

## Twelve experts from the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Ritual. Comments - Similarities, Nuances, and Differences in the Rituals

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**Abstract:** This research concerns the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR). Are there differences or nuances regarding the same ritual within lodges of the same East (Obedience)? Are there differences between lodges of different Easts? This research also explored the ritual by explaining excerpts from its content. This work is therefore intended for Apprentice Masons, but also Fellow Crafts, as well as Master Masons. The ritual is rich in symbolism, for example, the sun associated with the Worshipful Master, the age of the Mason, the significance of leaving metals at the lodge gate, the symbolism of the headband, the duties and oaths taken by the Mason, etc. Twelve excerpts from the ritual have been selected in an attempt to explain its meaning. Obviously, this work does not claim to be exhaustive: these are reflections intended to stimulate interest in reflecting on the ritual of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.



300th Anniversary of FM°, to the RGLB, Ferenc Sebök.

## 1. Introduction

This research highlights twelve sequences of interest in terms of Masonic symbolism; twelve sequences from the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR). The rituals practiced at the Worshipful Lodge "François-Charles de Velbrück" as well as the Worshipful Lodge "Les Vrais Amis" and the Worshipful Lodge "Iris" (Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium - RGLB) were used.

The ritual of the "Quadrum Leonardi" Lodge (Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary - SGLH) was also consulted, as well as the ritual of the French rite of the « France Lodge » (SGLH) and the ritual of the Modern Belgian rite of the "Les Sept Piliers" Lodge (RGLB).

This work offers a brief overview of the similarities, nuances, and differences between the rituals of the same rite and related rites before getting to the heart of the matter by presenting twelve sequences of excerpts from the AASR ritual, providing explanations.

## 2. Similarities, Nuances, and Differences in Rituals

When we read the rituals of various rites, we can easily notice many similarities and differences in the texts and/or in the performance performed by the Masonic actors. There are, of course, "symbolic standards" that are found in the various rituals of different rites.

The most obvious standards are, of course, the existence of the three degrees present in the blue lodges (Apprentices – Fellow crafts – Masters), the presence of the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and Compass on the altar, the Freemasons' lucky numbers (3 – 5 – 7), the stages during a Lodge Meeting (Opening – Closing), the Initiation and the passages, the Agapes, also called "Harmony", the existence of a table lodge, the three columns, etc.

Beyond these standards, there are similarities, nuances, and differences as well. They are noticeable in the stagecraft, in the interpreted texts, but also in the presence of additions or deletions in the written texts.

While the rituals are generally standardized by the East, there are often small nuances or even differences in the writings, additions, specific to the Lodges of the same East, working on the same rite.

Nuances arise from small additions to the rituals or simply nuances in the interpretation, the stage experience experienced by the actors, based on the same ritual. Differences are more profound, such as the notion of the divine, for example. The more differences there are, the fewer similarities there will necessarily be.

Differences arise from the words and phrases of the same rite, which can be observed in the rituals. We can also speak of similarities between two rites, whose rituals are similar.

Differences can be perceived in lodges working under the same rite, but also working under the auspices of different Easts. For example, the AASR ritual will present differences in lodges working under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of France or the Grand East of France, or even in relation to the French National Grand Lodge.

Thus, the notion of the divine is clearly affirmed in the French National Grand Lodge (FNGL) compared to the Grand Lodge of France (GLF). In the Grand East also named « Orient » (GOF), the divine will either be banished or will generally have very little value, although deist lodges may exist. Even between two lodges

"Of Regular Obedience," there will be differences or nuances. For example, the AASR ritual practiced at the FNGL and the RGLB.

When visiting Brothers visit a lodge practicing the same rite, they immediately notice these nuances, but sometimes differences as well. But the Brothers often attribute this to the particularity of a lodge. For example, I remember a lodge practicing the AASR where the Brother Secretary was to the right of the Worshipful Master and the Brother Speaker was to his left. In another lodge practicing the AASR, the arrangement was reversed.

Another example : during my visit to the AASR, I was surprised to see that on the Worshipful Master's Stall, a coloured candle was lit for the Brothers who had passed to the Eternal East. At the opening of the proceedings, the Worshipful Master gave the order to stand for a minute of silence.

Differences can also exist within the ritual itself : words and phrases from the same rite may differ between lodges of the same East or between lodges of different Easts, whether regular or irregular. However, despite the nuances and differences existing within lodges using the same rite, the framework remains identical, and the visiting Brother is not "disoriented."

It should be remembered that the patent or recognition of "regularity" depends on whether or not it is granted by the United Grand Lodge of England (the mother lodge of all lodges). Operative Freemasonry (professional masons) gradually saw the emergence of speculative Freemasonry, with a specific date: 1717.

Speculative Freemasonry, increasingly open to candidates who were not necessarily tradespeople, bourgeois and noble, or politicians who protected the Order, developed rapidly and was soon introduced in France and overseas.

Let us recall the importance of two key figures who participated in the birth of modern Freemasonry : Pastor James Anderson, father of the Anderson Constitutions (1684-1739), and Théophile Desaguliers. The latter, the son of a pastor in France, developed the fraternal sense and spirit of the Order. He has worked extensively to compile the Order's documents since 1723.

Currently, throughout the world, lodges of regular Obediences represent approximately 95% of Freemasonry. However, so-called "irregular" Freemasonry represents the majority in certain countries such as France and Belgium. Initially, Obediences such as the Grand Lodge of Belgium, or the Grand East of Belgium or the Grand Lodge of France were "regular," but during the Industrial Revolution of the late 19th century, the notion of God was called into question, and soon a French Masonic break with the English (United Grand Lodge of England) led to a different direction. We can easily understand how the French rituals were rewritten, but while maintaining the standards we have discussed and the essential framework. Thus, the differences can also be explained by the break between French Freemasonry and English Freemasonry.

There are also "related rites" with differences in their procedure, vocabulary, etc. For example, the French rite is practiced in French at the Worshipful Lodge "France 9," working under the auspices of the Grand Symbolic Lodge of Hungary, and the Modern Belgian rite is practiced at the Worshipful Lodge "Les Sept Piliers 38," working under the auspices of the Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium.

For example, while there is a "Terrible Brother" in the French rite, there is none in the Modern Belgian rite, where the Expert Brother performs the work. Differences can be identified in the three degrees of the Blue Lodge, the foundation of Freemasonry (Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master).

In the French rite, the name of God is much more exalted than in the Modern Belgian rite. In the French rite, the "Most Worshipful Master" asks the Brothers to turn towards the East to recite the prayer; this is the exaltation of the divine. In the Modern Belgian rite, which is close to the French rite, there is no such exaltation induced by the "Worshipful Master."

This difference is undoubtedly due to the fact that, unlike the French rite, where the Constitution contains the unshakeable notion of belief in God, in the Modern Belgian rite, the first article of the Constitution does indeed provide for belief in a Supreme Being, called God, but a first article bis stipulates that members are entitled to their own interpretation regarding the notion of God, the Great Architect of the Universe.

The Agapes and the toasts also present differences and nuances, depending on the lodges, the rites, and the lodges working under the auspices of regular or irregular Obediences. However, the framework is similar.

But since the purpose of this work is not to analyse the differences, nuances, and similarities between rites and rituals, I will stop here to offer a reflection on twelve sequences taken from the AASR ritual.

### **3. Twelve sequences taken from the ritual of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Comments**

This work does not claim to be exhaustive and only offers twelve major sequences to be understood at the first level of Apprentice:

- The symbolism of the sun and the Worshipful
- The Masonic Age and humility
- The Wisdom that presides over construction
- The declaration to work "To the Glory of the Great Architect," an essential sequence in the process of opening the lodge
- Leaving metals at the lodge gate
- The need for the mind to rid itself of prejudices
- Liberty, probity, and good morals
- The symbolism of the blindfold during initiation
- The duties of the Freemason
- Brotherly love and its limits
- Trust and its limits
- The Oaths taken

### 3.1. The symbolism of the sun and the Worshipful

Excerpts from the AASR ritual (Opening of the Lodge)

"As the sun rises in the East to usher in the day, The Worshipful Master (WM°) himself stands there to open the lodge, direct its work, and enlighten it with his light. »

Commentary:

The WM° sits symbolically in the east, in the Solomon Chair. Beside him, on the right, are the Brother Secretary, and on the left, the Brother Orator. He is the head of the lodge, presiding over the proceedings. At the same time, in symbolism, the sun is associated with the WM° (illuminating it with his light).

The sun rises in the east, at the earliest moment of the day; this symbolizes the important work to be done, for the WM° is present "as the sun rises in the east to open the day." The excerpt emphasizes that the WM°, and no one else, directs the work of the lodge.

The fact that the WM° directs the lodge means that no one else can do so, except in exceptional circumstances, such as illness, for example; In this case, it is the former WM°, called the "Immediate Past Master," who can preside over the proceedings. In any case, only an "Installed Master" (i.e., one who has been elected and installed in the Chair of Solomon after undergoing an esoteric installation ritual) can preside over the proceedings of a lodge.

When the ritual sequence insists that the WM° "stands there to open the lodge," this strengthens his position within the lodge.

The prerogative to direct the proceedings is such that when a Grand Master visits the lodge, alone or accompanied by his Grand Officers, the WM° will present him with the gavel to allow him to direct the proceedings. However, after exchanging a few words of courtesy, the Grand Master will refuse the gavel and ask the WM° to continue leading the lodge.

Indeed, this exchange is also symbolic. Since the lodge works under the auspices of a Grand Lodge, the ritual requires that the WM° present the gavel and the Grand Master refuse it. This demonstrates respect on both sides, but also a form of allegiance between the lodge and the Grand Lodge.

This scene is even more important symbolically if the lodge is part of a Masonic Order and not, for example, a Federation of Lodges.

### 3.2. Masonic Age and Humility

Here is an excerpt from the ritual:

"WM° Brother Senior Warden, how old are you?

Senior Warden, Three years, WM°"

Since the purpose of this work is not to analyse in detail the symbolism of the number three, I will simply specify that the number three represents the age of the Apprentice. This also indicates a necessary form of Masonic humility, but also that he remains a faithful worker participating in the construction of the building.

The First Warden is, however, one of the three Freemasons who lead the lodge. Three years also means that the First Warden, who certainly has the

The degree of Master Mason, like all others, receives the radiance of light, transmitted to the WM°, who "illuminates the lodge."

In the Masonic journey, the Freemason, from the grade concerning the Apprentice to the degree concerning the Master, will progress from 3 years of age, to 5 years, then to 7 years and beyond.

If the Freemason continues his journey in the High Grades of Scottishism, he will discover many other rituals in the Lodge of Perfection presided over by the Thrice-Powerful Master, or in the Chapter, presided over by the Wisest, and finally in the Areopagus.

The thirtieth degree, Knight Kadosh, will be presided over by a Grand Master, knowing, however, that at the summit of the Supreme Council will reign the Most Powerful Sovereign Grand Commander.

The High Grades culminate in three so-called "administrative" grades. The end of the initiatory journey itself therefore symbolically ends at the 30th degree of Knight Kadosh, knowing that the Mason will always remain a "learner" called an Apprentice.

Therefore, the essential foundation of Freemasonry lies at the first level of the so-called "Blue Lodge," including the first three grades (Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master). Thus, if some Brothers, having reached a high level in the Scottishism, claim to be a member of this group, it is not only an un-Masonic act, but it is also a mismatch of genres, insofar as the hierarchy existing in the High Grades has nothing to do with the hierarchy of the Blue Lodges.

In fact, while the Blue Lodges work under the auspices of a Grand Lodge presided over by the Most Respectable Grand Master, the so-called "green" lodges, the so-called "red" Chapters, and the so-called "black" Areopagus work under the auspices of a Supreme Council, headed by the Most Powerful Sovereign Grand Commander.

A question posed by the Apprentices is the following : why do we say that "three lead the lodge," that is, the WM° with the First and Second Warden?

Because it is the three of them who lead the "Jachin" and "Boaz" Columns in terms of work and spirituality, according to the ritual's staging. In fact, the three of them must set an example, guide, and inspire the Brothers present in the lodge.

The ritual is conducted with interventions in a triangle (WM° - First Warden - Second Warden and vice versa). These triangular interventions are carried out in a rhythmic manner, thanks to the use of the three mallets, symbolizing authority. This is the case, for example, when opening the lodge, closing it, to call the Brothers to their feet, or to ask them to take their seats.

Finally, the stated age of three also signifies that we will always remain Apprentices; this is the condition for progressing in knowledge. Not understanding this, boasting about having degrees and medals, demonstrates narrow-mindedness, the certainty of knowing more than others.

Flagging off one's trinkets that others don't have to impress is not only childish, but also shows that knowledge of the Masonic ideal and symbolism is still very weak. Some may even resort to a form of narcissism or, worse, implicitly pretend to have a certain power. Let us hope that this type of Mason is a minority within an Order.

### **3.3. Wisdom presiding over construction**

The excerpt following the VM° reads:

"Let wisdom preside over the construction of our building."

It should not be forgotten that thanks to the sun, light is transmitted to the WM°, seated on the Throne of Solomon. He also represents "Wisdom," which is symbolized by the column in the East. The First Warden represents "Strength," another column in the South (sometimes called South), and "Beauty," which is the prerogative of the Second Warden, is the third column in the North (sometimes called North).

In saying this, the WM° shows humility, since although he represents wisdom, he does not possess it; he must work like all the others to hope to impart a little wisdom, love, and create harmony in the lodge.

Wisdom refers to King Solomon in the Old Testament. The WM° sitting on Solomon's throne signifies that this is a position, an undivided mission, with the aim of working for the lodge's influence.

The First Warden must provide Strength as support in the construction of the building (sometimes called the Temple), and the Second Warden must provide Beauty as support in the construction of the building.

Wisdom – Strength – Beauty : three candles lit at the opening of the lodge.

The ritual reads: "Let strength complete it" (First Warden). Finish what then? Complete what Solomon (WM°) began to outline. The ritual reads: "Let beauty adorn it." Adorn what then? Create beauty during the construction of the building (Second Warden).



Thus, what governs the lodge can be defined as "Wisdom - Strength - Beauty," representing a triangle in constant motion, punctuated by the unfolding of the ritual.

This also means that the three links are interdependent in governing the lodge. This is why loyalty is essential. If one of the three links were to fail, the building (construction) represented by the lodge could be destabilized. This is what can happen in some lodges where the harmony of the "Wisdom - Strength - Beauty" triangle does not reign.

#### **3.4. The declaration to work "To the Glory of the Grand Architect," an essential sequence in the lodge opening process**

Excerpted from the ritual, the WM° says the following:

"To the Glory of the Grand Architect of the Universe, in the name of universal Freemasonry, under the Auspices of the Grand Lodge....., by virtue of the powers conferred upon me, I declare open to the Grade of Apprentice, this Respectable Lodge of Saint John ....."

First of all, a note should be made : in Freemasonry, in the AASR, and in the Scottishism, we speak of "Grades," whereas in other rites we speak of "Degrees." All work is done to the Glory of the Great Architect of the Universe (GADLU), who is "God" for most Anglo-Saxon and "regular" Obediences, that is, those recognized by the Mother Lodge of London throughout the world (United Grand Lodge of England, or GLUA), whose creation dates back to 1717, the official beginning of operative Freemasonry.

Universality is connoted by the symbolism of the "Mother Lodge" that has spread throughout the world. This reminder of universality is therefore a symbol of identity, but also an expression of allegiance to the Mother Lodge, the primary source of modern Freemasonry.

The declaration contains two essential meanings : first, that only the WM° has the transmitted power to open the lodge, and second, through the declaration of the opening, it refers precisely to the moment when the lodge passes from the profane to the sacred, when time and space no longer symbolically exist, and when the Brothers have left "their metals" at the gate of the Temple. The metals notably recall Jesus, who drove the money changers from the Temple.

The "Worshipful Lodge of Saint John" is the common name for the lodges, each of which has its name engraved during the consecration of the lodge. This consecration is usually performed by the Grand Master and his dignitary officers during a "Lighting of the Fire," meaning that the Lodge will be authorized to operate under a licence received from the Grand Lodge.

More symbolically, this "Lighting of the Fire" means receiving light to be able to work; this implies Strength, that is, the unwavering will of the Brothers to work tirelessly from "Noon to Midnight."

This excerpt also reinforces the power of Solomon (WM°), who holds the power he must use wisely. Moreover, he has attributes for this purpose, notably the gavel, his flaming sword. He also carries the square, as a sign of righteousness, justice, and fairness.

We saw previously that the VM° is the head of the lodge and that the Grand Master, when visiting, immediately returns the gavel to him, in a symbolic scene; nevertheless, in a Masonic Order, the WM° represents the Most Worshipful Grand Master in his lodge.

This opening declaration to the Glory of the Great Architect of the Universe also implies that the VM° is primarily responsible for his lodge. He must therefore always be "above the fray," know how to listen to the parties, and act with discernment, factually, and fairly, as King Solomon would, but without forgetting that he must also be a man of heart. Ultimately, he will work "for the Glory of the Grand Architect..." while always ensuring that order and harmony are maintained within the Lodge.

Who can help him in his task? First, his two Wardens, with whom he leads, then the Brother Secretary and the Brother Orator (Speaker). Together, these five Masons will "enlighten the Lodge." The ritual states:

"Three lead it, five illuminate it, but seven make it just and perfect."

This means that in addition to the five main actors, at least two other Masons are needed to open a Lodge. This phrase perfectly expresses the interdependence of the Brothers, as well as another Masonic expression that can be found in the ritual:

"...Together, we can do anything!"

Others can assist and advise the Worshipful Master in his mission: the Immediate Past Master (or former Worshipful Master), former Worshipful Masters, the Grand Master himself, not to mention the listening ear of his Brothers, Apprentices, Fellow Crafts, and Master Masons. Regarding the Apprentices and Fellow Crafts, his two ears will be the First Warden and the Second Warden.

### 3.5. Leaving the Metals at the Lodge Gate

Excerpt from the ritual where the Worshipful Master says the following:

"My Brothers, we are no longer in the profane world.  
We have left our metals at the lodge gate.  
Let us lift up our hearts in Fraternity and turn our gaze toward the Light."

What does the Worshipful Master mean?

Leaving metals at the lodge gate means getting rid of anything that could hinder spiritual work within the lodge. Metals refer to material interests, intolerance, and distorted beliefs and perceptions that limit the human spirit.

It can also concern human inclinations, addictions, and passions, which often have few limits. Passion and reason: a balance must be found to create a fraternal spirit.

Elevating hearts in brotherhood aims to set aside divergent opinions, disdain, anger, arrogance, pride, selfishness, intolerance, etc., in favour of an open-mindedness that allows for another perspective, perceptions other than those that are deeply rooted. It is also a call to unity and brotherly love, despite differences. This, of course, requires an effort within oneself.

"...Our gaze turns toward the light..."

This phrase implies openness, not closed mindedness, introspection, questioning, the search for the common good, and the elevation of the spirit. We must orient ourselves toward the Sacred and detach ourselves from the profane, which allows for spiritual elevation.

### 3.6. The Need for the Mind to Rid Itself of Prejudices

Excerpt from the ritual:

"You will only be one of us if, on this occasion, your mind rids itself of all prejudices and errors it may contain."

Prejudices are often linked to subjective perceptions and beliefs (believing one holds the truth, believing rumours and thus losing one's reason, not focusing on facts, but on impressions).

Prejudices kill the spirit of tolerance, create divisions and tensions. They destroy the spirit of brotherhood and the "power to live together." I have seen many times how prejudices can lead to discrimination or stigmatization, sometimes even within a lodge.

Prejudices are often hasty and create very regrettable errors of judgement, but often the damage is done; and it is easier to destroy than to build or rebuild. With prejudices, it is impossible to enter the realm of the sacred.

The Passions can then exacerbate and focus prejudices. These kinds of existing subjective perceptions undermine the work of the lodge, introduce elements of the secular world, and violate the "Sacred" intended within the lodge. Brotherly love can quickly be undermined by clannishness and secular interests.

This is why in Freemasonry, it is "forbidden to discuss politics or religion in the lodge."

But there's a long way to go, because Freemasons are, in fact, only men... Shouldn't one earn Masonry through one's attitude and behaviour, coupled with constant Masonic research, which is spirituality?

The study of the ritual, symbolism, esotericism, and Kabbalah are endless avenues of research that allow one to focus on the spiritual and not the material, because it is the material that can fuel tensions and create discord.

In Freemasonry, one who believes they possess the truth can no longer progress.

Evolution involves a perpetual questioning of what has been learned; the same is true for the research of historical facts and science, for example. Even at the level of art, there is a perpetual evolution with research.

### **3.7. Freedom, Integrity, and Good Morals**

During the integration process for a layperson who has knocked on the lodge gate, aren't they asked at some point if they are "Free, honest, and of good morals"?

The ritual therefore provides the initial conditions for an acceptable application. In Freemasonry, this is not freedom in the sense of financial well-being, although at some point, the candidate will be asked if they are able to fulfil their financial obligations as a member of the lodge without harming their family.

Freedom rather concerns the mind and state of mind. A mind free from the constraints that dogmas can exert on the individual is an example of freedom. Being free from all addictions is also a guarantee of freedom; for example, a candidate is not free because their life depends on the divine bottle. Gambling can also be financially fatal, affecting the family and jeopardizing the freedom to be and act.

But there is also the candidate's state of mind, linked to their beliefs. Do they have fixed ideas? Can they question themselves? What motivates them to try to enter Freemasonry?

This question is part of the ritual as the candidate "passes under the blindfold":

"... Isn't it curiosity that drives you to knock on the lodge gate?..."

A question to which the candidate wearing the blindfold must answer and then explain.

Probity is essential to Freemasonry because it represents uprightness of mind, but other qualities are also important, such as loyalty and honouring one's commitments.

Finally, "good morals" concern the candidate's morality, respect for others, adherence to the rules, and the absence of any desire to harm others. This aspect actually concerns the morality of the individual and is close to the laws that must be respected.

In my opinion, there are two questions that the Mason should ask himself: "How can one be free with limiting certainties and beliefs?" and "What are the possible links between prejudices, certainties, and beliefs?"

### **3.8. The symbolism of the blindfold during initiation**

The ritual reads as follows:

"... The blindfold that covers your eyes underlines the blindness of man, dominated by his passions and plunged into ignorance."

This phrase is crucial. The symbolism of the blindfold is rich and forces man, the layman in this case, to realize that he is a very weakened being when one of his senses fails him. It is a question of self-examination.

A way of leading the candidate to realize that man depends on his fellow man; we are truly interdependent. He must also feel the need to use another sense to try not to be completely destabilized: he must listen more closely to what he hears. Symbolically, the blindfold also helps us understand how paralysed a person can be, blinded by his passions, and lose the thread of reason.

Don't we say, in popular language, that "he sees red"? When trying to explain that the person has "lost it," instinct and passion take over reason. There are many expressions of this kind to explain that the person has "lost it."

He no longer sees anything, he no longer knows how to listen, and his vision of things takes over, believing that he is the victim of something, that someone is angry with him, or that the cause is unjust. He thus opens the door to subjective perceptions to the point of hearing "only what he wants to hear."



Beliefs and certainties, personal truths, are usually woven from subjective perceptions and emotional states. Jealousy, for example, is a source of passion that can be destructive. The tool could, for example, be anger, a refusal to engage in dialogue, or the ability to engage in dialogue.

Throughout his Masonic journey, the Mason will be confronted with the blindfold, but also with another symbolic tool used in Freemasonry, in the second degree: the mirror, which he discovers during his "travels."

Isn't man responsible for his actions? Freemasonry will constantly remind him of this question, so that he can become better :

"Semper Melior"

### **3.9. The Duties of the Freemason**

The ritual speaks of the duty to love one's Brothers in the form of a commitment:

"... I swear fidelity... To love my Brothers... I promise to help my Brothers..." etc.

The ritual continues:

"The first of these duties is to remain silent."

"The second duty, which is rooted in the very essence of our Order, is to combat passions."

"The third duty of the Mason is to comply in all things with the General Statutes of the Order and the specific laws of his lodge."

It will be easy to see that this sequence, full of symbolism, can be linked to other sequences, such as the sequence concerning the "blindfold" or the sequence speaking of "Liberty, Integrity, and Good Morals." Indeed, connections can be made between the twelve chosen sequences.

The Apprentice receiving the light must swear oaths on the Volume of the Sacred Law, on which is a square placed on the compass at the Apprentice level. The oath-taking is a solemn moment where the Brothers of the Columns stand in order, that is, with their hands open, their fingers clasped, and their thumbs placed squarely on their throats. This scene reminds all Brothers of their commitment to respect their oaths, but also to keep the secrets of the Mason:

"...I would rather have my throat slit than reveal..."

Throughout their Masonic journey, oaths and commitments will be recalled or sworn. Why? Because the Freemason remains a man with his qualities, but also his flaws. One word is often mentioned that sums up the duty to respect commitments.

This is clearly demonstrated when, in the Scottish Rite, the Brothers stand at the Closing of the Lodge and say in chorus three times, striking their hearts in English:

"Fidelity! Fidelity! Fidelity!"

### **3.10. Brotherly Love and Its Limits**

In the ancient and accepted Scottish ritual, we read that the Brother declares his promise, "to love his Brothers and to help them..."

This is a commitment that is not in vain and is even repeated at the ritual Agape during a toast to the Brothers "...Whether they be on land, at sea, or in the air..."

While helping a Brother in need must be done within the limits of what is possible for a helping Brother, brotherly love, on the other hand, must be limitless, if we read the ritual. It is therefore a form of unconditional love. It is clear that, in practice, this is an "unattainable star" toward which every Mason must strive.

Brotherly love is physically embodied in the lodge during a chain of union where the Brothers join hands in a closed circle, most often around the lodge board, surrounded by the three columns Wise - Strength - Beauty. The chain of union also recalls the knotted rope sometimes placed on the wall surrounding the lodge.

In Freemasonry, it is sometimes referred to as the Lake of Love. Some see it symbolically as femininity, linked to the unconditional love for one's newborn baby, who is totally dependent on it in his or her fragility. The lake, therefore, recalls amniotic fluid. Are not water and the moon symbols of the feminine?

As in secular life, little by little, the child will have to follow rules, make promises and keep them, with a conditionality of love emerging, even if this love remains intense. Similarly, in Freemasonry, does a perjured Brother deserve unconditional love?

### **3.11. Trust and Its Limits**

We have just spoken of brotherly love. Trust is closely linked to loyalty. How, indeed, can one trust when loyalty is absent?

The ritual reads:

"I would like to trust my Brothers."

This excerpt from the ritual implies that the impulse to trust exists, but it is also up to the other person to prove that they are trustworthy.

This is, in a way, a pragmatic approach to trust. Why this reserved approach? Because Freemasons are also human beings and must deserve trust.

Ultimately, the fundamental question remains the same: are we worthy of being Masons and practicing Masonry?

### **3.12. Oaths Taken**

In the ritual, we can read various things about oaths:

"... I swear fidelity... I swear to love my Brothers..."

Oaths are taken on the Altar, with the right knee on the ground, placing the right hand on the volume of sacred law (the Bible or sometimes something else like the Torah or the Quran (depending on the candidate's religious beliefs).

In the case of the Apprentice, he must also place the point of the set square, at a right angle, over his heart with his left hand.

As a reminder, in some lodges, even regular ones, several Sacred Books can be found on the Altar: the Bible, the Quran, the Torah, the Tao, and the Baghdad-Gita. Why?

Because while belief in the Supreme Being is essential in regular lodges, all laypeople who knock on the lodge gate must be respected. In some irregular lodges, a "white book" replaces all sacred books.

But at each grade increase, called a salary increase, from the oath-taking at the Apprentice level to the Master level, oaths are taken. Why?

This sequence can also easily be linked to other sequences, such as that of "Liberty, Integrity, Good Morals" or even "the duties of the Freemason."

## **4. Conclusions**

As they say in Scottish Masonry (Lodge of Perfection) :

"Yabulun is a good Mason!"

Work begins at noon, and ends at midnight in the Blue Lodges, and Masons receive their salaries in Column "J" (Jakin) and Column "B" (Boaz), but they must earn this salary through their state of mind, their brotherly love, and their actions.

A Mason following the path of spirituality must reflect on his or her own progress, and rituals are tools for study and reflection to achieve this.

It is therefore important to be aware of the importance of rituals.

At the AASR, beyond the Blue Lodge working on the first three degrees, there is the possibility of continuing one's journey, since the Scottishism offers thirty-three degrees. For each degree, there is a different ritual, but the rituals are ultimately a whole, allowing for endless spiritual reflection.

These twelve sequences are only a tiny part of the spiritual treasure that rituals can represent. Remaining at the level of the Blue Lodge, I will emphasize once again the fact that the chosen sequences form an osmotic whole.

### **Bibliography**

Rites Studied

Scottish Rite

Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite,

Rectified Scottish Rite,

French Rite,

Emulation Rite,

Modern Belgian Rite

Rituals Consulted

WL° François-Charles de Velbrück

WL° Iris

WL° True Friends

WL° Amphion (GLNF)

WL° France (GLSH)

WL° Hermes (GLSH)

WL° The Seven Pillars

WL° Saint Charles of Perfect Harmony,

WL° Sambre and Meuse

WL° A fény Oszlopai (GLSH)

WL° Egyenlőség (GLSH)

WL° Golden Spur

WL° Eagle of Patmos

WL° Allegiance (Grand Lodge of Scotland)

WL° J.J. Pershing (Grand Orient of the Netherlands)

WL° Trias Charlemagne (Grand Lodge of Germany)

WL° Quadrum Leonardi (GLSH)