind, not doing something beyond what the Statutes of the Scottish Rite say.
- That the Statues as agreed by Supreme council is his guide in all things and he will abide by them.
- That candidates for Scottish Rite cannot be atheists.
- That the members are honourable citizens of the community.
- That visitors are proven members of Scottish Rite from whatever jurisdiction and country they come from. (That would imply checking of their credentials - before joining in the fellowship of the lodge and its members.)
- That you promote the principles of Scottish Rite, be at all meetings, commit to memory ritual designated to your position and see that other officers also learn their respective work – identified is opening and closing.
- That he is responsible for giving instruction on history, symbolism, morality, and philosophy of Scottish Rite. (or see that a brother is directed to do so)
- That care is taken in investigating applicants for the order – that they are well suited to become a member

- That work for the lodge is efficient and effective, and that money is spent with due consideration
- That what actions are taken are in line with the Statutes and regulations
- That peace and harmony remain paramount at every meeting of the Lodge

Contemplation 4 - What Is Not Proper To Be Known?

We have all been privy to conversations about the work of an LOP not our own. I wondered how this type of conversation was reconciled with our pledge to disclose nothing that is “not proper to be known”. What is not proper to be known under our statutes, regulations, institutes, laws, grand constitutions and bylaws along with Provincial and Federal Legislation?

What is not proper to be known?

1. A Brothers personal relationships
2. Comparisons between Brethren
3. Any action to sanction a Brother by our LOP or its cause
4. Information gained from an investigation for membership
5. A Brother’s name, address or telephone number;
6. A Brothers race, national or ethnic origin, colour, or religious or political beliefs or associations
7. A Brother’s age, sexual orientation, marital status or family status
8. A Brother’s inheritable characteristics
9. Information about a Brothers health care status or history, including a physical or mental disability
10. Information about a Brothers educational, financial, criminal or employment status or history
11. The opinions of a person about a Brother
12. A Brothers personal views or opinions
13. Personally Identifiable information, which will allow a Brother to be identified, contacted, or located
14. The financial status of our LOP
15. Disputes or conflicts within our LOP
16. Information about another LOP as it relates to their relationship with our LOP
17. Information, which is not in the public domain
18. Any ritual or language of the ritual
19. Where our LOP or any brother is ridiculed. Often ridicule is embedded in humour

20. Discussions about future plans for the LOP until they have been solidified by our Brethren

What should never occur:

- a. A conversation regarding Lodge business in a public area or Craft Lodge where non- SR members might hear the content.
- b. A Conversation regarding Brethren or Lodge Business, where persons from outside the SR including friends and relatives are present.
- c. Posting information about a Brother on a bulletin board or leaving a Brother's information unattended in a Lodge, your place of work or a vehicle.
- d. Disseminating information or descriptions about a Brother without his permission.

Contemplation 5 – Decorum & Protocol

Throughout the advancement of the Rite there has evolved cornerstones of etiquette integral to the success of an LOP. Etiquette, as legend tells us, stems from the court of a French King who after complaints by his gardener's about members of the court destroying flowerbeds instituted lines of estiquent (little tablets) and ordered that court personages must walk within the estiquent. Thus, as we use the word etiquette, it is to walk within the social rubrics of being polite, considerate, courteous, charming, kind and gentle or to walk without and be offensive.

In the LOP Decorum is to:

1. never obstinately defend your own opinion until you become angry, or more excited than is becoming a Brother of the Rite;
2. never endeavor to force other Brethren to agree with you. Listen calmly to their ideas;
3. avoid silly or offhanded comments for effect, or forced wit. Wit can wound even though it was only meant to amuse;
4. never use unclear language. The commonest thought well put is more useful than the most brilliant idea jumbled up. A central idea to the benefit of the LOP might be lost to the Brethren, if the language which conveys it is obscure;
5. never seek to make Brethren feel inferior. All that a Scottish Rite Brother says must be marked by politeness and deference to the feelings and opinions of others;
6. never interrupt anyone who is speaking;
7. never supply a name or date about which another hesitates, unless you are asked to do so;
8. never anticipate the point of a story which another person is reciting, or to take it from his lips to finish it in your own language;
9. never put on an air of weariness or look at a your watch, read a letter, flip the leaves of a book, or in any other action show that you are tired of the speaker or his subject;
10. never, unless you are requested to do so, speak of your own

business or profession;

11. make what you say as modest and brief as is consistent with the subject under consideration, and avoid long speeches and tedious stories;
12. avoid a theatrical style. Waving hands as if commanding silence to get the attentions of the TPGM or another Brother is unacceptable;
13. never notice if others make mistakes in language. To notice by word or look such errors in those around you, is excessively ill-bred;
14. never use vulgar language and slang, though common, it has no place in an LOP;
15. avoid the use of technical terms or language not associated with the Rite. These terms only confuse the debate;
16. refuse to be the clown in the LOP but avoid by stiff manners, or cold, contemptuous looks, to check the innocent mirth of others;
17. never give quotations in a foreign language;
18. never use phrases of a double meaning;
19. never officiously offer assistance or advice unless asked;
20. never ridicule a Brother, the LOP, the Craft or the Rite and do not participate in practical joking;
21. avoid giving utterance to inflated expressions and remarks.

In the LOP it is protocol

1. While the LOP is at work a Brother must not talk impertinently or unseemly; nor interrupt the TPGM or Wardens or any Illustrious Brother; or behave ludicrously or jestingly. Loud talk, restless moving about, or private conversations are rude behavior which disturbs the harmony of the LOP.
2. During discussion of a motion the pronouns "you or he" are never used to refer to a Brother in the Lodge.
3. All comments are addressed to the TPGM or through him to a Brother or Brethren.
4. Political or religious discussions are never appropriate in an LOP.
5. In the Scottish Rite " Ill Brother" is neither a sentimental nor familiar

form of address. It is a title. A man does not attend his LOP in his capacity as a private individual. He is an Illustrious Brother and he should always be addressed as such.

6. All Scottish Rite Freemasons are Brethren irrespective of their rank in the Craft and must be treated with dignity and respect.
7. In the Scottish Rite the appellations such as TPGM, SGW, JGW and so on are appropriate to the office, not to the person.
8. A Brother entering the LOP after it has been opened should advance salute the TPGM in the appropriate manner give his salutation and quietly take his seat. Never stop to greet another Brother. (Better not to be late)
9. When visiting an LOP and the business of the Lodge has begun and you are late, after saluting the TPGM and giving your salutation you are to wait for the Director of Ceremonies to introduce you to the TPGM or conduct you to a seat. (Much better not to be late)
10. If a Brother must leave the LOP before it is closed he should wait until he has an opportunity of rising in place and asking the TPGM's permission to retire. This given, salute the TPGM again in the appropriate manner and retire quietly.
11. If you are travelling outside the Jurisdiction of our Supreme Council check to see what the tradition is in entering and leaving an LOP. In some Orients it is the custom to salute the TPGM, SGW and JGW when entering or leaving an LOP.

Contemplation 6 – The Nature of Deity

The strength of our degrees is that they articulate to the exploring Brother the path to the understanding of the Nature of Deity. Our degrees also provide a beginning knowledge of this Nature.

Our strength allows us to trace our knowledge back to the seekers who were Jewish sages, the Magi and followers of Zoroaster. It is why we of different faiths are able to meet together in the LOP because the Nature of Deity was historically the focus of all religious traditions.

The path for the seeker in the degrees of the LOP to learning the Nature of Deity is;

1. in the 4th degree the seeker must come face to face with the Deity for it is in the sanctuary that he resides
2. in the 5th degree the seeker starts to understand the nature of deity through the soul given by Deity
3. in the 6th degree the seeker is told to exalt the Devine and must begin to understand the Nature of Deity to do this
4. in the 7th the seeker learns the Nature of Deity in the balanced way the Deity judges.
5. in the 8th the Deity opens the door to his Nature for the seeker through knowledge.
6. in the 9th the seeker is given permission by the Deity to seek his nature through spiritual freedom
7. in the 10th the seeker is given encouragement by the Deity to never stop his quest to find the Nature of Deity
8. in the 11th the seeker is taught our quest to understand the Nature of Deity is also mankind's quest,
9. in the 12th Deity reveals his nature through our soul and its connection to him.
10. in the 13th the seeker is taught when mankind understands the Nature of Deity then the family of Brethren will be constructed
11. in the 14th the Deity reveals that man is his highest creation and the

nature of Deity is in all things of this world.

What is the nature of the Deity given by the LOP? Each must study and meditate on the question. Four of the 72 attributes of Deity that come from the Sages through our degrees are;

1. Deity watches and governs over the whole
2. Deity orders and directs all things
3. Deity is absolute good
4. Deity is absolute Truth

Contemplation 7 - Zoroaster

In the last “contemplation” it was suggested we can trace our echo to Zoroaster through his association in Masonic legend. In Masonic myth he is credited as the inventor of magic. A piece of fiction based on the misunderstanding of the words mythical and Magi. Albert Pike gives him prominence in “Morals and Dogma” and he is connected in the literature to Plutarch and Pythagoras, the Illuminati, and Rosicrucian’s as well as the Scottish Rite.

Zoroaster, the Greek translation of Zarathustra, is the name generally known in the West for the prophet of ancient Iran. He transformed his religion into a movement that became the dominant religion up until the triumph of Islam. He taught a monotheistic faith with a duality of good and evil. Many years before Zoroaster, tradition suggests, people worshipped a single God and this worship path was through the Sun, Moon and Nature. Over time this evolved in to polytheism where the icons to the worship of the one God were perceived as God’s in their own right and as such became the object of worship. Zoroaster believed that he was called by God to bring the people back to the worship of a single immutable God. The religious writings and legends of Zoroaster show striking similarities to Christian and Islamic writings and legends regarding their revelation.

Though there has been much speculation about when Zoroaster lived, Albert Pike suggests 2,200 to 3,600 B.C.E., it is generally agreed by historians from recent research that he lived within the time frame of B.C.E 660-583. Zoroaster was thirty years old when he commenced his ministry and died at the age of seventy-seven. He was born in West Iran in the district of Atropatene or Abarbaijan. His Father was a native of Abaraijan. His mother was from Median Ragha which in old Persia was a religious center of the ancient Median Empire. In Modern Iran this area is now Ray and a suburb of Tehran. Tradition suggests Zoroaster was married three times and had several children. All three wives survived him.

To add credibility to the contention we can trace our antiquity back to Zoroaster think of the opening of the 14th degree and the response of the SGW to the TPGM's question "what is Masonic work". Then hear what Zoroaster says. "Brother for the love of your fellow man be enjoined to protect them in danger, to help them in need and want; to raise their understanding in education; to enable them to enter into holy bonds of matrimony and to the best of your resources enhance the prosperity and welfare of the community of the brotherhood in particular and all mankind in general".

Out of the millions of believers in Zoroaster's thought throughout the centuries only a handful of devout followers remain. Known as Parsis they live primarily in the Gujarat and Sindh areas of India.

If you are interested in reading more about Zoroaster do not read Friedrich Nietzsche . In His "Thus Spoke Zarathustra, a Book for All and None" he treats Zoroaster as a fictional figure and puts the social cultural beliefs of the 19th century and criticism of Christianity under the rubric of the life and maxims of Zoroaster. Better choices would be Kapadia "The Teachings of Zoroaster and the Philosophy of the Paris" and Williams "Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran"

Contemplation 8 – The Soul's Relationship With Deity

Our lessons in the Scottish Rite lead us to consider our soul's relationship with Deity and its release from its earthly body at death. The soul's relationship with Deity as taught by our philosophical founders reinforces the soul's existence and confirms what our Guide's doctrines tell us about the soul's journey to Deity. Focusing us on this relationship is a benefit of our Easter celebration.

In our Scottish Rite doctrines is codified the momentous knowledge:

1. It is the soul we should focus on not the pleasures of the body which the world believes to be so necessary.
2. The soul is the depository of knowledge and that knowledge leaves with the soul at death.
3. We cannot see the soul at least in the physical sense; we can only see it in the behaviour of the man in which it resides.
4. The goal of the soul is to obtain wisdom and though we strive to obtain wisdom as a Brother of the Scottish Rite it may not be until we are with Deity that we gain wisdom.
5. We as members of the Scottish Rite should not fear death, as we know we are going to be with Deity.
6. The soul belongs to Deity and Deity is the guardian of the soul and of us.
7. Our Soul is in the likeness of the Devine. Immortal, intellectual, uniform indissoluble and unchangeable.

Along with the lessons of fidelity, truth, faith, hope and charity our Easter celebration points to a better place where we can be with better men than we leave behind. It also affirms for all of us there is a soul and that we are assured of its resurrection.

Contemplation 9 - What is Scottish Rite Brotherhood?

Scottish Rite philosopher, writers and Brethren over the centuries have suggested to be a Brother in the Rite is a life style of Brotherhood. We who are Brothers in the Scottish Rite understand the duties we owe to ourselves are precisely those we owe to our Brothers. We wish our Brothers a good lifetime as we wish our own and promote good for all our Brethren. We do not strive to master our Brothers but seek to master ourselves. We endeavour to understand ourselves and to be at peace, which opens us to knowing the intimacies of our Brother, and to honour their serenity. We consider our Brother a second self and so as we love ourselves we love our Brother. We know learning is a pathway to goodness and honour and support our Brother on their path as we ourselves move along ours. We govern our emotion, intellect, ambition, and desires, and assist a Brother when he struggles with these imposters. Discipline and Duty are not simply words for us. They are a life style. To be virtuous is not a goal it is an imperative. We know we create our own happiness so we aid our Brother in creating his happiness. We rest our opinions on foundations of fact not rumour and so protect ourselves and our Brothers from unfounded dispersions. We first see the positive in ourselves and the positive in our Brother. We number in our attributes self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, and faith. As Brothers we do not crave worldly distinction but rather the distinction of the soul. We know our soul and the souls of our Brothers will meet again in the Grand LOP Above. We know the Deity walks with us. Because of this and our Brothers we are never alone.

Our bonds of Brotherhood are not explicitly dependent on the symbols and structures of our culture. The profoundness of being a Brother in the Scottish Rite is in a shared faith that binds us as Brethren. Our faith is visible in our ideals and the way we interrelate with our Brothers. Our faith gives us reverence for ourselves, our Brothers and mankind. Our faith is an anchor for ourselves and our Brothers in our moral development. If we should need testimony of our faith we see it in the way our Brothers treat us

and we treat them.

As Brethren in the Scottish Rite we can look to our past and know our faith, attributes and deeds within the Rite have been loved and practiced by our Fathers, Grandfathers and beyond. Our appointment as Brethren is to never break the cable tow that has been left for us to prize. We focus on strengthening the Scottish Rite so as we pass it on to future Brethren we pass it unbroken, vibrant and momentous. We do this together because we are Brothers.

Contemplation 10 - Ritualism

The SGC Northern Jurisdiction in the USA in his article, "Freemasonry: Enlightenment and Liberty" the Sovereign Grand Commander says ritualism is too often mistaken for Freemasonry. This article is one of many that examine ritualism and its place in the Craft. The underlying assumption in these articles is ritual is important but should not dominate meaning. How does one avoid becoming a "parrot mason" and simply mouthing the words to get through the text?

In the SR we act our lessons and so delivering the meaning for us is paramount. To project the significance of a message requires preparation, delivery and enjoyment.

Preparation

1. Understand the meaning of what you are about to say. It is not just the words that represent meaning but meaning is a composite of the cultural context of the story. What was happening at the time the story was set? What were the norms and values of the era?
2. Who was this person you are about to play? What do they mean to you? Are they saying things you yourself believe in? If not it will be very hard to convince those who are listening what you are presenting is meaningful. If you know the person you are representing you will be able to determine how that person would have spoken and presented themselves at the time of the story. You are not presenting the meaning of what they said in the way you would say it in the cultural context of today but the meaning of how the person you represent would have said it in the time of the story.
3. Empty your mind to memorize. There are many different methods of memorization and you may have your own technique. Look at all the different ways you can present your meaning.

Delivery

1. No Fear - We get concerned with parroting the words and from this we derive apprehension about the delivery. To deal with this anxiety prepare well. When you are about to participate in the degree, concentrate on your role. For the evening of the degree that is all that matters. Enjoy the spotlight.
2. Beware of Overacting or Mechanical Acting-To portray the meaning appropriately be sincere in your emotion and belief while playing the part. You have probably experienced similar emotions to the person you are playing. Tap into these memories. What was it like to feel this way?
3. Live the part and be creative- Our degrees are presented in make believe. For the few minutes that you participate in the degree be the person you represent.
4. Empathize-understand the complexities, contradictions, agony and bliss of the person behind the part you are playing. Add them to the way you portray the person.
5. Degrees are not work they are the way we impart to our Brothers the culture, beliefs, understanding, and love of the Scottish Rite. Convey the enjoyment of being a Scottish Rite Mason.

Enjoy and have fun

1. It's about the team-Do not prepare or deliver your part in isolation. The success of the degree will be directly proportional to how much you support your Brothers in preparing the degree and how much pleasure you and the degree team had in getting ready. Get to know the other parts in the degree. Rehearse individually and with other members of the degree team before the entire team is together for the degree rehearsal.
2. For a few moments step outside your life and identity and live the life of another. Not only is it enlightening it is fun.

Contemplation 11 – The Evolution Of Scottish Rite

I was glancing through an old LOP book and thought about the comment during our last communication about where the LOP and SR evolved from.

I discovered:

1. There are many theories about the Rites origin each having some credibility but most are speculative. Our origin is ascribed to the Dionysian artificers (Masons sent to King Solomon from Tyre were members of the Dionysiac Fraternity), from the crusades, from the Templars, from Prussia, from France, and from Scotland.
2. Though detached from our present system documentation demonstrates some of our degrees were practiced as early as the fourteen century. There is conjecture they were practiced in part much early than this.
3. The first to the thirty first degree are termed “Engraved Tablets”. The Consistory and Supreme Council “Balustress” (In the historic Rite this probably was from the French spelling and suggests the cap or top of an Ionic column. This of course in the best Masonic tradition raises the question what would cause the Brethren to choose an Ionic column)
4. The maximum number of regular members in a LOP is 27 though there can be any number of honorary members.

Why 27? What might be the connection to the LOP

1. It is known for the number of the Holy Spirit
2. It is the number and symbol of Divine Light
3. It represents the 27 Masters who pursued the murderers of Hiram
4. The 27th book in the New Testament is the book of Revelation written by St John one of our Patron Saints.
5. The addition of 7 and 2 is 9 representing leaving the old and accepting the new.
6. Estienne Morin’s patent was dated 27 August
7. The square of the Battery 3x3x3 is 27

8. In Hebrew it is the Gematria (assigning of a numerical value to a word or phrase) of the Tetragrammation

Some other historic rules.

- a. Besides the festivals of St John on the 24th of June and 27th of December the LOP is to celebrate the building of the first temple on 5th October, and on the 5th day of the 5th month memory of the dedication of the temple.
- b. The Orator discourses at all receptions (communications) and if there is any indiscretion or dispute among Brethren he informs the Lodge and takes action to rectify the situation.
- c. The Hospitable Brother must ensure every sick Brother obtains appropriate treatment and is well cared for.
- d. All Brethren are expected to attend and assist at a Brothers funeral.

Contemplation 12 – The Lily and the Acacia

Our Symbols in the form of visual images, words and gestures convey our beliefs. The cross with the red rose, the pentagram, the triangle in the circle and the pelican to name only a few are infused with our principles. The Lily and Acacia in their shared symbolism additionally endorse our teachings.

Legend says when Eve was banished from the Garden of Eden, she shed tears of repentance and from her tears sprang lilies. The lily is revered as it was found growing in the garden of Gethsemane. In early biblical paintings, Gabriel is pictured extending white lilies to Mary.

Acacia, also known as thorn tree or whistling thorn, is thought to be the burning bush, which Moses encountered in the desert. The table in the tabernacle was made from the Acacia tree and the crown of thorns is whispered to have been formed from the Acacia. The Israelites planted Acacia around the graves of the deceased. The "Shittah Tree" of the Torah throughout its history has always been set-aside for a sacred purpose. The Quran reveals the Acacia as the tree symbolizing immortality. It is a long established practice when communicating with a Brother; a Scottish Rite Freemason will say "My name is Acacia," which affirms he has a claim to life everlasting.

Our Rite communicates the unquestionable unity of God, authentic universality and immortality of the soul and the defeat of evil. We are taught the miracle of faith and tolerance for all the souls in creation. Though hate and deceit are entrenched in our World we know as Scottish Rite Brethren evil cannot prevail. Our rule as Brother Knights, our legend of Hiram and our Degrees assure us of triumph over evil, ignorance and wrong. To fight these imposters which compel men to despondency remains our vocation.

Throughout antiquity the Lily and the Acacia have symbolized purity, endurance, resurrection and the immortality of the soul. Renowned as

marks of virtue and grace the lily and Acacia are perfect expressions of our experiences and future in the Scottish Rite.

Contemplation 13 – History and Our Degrees

The morals and virtues along with the geographical and cultural context inculcated in our LOP degrees are bounded by the anointing of Solomon King of Israel in 967 BC and the Jewish Rebellion of 63 BC. Our degrees reflect a significant epoch in human history.

Over the years of our degrees; the system of the alphabet; Classical Sanskrit; the theory of buoyancy; geometry; Pythagorean theorem; theory of the spherical earth; the theory of atoms; the water clock; the first railway(Corinth); the first super ship; the first Lighthouse (Alexandria),the first super warship (a trireme); the crossbow and the siege engine (designed to break or circumvent city walls) all became known. Though we in the West take credit for these and other inventions study of the technology of those societies who speak Arabic, Hebrew, Persian and Turkish shows the West simply improved on the original concepts. During the period of our degrees we also find Judah seceding from Israel; Assyria invading Israel and Israel being conquered; the Persians dominating Babylon and Greece capturing Persia.

Flavius Josephus the Hebrew historian (who says for a period of time he was a member of the Essene community) conveys the significance of this epoch of antiquity. His account of the events leading up to the Kingship of Solomon and episodes during the era of our degrees brings an authenticity to Adoniram, Jeroboam, Zabud, Jehoshaphat, Joabert along with many others that emerge in our degrees. For example the letters between King Solomon and King Hyrum as Josephus relates bring an authenticity to the building of the first temple and relevance to the phrase “harmonious cooperation” as spoken in the opening in the 14th degree.

The land of the Essenes and the Kingdoms from which our degrees derive is known in the literature of our current age as the land of the three Sabbaths and the four tomorrows. The three Sabbaths, as Friday is sacred to Islam, Saturday to Judaism and Sunday to Christianity. The venues of our degrees

show us the land of the three Sabbaths is also our land.

The lessons we teach and portray in the LOP are embedded and steeped in ancient events which still shape our present social and cultural experience. It is why the LOP and the Scottish Rite remain relevant.

Contemplation 14 – The Cube

In the opening and closing of the 14th we speak of sacred numbers. These numbers are also prevalent in a cube which for us in the LOP represents perfection. The cube when placed on a flat surface gives us three visible faces and its lines, points and all its faces give us the number twelve. Twelve contains all our sacred numbers.

The cube is said to have a monad which is an elementary individual substance which reflects the order of the world and from which material properties are derived. For us in the LOP the cube represents the individual substance of perfection and from this is derived all the moral, intellectual, behavioural and ethical components which as SR Freemason we subscribe to.

Our cube embodies;

1. In some ancient faiths the cube is said to contain all the elements of God's creation;
2. The three dimensional cube is The Holy Name of Yahweh expressed geometrically;
3. When opened the cube is a Latin Cross; The cube (Yahweh concealed) is the cross (Yahweh revealed).
4. A Masonic and SR cube viewed in the open position, with the "East" at the top, displays the positions of the TPGM, MWS and WM and Wardens, their jewels of office, the sacred books in the center on its alter, the pillars and other symbols of Freemasonry.
5. A closed SR cube represents the man who is educated about the Rite and keeps the symbols and secrets sacred within himself.
6. The perfect cube represents the personality that has had all the unevenness, roughness, and inequality polished away by experience.
7. Let a cube be dropped on any level surface and the moment it comes to rest it is automatically the right way up. It does not matter which of its own six surfaces it rests as a base. It says to the SR

Mason always be "The right Way Up" to all things.

8. The ancients often symbolized the logical rational mind of man as a cube, in contrast to the spirit, signified by a sphere.
9. The cube in Islam is the Kaaba ('Arabic for "cube") in the Holy City of Makkah, which houses the Black Stone. The cube in Judaism is the Tehilim (Psalms). In Christianity, the cube is the Cornerstone of the Temple that the builders rejected.
10. The cube represents a solid foundation and stability. It suggests a need for patience and consistency, allowing things to develop in their own perfect time
11. According to Pythagoreans, the cube is a symbol of both matter and man, the opening of the cube being a symbol of the unfoldment of man and the releasing of geometric mysteries within himself.
12. The cube symbolises the three dimensions of space in which this material universe is extended.
13. it is a symbol of stability and permanence, of geometric perfection.
14. It can be seen as the truth, because it looks the same from any perspective

Contemplation 15 – Resolving Disputes

We have all read articles offering reasons individuals join the SR. Many of these articles also speculate on why Brethren no longer attend their Valley. The research shows having a dispute with a Brother, policy or decision is a primary rationale for a Brother no longer appearing in the LOP.

Disputes in the LOP are rooted in each Brother's dearly held beliefs. When a dearly held belief is challenged by a decision of the LOP Officers, the Brethren as a whole, Supreme Council or the principles of another Brother the first response often is to defend the conviction resulting in a dispute.

While disputes are inevitable due to varying backgrounds, values and responsibilities of those who are together in a LOP, disputes can be minimized by Brethren.

1. Our LOP relies on trust and confidence in each other. To trust means we believe in the reliability, truth, ability, and strength of each Brother. The key to trust is Brethren believe the actions, words, direction, mission, or decisions by a Brother are motivated by mutually-serving (what is best for the LOP) rather than self-serving motives. Always act in a way that is best for the LOP.
2. Know the difference between a constructive dispute and destructive dispute. Constructive disputes lead to a resolution and increase the involvement of every Brother in the solution. Constructive disputes demand participants honestly want a resolution. Destructive disputes polarize or divide the Brethren.
3. Not every Brother sees the totality of an issue or is able to articulate a question that leads to an answer relevant to the issue at hand. See the larger picture and think through all its content. By pass irrelevant statements and information that fosters a dispute.

4. Speak with the Brethren on the common platform of the Lodge. A member of the LOP who attempts to rally support for an orientation or perspective without speaking to all the Brethren on the level begs the accusation he is self-serving rather than acting in the best interest of the LOP. If Trust is the Key Stone for our relationships in the LOP any actions such as not being forthright with the Brethren of the LOP is divisive.
5. Discard all-or-nothing thinking. All-or-nothing thinking often involves using absolute terms, such as never, we always or every. All or nothing thinking includes an inability to see the alternatives to circumstances. All or nothing thinking leads to seeing only the negative in the LOP or the Brethren.
6. Do not tell Brethren how it was better in your “good old days”. Your “good old days” were not likely the “good old days” of the other Brethren. Doug Larson a columnist with the Green Bay Press-Gazette said “Nostalgia is a file that removes the rough edges from the “good old days”. The reality is “the good old days” weren’t that good. Bad memory is the best advocate for the good old days.

Contemplation 16 - The Double-Headed Eagle

I was thinking about the culture of the Scottish Rite. Harkening back to my days at university the word culture has meaning for us in the Rite as it derives from the Roman orator Cicero: "cultura animi" (cultivation of the soul) a particular focus of the Rite. Our symbols convey our culture. One of the most iconic of our symbols is the double headed eagle or as it is called by some of the symbolists of antiquity the double headed phoenix.

The double-headed eagle is a Hermetic Symbol (a religious and philosophical tradition based primarily upon writings attributed to Hermes), representing the Divine Generative Potency, and Productive Capacity of Nature. God and Nature. The double headed Eagle of Lagash (the full name of the double headed Eagle of the SR) is the oldest crest in the world. It is believed to have existed 2000 years before the building of King Solomon's Temple. The double-headed eagle was known to the kings of Lagash (modern Telloh Iraq, founded somewhere around 5200 BCE) and was known as the storm bird. The French excavated at Telloh between 1877 and 1933 and uncovered at least 50,000 cuneiform texts that have proved one of the major sources for knowledge. Included within this find were silver vases adorned with engraved double headed eagles. Representations of the double Headed eagle go back to the 20th century BCE.

This motif is associated with the Byzantine Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, the Serbian Empire, and the Russian Empire. The double headed eagle has been used within coats of arms In England, Scotland, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria India, Prussia, Germany, Turkey and is the representation of the SR all over the world.

The double headed eagle is no less the badge of the Grand Inspector and Sublime Prince than that of the Grand Elect Knight. As the symbol of the Inspector it suggests an equal contemplation of both sides of a question-and thus, judicial balance. It is seen as the fitting emblem of an elect knight in

ancient religious engravings, and it appears upon the banners of knights and princes. In ancient Mesopotamia, the double headed eagle is associated with the sun symbol in the form of the Chaldean Elu (Chaldean god) which the knight and prince wore. its meaning: "The light toward which my eyes are turned."

The double-headed eagle reminds SR Freemasons there is yet even "more light" for the pilgrim who travels East, and in whose heart is the motto, "SPES MEA IN DEO EST." (My Hope is in God)

Sources: Origin and Progress of the Supreme Council 33rd Degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for England, Wales, the Dominions and Dependencies of the British Crown: Phoenixmasonry Inc. : The Builder - April 1923.

Contemplation 17 - Masonic Work

What does it mean to perform LOP Scottish Rite Masonic work?

Anchored in our beliefs that God is above all and the founder of all and Human distinctions are infinitely insignificant, LOP SR Masonic work is to encourage and assist our Brethren. This work is our actions of giving a Brother support, confidence, or hope accordingly removing barriers for our Brother to progress in his SR Journey.

Scottish Rite LOP Masonic work occurs when;

1. We shake hands. It is more than a greeting. It signifies all that is entailed within our Brotherhood;
2. We ask a Brother about his life we are genuine. This is not a platitude as in the profane world. It is a sincere concern for the welfare of our Brother;
3. Each Brothers success in the SR is essential and we demonstrate this through our actions of being ready to offer understanding and positive guidance;
4. Brethren in everyday life, as when in crises, experience our support. Providing, intellectual, emotional and physical sustenance is our Brotherly obsession;
5. Each of us sacrifices within our limitations for our Brothers;
6. Our interactions with all Brethren are kind, gracious and positive;
7. We are patient with all our Brethren;
8. We covet being in our LOP and meeting each Brother there;
9. We share our joy of being in the LOP and in seeing each Brother there;
10. Our allegiance is to all Brothers of the Rite;
11. We validate each Brother in his understanding of the ideals and lessons of the Rite;
12. We value how each Brother experiences the Rite as part of his life;
13. We assist with a Brothers journey within the Rite;
14. We see something in a Brother that prevents him or other Brethren progressing in their journey we gently and with kindness let the

Brother know;

15. We continuously check our own attitude to ensure we are not jealous, resentful, judgemental, hostile or negative toward the Rite or a Brother;
16. We exult each Brothers strengths and support each other's weaknesses.

Scottish Rite LOP Masonic work is personal. It is this personal, respectful, eloquent and elevating Brotherly Work that assists and encourages our Brethren to join us in the LOP.

Contemplation 18 – Spiritual Leadership

The subject of spiritual leadership in the Scottish Rite which is prevalent in our early literature seems, in more recent years, to have been left out of the discussion. Yet, the spiritual life of a Scottish Rite Freemason is continuously pointed to in the lessons of the LOP. Our degrees are not just a resume of interesting historical events or moral imperatives but rather a spiritual path for each of us to pursue.

W.L Wilmshurst Past Provincial Grand Secretary (West York) and author of “The Meaning of Masonry” suggests Freemasonry is the “veiled and cryptic expression of the difficult science of spiritual life” and requires “a genuine and earnest desire for knowledge and no small capacity for spiritual perception”. He says the emphasis for each Brother should be to “understand the Masonic system and to reduce its implications into a personal spiritual experience”. This spiritual experience is the process of intellectual, emotional and personal transformation. It is a belief in a power operating in the Universe that is greater than ourselves. He goes on to say the personal spiritual journey of the “man within” is to be more like and in greater relationship with God.

Our degrees of the LOP teach us the “man within” must;

1. choose to move forward on the path of Scottish Rite (SR) Freemasonry. If we do not make this choice we move further away from the path;
2. initiate the process of transformation. It cannot be forced on us and it cannot be done for us by a Brother;
3. understand ourselves. The path of Scottish Rite Freemasonry is doing, performing genuine work. We cannot just talk about what the Scottish Rite does for a man;
4. recognize our comfort zone blocks our ability to transform. If we relate only to things we understand or think we understand we close ourselves to the wisdom of the Scottish Rite;
5. remember the first and second commandment are imperatives for

- our behaviour on the path of the Scottish Rite;
6. learn gratification of pleasure is not our purpose. Our purpose is to become a being of light;
 7. recognize on the Scottish Rite Path there is no appropriate anger, no appropriate jealousy, no appropriate resentment or any other inappropriate emotion;
 8. do away with arrogance and pride in whatever form it takes in our life. We need humility to recognize the Creator;
 9. grasp we can be a prisoner of our own thoughts, limited knowledge and understanding;
 10. live in the moment so hope or fear of the future does not cloud our judgment;
 11. appreciate we are dependent on the Creator. Without God we and this world would cease to exist;
 12. know those traits that separate us from our SR Brothers separate us from God and those qualities that connect us to our SR Brother also connect us to the Creator;
 13. take into account our world is an illusion and will pass away either because of events or because of our death;
 14. recognize the only permanence is God.

After gaining this knowledge we take it back into our world putting into action "Spes mea in Deo est"

Sources W.L Wilmshurst, "The Meaning of Masonry"; Supreme Council A&ASR of Canada "The lectures of the Degrees of the Lodge of Perfection"; pheonixmasonry.inc.: Robert Morris "The Lights and Shadows of Freemasonry" ; Musa Muhaiyadden "The Elixir of Truth: Journey On the Sufi Path": George Oliver "The Book of the Lodge"; William Preston "Illustrations of Freemasonry".

Contemplation 19 – Triangles

Triangles are an integral part of LOP symbols. They are fundamental to the spirituality of the Scottish Rite.

Since the development of faith systems triangles have been used to present such concepts as past, present, and future or spirit, mind and body. Both in antiquity and current usage in the culture of symbols;

1. Triangles pointed upwards are employed to represent ascension toward the spiritual world,
2. Triangles pointed-down represent a descent into the physical world.
3. A point-up might represent a strong foundation or stability.
4. The elements of earth and water are designated by point-up triangles,
5. The elements of air and fire are styled by point-down triangles.
6. An upright equilateral triangle, is a male and solar symbol representing spirit, divinity, fire, life, prosperity and harmony.
7. The reversed triangle signifies the female and lunar, representing mother earth and grace.

In Christianity, a triangle is used as a symbol for God and the Holy Trinity. In Judaism it is a symbol for God. When upright and downward triangles are put together, they form the Creator's Star and symbolize balance and knowledge.

For us in the Rite;

1. The equilateral triangle has relevance to the number 3;
2. The equilateral triangle is a divine symbol representing;
 - a. The Great First Cause,
 - b. The Creator and Container of all things, as one and indivisible,
 - c. God manifesting Himself in an infinity of forms and attributes in this visible universe

3. The equilateral triangle with the apex pointing downward is emblematic of the Creator, the apex pointing upward toward the universe, the created;
4. The apex pointing upward characterizes the perfect man made in Gods image with the apex pointing to God;
5. The two triangles entwined represents perfect man and God exemplifying the final unity of God and the perfect divine man;
6. The Creators Star six points stand for the six days of creation, and also represent the six attributes of God: power, wisdom, majesty, love, mercy and justice;
7. The Yod within the triangle embodies the Tetragrammaton, or sacred name of God.

Sources: Brother D. W. Nash , "Freemasons Magazine iv"; The Builder - February 1919; The Grand Lodge of Texas "The Equilateral Triangle: Masonic Trowel; George H. Steinmetz "Freemasonry: Its Hidden meaning".

Contemplation 20 – Spirituality

I recently heard the contention there is little impulse for spirituality among the Brethren of the Rite. I was saddened to hear such an ill-conceived statement from our Brethren. Their proposition turned on a supposition that Scottish Rite Brethren do not have time to consider or practice spirituality.

Without spirituality and our behaviour that is rooted in spirituality the essential focus and purpose of the Scottish Rite is lost. Without spirituality we are simply another guild all be it with a specialized ritual and allegiances. The Scottish Rite teaches our spiritual experience is the process of intellectual, emotional and personal transformation. The Scottish Rite teaches spirituality is God working within us.

Spirituality is the essence of our Soul. It is love and respect for God, love and respect for ourselves and love and respect for the human family. It is the search to know our real self. It is a belief in a power operating in the Universe that is greater than ourselves. A sense of interconnectedness with all living creatures, and an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life.

The Scottish Rite teaches us we practice spirituality when we demonstrate Deity working within us, reinforce our personal spiritual journey and make evident our SR principles:

1. When we put the best and highest interest of the other person ahead of our own self-interest.
2. When a person attacks us we speak well of them.
3. When we see joy in life so others will see the joy of life.
4. When we are peace makers. We will experience unfairness, meanness and injustice but as a SR Freemason this type of behaviour is not who we are. We never repay evil with evil.
5. When patience and tolerance become our strength. We forgive mistakes, believe the best of people and are merciful to them.
6. When we practice kindness. We do not have to agree with another's

position but we must be kind to them. If our words are delivered with kindness the person we are speaking with will hear us.

7. When we recognize the GAOTU has provided us with abundance. Not with standing a SR Brothers circumstances his glass is always half full. This assures we will practice generosity.

8. When we continue to work and study to Know the GAOTU better.

9. When we are gentle with our words, our attitudes and our actions.

10. When we have our ego under restraint enabling us to practice self-control and thus accepting all those individuals who make up Gods creation.

Contemplation 21 – The Opening of a Lodge of Perfection

Scottish Rite Ritualists speak of two distinct functions during our LOP gathering. Business which comprises the logistics of keeping our LOP operating and work which is the delivery of our degrees. Included in the work is the ritual of opening and closing our LOP. There is a tendency to treat the opening and closing as a system of rote. A formal tradition, surrounded by symbols performed without variance. In thinking about this and reviewing the language particularly of our opening the text appears to speak in terms of instruction or if you will, a catechism of our beliefs as SR Freemasons. This Catechism says:

1. We are watched by God and the Holy St John.
2. Equality and harmony must be our goal and all Brethren are on the level
3. Reason, faith, liberty, brotherhood, honour, and duty are foundations of our creed.
4. Prejudice, intolerance and envy and anything else that diverts us from our fiat must be purged so that we can continue protecting the oppressed, righting wrongs, raising the fallen, and relieving want and distress.
5. We must be fruitful daily in meeting the purposes of a SR Freemason

Our opening also poses a “and what more” question to which the TPGM, SGW and JGW respond;

1. The SGW answers “as men we are affirmed in all we do and not condemned but supported by our Brethren since we are bound by our sacred ties and laws of Brotherhood”.
2. The SGW answers “we will be judged by the standard we judge others as we are bound by the Laws of God”.
3. The JGW answers “we are part of a universe created by God where all people are children of His conception and are equal”.
4. The JGW answers “we are in the presence of God Infinite and He resides with us”.
5. The SGW answers “God is within us reaffirming the existence of our

soul”.

6. The SGW answers “during our daily life’s walk if we look we will find God surrounding us as He is manifest in nature and in man”.

7. The TPGM answers “take the Peace of the Rite and the knowledge gained out into your world for then you show the essence of His creation”.

Both the rote poetry and the “what more” idiom of our opening ritual avows who we are as men and Scottish Rite Freemasons. Our opening ritual allows us to glimpse the well-worn stones on the thoroughfare of our Souls passage to Deity and to understand and follow the signposts for our Journey. Though our opening is a formal tradition, surrounded by symbols performed without variance, its meaning, instruction and relevance exceeds its recital. Our opening is not a precursor to our business or work but rather it is integral to reminding us of the obligations and oaths we have made as Brethren of the LOP.

Contemplation 22 - Thanksgiving

For many Thanksgiving is thought of as an almost exclusive North American tradition marked by religious observances and a traditional meal including turkey. The holiday is believed to commemorate a harvest festival and is thought of as a Christian celebration based on the American story of the Pilgrims and their commemoration of 1621. However, our Thanksgiving celebration goes back in Jewish history and the tenants of Thanksgiving are taught by Islam. Thanksgiving is truly an inclusive celebration as the SR is an inclusive spiritual Brotherhood.

In our Volumes of SL (Torah, Quran, Bible) we are taught during the Temple era, every farmer was commanded to bring to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem the first fruits which ripened in his orchard. He would then recite a passage thanking God for the Land and its bountiful harvest. The Quran teaches faith encompasses being thankful to Allah, being grateful, reminding ourselves of His favors, keeping family ties and feeding food which are the essence of the North American cultural Thanksgiving Celebration. The Bible reinforces what is shared between our Friends and family in the Thanksgiving Celebration. "For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer".

Though Thanksgiving has its roots in antiquity the Pilgrim story shows how our SR tenants are involved with this celebration. The Pilgrims as members of the English Separatist Church (a Puritan sect) fled their home in England to escape religious persecution. An action which would likely be supported by a SR Freemason and his pledge to protect religious tolerance. It is believed at least one of the Pilgrims (William Brewster) was a Freemason and likely had a connection to the Knights Templar. Brewster became the senior elder of the colony, serving as its religious leader until the colonies pastor, arrived in 1629.

In Canada the roots of our Thanksgiving Celebration can be traced to 1578

and the explorer Martin Frobisher. Frobisher, held a Thanksgiving celebration for surviving the long journey from England through the perils of storms and icebergs. Canadian Thanksgiving is also traced to the French settlers who celebrated their successful harvests in the early 17th century. We believe there were Freemasons in New France but they were not active at this time. In 1634 Lord Alexander a member of Edinburgh Lodge No.1 founded a colony of Scots on the banks of the St. Lawrence River. These new immigrants along with others such as the Irish and Germans added their own traditions to the harvest celebrations.

The spiritual meaning of the Thanksgiving Celebration according to religious writers is to gather in unity, to teach the purpose and significance to the richness of our inheritance and to prepare the heart and soul for our past and future in gratitude. Thanksgiving focuses on the relationship between God and man. All of which are the declarations and resolve of a Scottish Rite Freemason.

Sources: Rabbi Naftali Silberberg the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute, (Deuteronomy 26:1–12); Mary Fairchild; 1 Corinthians 13:4-13 ESV; Shaykh Luqman , The Holly Quran; 1st Tomothy. The Holy Bible.