

**The Degree Rituals**  
of  
**The Supreme Council, 33° , AASR**  
for the  
**Northern Masonic Jurisdiction**  
**United States of America**

by C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°

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*“If the time ever comes when the Scottish Rite determines to remain static, when its philosophy may not be adjusted to the needs of a changing world, then is the time for its obsequies. Until then, its leaders should never abandon study of the philosophy of its ritualistic teachings that, by recast and revision, it may keep in the van of advancing civilization.”*

Melvin Maynard Johnson  
Sovereign Grand Commander  
(1943 Allocution)

“It shall be the duty of the Committee on Ritualistic Matters to study and from time to time to suggest revision of all rituals and ceremonials of the Scottish Rite within this jurisdiction, to make recommendations with respect thereto, and to report thereon to the Supreme Council at each annual meeting.”

*Constitutions 135 – 1(5)*

*If the holder loses possession by death or otherwise,  
the finder will please return to:*

The Grand Secretary General  
Supreme Council, 33°  
33 Marrett Road  
Lexington, MA 02421

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## **Foreword**

to

*The Degree Rituals*

The most recent edition of *The Degree Rituals* appeared in the year of the bi-centennial which we note was some 32 years ago. In an effort to bring most of the Supreme Council publications up to date, it was requested that Ill. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°, chairman of the Ritualistic Matters Committee, assume the responsibility for preparing the present edition for publication.

The work of the committee is demanding, sensitive, essential and on-going. Ritual is not static but must constantly be subjected to re-evaluation for effectiveness in light of the times. The Supreme Council is grateful for the yearly efforts of this select committee of diligent Brothers and especially for the scholarship, patience and attention to detail of its chairman, Ill. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°. The work is not easy, yet as evidenced by this present edition, the committee proved itself up to the task begun with such competence by Ill. Irving E. Partridge Jr., 33°, whose chairmanship of the committee to produce the first edition lasted 16 years. The dedication of Illustrious Brothers, such as Partridge and Trexler and their committees, is to be noted with deep appreciation.

Fraternally yours,

JOHN Wm. McNAUGHTON, 33°  
Sovereign Grand Commander

September 1, 2008

## Preface

More than 30 years have passed since publication of *The Rituals of the Supreme Council, 33°, for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, U.S.A.* This unique work traced the obscure and complex origins and development of the 29 Scottish Rite degree rituals through the course of 200 years from the earliest surviving source, Henry Francken's 1783 manuscript of 300 pages, believed to be based on earlier French rituals entrusted to Francken by Stephen Morin.

The author of *The Rituals*, Ill. Irving E. Partridge, 33°, Active Member for Connecticut, was eminently qualified for the task. A member of the Supreme Council Committee on Rituals<sup>1</sup> since 1951, he had served as chairman for 15 years, 1957-72, and would be called upon to resume that post in 1977-78. Despite the credentials he brought to the project, Partridge readily conceded credit for the content of *The Rituals* to his predecessor, Ill. McIllyar H. Lichliter, 33°, Active Member at-Large and committee chairman in 1945-57. Brought to the Supreme Council by Sovereign Grand Commander Melvin Maynard Johnson in 1942, Lichliter emerged as the preeminent scholar and authority on the degree rituals of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction during the 20th century. Lichliter devoted more than a dozen years to research and analysis of the rituals of the jurisdiction, compiling voluminous notes which described their content and traced their development. Lichliter continued his studies until 1958.

Lichliter was more than an antiquarian. He believed that Scottish Rite Masonry was not simply the working of ritual for its own sake. Ritual was the means of presenting Masonic philosophy that men might understand the reason and purpose of life, and thereby gain the knowledge and inspiration to better themselves and society. The logical extension of this belief is that as life and society are continually changing, so the ritual must be adapted from time to time to remain relevant. Lichliter's copious notes included recommendations as to how the degree rituals might be revised and improved. In this conviction, he probably was influenced, and certainly was encouraged, by Grand

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<sup>1</sup> The Supreme Council Standing Committee on Rituals and Ritualistic Matter was renamed in 2002 as the Committee on Ritualistic Matters. The term "Committee on Rituals," wherever used throughout this work, refers to the same committee.

Commander Johnson. In contrast to the opinion that prevailed in many other Scottish Rite jurisdictions, Johnson believed that ritual existed to serve the Rite, not the other way around.

Although Johnson and Lichliter were prominent advocates of ritual revision, the practice, as we shall see, did not begin with, nor has it been confined to, their efforts. As Ill. Arturo De Hoyos, 33°, recently has noted, “The Supreme Council, 33°, NMJ, has a longstanding practice of ritual revision. Rather than using only the traditional legends and themes of the Scottish Rite, many of its degrees employ modern themes to teach its lessons.”<sup>2</sup>

Consistent with this philosophy, the degree rituals of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction have continued to evolve. Since publication of Partridge’s work in 1976, all 29 rituals have been revised at least once, many of them extensively, and some have gone through as many as four revisions. Six entirely new degree rituals have been written and introduced, and one previously withdrawn has been reintroduced. Five rituals extant in 1976 have since been withdrawn and replaced.

It is of passing interest that in 1960 the Supreme Councils of the Northern and Southern Jurisdictions of the United States agreed to joint meetings of their respective Committees on Rituals for the purpose of promoting greater uniformity in degree work. Before any meetings were held, however, the Southern Jurisdiction withdrew from the venture on the grounds that its ritual, written by Albert Pike, already “was as perfect as humanly possible.” Hence, there was no reason to discuss change, notwithstanding that Pike himself had been the greatest innovator of Masonic ritual and, over a period of 30 years to 1884, had revised the initial versions of his own rituals. Perfect or not, the reality was that Valleys across the Southern Jurisdiction routinely were abridging and adapting the Pike ritual to suit their individual situations. Perhaps it was inevitable that, starting in 1985, the Southern Jurisdiction began to soften its stance by undertaking to modify and simplify, i.e., abridge, the Pike ritual. This process culminated in 2000 with issuance of *The Revised Standard Pike Ritual*.

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<sup>2</sup> *Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor and Guide* (2007), 90, n. 1.

## Argument

Why is revision (i.e., change) of Masonic ritual necessary or desirable? Masons come to the Scottish Rite from the symbolic lodge imbued with a belief in the purported ancient origin and immutability of Masonic ritual and strictures against innovation. Yet what many regard as the spiritual core of symbolic lodge ritual, the Hiram legend of the Master Mason's degree was itself an innovation that did not come into general usage until a decade or more after the formation of the first Grand Lodge.

The Scottish Rite degree rituals recorded in the *Francken Manuscript* and what we know of their communication during most of the nineteenth century were skeletal compared to the dramatized allegories with which we are familiar. For example, the 20° and 27° rituals, noted for their impressive dramas, did not include dramatic sections at all until they were added by the revised rituals of 1896. Moreover, the medieval trial drama of the 30° (formerly the 31°) did not appear until 1938 and did not become a permanent part of the ritual until 1949. Even more recent is the dramatic section of the 11° which did not appear until 1974. Perhaps most surprising of all is the fact that the "Constans" allegory of the 31°, considered by many of our Brethren to represent the essence of Scottish Rite ritual, made its first appearance as late as 1916, when it was added to the ceremonial ritual of the 32°.

During the past 150 years the format of Scottish Rite degree rituals has been completely transformed. The traditional full form ritual, established by the French rituals of the mid-1700's and no doubt based on the form of the symbolic lodge degrees, consisted of a ceremonial opening, followed by reception of the candidate, the obligation and investiture, and a lecture or catechism, often very lengthy, explaining the history, symbolism, and lesson of the degree. In the late 19th century the lecture and catechism were increasingly replaced by a dramatic allegory which during the 20th century became the principal component of most degree rituals. In other words, the dramatic had superseded the didactic as the preferred method of communicating the essence of the ritual. By the end of the last century, the ceremonial portion was disappearing entirely from most degree rituals, leaving only the dramatic section, or allegory, as the ritual of the degree.



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Several noteworthy examples of radical revision of Scottish Rite degree rituals occurred during the first half of the 20th century. In 1922, Frederick of Prussia and the European setting of the 20° ritual were superseded by George Washington and the American Revolution. The change was believed, and subsequently proven, to be more effective in communicating the lessons of patriotism and trustworthiness to an American audience. In 1942, the drama of the 26° ritual, based on the persecution of early Christians in ancient Rome, was replaced by the biblical story of Joseph and his brothers which was seen as an improved medium to communicate the lesson of mercy. That same year, an elaborate dramatic production set against the colorful background of Herod's Temple replaced the time-honored, solemn and didactic ritual of the 17°, based on the Book of Revelation.

We have touched upon the philosophical justification, if not the imperative, for ritualistic revision. If the purpose of the ritual is to impart a moral lesson and shape personal behavior, then it must be meaningful and inspiring to the individuals to whom it is communicated. This, in turn, requires that the method in which the ritual is communicated be understandable and that its content be relevant in the prevailing social culture. Society, as we know, is subject to continuing change, and during the past 30-odd years that change has come at an accelerated rate. Of course, truth and the contrast between moral right and wrong do not change. But means of communication and interpretation must be responsive to cultural change if the message is to be understood.

## **Degree Realignment**

Without question, the most significant single development in the degree ritual of this jurisdiction since 1976 has been the realignment or transfer of four degree rituals in their entirety from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection. As early as 1974, the Committee on Rituals' long range policy for ritual revision called for realignment of the ritualistic allegories of the Lodge, Council, Chapter, and Consistory in a logical, approximately historical sequence. This required the transfer of the Old Testament-based allegories of the 23°, 24°, 25°, and 26° from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection. Moreover, the Consistory rituals contained dramatic allegories that illustrated important moral lessons which were seen as an improvement over traditional Lodge of Perfection degree rituals that were nothing more than extensions of the Hiram legend exemplified in the symbolic lodge.

Although the proposed realignment was not presented for the Supreme Council's approval until 1985, implementation proceeded rapidly thereafter. The transfer began in 1986 and was completed in 1993, replacing the existing rituals of the 5°, 6°, 9°, and 12°. The greatest challenge, or rather opportunity, of the process was the necessity to prepare four entirely new degree rituals to replace the Old Testament allegories in the Consistory. Inspired, no doubt, by the success of the "Washington" allegory of the 20°, all of the new rituals were based on more contemporary American themes. Thus, the aim was for Scottish Rite ritual to provide a more timely and relevant message as well as a more coherent one.

## **What's in a Name?**

Notwithstanding extensive changes in the form and substance of degree rituals over the years, the titles of the degrees remained relatively constant from the early 19th century. This resulted in the traditional titles of many of the degrees, however grandiloquent, becoming increasingly arcane, obscure, and irrelevant to the ritual. In 1979 the Committee on Rituals considered the increasing inconsistency between the titles and the rituals of various of the degrees, but determined that degree titles were mandated by the Constitutions of the Supreme Council. Thus, the traditional degree titles were left in place.

There the matter rested for nearly a quarter century. In the meantime, the transfer of the four Old Testament degree rituals from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection and their replacement by entirely new rituals had made the anomaly of degree titles more difficult to overlook. In 2003 the committee revisited the question of degree titles that bore no relevance to the subject matter of the ritual. Prime cases in point were the 6°, “Intimate Secretary,” the ritual of which now was based on the biblical story of Moses and the brazen serpent, and the 25°, “Knight of the Brazen Serpent,” now with a ritual based on the life of Benjamin Franklin. Appropriate changes in the titles of the 6°, 9°, 24°, 25°, and 27° were recommended and approved, together with pertinent enabling amendments to the Constitutions. In subsequent years similar changes were made in the titles of the 4°, 12°, 23°, 26°, 30°, and 31°, as well as abbreviations of the titles for the 10° and 15°.

## **Matters of Style**

Ritual revision most frequently takes the form of stylistic changes in the dialogue. The choice of a word and the turn of a phrase, though highly subjective, are far from arbitrary distinctions without a difference or elevations of form over substance. They can matter a great deal in attracting and retaining the appreciation of the audience, no less than in facilitating the effective delivery of lines by amateur actors. The dialogue must not only convey the intended message and be clearly understood, it must capture the attention of the audience and, ideally, impress and inspire the mind and the emotions with the message we are seeking to communicate.

The meaning, usage, and nuance of many words change over time, so they may no longer express the same thought or be understood in the same way as they were by previous generations. “Gay” and “awesome” are but two examples of words that have undergone such a change within the recent past. Grammatical style also evolves with time. The florid, verbose style of discourse, so natural and popular at the turn of the 20th century, no longer is in vogue or even understood by many. Words and styles of speech must be modified in order to communicate to succeeding generations.

The situation is complicated by the fact that authors of the degree rituals in many cases intentionally used styles of speech, such as King James English, that were archaic even in their day. Perhaps the intention was to imbue the language of the ritual with a more elevated and poetic tone than was present in ordinary verbal discourse. The result, unfortunately, has been that over time ritualistic dialogue has become increasingly less impressive and intelligible to contemporary audiences.

Audiences of the early 20th century also were accustomed to lengthy theatrical performances, featuring long monologues. In contrast, contemporary audiences, conditioned no doubt by modern media, expect and tolerate only much shorter presentations in which thoughts are communicated in brief exchanges of interactive dialogue, in the nature of everyday conversation. In other words, the message of the degree ritual must be communicated within a shorter audience attention span.

## **Techniques and Technology**

The accelerating pace of visual arts technology and the expanding use of new theatrical techniques have raised the bar for achieving the necessary effect of theater, “suspension of [audience] disbelief.” Scottish Rite Valleys have been obliged to accommodate these developments if they expect to communicate the degree rituals effectively to audiences that have become accustomed to them. Many Valleys have introduced computerized lighting and sound controls. Use of a conventional main curtain and scenery sets may help create impressive visual tableaux, but often compromises the presentation by breaking the continuity of the drama and losing audience attention by excessive dead curtain time. Hence, traditional techniques increasingly are being superseded by imaginative use of open stage concepts, scrims and scenery drops or flies, and electronic projections, resulting in significant savings of time, cost, labor, and, most important of all, audience appreciation.

Video recording of degree rituals was first sanctioned by the Supreme Council in 1986, subject to specified conditions, for the limited purposes of training, critique, and evaluation. In 2003 the Supreme Council discontinued publication of the degree rituals in printed book form, a practice that dated back at least to 1870. Henceforth, all the degree rituals were recorded on a single computer disk, an updated copy of which is distributed to each Valley annually. This transition has greatly facilitated the process of ritual review and revision, and accelerated distribution to the Valleys of the current version of the ritual, not to mention the substantial savings that have accrued to the Supreme Council by elimination of printing costs.

## **The Question of Resources**

Ritualistic revision also has been driven by conditions and changes within the fraternity. One hundred Valleys, more or less, spread across the 15-state jurisdiction, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi River, and from Canada to the Ohio River, represent diverse aggregations of human and material resources. Degree rituals that require a multi-scene stage production, with a sizable cast and elaborate costumes and sets, may be an acceptable challenge for large, well-endowed Valleys, but beyond the capabilities of small Valleys with slender resources. The usual result is that such a ritual never appears in the degree schedules of the latter, or, if it does, is presented in an unimpressive, inadequate manner. The optimum goal should be to devise a ritual with options that can be presented in full panoply by Valleys able to pursue that option, but providing for basic cast, dialogue, and scene requirements so that the ritual can be presented in a meaningful and inspiring manner by all Valleys in the jurisdiction.

Membership trends since the 1970's have had an impact on the availability of degree cast participants in every Valley of the jurisdiction, regardless of size or location. A universal complaint from directors is that they no longer are able to cast the degrees. Large degree casts once may have been desirable to provide opportunities for member participation, as well as for theatrical effect. But present reality calls for rituals that can be presented effectively by minimal numbers of essential cast members.

## **Time and Scheduling**

One of the greatest influences on ritual revision is the element of time. In recent decades Scottish Rite reunions have been contracted into increasingly tighter time schedules. Even large Valleys are challenged by this kind of pressure. The day is long past when candidates anywhere in the jurisdiction experience all 29 degrees before attaining the 32°. At present, two eight-hour daily sessions probably represent the maximum in degree programs. In many Valleys it can be considerably less. One-day reunions, originally introduced as special occasions to accommodate candidates whose occupational obligations would not allow their participation for a longer period, soon became commonplace occurrences.

One-day reunions provide adequate time for candidates to witness the six degree rituals required as a minimum for advancement to the 32° (Constitutions 516-1). A schedule that provides only the minimum requirement, however, affords little opportunity for candidates, and members for that matter, to witness the remaining 23 degree rituals and experience the full degree system of the Rite as it was intended and designed. In 1990 the Committee on Rituals reported as a matter for concern the growing trend toward shorter reunions and the presentation of fewer degrees, as candidates who witness only the required degrees are not exposed to the complete philosophy of Scottish Rite Masonry.

Such concerns led to the Scottish Rite passport program, proposed in 1999, to encourage 32° Masons to witness all the Scottish Rite degrees. The following year the Supreme Council adopted a policy goal for each Valley in the jurisdiction to present every one of the 29 degrees at least once during a six-year cycle. Of course, both of these programs are dependent upon voluntary compliance by members and Valleys. Their success has been limited.

More effective in addressing the problem generated by shorter reunion schedules has been the policy of the committee in revising the degree rituals to make them more concise. This policy was first formalized in 1995, when the Supreme Council approved a recommendation of the committee to eliminate the opening and ceremonial sections from all future revisions of the de-

gree rituals (except for the 32°). The effect was that the degree rituals would begin with the prologue. The policy was justified on the grounds that with the trend toward shorter reunions and fewer degree exemplifications, it is better to dispense with the ceremonial sections and devote as much as possible of the limited time available to presentation of the allegories (dramas) that contain the Masonic lessons of the degrees.

This policy subsequently was extended in implementation to eliminating, or making optional, scenes not deemed essential to dramatize the philosophical theme of the degree. Furthermore, ritual revision in major part has become the rewriting of dialogue to delete superfluous material and render passages more concise in expression.

A goal of ritual revision pursuant to these policies is to enable each of the 23 non-mandatory degree rituals to be presented at least once over a two-year cycle of four two-day reunions.

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Notwithstanding these efforts, however, the 21st century brought a revolutionary innovation in Masonic membership that appeared to require an equally revolutionary response. Grand Lodges across the jurisdiction began to sponsor “one-day classes,” whereby candidates could receive all three symbolic lodge degrees and, in addition, become a Scottish Rite Mason in a single day. Obviously, in such a venue the time allotted to the Scottish Rite degree work was extremely brief, in some cases barely more than one hour. These conditions permitted the presentation of only one degree, either the 14° or the 32°, begging the question whether any philosophical lesson could be effectively communicated, let alone the philosophy of Scottish Rite Masonry.

The response, in 2004, to the challenge posed by the “one-day class” was a new departure in degree ritual. It did not purport to communicate a moral lesson in itself, but rather to give the candidate a preview of the philosophical presentations he could expect to experience on his ritualistic journey through the degrees of Scottish Rite Masonry.



## **A Long Journey — The Fourth Degree**

Despite its prominent position as the first of the Lodge of Perfection, or so-called “Ineffable,” degrees, the ritual of the 4°, until very recently, has had a relatively languid, uneventful, and uninspiring development.

As recorded in Henry Francken’s 1783 manuscript, the 4° ritual was simple in content as well as in form. It represented a lodge of Secret Masters convened to fill a vacancy among the guardians of the Holy of Holies of the unfinished Temple. The lessons, obviously enough, were secrecy and silence.

Seventy-odd years later, Albert Pike’s ritual greatly elaborated upon Francken, adding an antiphonal invocation of duty as the lesson of the degree and introducing a catechism on the various names of God. The Pike ritual was the primary source for the 4° Ritual of 1871, the first version to be approved by the Supreme Council after the Union of 1867. Several additions and deletions were made in the succeeding rituals of 1894 and 1917. Except for the addition of a ceremonial cleansing of the candidate, however, there was no significant change in content.

The prevailing attitude toward the ritual was best expressed in few words by McIllyar Lichliter in 1943, “Dead. Dull. Overloaded with symbolism.” Many agreed that what was needed was a more dramatic ritual. Nevertheless, no effective steps were taken to address the need.

The changes introduced with the ritual of 1955 were more of form than substance. A new ceremonial section included a formal opening of the Lodge of Perfection, a cover obligation for all the Lodge of Perfection degrees, and an introductory legend and prologue. The so-called “drama” was not dramatic at all, but simply a modernized version of the traditional initiation ritual, i.e., reception, obligation, investiture, and lesson (lecture), together with the ceremonial cleansing and antiphonal on duty.

The ritual of 1955 was indeed distinct from previous rituals, but there was no real difference. Nevertheless, it remained the authorized ritual of the 4° for half a century. In 1984 the Supreme Council approved a requirement that the 4° must be exemplified by every Valley at least once a year. It was an attempt to establish the importance of the degree as a bridge from the symbolic lodge

to the Scottish Rite. However, despite numerous attempts during the succeeding years, the Committee on Rituals was unable to produce a meaningful improvement on what was generally considered to be an unsatisfactory ritual.

For three successive years, commencing in 1987, the committee reported a continuing study to improve the viability of the 4° ritual. Then, during 1991-94, the committee reported the review of no fewer than six proposed revisions of the ritual, all of which were attempts to introduce a dramatic scene to portray the Masonic lesson of duty. None of the six was found to be suitable. Then, an unprecedented call was extended to Scottish Rite Masons throughout the jurisdiction to contribute to the effort. Apparently, no acceptable responses were received. In 2002 the committee considered three separate proposals for a new, dramatic 4° ritual, all of which were based on Old Testament themes — David and Goliath, Moses and the Burning Bush, and Abraham and his sons — the first of which reached the point of a trial exemplification. None of them, however, was considered to be acceptable. The most the committee could accomplish was to amend the ceremonial section to expand references to the Solomonic era to accommodate the four degree rituals transferred to the Lodge of Perfection from the Consistory.

The apparently insoluble problem of the 4° had been around for a considerable time and had baffled generations of ritualists long before the turn of the 21st century. Even Albert Pike, that most prolific of Scottish Rite ritualists, confessed his frustration in an allocution delivered in his 70th year that the Lodge of Perfection rituals were not all they should or could be, but that “We cannot do all things.”

Then, in 2004, circumstances took a sudden, unexpected and dramatic turn. Recent developments in membership were having a radical impact on the presentation of degree rituals. Grand Lodges had begun to authorize “one-day classes,” in which it was possible for candidates not only to receive all three symbolic lodge degrees, but also to become Scottish Rite Masons on the same day. To accomplish this, the time available for Scottish Rite ritual work, of necessity, allowed exemplification of only one degree, either the 14° or the 32°. Whatever the results in expanding membership, the situation was most unsatisfactory insofar as exposing candidates to the degree rituals and communicating to them the moral philosophy of the Scottish Rite. Nevertheless, the “one-day class” appeared to be a feature of the Masonic landscape for the foreseeable future.

To accommodate the new situation created by the “one-day class” and to restore the viability of the Scottish Rite degree system, Sovereign Grand Commander Walter E. Webber proposed preparation of a new 4° ritual that would be the required initial degree for Scottish Rite candidates. The proposed ritual would introduce the candidate to the Rite as he identified with an exemplar passing through four dramatic scenes, each representing one of the coordinate Bodies of the Scottish Rite. In each scene, the exemplar would encounter some of the characters, dramatic situations, and philosophy presented in the degree rituals of the representative Body. In effect, the proposed ritual would be a ritualistic preview of the Scottish Rite degree system. Hopefully, it would encourage candidates to return to view the degree rituals they had not yet experienced.

A rough draft of a degree ritual conforming to the outline proposed by Grand Commander Webber was prepared virtually overnight by Ill. James L. Tungate, 33°, Active Member for Illinois and a member of the Committee on Ritualistic Matters. Within a few months the ritual was completed and staged in a trial exemplification. As completed, the ritual consisted of a prologue, an introductory scene where the exemplar, a newly-made Master Mason, met his guide through the Scottish Rite, followed by four scenes in which the exemplar encountered a selection of characters and passages of dialogue (so-called “modules”) from the rituals of the 8°, 12°, 16°, 18°, 20°, 23°, 24°, and 31°. The proposed new ritual was presented to the Supreme Council and approved as the 4° Tentative Ritual of 2004, under a new, descriptive title, “Master Traveler.”

In 2007, after a few years of presentation across the jurisdiction, the tentative ritual was revised by the addition to scene five (Consistory) of modules for the 22°, 26°, and 27°. Moreover, the modules for the 22°, 23°, 24°, 26°, and 27° were made optional, any two of which were to be presented, together with the required modules for the 20° and 31°. The purpose of this revision was to allow individual Valleys greater flexibility in using the ritual to introduce candidates to the degree system of the Scottish Rite.

The 4° tentative ritual represented a new departure in Scottish Rite degree rituals. It was unprecedented in concept, in substance, and in manner of presentation.

## Sacred Fire — The Fifth Degree

The ritual of the 5°, “Perfect Master,” as it appeared in the *Francken Manuscript*, followed the traditional pattern of the earlier French rituals from which it was derived. A candidate was received and obligated, then given a long explanatory lecture and catechism that included a description of the funeral and tomb of Hiram Abif.

Seventy years later, the Carson/Van Rensselaer ritual<sup>3</sup> presented similar themes in the form of a funeral service at the tomb of Hiram Abif, inculcating respect for the memory of a deceased brother as the lesson of the degree. With various changes and embellishments, these themes continued to evolve through several rituals until they emerged in the ritual of 1960 as a dramatization of a Lodge of Sorrow for Hiram Abif.

Although the Lodge of Sorrow was a logical culmination of the ritualistic development of the 5° since the Francken ritual, it provoked adverse criticism. Many viewed the 1960 ritual as a gratuitous and essentially meaningless extension of the Hiram legend exemplified in the symbolic lodge which served no purpose in the degree system of the Scottish Rite.

Increasing disenchantment with the Hiram legend as a degree theme coincided with plans of the Committee on Rituals to replace several of the Lodge of Perfection degree rituals with Old Testament-based rituals from the Consistory. The so-called degree realignment policy was approved by the Supreme Council in 1985, and three years later, after having survived in evolving forms for more than 200 years, the 5° ritual became the second Lodge of Perfection degree ritual to be withdrawn and replaced under this policy.

The new 5° Tentative Ritual of 1988 was the 23° ritual of 1930. It was based on the Old Testament story of the sons of Aaron, who, by their self-absorbed inattention and neglect of duty, allowed the sacred fire in the Tabernacle to be extinguished. The prime author of the ritual was English-born Ill. John Lloyd Thomas, 33°, later an Active Member for New York and a mem-

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<sup>3</sup> Enoch Terry Carson’s 1853 ritual apparently was based on the 1845 manuscript of Killian Van Rensselaer. Hence, that work is referenced throughout as the Carson/Van Rensselaer Ritual.

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ber of the Committee on Rituals, who submitted a draft ritual to the committee in 1907.<sup>4</sup> This draft was approved as the 23° Ritual of 1908, which, with minor revisions, became the ritual of 1930.

The tentative ritual was superseded by the revised 5° Ritual of 1996, which contained stylistic changes to “modernize” the dialogue and deleted the ceremonial section, in accordance with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995. Further stylistic changes were made in the ritual of 2007, eliminating passages of dialogue considered to be extraneous or obscure to modern audiences, such as mention of the *Shekinah*. Anachronistic reference to “Jehovah” was changed to “the Lord,” and the equally ahistorical reference to “Hell” was deleted. The recent revisions, however, have left intact the content of the Thomas ritual.

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<sup>4</sup> Ill. Brother Thomas (1857-1925) made a prolific and important contribution to the degree rituals of this Scottish Rite jurisdiction. Writing in the early 20th century, his work has stood the test of time. He was the prime author of the basic rituals that are still in use today for the 5°, 9°, 31°, and 32°.

## A Matter of Faith — The Sixth Degree

The 6° in the *Francken Manuscript* bore the unusual and unwieldy title “Perfect Master by Curiosity of Intimate Secretary.” This name, at any rate, was descriptive of the reception, where the candidate intruded into the presence of King Solomon as an unintentional eavesdropper and thereby gained admission to the degree. Another unusual feature was the fact that the lecture explained the delta as symbolic of the Christian triad, Faith, Hope, and Charity, an anomaly for the Old Testament setting of the ritual. Nevertheless, this explanation (although deleted by Albert Pike) remained a part of the 1871 ritual, the first to be approved after the Union of 1867. A succession of 6° rituals over more than 150 years made only minor verbal changes, except for abbreviating the title of the degree to “Intimate Secretary,” improbable as that name may have been for a Scottish Rite degree.

A major revision finally appeared in the ritual of 1966 although it remained consistent with the essence of the Francken ritual. In accordance with the conventional form of degree rituals as they developed during the 20th century, a ceremonial section, including the obligation and investiture, was followed by a dramatized elaboration of the eavesdropping incident represented in the reception of the Francken ritual. This remained the ritual of the 6° for more than a quarter century.

In 1985 the Supreme Council approved the transfer of degree rituals with Old Testament themes from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection. This plan ultimately resulted in withdrawal of the traditional 6° ritual which in substance dated back more than 200 years to the *Francken Manuscript*. It was replaced in 1993 by a tentative ritual that had been the ritual of the 25°, “Knight of the Brazen Serpent.” The 1993 tentative ritual, with some modifications, later was approved as the 6° Ritual of 1996.

The new ritual of the 6° consisted of a prologue, and introductory scene one, in which the officers of the lodge discussed the problems and needs of the contemporary world in preparation for the lesson of the degree which then was exemplified in dramatic form in scene two. The dramatization, which dated back to 1896 and owed its inspiration to Albert Pike, was based on the biblical account of Moses and the Brazen Serpent. The lesson of the degree was faith — in ourselves, in each other, and in God.

Several years later further revisions were made with the ritual of 2003. Presentation of scene one was made optional and the prologue was moved to a logical sequence preceding scene two. A number of stylistic changes were made in the dialogue. Finally, the title of the 6° was changed from the now totally irrelevant “Intimate Secretary” to the highly descriptive “Master of the Brazen Serpent.”

## Equity — The Seventh Degree

Few degree rituals of the Scottish Rite can be traced in recognizable form from origins as early as that of the 7°, “Provost and Judge.” Not only is it found in the *Francken Manuscript* of 1783, but that version also appears to have been a literal translation of earlier French rituals dating back to 1754. The title of the degree was derived from a biblical source, that is, the officers appointed over Israel by David (*I Chronicles 23:4*). The lesson of the degree from its inception has been truth, equity, and justice. The drama, as we know it, a dispute between workmen in a quarry and its eventual resolution, was first introduced with the ritual of 1894. This was amplified by addition of the trial scene in 1915. The 1941 ritual added an optional brief intermediate scene in pantomime, depicting the theft of the keystone.

Thus matters stood for more than 30 years until the tentative ritual of 1974. After an extended period of trial exemplifications across the jurisdiction and further modifications, this version was approved as the ritual of 1980. As finally approved, the revised ritual included a marginally shortened ceremonial opening, a few modest word changes in the drama, and elimination of the optional pantomime scene.

The ritual of 2005 eliminated the ceremonial opening in its entirety, consistent with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995, and made a number of stylistic changes in the dialogue of the drama. However, the cast of characters and the dramatic theme presented in the quarry and the trial scenes remained intact. Today, the message of the 7° is essentially the same as that which appeared in French rituals 250 years ago and is dramatized in the same fashion, as a quarry dispute, that was introduced into the ritual in the 1890’s.



## David and Solomon — The Eighth Degree

The ritual of the 8° provides a ready example of the developmental pattern of many Scottish Rite degree rituals. The *Francken Manuscript* included a complete ritual for the 8°, entitled “Intendant of the Building.” The ritual contained the traditional elements of a Scottish Rite degree ritual — opening, reception, obligation, investiture, and a lecture, explaining the symbolism of the degree. The theme was the creation by King Solomon, in the role of Thrice Potent Master, of a superintendent of the workmen on the Temple.

Subsequent rituals were either copies of Francken or added only minor embellishments. All of this was greatly elaborated and presented in more dramatic form by Albert Pike’s ritual, which in essence was the ritual adopted after the Union of 1867 and used in this jurisdiction for more than a century.

Then, beginning in 1979, the Committee on Rituals embarked on a revision of the ritual. The prime author of the revision was Ill. William W. Merrill, 33°, a member of the Valley of Detroit and a consultant to the committee. Merrill added a dramatic section in two scenes that depicted David’s selection of Solomon as his successor and the builder of the Temple. To compensate for the addition of the dramatic section (15 pages) and to avoid greatly extending the length of the ritual, Merrill significantly shortened the ceremonial section which contained the original elements of the ritual. The aim was to communicate the lesson of the degree in dramatic form, as an allegory which was believed to be more effective than the traditional didactic form of Masonic ritual. The revised version was approved as the ritual of 1981.

Twenty-five years later another revision of the ritual deleted the ceremonial section in its entirety, consistent with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995, thereby reducing the playing time by a third. The prologue was modified to include an explanation of the lesson of the degree instead of simply reciting the biblical background of the drama. Modest changes were made in the drama to eliminate superfluous and obscure dialogue. The anachronistic reference to “Jehovah” was changed to “the Lord.” In all other respects the ritual of 2006 preserved the content of the drama and still bears the original Francken title, “Intendant of the Building.”

## Who Serves God Best? — The Ninth Degree

The ritual of the 9°, as it appeared in the *Francken Manuscript*, followed the usual pattern of early Scottish Rite rituals — a ceremonial opening and reception, the obligation and investiture, and a long explanatory lecture. The theme was derived from the Hiram legend exemplified in the symbolic lodge, in particular, the murder of Hiram Abif and the ensuing pursuit of the assassins. The lesson was a forbidding admonition on vengeance and the breach of an obligation.

Subsequent rituals made various refinements on the Francken ritual, including a dramatization of the selection by lot of nine craftsmen who were to pursue the assassins; hence the title of the degree, “Master Elect of Nine.” (Pike’s variation on this was “Knight Elu of Nine.”) Such was the form of the ritual of 1871, the first to be approved by the Supreme Council for the 9° after the Union of 1867. It remained substantially unchanged for nearly a century, until the first of a succession of tentative rituals was introduced in 1965.

The criticism written in 1943 by McIllyar Lichliter was but one expression of dissatisfaction with the rituals of the 9° and 10°, both of which were based on the same theme, pursuit of the assassins of Hiram Abif. In addition to the issue whether this theme provided an appropriate basis for the moral lessons to be exemplified in two degrees of the Scottish Rite, the version of the Hiram legend portrayed in the degree ritual was at variance with that exemplified in the symbolic lodge, despite the fact that the latter was part of the experience of every Freemason and the very reason why the legend was the theme of the two rituals.

Consequently, over a period of 15 years commencing in 1965, three successive tentative rituals were prepared for both the 9° and the 10°. The primary author of these efforts was Ill. William H. Cantwell, 33°, Active Member for Delaware, a member, and for a time chairman, of the Committee on Rituals. The culmination of Cantwell’s work was a combination ritual for the 9° and 10°, the tentative ritual of 1980. This was a logical step, as for many years it had been customary to present both degree rituals in conjunction as a continuous performance.

The 1980 tentative ritual, however, was quickly overtaken by events and never was issued. Since 1974, the Committee on Rituals had been working by fits and starts toward a major realignment of degree rituals. The plan entailed a transfer of rituals based on Old Testament themes from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection. By the early 1980's the realignment was becoming a reality. The proposal was formally approved by the Supreme Council in 1985, and in 1986 the 9° became the first Lodge of Perfection ritual to be withdrawn and replaced by a degree ritual transferred from the Consistory.

Any doubts about the moral lessons to be derived from the traditional ritual of the 9° were more than addressed by its transplanted replacement, the tentative ritual of 1986. The new 9° ritual featured a dramatic allegory that had originated as the literary handiwork of Ill. John Lloyd Thomas, 33°, later an Active Member for New York and a member of the Committee on Rituals, that had been adopted by the Supreme Council in 1909 as the ritual of the 24°. The allegory, consisting of a single, albeit lengthy scene, depicted a fictitious event at the dedication of the Temple, an assembly of representatives of many religions summoned by King Solomon. After a discussion of many views on the nature of God, disrupted by a voice of skepticism, the dramatic action climaxed with an expression of spiritual unity inspired by a moving plea for a universal faith of service to humanity. "God is best served by those who best serve their fellow men."

The tentative ritual was subsequently confirmed as the 9° Ritual of 1992. Although the substance of the ritual did not provoke criticism, its presentation did pose casting and scheduling difficulties for Lodges of Perfection. This was taken into consideration in the following decade when the ritual was next reviewed and revised.

The 2003 revision was primarily the work of Ill. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°, Active Member for Pennsylvania and chairman of the Committee on Ritualistic Matters. It deleted the brief ceremonial section in conformity to the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995, although much dialogue from the ceremonial was incorporated in a relatively long prologue to set the background for the allegory. More significant were changes in the allegory. In addition to extensive stylistic revisions in the dialogue, the essential cast was reduced by a third, including two of the eight representatives of foreign

religions.<sup>5</sup> The overall effect was a substantial decrease in playing time, thereby facilitating presentation of the allegory by Lodges of Perfection. Finally, the traditional title of the degree, “Master Elect of Nine”, which no longer was relevant to the content of the ritual, was changed to “Master of the Temple.” These revisions were approved as the 9° Ritual of 2003.

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<sup>5</sup> Two cast deletions, the Chinese merchant and the Persian priest, were apparent anachronisms. It is unlikely that direct commercial contacts existed between China and the Middle East in the tenth century B.C. Even less explicable was the presence of a disciple of Zoroaster some 400 years before the latter’s lifetime.

## **Disobedience - The Tenth Degree**

As part of the Rite of Perfection, the ritual of the 10° appeared in the *Francken Manuscript* under the title “Illustrious Elect of Fifteen.” It was in the traditional form of degree ritual, with reception, obligation, and explanatory lecture. In the mid-19th century the ritual was expanded by Albert Pike, who injected symbolism with philosophical meanings and titled it “Illustrious Elu of Fifteen.” Although a virtual copy of the Pike ritual was in use after the Union of 1867, it was superseded in 1871 by a shorter ritual that omitted much of Pike’s symbolism and adopted the modern title “Master Elect of Fifteen.” The influence of Pike reappeared in the ritual of 1894.

The early rituals of the 10°, as those of the 9°, were based on a theme from the Hiram legend exemplified in the symbolic lodge; that is, the pursuit and apprehension of the assassins of Hiram Abif. The lesson that pervaded the various versions of the ritual was obedience to authority. The ritual of 1917 dramatized the episode of the assassins in two scenes, which was expanded to five scenes in the tentative ritual of 1966, in addition to the traditional elements of the ceremonial section. For some years it had been customary to present the 10° in conjunction with the 9°, as the rituals of the two degrees were based on the same theme and the dramatic action from the 9° ritual to the 10° was continuous.

The succession of three tentative rituals proposed for the 10° (as for the 9°) over a span of 15 years from 1965 indicated dissatisfaction with the content of the ritual and repeated efforts to rework the Hiram legend and improve the message. As early as 1943, McIlyar Lichliter had criticized the rituals of both the 9° and 10° as presenting a version of the Hiram legend that differed from that exemplified in the symbolic lodge to which the Scottish Rite rituals obviously were intended to relate. The primary author of the tentative rituals was Ill. William H. Cantwell, 33°, Active Member for Delaware, a member and one time chairman of the Committee on Rituals. Cantwell’s efforts culminated in a short-lived attempt to combine the ritual of the 9° with that of the 10° into a single ritual which was approved by the Supreme Council as the 9° and 10° Tentative Ritual of 1980. In the event the combined ritual never was issued. By this time the Committee on Rituals was moving to implement a plan to replace several of the Lodge of Perfection degree rituals,

including that of the 9°, with degree rituals from the Consistory having Old Testament themes.

At that juncture, the committee abandoned efforts to salvage the Hiramic legend theme and in 1985 proposed a new ritual for the 10°, based on the apostasy of Solomon. It consisted of a short ceremonial section, prologue, and a dramatic allegory of three scenes. The theme was consistent with the traditional lesson of the degree, “The violator of his obligations shall not go unpunished.” The primary author of what became the new 10° Tentative Ritual of 1986 was Ill. Robert L. Miller Sr., 33°, Active Member for Indiana and chairman of the committee.

The new tentative ritual was confirmed as the 10° Ritual of 1992 and remained in effect until revised fourteen years later. The ritual of 2006 abbreviated the degree title to “Master Elect,” deleted the ceremonial section in accordance with the current Supreme Council policy, and made a modest number of mainly stylistic changes in the prologue and the allegory. The ritual of the 10° is one of the few current Scottish Rite degree rituals to have a lesson that is posed in negative rather than positive terms.

## **The Bad Steward — The Eleventh Degree**

The *Francken Manuscript* contained the full text of a ritual for the 11°, “Sublime Knight Elected,” in the traditional form of opening, reception, obligation, and a lengthy lecture, which included a catechism of symbolism. The ritual of Albert Pike, titled “Sublime Knight Elu of Twelve,” introduced, among other things, an explanation that abuses committed by his tax collectors prompted King Solomon to appoint supervisors, or Elus, which was exemplified in the ritual. The first 11° rituals in use after the Union of 1867, including that approved in 1871, were variations of the Pike ritual, and bore the modern title, “Sublime Master Elected.” The ritual of 1894 was essentially a condensed version of the Pike ritual. No changes were made in this ritual for the next 80 years.

The ritual of 1974 transformed the degree by introducing a substantial dramatic section of five scenes and 47 pages following a brief ceremonial section. The drama portrayed a story of abuse and fraud perpetrated by one of Solomon’s tax collectors. Exposure of the wrongdoing persuades the King to appoint one of the victims and a select group of his associates as “Sublime Masters” to superintend the collection of taxes. A principal reason for the change was to provide Lodges of Perfection with an opportunity to present a major dramatic ritual.

The purpose apparently was served, as the 1974 ritual continued in use for 30 years without second thoughts on the part of the Committee on Rituals. However, concerns did develop. The long drama with five scene changes and a substantial cast was not easily accommodated by the scheduling constraints and limited resources of many Lodges of Perfection. The revised ritual of 2004 was intended to alleviate these difficulties and facilitate presentation of the degree while preserving the content of the dramatic ritual.

The ritual of 2004 eliminated the brief ceremonial section, in accordance with the Supreme Council policy adopted in 1995, as well as the “Interlude” scene two of the dramatic section. Moreover, the lengthy scene four (revised scene three), which was entertaining, but did not significantly advance the action of the drama, was made optional. These changes shortened the playing time of the ritual by as much as a third and eased the casting requirements.

Stylistic revisions were made in the dialogue. Repetitious and superfluous passages were deleted. Anachronisms were corrected. Finally, the inexplicable and possibly derogatory use of Arabic names for certain, less than exemplary, characters in the drama was changed to Hebrew names appropriate to the time and place represented. The prime author of the revised ritual was the chairman of the Committee on Ritualistic Matters, Ill. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°, Active Member for Pennsylvania.



## Quality of Mercy — The Twelfth Degree

Henry Francken's 12° ritual, "Grand Master Architect," contained a long (ten page) lecture and catechism that reviewed the moral symbolism of numerous branches of scientific knowledge, the five orders of architecture, and the mathematical instruments. As such, the ritual was closely related to the symbolic lodge degrees, in particular the fellowcraft, and introduced fundamentals of symbolic Masonry into the Scottish Rite. In yet another extension of the Hiram legend, the setting of the ritual was the School of Architecture established by King Solomon after the death of Hiram Abif to train craftsmen to complete the design and building of the Temple. The ritual was not dramatic, nor, through its long history, did it lend itself to a dramatic presentation.

The 1871 ritual, the first to be approved after the Union of 1867, defined the lesson of the degree with the phrase "Virtue is as necessary as talents." Subsequent rituals were greatly influenced by Albert Pike, emphasizing the five orders of architecture to which the candidate was introduced in the Fellowcraft Degree of the symbolic lodge. The 1917 ritual introduced an optional semi-dramatic scene in which the relative qualities of various ancient types of architecture were debated. In 1968, a new tentative ritual, later approved as the 12° Ritual of 1976, brought the School of Architecture forward in time to the Renaissance. The telescoping of time was intended to correct the anachronism of discussing the five orders of architecture, which were of classical origin, in a Solomonic setting. However, it also created another anomaly, as all the degree rituals of the Lodge of Perfection, by definition, were supposed to be set in the Solomonic era. Before too many more years passed, this issue became academic.

The proposal by the Committee on Rituals to transfer degree rituals with Old Testament themes from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection was approved by the Supreme Council in 1985. As a result of this policy, the 12° Ritual of 1976, which had evolved from the 1783 Francken ritual, was withdrawn in 1993. Its replacement, the tentative ritual of 1993, was very different in every respect.

The new ritual of the 12° was a modified form of the dramatic allegory from the 26°, which itself was of comparatively recent origin. Introduced to

the Scottish Rite degree system with the 26° Ritual of 1942, the allegory was a dramatization of the familiar biblical story of Joseph and his brothers, and was considered to be an ideal vehicle to teach the then lesson of the 26° — mercy. The primary author of the allegory was Ill. Ernest W, Hotchkiss, 33°, a member of the Valley of Detroit, who had written the drama some years earlier for presentation by Scottish Rite players in his Valley.

Despite general agreement as to the appropriate nature of the theme, it took nearly ten years for the “Joseph” allegory to be awarded permanent status as the ritual of the 12°. The problems were practical ones, similar to those experienced with other degree rituals transferred from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection. The length of the ritual, size of the cast, and staging requirements of four scene changes and three different sets posed production difficulties for smaller and single-body Valleys, as well as under the time constraints imposed by the trend toward shorter reunion schedules. The scheduling and casting problems were partially addressed in the tentative ritual of 1996, which deleted the ceremonial section in compliance with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council the previous year. However, the Committee on Rituals recognized that this was not a complete solution.

This led, in 2002, to a complete rewrite of the prologue and the allegory, of which Ill. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°, Active Member for Pennsylvania and chairman of the Committee, was the primary author. The most radical change was the reduction of the allegory from five to two scenes (revised scenes three and five of the tentative ritual), without requiring a change of set. As rewritten, these scenes contained a condensed dramatization of the story of Joseph and his brothers, as well as the lesson of the degree. A revised version of scene one of the tentative ritual was retained for optional use as an introductory scene by those Valleys with adequate casting and staging resources and time in the reunion schedule. In addition to extensive revisions in the dialogue, several changes were made for the sake of greater consistency with the story as related in the biblical book of Genesis. As a result of the foregoing, the 12° Ritual of 2002 represented a considerable simplification of casting and staging requirements as well as shortening of playing time.

A further step needed to be taken. In 2005, the name of the degree was changed from the once descriptive, but now arcane “Grand Master Architect” to the apropos “Master of Mercy.”

## Royal Arch — The Thirteenth Degree

A complete ritual for the 13°, by name “The Royal Arch,” is recorded in the *Francken Manuscript*. Written for a cast of five lodge officers, it consisted of an opening and prayer, reception, obligation, a long lecture reciting the legend of the Royal Arch of Enoch, and a closing in which the signs and words of the degree were rehearsed. The setting of the ritual was an underground vault. During the reception, three candidates were admitted at a time. Descending into the earth by rope and retrieving the delta proved them worthy to receive the secrets of the degree.

By the middle of the 19th century, the Carson/Van Rensselaer ritual (1853) and that of Albert Pike (1855) still retained the substance of the Francken ritual but with more dramatization under the name “Knight of the Ninth Arch.” Following the Union of 1867, the Carson/Van Rensselaer ritual essentially was adopted by the Supreme Council as the ritual of 1871. With the ritual of 1894, the degree received its modern title, “Master of the Ninth Arch.” The ritual of 1917 was a revised and abridged version of the Carson/Van Rensselaer ritual which continued in use for more than half a century.

The tentative ritual of 1971, approved as the ritual of 1977, represented an extensive revision in the structure of the 13°, although the substance was retained. In the fashion of Scottish Rite degree rituals of the period, it was comprised of a ceremonial opening, reception, and obligation, followed by a prologue and dramatic section, or allegory, of five scenes, alternating between the audience chamber of King Solomon and the entrance to the subterranean Temple of Enoch. The legend that had been communicated by the lecture in previous versions of the ritual was now dramatized in the allegory.

Another extensive revision was introduced with the 13° Ritual of 2004. Consistent with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995, the ceremonial opening, reception, and obligation were eliminated. The prologue was shortened. Although the five alternating scenes were retained in the allegory, there were numerous stylistic changes and abridgements in the dialogue. The result was a significant reduction in playing time. Despite the revisions, the substance of the ritual remained that of Carson/Van Rensselaer and consistent with the theme found in Francken, albeit recast in form for the

benefit of contemporary audiences. “Difficulties and dangers, however great, should not deter the true and faithful Brother....”

## Perfection — The Fourteenth Degree

Among the 25 degrees of the Rite of Perfection catalogued by Henry Francken in his 1783 manuscript, no ritual was lengthier or more detailed in exposition than that of the 14°, titled simply “Perfection.” Over time, the title of the degree evolved into “Grand Elect Mason,” from the setting of the Francken ritual in a Lodge of Grand Elect Masters.

Many elements of the Francken ritual, in modernized form, remain a part of the current ritual. After the opening and reception, the examination reviewed the words, signs, and lessons of the preceding Lodge of Perfection degrees. This was followed by the confessional inquiry, the obligation, anointing, ring presentation, covenant of friendship or *aroba*, a symbolic sharing of bread and wine, and the investiture. No longer in use is the historical lecture that traced the history of Israel from the reign of King Solomon and a legendary history of Freemasonry down to the Crusades and the Knights of St. John (not the Knights Templar), which accounted for two-thirds of the 39 manuscript pages that Francken devoted to the 14°.

To Francken’s already long and multi-sequence ritual, the 1853 Carson/Van Rensselaer ritual added the lesson, an antiphonal recital of scriptural passages, the Ten Commandments, and, as part of the investiture, the symbolism of the collar, apron, and girdle of perfection. All of this was the basis of the ritual of 1871, the first to be approved after the Union of 1867. The subsequent rituals of 1894, 1917, 1927, and 1938 incorporated a number of minor changes, the main effect of which was incrementally to condense the historical lecture.

Then, in 1945, the Committee on Rituals set to work on a major revision. This project, at least in its initial stages, was abortive, as the committee could not agree among themselves on a draft of proposed revisions. Points of contention involved the confessional nature of the inquiry and whether or not to retain the historical lecture. The issues were heatedly debated by the Active Members in the Executive Session of the Supreme Council and referred back to the committee for further study. To resolve the impasse, Sovereign Grand Commander Melvin Johnson appointed a new committee, chaired by McIllyar Lichliter.

After a year of intensive effort and multiple draft revisions, as well as solicitation of comments from across the jurisdiction, the committee proposed a revised ritual, which was approved by the Supreme Council as the 14° Ritual of 1946. The end result of this process was that most of the ritual had been rewritten and considerably shortened, although the substance remained intact. The opening was made optional. In major breaks with the past, the inquiry was directed to the individual conscience, thereby eliminating public confession, and the long, traditional, historical lecture was deleted. A new obligation emphasized charity and reverence for God.

The ritual of 1976 included a new prologue, shortened the reception and ring dialogue, eliminated exemplification of the degree signs from the examination and investiture, altered the sequence of portions of the ritual, inserted a number of stage directions, and added an epilogue to the closing. It also introduced a dramatic element in the person of Moses to present the Ten Commandments.

During 1986-93, several degree rituals were transferred from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection, replacing the existing rituals of the 5°, 6°, 9°, and 12°. This development necessitated changes in the examination which made specific reference to the superseded rituals. This was addressed in the 14° Tentative Ritual of 1995 by condensing the review of Lodge of Perfection degrees into a single paragraph so that it no longer was a catechism of each of the preceding degrees.

Other significant changes also appeared in the tentative ritual. The sequence of obligation, ring, covenant of friendship (*aroba*), and anointing was rearranged. More controversial were the deletion of the investiture and the rewording of the many scriptural passages of the ritual to conform to the New Revised Standard English Bible. This was one of the first instances in which scriptural passages in a degree ritual of the jurisdiction did not follow the traditional King James translation.

In 2000, the Supreme Council restored the investiture and, with this modification, the tentative ritual was approved as the 14° Ritual of 2000.

Writing in 1945, McIllyar Lichliter had criticized the ritual of the 14° as lacking in continuous action and dramatic unity. It was, in his view, a collection of unconnected sequences. Despite three major revisions during the next half century, this important ritual in the Scottish Rite degree system was still considered by many to be less than satisfactory.

Consequently, after a brief period, there was another revision, resulting in the 14° Ritual of 2006. The opening, which had been optional since 1946, was eliminated, consistent with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995. The examination was further modified and shortened. Reference to the “Holy Bible” was changed to the “Volume of the Sacred Law.” While the overall sequence of the ritual was retained, extensive revisions were made in the stage directions and the dialogue for the sake of consistency and clarity and to eliminate superfluous passages. Some of the Thrice Potent Master’s dialogue was reassigned, or permitted to be reassigned, to other members of the cast in order to relieve excessive monologues.

The issue of biblical translation was revisited and resolved by a decision to retain the New Revised Standard version introduced in 1995, except for the 23rd Psalm, which reverted to the more familiar and poetic language of the King James translation.

An option was added to permit the Ten Commandments to be delivered by the orator, instead of Moses, where the ritual is presented by a cast in modern Masonic dress rather than in Solomonic costume.

A recurring issue with the 14° was the proper setting of the ritual. Traditionally, as with other Lodge of Perfection degrees, the setting was the Solomonic era. From the beginning, however, this posed an anachronism. Philosophically, as Albert Pike recognized, the setting of the ritual should be the present. Moral concepts from the historic past, many of which were unknown in the tenth century B.C., are introduced as lessons of the degree. The inconsistency never has been fully resolved. Thus, the set for the 14° continues to be furnishings associated with the Temple of Solomon and the cast may appear in Solomonic costume, or in modern Masonic dress wearing the regalia of the Lodge of Perfection. Either is permitted by the current ritual.

With all due respect to the opinion of Dr. Lichliter, the ritual of the 14° may be lacking in dramatic unity because, unlike most other Scottish Rite rituals, it is not and never was intended as a dramatic presentation. Despite extensive revisions to the ritual over the years, generations of ritualists have been reluctant to stray very far from the original elements of the Degree as it existed in 1783. Thus, today’s ritual of the 14°, “Grand Elect Mason,” is not all that far removed from the essentials found in the *Francken Manuscript*.

## **The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Degrees**

If for no other reason than their number, the ritualistic development of the two degrees presented in the Council, Princes of Jerusalem, has been comparatively less complex and contentious than the eleven conferred in the Lodge of Perfection. The essence of the current rituals of the 15° and 16° may be traced to the *Francken Manuscript* of 1783. Often called “The Historical Degrees” of the Scottish Rite system, the rituals are based on incidents relating to the return of the Jews to their homeland from the Babylonian captivity and the construction of the Second Temple in the late sixth century B.C. Sharing a common historical setting and protagonist, the Jewish prince Zerubbabel, as well as a similar dramatic theme, these degrees also share the same prologue which is given only in the 15° when both degrees are presented during the same session of the Council.

The 15° rituals of Francken (1783), Carson/Van Rensselaer (1853), and Albert Pike (1855) all were based on the theme of Zerubbabel’s appeal to King Cyrus on behalf of his people “to return to Judea and restore the Temple.” They also shared the same title for the degree, “Knight of the East, or Sword.” The tempting of Zerubbabel to disclose the “Secrets of Freemasonry” as the price for his request first appeared in the Carson/Van Rensselaer and Pike rituals, but not in dramatized form. Dramatization was introduced with the ritual of 1878, although the modern temptation scene did not appear until the ritual of 1911. It is believed (although not documented) that this scene was written by Ill. Eugene S. Elliott, 33°, a member of the Valley of Milwaukee, sometime previous to 1902 and may have been presented in that Valley for some years before its inclusion in the degree ritual.

The modern ritual of the 15° dates from 1920 and continued virtually intact, with only one significant revision, until early in the present century. Several changes were approved by the Supreme Council in 1959. These included elimination of the fourth, anticlimactic and superfluous scene in the Apartment of the West, consisting mainly of a lecture describing what the audience had already witnessed in the action of the preceding scenes, and moving the obligation from the end of the degree to the opening. The ritual of 1999 was the first complete edition of the 15° ritual since that of 1943, and differed from the latter only by incorporating the changes approved in 1959.



As a result of the 2003 decision to record all degree rituals on computer disk and discontinue publication of the degree rituals in book form, and in view of the fact that a study had not preceded publication of the 1999 ritual, the Committee on Ritualistic Matters made a complete review of the 15° ritual, last done more than 45 years before. The result, the 15° Ritual of 2005, represented an extensive revision of the previous ritual, in effect, the first to be promulgated since 1943.

Despite the scope of the 2005 revision, the historical setting, dramatic theme, cast of characters, and Masonic lesson were unchanged. However, the ceremonial opening, obligation, and sash and sword investiture were deleted, consistent with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995. For similar reasons, the lengthy entrance and introductions of princes and satraps were deleted from the drama. The dialogue was rewritten to render archaic and obscure language intelligible to a contemporary audience. Several overly long or essentially meaningless passages were deleted. The ordeal sequence was rewritten to include an active intercession by Daniel on behalf of Zerubbabel. Historically questionable references to the practice and secrets of “Freemasonry,” which dated back to the mid-19th century rituals, were changed to the more ambiguous “Ancient Craft.” The 1943 prologue, which was a lengthy recitation of biblical events and dates, with only a single sentence devoted to the Masonic lesson of the degree, was substantially revised and shortened. Vestigial reference to the “Apartment of the East” was removed. Finally, the title of the degree was shortened to “Knight of the East.” The result was seen as a more audience-friendly presentation with a much reduced playing time.

The theme of the 16° ritual recorded by Francken was the story from the Old Testament Book of Ezra and the Apocryphal Book of Esdras of an embassy, led by Zerubbabel, sent from Jerusalem to the court of King Darius to request assistance in rebuilding the Temple. In the mid-19th century the Carson/Van Rensselaer ritual, as well as that of Albert Pike, followed the account from Esdras almost verbatim to feature Zerubbabel’s speech extolling the power of truth as the lesson of the degree. As in the case of the 15°, dramatization was introduced with the ritual of 1878.

The modern ritual of the 16°, “Prince of Jerusalem,” also appeared in 1920. As its companion 15°, it was subject to a major change in 1959, when the final scene, the Apartment in the West, was eliminated for the same rea-

sons. The change was carried forward in the ritual of 1992, a more thorough revision, in which the dialogue was rewritten (“modernized”) to appeal to a contemporary audience. Historical background to the ritual was provided dramatically by additional dialogue in the first scene, notwithstanding that much of this also was presented to the audience in lecture form in the prologue shared by the 15° and the 16°. The duplication was eliminated when the new prologue written for the 15° in 2005 was made a part of the 16° ritual that same year.

The 16° Ritual of 2007 incorporated further refinements in dialogue, eliminating superfluous wording and marginally shortening the playing time. Anachronistic use of the name “Jehovah” was replaced by “the Lord.” The climax of the ritual, Zerubbabel’s dialogue on truth and the response by King Darius, was rearranged for greater dramatic effect.

As in the case of the 15° Ritual of 2005, the revisions made to the 16° ritual in 1992 and 2007 have left the dramatic theme, cast of characters, and Masonic lesson unchanged.

## **The Rose Croix Degrees**

As in the Council, the two degree rituals presented in the Chapter of Rose Croix share a common historical setting, in this case, that of the New Testament. Unlike the Council degrees, however, the ritual of each of the so-called “Philosophical Degrees” of Rose Croix has gone through a very different process of development.

The ritual of the 17°, “Knight of the East and West,” that appeared in the *Francken Manuscript* seems to have been a stand-alone ritual with a chivalric background, i.e., Knights Templar, featuring symbolism and passages from the New Testament Book of Revelation. Early rituals of the degree included a disclaimer that it was a “Degree of Chivalry,” historically unrelated to Freemasonry. The ritual that was approved by the Supreme Council in 1870 had atrophied into a brief prelude, a mere appendage to the 18°, concerned with the search for the Lost Word. And so it continued into the middle years of the 20th century.

In 1939, a dramatic allegory, replete with pageantry and a large cast, was proposed as a replacement ritual for the 28° and was approved for trial exemplification as the Tentative 28° Ritual of 1940. The primary author was Dr. Harry K. Eversull, 32°, a clergyman and president of Marietta College in Ohio. The setting of the allegory was King Herod’s Temple which supplanted the Second Temple of Zerubbabel in the first century B.C. It soon became apparent to Sovereign Grand Commander Melvin Johnson, among others, that the “Herod Allegory” could provide a convenient historical and philosophical bridge from the Council degrees to the 18°. What became one of the more bizarre chains of events in the ritualistic history of the Supreme Council was set in motion.

In 1942, the 17° ritual in use since 1870 was abruptly withdrawn and, as recommended by Commander Johnson, was replaced by the tentative 28° ritual which became the 17° Ritual of 1942. Unfortunately, the new ritual was not universally accepted. A survey conducted in 1954 disclosed that many Valleys had no history or intention of presenting the 1942 ritual because of what were perceived to be demanding cast and staging requirements. Rather than attempting to modify the ritual to facilitate its presentation, in 1957, the

Supreme Council withdrew the “Herod Allegory” and restored the traditional 17° ritual that it had superseded only 15 years earlier.

Thirty years passed. Then, the Valleys were heard from again, this time expressing discontent that Rose Croix Chapters, in contrast to the other Scottish Rite Bodies, could present only what amounted to a single degree. The restored 17° ritual, of course, had resumed its old place as but a prelude to the 18°. In response, the “Herod Allegory” was resurrected and, beginning in 1989, was rewritten several times over the course of the next five years to address the production drawbacks that previously had discouraged its presentation and to reinforce its connection with the 18°. The first draft was the work of Ill. Theodore E. Torok, 33°, a member of the Valley of Trenton (Central Jersey) and a consultant to the Committee on Rituals.<sup>6</sup> Subsequent drafts were prepared by Ill. Richard W. Parker, 33°, Active Member for Vermont, a member and later chairman of the Committee.

Finally, the modified “Herod Allegory” returned as the 17° Tentative Ritual of 1994, for the second time displacing the traditional ritual of the 17°. The tentative ritual later was approved as the 17° Ritual of 2002. The new ritual ended with the sealing of the Book of Life, thus creating a link to the ritual of the 18°. Instructions published with the ritual expressly permitted individual Valleys to adjust the size of the cast to conform to stage capacity, provided there were sufficient actors to make the scene realistic. The ritual was to be dramatized as a single scene, thereby eliminating the need for scene changes and multiple sets.

A further revision of the “Herod Allegory,” approved a few years later as the 17° Ritual of 2007, removed the ceremonial section in conformity with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995. A number of wording changes were made in the prologue and the allegory mostly stylistic in nature. A few superfluous passages were deleted as was the unlikely intention of the Essenes “to visit the schools of philosophy in Greece and Rome.”

Many elements of the present 18° ritual, “Knight of Rose Croix,” were present in the *Francken Manuscript*. These included the symbolism of the

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<sup>6</sup> Ill. Brother Torok’s talents as a dramatist were evidenced by his popular Masonic theme play *December’s Rose*, published by the Masonic Service Association in 1988 for presentation to Masonic and non-Masonic audiences.

pelican, the cubic stone, the three pillars of faith, hope, and charity, the mystic letters "I.N.R.I.", and use of Jesus of Nazareth as the exemplar. Where the Francken ritual differed most radically from the modern ritual was in the stipulation that only Christians could be admitted to the degree.

The 18° ritual approved by the Supreme Council in 1870 reinforced and perpetuated the original Christian emphasis of the degree. This circumstance was not without its critics, however. For one, Albert Pike, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction and a renowned Masonic ritualist in his own right, objected to the 18° ritual of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction as a "strictly Christian degree." The rebuttal to Pike was that he was an innovator, who had changed the ritual of the 18° to transform what always had been a Christian degree into a universal degree.

The issue never was completely resolved, as some voices continued to advocate a ritual with a more universal message, that is to say, acceptable to all monotheistic faiths. This point of view finally gained concessions in the ritual of 1942, further refined in 1964, which made widespread changes to rephrase or delete overtly Christian dialogue and included a new prologue that emphasized the universal character of the degree. However, as it does to this day, the ritual retained Christian symbols, the beatitudes, "The Story of the Cross," the mystic letters, and Jesus of Nazareth as the exemplar of the degree. Another refinement toward a more universal ritual was made in 1987, when the name "Jesus" replaced "Christ" in the prologue.

In 1990-91, and again in 2007, the Committee on Ritualistic Matters expressed concern that the universalist philosophy of Scottish Rite Masonry was being compromised by local Valleys embellishing presentations of the 18° with non-ritualistic, unauthorized Christian sermons, prayers, and hymns. As to the ritual itself, however, the 18° remains in equipoise between traditionalists and universalists. In effect, it has retained its Christian character but has been purged of theology and dogma.

Aside from issues of Masonic philosophy, the ritual of the 18° has been impacted by the redefining changes made in the 17°. As previously explained, the 17° Ritual of 1957, based on the Book of Revelation, had been presented in conjunction with and as a prelude to the 18°. The decision to withdraw that ritual in 1994 prompted a revision of the 18° ritual to incorporate introductory material formerly communicated as part of the 17°. This resulted in

the 18° Tentative Ritual of 1994. The tentative ritual also introduced a stylistic innovation that would have ritualistic ramifications beyond the 18°. The numerous scriptural passages in the ritual were rewritten according to the New Revised Standard English Bible, replacing the time-honored King James version. The tentative ritual was approved as the 18° Ritual of 1999.

Further revisions followed in the ritual of 2007. The brief ceremonial section was eliminated consistent with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995. A modest number of stylistic changes were made in the dialogue. Use of the word "*Shekinah*" was discontinued for the sake of clarity to modern audiences. Significantly, suggestions to shorten the ritual and to remove passages relating to the Crucifixion and the Resurrection were resisted. None of the revisions made to the 18° ritual since 1964 have altered the dramatic theme of Masonic lesson of the degree.

## Good and Evil — The Nineteenth Degree

The 19°, “Grand Pontiff,” now the first of the Consistorial degrees, was one of the Rite of Perfection degrees recorded in the *Francken Manuscript*. In its earliest form, it consisted primarily of a kind of lecture with references to the “New Jerusalem” and other symbols from the New Testament Book of Revelation. Albert Pike’s ritual expanded on these elements to include a series of 12 lectures on the struggle between good and evil. The ritual of 1886 developed this theme into a dramatic allegory which forms the basis of the modern ritual. It introduced Philetus the Neophyte, his visit to the Shades, and the personified Spirits of Evil and of Masonry. This ritual continued intact until a shortened form appeared in 1953.

After more than a century of presentations to Scottish Rite Masons, making it one of the longest running degree rituals in the Jurisdiction, the 19° ritual underwent major revisions. This process was not quickly or easily accomplished. Over a period of five years, commencing in 1988, a succession of five draft revisions were prepared. The primary author of these successive revisions was a clergyman, Ill. Richard C. Thistle, 33°, a member of the Valley of South Bend and a consultant to the Committee on Rituals.

In the course of these revisions, the ritual was rewritten in more contemporary language. An addition to the prologue explained the derivation of the word “Pontiff” from the Latin “*pontifex*,” literally “bridge-builder.” The appearance of the Spirit of Evil and his confrontation with the Spirit of Masonry were staged as a vision of the pontiffs. The obligation and the anointing were eliminated as anticlimactic to the principal action of the allegory, thereby setting a precedent that would be followed in subsequent revisions of other degree rituals. In place of these deletions, a charge was added at the close of the ritual. The fifth such revision was approved as the 19° Tentative Ritual of 1993.

For nine years the approved revision remained in limbo as the tentative ritual until it was superseded by a further revision, the 19° Ritual of 2002. The 2002 ritual retained the prologue and scenes one and two of the tentative ritual without change and made two minor deletions from dialogue in scenes three and five.

Major changes, however, were made in the climactic scene four. The dance of the “imps,” or spirits of darkness, was eliminated because of the perception that in many presentations it fostered a Halloween-like atmosphere that detracted from the serious message of the ritual. The voices of gloom and of prophecy also were deleted, their dialogue being spoken, respectively, by the Spirit of Evil and the Spirit of Masonry. Much consideration was given to substituting a Spirit of Good for the Spirit of Masonry because of possibly unintended religious connotations arising from this character’s confrontation with and triumph over the Spirit of Evil (i.e., Satan). Ultimately, it was decided that such a change would detract from the Masonic character of the ritual. Hence, the character was styled the “Spirit of Freemasonry” and the “Defender of Good.”

Notwithstanding the many changes embodied in the 1993 and 2002 rituals, the action sequence and dramatic theme of the degree have remained the same — the perennial conflict between good and evil.



## Master for Life — The Twentieth Degree

It is no exaggeration to observe that the allegory of the 20° for many years has been regarded as the most popular and inspiring of the Consistorial degree rituals, due in no small measure to its patriotic American theme. Of course, the early form of the ritual as it appeared in the *Francken Manuscript* was quite different. It was comprised principally of nine symbolic lights and a lengthy lecture reviewing the symbols of Freemasonry. Perhaps the most unique feature of the degree was its threefold title — “Venerable Master,” “Sovereign Prince,” or “Master ad Vitam.”

The first major revision came with Pike’s ritual in the mid-19th century, “Venerable Master,” which in turn was revised shortly thereafter by the ritual of 1866, under the modern title, “Master ad Vitam,” or Master for Life. The core elements of the 1866 ritual were the presentation of a gavel and Francken’s nine symbolic lights, representing the principles of Masonic leadership. This remained the ceremonial, or “candle” section of the 20° through the 19th and most of the 20th centuries.

A radical departure was introduced with the ritual of 1896, when a dramatic allegory was added to what until then had been a ceremonial ritual. The protagonist of the allegory was King Frederick of Prussia, the legendary patron of Scottish Rite Masonry, who supposedly convened the first Supreme Council of the Rite. As became the pattern for other Consistorial degree allegories, the cast was made up of prominent historical characters, who allegedly were Freemasons, although the action of the allegory was not based on an historical event. In the setting of a lodge meeting in 18th century Europe, a story of treachery unfolded in which a Freemason was exposed as having misused his fraternal associations to commit espionage. At the conclusion, Frederick issued the Regulations of 1762 as the basic law and presented the double-headed eagle as the emblem of Scottish Rite Masonry.

The ritual was reissued without change in 1915. In the aftermath of World War I, however, there was much sentiment for removing the allegory to a setting that would have more relevance, interest, and inspiration for American Masons. The result, which appeared in the ritual of 1922, transferred the dramatic plot, much of the dialogue, and the Masonic lesson of the “Prussian”

allegory to an American setting with the American Masonic icon George Washington replacing Frederick as the lead character. The primary author of the transplanted allegory was J. Frank Davis, 32°, K.C.C.H., of San Antonio, Texas.

As the first Scottish Rite degree ritual with an American setting and theme, the 20° Ritual of 1922 enjoyed immediate acceptance. Within a few decades its popularity was enhanced by the patriotic fervor generated during the era of World War II. The allegory was so well received that over the years there were repeated requests for permission to make public presentations. All such requests, of course, were rejected, as by law and by custom the degree work of the Rite may be exhibited only to persons who are Scottish Rite Masons of the requisite degree.

In 1936, a prologue and epilogue to the allegory were approved for optional use on a trial basis. The effect was to portray the drama as a multi-scene dream sequence. The additional scenes never were adopted as part of the ritual and were withdrawn in 1951.

The ritual was reissued without significant change in 1939 and 1951. More than 40 years then passed before the ritual again underwent scrutiny by the Committee on Rituals. In the interim concern had arisen over the depiction of some prominent historical characters in the allegory as Masons, as no documentary evidence was known to prove their membership. There also was a question as to when and where Lafayette had become a Mason. These concerns over historical accuracy were partially addressed in 1980, when the Committee on Rituals directed that some of the characters in the allegory be replaced by others with proven Masonic credentials.

The significant change made by the ritual of 1994 was elimination of the ceremonial opening, i.e., the “candle section,” which dated back more than 200 years to the *Francken Manuscript*. This ceremony had been the essence of the 20° ritual until the allegory was introduced shortly before the turn of the 20th century. Its removal from the ritual was unquestionably a blow to Scottish Rite tradition. It was justified, however, for the sake of facilitating presentation of the allegory, which exemplified what had evolved as the Masonic lessons of the degree. For this reason the Supreme Council already had made the presentation of degree ceremonials optional, and many Valleys routinely omitted them in the interest of tightening reunion schedules. Although

it went unsaid, continued use of the ceremonial with the allegory in fact perpetuated a dichotomy in the degree. The two sections of the degree had evolved from wholly different sources and, especially after the patriotic American drama had been introduced, communicated two entirely different lessons. Indeed, with the removal of the only part of the 20° ritual that was representative of the original degree, the name itself, “Master for Life,” became a *non sequitur*.

Ten years later a refinement was made to the allegory for the sake of drama and emphasis. The final lines of dialogue and stage directions were deleted so that the allegory would conclude with Washington’s ringing statement of the Masonic attitude toward the crime of treason.

The first major revision of the “Washington” allegory since its introduction came in 2007, the 85th anniversary of its introduction. The last vestiges of the ceremonial opening, including the obligation, were eliminated in accordance with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995. The admission of characters to the lodge room was rearranged. Extensive stylistic changes were made in the prologue and throughout the allegory. Several passages of dialogue, considered overly lengthy, were abridged. For reasons of character portrayal, these included the final exchange between Washington and the American traitor, Arnold.

The result was a degree ritual of marginally shorter playing time, but no significant change to the cast of characters or dramatic action. The average spectator should find the differences between the 20° Ritual of 2007 and the previous version imperceptible, while hopefully receiving an improved appreciation of its Masonic message.

## Let Justice Be Done — The Twenty-first Degree

The ritual of the 21° lays claim to what is probably the most unusual origin of any degree in the Scottish Rite system. The ritual that appeared in Francken's 1783 manuscript under the title "Prussian Knight or Noachite" had no apparent connection with the traditional Masonic symbolism of the Solomonic Temple. The pattern of Francken's ritual was conventional enough. There was the opening, containing a lecture in the form of a catechism, followed by a rather simple reception, obligation, and investiture, concluding with a long historical lecture. The subject of the lectures was the Old Testament story of Noah and a curious legend concerning Peleg, the reputed architect of the Tower of Babel. After the Confusion of Tongues, Peleg allegedly had taken the arts of Masonry to Northern Europe, i.e., Prussia and Germany, where his tomb supposedly was discovered in the sixth century A.D.

The name of Peleg appears in genealogical lists in the Book of Genesis as a descendant of Noah and an ancestor of Abraham, contemporary with the Confusion of Tongues. More to the point, however, although Noah, together with many other biblical and historical figures, is mentioned as a practitioner of the Masonic arts in the fanciful history contained in *Anderson's Constitutions*, there is no reference to the Masonic associations of Peleg upon whose legendary role the ritual of the 21° was based.

The French ritual which was the source of Francken's 21° supposedly was translated from an earlier German ritual in 1757. The title of the presiding officer of the assembly depicted in the ritual was "Lieutenant Commander." The position of Grand Master of the Order was reserved for King Frederick of Prussia.

So it remained for 70-odd years. Then, in 1855, the ritual of Albert Pike made an abrupt departure from tradition and introduced the dramatic theme that in large measure comprises the current ritual. Pike selected for the background of his ritual the mysterious secret tribunals (*vehmgerichte*) of me-

dieval Germany.<sup>7</sup> These extra-legal tribunals dispensed what was purported to be impartial justice, regardless of rank or affluence, for criminal acts and excesses committed by minions of both church and state. The *vehmgerichte* apparently had three grades or degrees of membership, thereby paralleling the later organization of the symbolic lodge. As the motto of the 21°, Pike adopted the Latin form of a fitting phrase, “Let justice be done though the heavens should fall.”

At the Union of 1867, the Pike ritual was the accepted form of the 21° in this Jurisdiction with an important addition — the Ordeal of the Three Tests. In 1886, the ritual was further elaborated by expanding the reception to introduce a number of historical rulers of the period, including Kings Richard the Lionhearted and Philip Augustus. The addition of these characters was ahistorical in the extreme, an instance of celebrity namedropping that was meaningless for the development of the dramatic action.

The next change of note was made in the ritual of 1919. As a result of patriotic emotions generated by World War I, which also would motivate replacement of the original allegory in the 20° by the “Washington” allegory, references to “Prussia” were deleted from the ritual. The title of the degree was altered to “Patriarch Noachite,” virtually the only vestige of the original Francken ritual. Somewhat surprisingly, the German setting of the ritual remained unchanged.

In 2003, the reference to “Belus”, a form of Baal, the infamous deity of the ancient Canaanites, and the word “infidel”, used as a gratuitous and derogatory reference to the Islamic faith, were removed from the ritual.

The first significant revision of the ritual since 1886 came the following year. As in the case of other recent degree ritual revisions, length of playing time and the number of essential cast members were major considerations. The opening and reception, moreover, were not separate sections of the ritual, as Pike had incorporated them as an integral part of an overly long, single scene drama. Thus, downsizing the essential cast to only ten characters, plus optional supernumeraries, provided a means to achieve a significant reduction

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<sup>7</sup> Pike’s apparent source and possible inspiration for selecting the *vehmgerichte* as the background for the 21° ritual was an 1837 publication, *Secret Societies in the Middle Ages* by Thomas Keightley, which also was a source used by Albert Mackey for his encyclopedia. The 1827 novel *Anne of Geierstein* by the popular author of the period, Sir Walter Scott, also cannot be overlooked as a possible source.

in the playing time of the ritual. Fewer secondary characters allowed the time-consuming reception to be deleted as well as portions of dialogue that did not contribute to development of the action. Elimination from the cast of the prominent names added by the ritual of 1886 also improved the historical credibility of the drama. The dialogue was revised throughout to reword many archaic, awkward (to the modern ear), inconsistent, or superfluous passages. Stage directions were inserted to clarify the staging of the Three Tests. The revised Prologue included an explanation of the motto of the degree. Ill. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°, Active Member for Pennsylvania and chairman of the Committee on Ritualistic Matters, was the primary author of the revised ritual.

Many of the extensive revisions made in the ritual of 2004 had the effect of stripping away the embellishments added to Pike's ritual from the 1880's. The result preserved the essence and hopefully the interest of his 150-year old creation.

## **The Twenty-second “Musical” Degree**

The 22° appeared in Henry Francken’s manuscript by name, “Knight of the Royal Axe,” a literal translation from the French, but without a ritual text. All that Francken recorded about the degree was a legend about the Cedars of Lebanon concerning use of the wood in the building of the Temples of Solomon and Zerubbabel. This has led to conjecture that the 22° was intended only as a “pass” degree without a complete ritual and lesson of its own.

A ritual for the 22° did not come into existence until Albert Pike’s initial draft in 1855. Against the background of the Cedars of Lebanon, Pike introduced the symbolic tools of the woodsman — the saw, the plane, and the axe — as well as the dignity of labor as the lesson of the degree. This was the approved ritual for use in the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction at the time of the Union of 1867 and, with only slight changes, for nearly 130 years thereafter. Over time, the alternate title, “Prince of Libanus” (Lebanon) became generally accepted for the degree.

During the 1930’s, a variation of the ritual developed. Ill. Julius B. Christman, 33°, and Ill. Otto J. Goffeney, 33°, members of the Valley of South Bend, adapted the ritual to be presented in operatic style with members of the cast performing vocal music, both solos and choruses. In 1942, this musical version was approved by the Supreme Council as an alternate ritual for the 22°, thus becoming the only musical degree ritual to be authorized in the jurisdiction.

Despite initial popularity, use of the musical ritual unfortunately became less frequent. By the 1970’s, few Valleys were able to assemble sufficient numbers of players with the requisite musical talent. In 1977, the Committee on Rituals sought to address the problem by having the music of the 1942 ritual rearranged and transposed into lower keys to facilitate performance by less accomplished vocalists and by quartets in place of choruses. Although this solution seemed feasible in concept, it would not be implemented for many years.

The project was suspended in 1984 after two successive consultants retained by the committee failed to produce the desired results. The committee renewed the effort in 1987 and persisted through six more years and the serv-

ices of four more consultants. Finally, a computer-generated, rearranged and transposed musical score was produced, incorporated in the ritual, and approved as the 22° Tentative Ritual of 1993 (Musical Version).

The following year, an extensive revision was made of the 1939 (non-musical) ritual, still essentially the 140-year old Pike ritual. A brief prologue was added, replacing the ceremonial opening. The obligation, investiture, and closing also were eliminated as was the historical lecture, a survival of the Legend of Lebanon that had been all there was to the degree in the *Francken Manuscript*. What remained was the dramatic allegory. In addition, many stylistic changes were made to “modernize” the archaic dialogue. Finally, the text of the musical version was conformed to the non-musical version, so that, except for the musical selections in the former, the ritual of both versions was identical. These revisions were approved as the 22° Ritual of 1994 (both musical and non-musical versions).

Notwithstanding the lengthy process and radical revision, which resulted in a short ritual, easy to stage, with a small cast, a straightforward message, and a choice between presenting either a musical or a non-musical version, the 22° did not seem to gain popularity, based on the infrequency of its presentation across the Jurisdiction. This prompted another review of the ritual in 2007.

In addition to modest revisions in wording, the action of the allegory was transplanted from the slopes of biblical Mount Lebanon to a 19th century American forest. The cast was costumed in ordinary work clothing, e.g., denim overalls, flannel shirts, etc., appropriate to the transposed time and place. Thus, the 22° Ritual of 2007 became the sixth Consistorial degree (together with the 20°, 23°, 24°, 25°, and 26°) to be given a more contemporary American setting.



## **The Twenty-third “Four Chaplains” Degree**

It was not until the middle of the 19th century that the ritual of the 23° was recorded in any surviving form. It had been mentioned by Jean Frederick Doszedardski in 1805 as one of the French “Philosophical Grades,” under the title “Chief of the Tabernacle.” However, no indication of its content was given. Killian Van Rensselaer’s 1845 manuscript provided signs and passwords for the degree but nothing further.

As was the case with several other Scottish Rite degrees, the writing of a complete ritual for the 23° apparently had to await the creative pen of Albert Pike, who gave no indication of his source. Pike gave the ritual a mosaic setting consistent with the traditional title of the degree, the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. The ritual was presided over by Aaron, as “Most Excellent High Priest,” assisted by two of his sons as Wardens. The form of the ritual was traditional with an opening, reception, examination, obligation, a series of ten charges, and concluding with a long investiture and lecture interpreting the symbolism of the ritual. The Pike ritual was adopted by this jurisdiction after the Union of 1867 and continued in use for more than 40 years.

Early in 1907, Ill. John Lloyd Thomas, 33°, later Active Member for New York and a member of the Committee on Rituals, met with the committee and submitted for their consideration a proposed new ritual for the 23°. Using the setting of the Pike ritual, Thomas proposed a dramatization of the Old Testament story of the sons of Aaron, who neglected their duty to tend the sacred fire in the Tabernacle. In 1908, a modified form of the Thomas proposal was approved by the Supreme Council, replacing the Pike ritual. Subject to minor revisions made in 1930, the ritual of 1908 remained the ritual of the 23° for the next 80 years.

In 1985, the Supreme Council approved a recommendation by the Committee on Rituals to transfer degree rituals based on Old Testament themes from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection. This decision, of course, impacted the 23°. Before the plan could be implemented, however, an acceptable new ritual had to be available to replace each ritual transferred from a Consistory degree.

In the case of the 23°, the genesis of the replacement ritual went back to the 1960's, preceding its eventual adoption by 20 or more years. Ill. John H. Van Gorden, 33°, Active Member for New York, had written a dramatic allegory, "The Four Chaplains", as a suggested degree ritual. It was based on the celebrated incident during World War II when four U.S. Army Chaplains gave up their lifejackets to save injured servicemen and perished aboard a torpedoed troop transport in the North Atlantic. However, the time for such an allegory as a Scottish Rite degree ritual had not yet come.

By 1983, with the prospect of ritual "realignment" and the need for new degree rituals on the horizon, Van Gorden's proposal was being revisited. A consultant to the Committee on Rituals, Ill. Haydn R. Jones, 33°, a member of the Valley of South Bend and later Trenton (Central Jersey), was assigned to prepare the script of a dramatic allegory suitable for a degree ritual based on the "Four Chaplains" theme.

The underlying historical event seemed ready-made for the theme of a Scottish Rite degree ritual, just as it had been a tocsin for patriotic morale when it occurred in 1943. It was more than a real life story of heroism and self-sacrifice, which wartime events produced in abundance. There was an ecumenical message. The four protagonists had come from diverse backgrounds and represented different religious faiths (Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish).

Nevertheless, the subject did have a downside. The proposed ritual would be the first to have a modern, indeed, a contemporary setting. Some members of the Committee on Rituals had second thoughts about a degree allegory based on an event within living memory. Modern ritual settings had the potential of arousing reactions from personal experience and beliefs that could distract attention from, or even compromise, the moral lesson that was being exemplified. Degree rituals with biblical or remote historical, even American Revolutionary, backgrounds did not have the same potential for distraction or controversy. In the end, however, these reservations were overcome.

In 1986, the committee reported that an allegory based on the World War II incident of "the Four Chaplains" would be proposed as the new ritual of the 23°. The work of Haydn Jones had been substantially completed by that time. The proposed ritual would be innovative in respects other than its contemporary setting. The ceremonial opening and prologue were followed by an eight-

scene drama, with a cast of more than 30 characters, concluding with an epilogue. The scenes were introduced and linked by a narrator representing a survivor of the event. To facilitate its presentation, which many Valleys would find to be challenging and some daunting, the proposed ritual included ample stage directions, production notes, and scene diagrams explaining that the allegory was designed to be presented with no scenery and with only limited stage properties. Thus, modern theater techniques were applied to presentation of a Scottish Rite ritual.

In 1988, after trial exemplifications, the allegory of “The Four Chaplains” became the tentative ritual of the 23°. The previous “Sacred Fire” ritual was assigned to the 5° in the Lodge of Perfection. Eight years later the tentative ritual, with some modifications, was approved as the 23° Ritual of 1996.

The first complete review of the “Four Chaplains” ritual was a two-year process undertaken in 2006-08 under the primary responsibility of Ill. Lawrence D. Inglis, 33°, Active Emeritus Member for Illinois and member of the Committee on Ritualistic Matters. The review resulted in numerous and significant revisions, although the dramatic theme and primary lesson remained intact. The review included research of the historical event on which the ritual was based, as well as the biographies of the four protagonists and comments submitted by members across the jurisdiction.

The brief ceremonial opening was eliminated in accordance with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995. The prologue was substantially modified by deletion of the better part of three paragraphs that attempted to preserve a strained connection with the Old Testament story of the “Sacred Fire,” which had been the theme of the 23° ritual before its transfer to the Lodge of Perfection in 1988. References to the “Sacred Fire” which reoccurred in the allegory also were eliminated.

The quotation on religious toleration in the prologue, from President and Ill. Brother Truman’s address at the dedication of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains in 1951, was replaced by observations on fraternal love and self-sacrifice made in the same address. The latter remarks were considered more consistent with the primary lesson of the degree. An excerpt from Ill. Brother Truman’s address emphasizing the lesson of the degree also was added to the epilogue.

The paraplegic narrator, who identified himself by name not found among the crew and passengers of the troopship *Dorchester*, and incredibly as “a member of this Valley,” was replaced by an anonymous survivor. A new, historically factual character and incident, relating to the gloves of one of the Chaplains, were added.

Numerous passages of dialogue were deleted from the allegory because they were considered superfluous to the dramatic action or lesson of the degree, or because they simply were improbable. Scene five, which dramatized an unlikely verbal and physical altercation between one of the Chaplains and a fictitious crewman, and which did not contribute to the theme of the ritual, was deleted in its entirety.

The scriptural reading in the renumbered scene five was reworded from that of the New Revised English Standard Bible to the King James version, as the former had not yet been written in 1943. Many refinements in wording were made throughout the allegory for the sake of clarity, style, or historical or literary accuracy. Among these was the rewording of the Hebrew prayer in the renumbered scene seven. Profanity also was eliminated from the dialogue.

The result of these thorough-going revisions, the 23° Ritual of 2008, preserved the dramatic theme with greater attention to historical accuracy and a clearer statement of the moral lesson. It also represented a substantial shortening of playing time over the previous ritual which had been the longest of the 29 degree rituals. Finally, the revised ritual renamed the degree from the traditional “Chief of the Tabernacle,” which dated from 1805, but had been irrelevant since 1988, to “Knight of Valor.”

## **The Twenty-fourth “American Indian” Degree**

The ritual of the 24°, like that of the 23°, at least in any identifiable form, was a latecomer to the Scottish Rite degree system. There was no predecessor to the current degree ritual preserved as part of the Rite of Perfection rituals in Henry Francken’s 1783 manuscript. The traditional title of the degree, “Prince of the Tabernacle,” was mentioned in 1805 by Jean Frederick Doszedardski in reference to a French degree, but no details of the ritual were given. Killian Van Rensselaer’s 1845 manuscript provided signs and words for the degree, indicating that the lesson was toleration, but nothing more. Thus, up to the middle of the 19th century, the content of the 24° ritual is unknown.

Then, enter Albert Pike. Among the degree rituals he completed in 1855 was a ritual for the 24°. Pike’s source for this ritual remains a mystery. Ostensibly set in the time of Moses, the ritual meandered through the centuries in an anachronistic *mélange* of philosophical ideas. At times it bordered on the occult, at times on Masonic symbolism, arriving at Pike’s doctrine of equilibrium. There was no discernible theme. The lesson of the degree, in essence, was God, country, and the pursuit of happiness. It was not Pike at his best.

Nevertheless, perhaps not only for lack of something better, but simply for lack of anything else, the Pike ritual was accepted for the 24° of this jurisdiction after the Union of 1867. Moreover, this ritual continued in use, with but a few minor changes, for the next 42 years.

Finally, in 1909, the Supreme Council withdrew the Pike ritual and approved a new ritual featuring a dramatic allegory for the 24°. The primary author of the new allegory was English-born Ill. John Lloyd Thomas, 33°, who later was elected an Active Member for New York and appointed a member of the Committee on Rituals. The Thomas Allegory depicted a fictitious incident during the dedication of King Solomon’s Temple. A discussion on the nature of God by representatives of various religions was disrupted by a voice of skepticism. The disharmony ultimately was resolved by an eloquent declaration of the universal faith of service to humanity.

The 24° Ritual of 1909, in substance, remained in use for most of the 20th century, and probably would have continued into the 21st century as well had it not been for other developments. In 1985, the Supreme Council approved the recommendation of the Committee on Rituals to transfer to the Lodge of Perfection those Consistorial degree rituals based on Old Testament themes. The first of these rituals proposed to be transferred to the Lodge of Perfection was that of the 24° which was to be replaced by a new “American Indian” allegory.

Obviously, the most challenging aspect of the so-called “realignment” of degree rituals was to find or prepare rituals to replace those that were removed from the Consistory degrees. In the case of the 24°, the solution came in 1983 with a proposal that a new ritual be written on the theme of an American Indian petitioning for membership in a colonial symbolic lodge. The primary author of the proposed ritual was Ill. Henry J. Cooper, 33°, Active Member for Rhode Island and a member/consultant of the Committee on Rituals. The new ritual, consisting of a prologue and a dramatic allegory in three scenes, was completed in 1985 and was approved by the Supreme Council as the Tentative 24° Ritual of 1986.

The 1986 tentative ritual was only the second degree ritual in 65 years (after the 20° Ritual of 1922) to have an American setting. It was an instant success, due, no doubt, to the familiar appeal of an American frontier scene and buckskin-clad, feather and bead-adorned cast members. The dramatic theme of the ritual also was a factor in its widespread acceptance. It posed the real-life dilemma experienced at one time or another by most active Masons. Under what circumstances was use of the black ball justified in balloting on a petitioner? On a climactic note of high drama, the allegory came to an end before the result of the ballot was announced, the question left to linger unanswered in the individual consciences of the audience.

Larger issues also were presented. The qualification of the petitioner was cast in terms of misunderstanding (i.e., ignorance) of Native American religious beliefs. The discussion of those beliefs, concluding with acknowledgment of the spiritual brotherhood of man under a universal Heavenly Father, was reminiscent of the previous ritual of the 24°. The apparent lesson was toleration of religious and cultural diversity. However, in the social context of late 20th century America, many perceived a tacit lesson of racial tolerance.

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The tentative ritual eventually was approved without change as the 24° Ritual of 1993, although publication of the final ritual was delayed.

Despite its positive reception, the ritual was plagued by concerns for “political correctness.” Consultants were enlisted to review the dialogue to opine whether Native Americans were portrayed in a patronizing or stereotypical manner. In the 2002-03 revision, pejorative adjectives, such as “drunken” and “depraved” were deleted. Native American dialogue was revised to reflect grammatical simplicity, but avoiding stereotypical monosyllables characteristic of “Hollywood Indians.” In addition, a number of passages considered to be superfluous were eliminated. A major change was the deletion of highly improbable woodland dialogue in which a Harvard graduate lectured Native Americans on comparative religion. With the foregoing revisions, the 24° Ritual of 2003 in all other respects preserved the substance of the 1986 tentative ritual.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the traditional title of the 24°, which was of uncertain origin and for many years had been all there was of record to the degree, was changed from “Prince of the Tabernacle” to the descriptive “Brother of the Forest.”

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<sup>8</sup>There was some concern over the apparently anachronistic reference in the ritual to the “Trail of Tears,” a term usually associated with the forcible relocation of the Cherokees during the 1830’s. While the Cherokee incident may have been the most infamous, many similar relocations of Native American peoples occurred over the years. Thus, it was decided to make no change to the reference in the ritual.

## **The Twenty-fifth “Ben Franklin” Degree**

The 1855 ritual of Albert Pike was the earliest surviving ritual of the 25°. True, in the first decade of the 19th century Doszedardski had mentioned the degree by name, “Knight of the Brazen Serpent,” as one of the French “Philosophical Grades,” and Killian Van Rensselaer had recorded the signs and passwords of the degree in his 1845 manuscript. However, neither of these sources provided anything of the content of the ritual. Pike, himself, did not cite a source for his work, leaving us to conclude that it was a product of his own creation. The theme of the ritual was easy enough to create. It was suggested by the traditional title of the degree. After Pike’s fashion, however, the Old Testament story of Moses and the brazen serpent was secondary to an exposition of symbolism and the philosophy of equilibrium.

Consequently, the Pike ritual was virtually all that existed of the degree, and it remained the authorized ritual of the 25° in this jurisdiction for 30 years from the Union of 1867. Then, the revised ritual of 1896 introduced a dramatization of the Old Testament story of the brazen serpent and emphasized faith as the lesson of the degree. Another revision in 1951 added a new ceremonial section to the ritual but made little change in the drama. In 1993, the 1951 ritual was transferred to the Lodge of Perfection, becoming the ritual of the 6°, where it remains to the present time, in substance the 1896 drama of the Brazen Serpent.

The removal of the “Brazen Serpent” ritual from the 25° was part of the “realignment” of degree rituals with Old Testament themes from the Consistory to the Lodge of Perfection, a policy approved by the Supreme Council in 1985. This decision, of course, necessitated the preparation of new rituals to replace the traditional rituals of the Consistory degrees. In the case of the 25°, the origin of the replacement ritual began two decades before it finally was implemented.

In 1974, in anticipation of the national bicentennial celebration, the Supreme Council approved the preparation of a dramatization of events in the life of Benjamin Franklin to be made available to Valleys for presentation during 1976. The Committee on Rituals subsequently recommended that the “Franklin Allegory” be considered as a tentative alternate ritual for the 25°.



Texts of the proposed allegory were distributed to selected Valleys for trial exemplification. However, the response to a questionnaire sent to all Consistories in the jurisdiction was not favorable to the proposal. Consequently, in 1977 the committee reported that the proposed allegory “would not harmonize with our degree structure chronologically or historically” and recommended its withdrawal. The issue seemed permanently put to rest in 1980, when the committee approved the play *Benjamin Franklin* for public presentation.

Nevertheless, retirement of the Franklin theme was only temporary and interest in the subject soon was revived. The approval and implementation of the degree ritual “realignment” policy during the 1980’s increased the priority for finding a replacement ritual for the 25°. As a result, several alternative scripts on the Franklin theme were considered by the committee as potential degree rituals. Finally, in 1992, Ill. Robert L. Miller Sr., 33°, Active Member for Indiana and chairman of the committee, completed a draft ritual on the Franklin theme, consisting of a main prologue and two dramatic scenes separated by a second prologue, as a replacement for the 25°. After trial exemplifications and a number of modifications, this proposal was approved in 1993 as the tentative ritual of the 25°, permitting transfer of the “Brazen Serpent” allegory to the 6°. The new tentative ritual was the last to be approved as a replacement for a Consistory ritual transferred to the Lodge of Perfection and became the third degree ritual (after the 20° and 24°) to have an 18th century colonial American setting.

Although the tentative ritual was approved in 2000 as the ritual of the 25°, the committee postponed publication pending further study. There was a question of dramatic unity, as the two scenes of the drama portrayed different, disconnected events in Franklin’s life, separated by nearly 60 years. Scene one represented the interview of the young Franklin by a committee investigating his petition for membership in a Masonic lodge. Most of the dialogue of the scene centered on Franklin having fathered a child out of wedlock. Scene two represented a Masonic lodge (with future presidents and fellow Masons Washington and Monroe in attendance) honoring Brother Franklin on his 82nd birthday by recalling some of the salient public events in his distinguished life.

Upon reconsideration, the Committee on Ritualistic Matters recommended elimination of scene one, as, in their view, it did not contribute to the theme

of the degree; that is, Franklin's lifetime of personal accomplishments and public service. This allowed the second prologue to be eliminated as well. Scene two was retained without change. The main prologue was rewritten to emphasize personal industry, exemplified in the life of a prominent Freemason, Benjamin Franklin, as the lesson of the degree. The effect of these revisions was to eliminate one scene change, reduce the cast by three speaking roles, and decrease the length of the script by one-third, with a consequent shortening of playing time. The traditional and now meaningless title of the degree, "Knight of the Brazen Serpent," was changed to "Master of Achievement" to reflect the current subject matter and lesson of the ritual. These revisions were incorporated in the 25° Ritual of 2003.

A lingering issue for Masonic scholars was Franklin's Masonic status and whether he would have attended a Pennsylvania lodge at the time depicted in the ritual. This was addressed in the historical notes to the degree without injecting complications into the drama of the ritual.

## The Twenty-sixth “Gettysburg” Degree

The development of the ritual of the 26° has been a drama in itself and at times along the way has been a center of intense controversy. The earliest surviving ritual for the degree dates only from the mid-1850’s. More recently, there have been four different rituals for the 26° within the space of 65 years.

The 26° was not part of the Rite of Perfection. Thus, no mention of it appeared in the *Francken Manuscript*. In fact, it was not mentioned in any of the early ritual sources until 1805 (Doszedarski’s manuscript), and then only by name, without more. According to the Masonic scholar Albert Mackey, the original title of the degree, (translated from the French) “Prince of Mercy or Scottish Trinitarian,” referred to the “Triple Covenant” made by God with humanity through Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ.

We have no written ritual for the 26° before Albert Pike’s 1855 opus of 53 pages. The setting of Pike’s ritual was the catacombs of ancient Rome. Pike’s inevitable series of long lectures described the tribulations of early Christians during the Persecution of Emperor Domitian. At the Union of 1867 the Pike ritual for the 26° (there was no other) was adopted by the Northern Jurisdiction and, except for an abridgement of (only) 31 pages in 1911, remained in use for 75 years.

In 1938, the Committee on Rituals reported bluntly that the ritual of the 26° “failed utterly to teach the quality of mercy as it should be taught in the Scottish Rite.” Soon thereafter, the committee settled on what appeared to be a more satisfactory theme, the Old Testament story of Joseph and his brethren. A tentative ritual was approved for trial exemplification in 1940. It was based on a play, *Joseph and His Brethren*, written for public presentation by Ill. Ernest W. Hotchkiss, 33°, a member of the Valley of Detroit.

Although other compositions on the subject were considered, the substance of the tentative ritual was approved as the 26° Ritual of 1942. Preceded by the customary ceremonial opening, reception, and prologue, the allegory of “Joseph and His Brethren” was dramatized in five scenes, exemplifying the lesson of the degree, mercy.

For 50 years thereafter the new ritual served its purpose until it was impacted by the 1985 decision to transfer to the Lodge of Perfection those Consistorial degree rituals based on Old Testament themes. Thus, in 1992, the “Joseph Allegory” became the ritual of the 12°, where, in a modified form, it still remains.

Of course, the most challenging aspect of the exercise was finding a suitable replacement ritual for the 26°. From time to time the Committee on Rituals had considered the efficacy of a degree ritual based on the American Civil War. The first substantive possibility to this end appeared in the late 1970’s with *House Undivided*, a dramatization of incidents relating to Freemasonry during the Civil War, based on Allen E. Roberts’ book of the same title. There being no immediate need for a new degree ritual, the opportunity passed by. Publication of *House Undivided* was approved by the Supreme Council in 1979 for presentation to the general public.

As the 1980’s progressed, the need for new rituals to replace those transferred from the Consistory degrees to the Lodge of Perfection took on new urgency. The goal of the committee crystallized on development of a degree ritual with Abraham Lincoln as the central character, notwithstanding the fact that Lincoln had not been a Freemason. Eventually, in each of the years 1988-90, the committee reported work on a new ritual for the 26° based on an incident relating to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. The theme had been suggested by a play written many years previously by Ill. Henry J. Cooper, 33°, Active Emeritus Member for Rhode Island, a member/consultant of the committee, and primary author of the “American Indian” ritual of the 24°. Cooper, assisted by Ill. Robert F. Case, 33°, Active Member for New York and a member of the committee, assumed the primary role in modifying the play and incorporating Masonic content to make it suitable for a degree ritual. After a number of revisions and trial exemplifications, the “Lincoln Allegory” was proposed and approved as the 26° Tentative Ritual of 1992 and subsequently as the 26° Ritual of 1999, although not without persistent opposition.

The new ritual was well received. It had a familiar subject as a theme and it played well dramatically. It consisted of a prologue and three scenes with two set changes, a script of only seventeen pages, and required only four speaking roles. Despite this, the ritual never was able to convince its dissenters.

In summary, the case against the “Lincoln Allegory” was that it was artificial and contrived, when, as *House Undivided* had demonstrated, there were many real life events reflecting on Freemasonry during the Civil War that could serve as the basis for a degree ritual. Lincoln was not a Freemason. Why, then, should he be the central figure in a Masonic degree allegory?

The truth of the matter was that the story line of the “Lincoln Allegory” was not Masonic, nor was it factual, nor was it original. Its source was a fictional short story, *The Perfect Tribute*, written in 1906 by Mary Shipman Andrews. It played on the popular myth of Lincoln’s humanity and what critics might describe as maudlin sentimentality. Perhaps more important than the origin and substance of the story was the fact that it had become a prominent feature of the public domain. It had been portrayed on film in the 1940’s and again on television in the 1990’s. Passages of dialogue in both productions were verbatim with the ritual. This gave rise to the inevitable inquiry, if the ritual can be shown to millions by the mass media, why can’t it be presented to families, friends, and prospective Scottish Rite Masons?

Consequently, in 2001, only two years after approval of the 1999 ritual (but after a turnover of members on the committee), the Committee on Rituals decided to recommend withdrawal of the “Lincoln Allegory” as a degree ritual and authorize its presentation to general audiences. No action was taken to implement this decision until 2004, when the committee recommended to the Supreme Council that the 1999 ritual of the 26° be withdrawn and approved for public presentation. In its place, the committee recommended preparation of a new, factually-based Civil War degree ritual with a Masonic theme. Specifically, the committee proposed a dramatization of the historical incident memorialized in the National Cemetery at Gettysburg by the “Friend to Friend” Masonic Memorial erected and dedicated by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in 1993. Despite strenuous opposition from former members of the committee, the recommendation was approved.

III. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°, Active Member for Pennsylvania and chairman of the Committee on Ritualistic Matters, was assigned to prepare the new degree ritual pursuant to the recommendation approved by the Supreme Council. The result consisted of a prologue and four dramatic scenes with three set changes, a cast of seven speaking roles and optional walk-ons. All characters were historical and known to have been Freemasons. The story, told in flashback from the first scene, was the Masonic friendship of Union

General Hancock and Confederate General Armistead that ended with their confrontation and the latter's death at Gettysburg. Period music was arranged for scene interludes and the finale and was recorded for use by Consistories unable to provide live musicians. The traditional title of the degree, "Prince of Mercy," was to be changed to "Friend and Brother Eternal."

All was completed and recommended by the committee for approval in 2005, only to encounter the most unanticipated and acerbic criticism of a ritualistic proposal and the work of the committee since the impasse over the proposed revision of the 14° ritual in 1945. In the end, the proposed ritual was spared outright rejection and tabled, only to be recalled the following day and referred back to the committee for further study. Thus, the "Lincoln Allegory" remained in place as the ritual of the 26° instead of being released for public presentation that year as many had expected.

As the criticisms of the proposed ritual had been nonspecific, the committee was at some loss as to what modifications might improve its acceptability. The approach pursued was to reduce the length and complexity of the proposed ritual. The first scene and the flashback feature, as well as one of the principal characters, were eliminated. There was minor editing of the dialogue, but the substance of the drama remained. A revised version was presented and approved over minority opposition as the 26° Tentative Ritual of 2006. "Friend and Brother Eternal." The "Lincoln Allegory" was withdrawn as a degree ritual and approved for public presentation as *The Last Full Measure*.

## Church and State — The Twenty-seventh Degree

As the 27° was not among the degrees of the Rite of Perfection, no reference to it appeared in the *Francken Manuscript*. It was mentioned only by name, “Commander of the Temple,” in an 1804 manuscript of unknown authorship which provided no hint of the ritual. Moreover, it is unlikely that any of the Consistorial degrees other than the 30°-32° were conferred in this jurisdiction prior to 1845.

The first ritual of the 27° in authorized use after the Union of 1867 included an elaborate ceremonial opening and reception of a Prince of Mercy, 26°, into an order of knighthood dedicated to the five qualities of humility, temperance, chastity, generosity, and honor. The chivalric order portrayed in the ritual was represented to be the historic Order of the Teutonic Knights. Although some sources have claimed that the 27° ritual originally was based on the Order of the Knights Templar, there is no evidence to support this contention.

The dramatic section did not appear until 1896 when the convocation scene with a 13th century historical setting was added to the ritual. This addition greatly extended the length of the ritual and expanded the cast to more than 50 players with accompanying costume requirements. Another innovation was that the traditional five qualities were eclipsed in importance by the three vows of chastity, obedience, and charity.

After nearly half a century, the ritual of 1944 introduced major revisions, almost all of which affected the original ceremonial opening rather than the dramatic section. The numerous vows assumed by the novice were greatly condensed and references to his Masonic associations and duties were deleted as anachronisms in the 13th century setting of the ritual. The obligation was replaced by a shorter cover obligation. The historical lecture was removed and portions incorporated in a new prologue. The poetic dirge also was eliminated and the previous emphasis on the imminence of death was reduced to the symbolic display of the pendant sword. The five qualities, which originally had been the principal lessons of the degree, disappeared from the ritual. Belief in a free church within a free state, neither seeking to dominate the other, as dramatized in the convocation scene, emerged as the primary lesson of the degree.

Another 40 years were to elapse before the ritual next was scrutinized by the Committee on Rituals. Notwithstanding the drama and pageantry of the ritual that gave the 27° widespread popularity, several problems were becoming apparent in its presentation. For one, addition of the elaborate convocation scene to the preexisting ritual, with protracted processions, individual entrances, and recessions, significantly lengthened the playing time of the degree and gave it a dual message. For another, the large cast, costuming, and staging requirements were difficult, if not impossible, for smaller Valleys to produce. Finally, although the dramatic confrontation between secular authority and the Papacy was historical, it unfortunately provided opportunities for unscripted anti-Catholic bias to manifest itself in some performances.

Despite all of this, few changes were reflected in the 1983 ritual.<sup>9</sup> The most obvious was the introduction of an alternative short version which provided a marginal easing of production difficulties by use of a slightly abridged opening and reception preceding the convocation scene. More subtle was the addition of wording to the prologue, implying that the dispute which gave rise to the dramatic confrontation between church and secular leaders was caused by poor communications, or misrepresentations perpetrated by devious underlings rather than by inherent antagonism between the two institutions or their respective leaders.

Twenty years later the ritual underwent a thorough revision. The primary author of the revision that became the 27° Ritual of 2003 was Ill. C. DeForrest Trexler, 33°, Active Member for Pennsylvania and chairman of the Committee. The revised ritual deleted the opening, obligation, and reception. Not only did this significantly reduce the length of the ritual, it resolved the dual message of the degree by eliminating the last vestiges of the original 19th century ritual. The lesson of the degree was framed unambiguously to address the ever-present tension between secular and religious authority, an issue that is with us today as it was during the 13th century.

The revised ritual made minor deletions and stylistic changes in the prologue. Although the theme and principal characters of the convocation scene, or “drama,” remained intact, the revisions were extensive. The dialogue, which reflected a stilted, artificial, and overly verbose style, was largely

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<sup>9</sup> According to then chairman of the Committee on Rituals, Ill. Robert L. Miller Sr., 33°, (*The Walls Came Tumbling Down*), there was insufficient support among the Active Membership to approve more substantial revisions in the 27° Ritual of 1983.



rewritten. Latin intonations, frequently mispronounced or made the subject of levity, and some obscure historical references were eliminated. Derogatory references to Islam, although an accurate reflection of attitudes during the historical period portrayed, were considered unnecessary distractions from the message of the ritual and were rephrased in less offensive language.

The number of prescribed characters and supernumeraries in the cast was sharply reduced. Only five chivalric characters and one monarch, Emperor Frederick, were retained. Five temporal rulers, whose participation in the convocation was gratuitous to the dramatic action (as well as historically questionable), and their largely extraneous dialogue were deleted. The proclamation at the opening of the convocation and the anticlimactic recessional toward the close of the degree also were removed. The result of all this was a substantial reduction in casting and staging requirements as well as playing time.

The drama of the 27° is based on an historical event, the convocation at Ferrentino, Italy, in March, 1223, when Pope Honorius III and Emperor Frederick II met to discuss a new Crusade to recover Jerusalem. Portions of the dramatization in the ritual, however, are implausible or fabricated. This includes what is represented to be the underlying cause of ill feeling between the Pope and the Emperor, an irreligious writing called *The Three Imposters*. In fact, this document did not appear until a dozen years after the events dramatized in the ritual during the reign of a subsequent Pope. In the ritual, the issue is conveniently resolved by Frederick's dismissal of the alleged author of the offensive writing, his Chancellor, Petrus de Veneis. In historical fact, origin of the document was not attributed to Veneis but to Papal partisans seeking to discredit the Emperor. Veneis was an eloquent proponent of secular authority who continued to enjoy Frederick's trust and favor for another 26 years before he was removed from office for embezzlement, not blasphemy. To correct these anachronisms and inaccuracies, however, would have eviscerated the dramatic quality of the ritual. Thus, for the sake of drama and the moral lesson of the degree, Veneis has remained the villain of the piece. Not for the first time in Scottish Rite ritual, dramatic license has prevailed over historical fact.

Finally, the ritual of 2003 changed the traditional title of the degree, "Commander of the Temple," to "Knight of Jerusalem" as a more accurate reflection of the dramatic setting.

## Search for the Truth — The Twenty-eighth Degree

Probably the most unusual or even, as some might say, unique degree ritual of the Scottish Rite is that of the 28°. The degree originated as the 23° of the Rite of Perfection. It appeared as such in the *Francken Manuscript*, the ritual occupying an exceptional length of 35 closely written pages. The principal officer in the ritual was Father Adam, assisted by Brother Truth and a number of spiritual beings, who remained in the ceremonial section of the modern ritual. According to Francken, the degree was titled “The Key of Masonry,” although French rituals used the more familiar title “Knight of the Sun.” Frederick Dalcho’s manuscript ritual of 1801 adopted the title “Knight of the Sun or Prince Adept.”

As one might expect from its sheer length, the ritual was verbose, filled with much mystical symbolism that provided no discernible practical lesson. Albert Mackey, the 19th century Masonic scholar, attributed the roots of the ritual to Hermetism and the medieval Jewish theosophy of Cabalism. All of this was grist for the mill of Albert Pike, who expanded the Francken ritual to 65 printed pages of interminable, rambling, esoteric lectures on mystical concepts, without a common theme or practical application. The Pike ritual was adopted verbatim by the Supreme Council after the Union of 1867 and continued in use for more than 40 years under the Dalcho title “Knight of the Sun or Prince Adept.”

Finally, in 1910, Ill. James I. Buchanan, 33°, Active Member for Pennsylvania and chairman of the Committee on Rituals, prepared a revised ritual for the 28°, which was approved by the Supreme Council the following year. Although the 1911 ritual accomplished not a mean feat by condensing the Pike ritual into 30 pages, it did nothing to improve the exposition or content. Dissatisfaction with the ritual remained widespread and grew during the 1920’s and 1930’s, but acceptance of a meaningful replacement was slow in coming.

In 1938, matters finally came to a head. The Committee on Rituals reported that the ritual of the 28° “does not lend itself to satisfactory presentation. . . The degree is too esoteric and unreal.” Sovereign Grand Commander Melvin Maynard Johnson agreed with this appraisal and appointed a special

committee, comprised of six prominent clergymen, to prepare a new ritual based on the contributions made by ancient religions to the "Search for Truth." In the event, the full committee never met, but one of the designated members, Dr. Harry K. Eversull, 32°, president of Marietta College, prepared a draft ritual based on the building of King Herod's Temple. Although Eversull's draft did not meet Commander Johnson's criteria, a modified version was approved in 1940 for trial exemplification as the tentative 28° ritual.

The subject matter of the tentative ritual was soon recognized to be more appropriate as an introduction to the Rose Croix Degree. Consequently, on Commander Johnson's recommendation, in 1942, it was approved as the ritual of the 17°. Thus, the Pike ritual, in its original and condensed versions, "admittedly unsatisfactory and unworkable, unreal and too esoteric" survived the effort to replace it and remained the ritual of the 28° for well over a century. In the words of McIlyar Lichliter, chairman of the Committee on Rituals, written in 1946, the ritual "is not worthy of a place in the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite.... If there is anything more chaotic in our system, I do not know what it is."

There matters stood, despite well nigh universal dissatisfaction, until 1980, when two members of the Valley of Chicago, Ill. N. Tracy Walker, 33°, M.S.A., and Bro. William R. Deutsch, 32°, M.S.A., apparently without any initiative from the Supreme Council, prepared a dramatic ritual on the search for truth theme. The drama was based on the 17th century Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross, an obscure organization of scholars and philosophers from various lands, faiths, and cultures, which some have theorized influenced the transition from operative craft Masonry to speculative Freemasonry. The action depicted in the drama was not historical, but the protagonist, Elias Ashmole, is known to have been a Freemason in the transitional years preceding the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717.

The draft ritual found its way to the Committee of Rituals and was the subject of trial exemplifications in 1981 and 1982. Consisting of a ceremonial section, prologue, and allegory, it went through several revisions, primarily involving Ill. Haydn R. Jones, 33°, a consultant to the committee. Finally, it was proposed and approved as the 28° Ritual of 1984, under the abbreviated title "Knight of the Sun." After 200 years, during most of which it had been the subject of criticism and dissatisfaction, the Francken/Pike ritual had been withdrawn and replaced.

The most recent revision of the 28° ritual, that of 2006, eliminated the ceremonial section in accordance with the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995 and made a few, minor wording and stylistic changes in the prologue and the allegory. None of these changes altered the content of the 1984 ritual.

## Toleration — The Twenty-ninth Degree

The 29° was not part of the Rite of Perfection. Therefore, it was not mentioned in the *Francken Manuscript*. It appeared for the first time in surviving records in Killian Van Rensselaer's 1845 manuscript. The ritual was given only in outline form, describing the decorations, signs, and words of the degree, without suggestion as to the content of the ritual. As was the case with many other degrees of the Scottish Rite, it remained for Albert Pike to produce a complete ritual for the 29° based on a purported chivalric order of the Crusades called "Grand Scottish Knight of St. Andrew." The practice of charity was the primary lesson of the degree. However, it does not appear that the Pike ritual was ever adopted for use in this jurisdiction.

The 29° ritual in use at the Union of 1867 was the Hays-Raymond ritual of 1864. Although it obviously was influenced by Pike, borrowing the obligation and other elements from his ritual, the central feature of the degree, now styled "Knight of St. Andrew," was an innovative dramatic allegory. Captive Knights of St. Andrew granted the request of their captor, the Turkish Sultan, to be made a member of their Order after having been persuaded that the essential tenets of the *Koran* were compatible with their own Christian beliefs. Thus, the dramatic theme of the degree and its lesson of toleration have remained intact from the 1860's to the present day.

The ritual of 1896 extravagantly expanded the allegory with lengthy speeches and even added a climactic battle scene between the Knights and the Turks.<sup>10</sup> These embellishments were not of long duration, however, and were gradually eliminated from subsequent revisions of the ritual. The rituals of 1907 and 1915 abridged the longer speeches and deleted the battle scene as inconsistent with the lesson of the degree. Further abridgments were made in the ritual of 1933.

The changes apparently did not go far enough for the critics. For one, a chairman of the Committee on Rituals, McIlyar Lichliter, complained that the lecture on toleration, which had been a part of the 1864 ritual, was too long and anticlimactic. Finally, after 45 years, the committee again addressed

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<sup>10</sup>The battle scene also was a feature of the 32° ritual at this period.

the 29°. The result was the ritual of 1978 which contained a rewritten prologue, more abridgments in the allegory, and converted the toleration lecture into dialogue form.

A quarter century later there was a much more thorough revision. The brief, optional opening was shortened further, as was the prologue. Stylistic changes were made to “modernize” the affected King James English which appeared throughout the allegory. Passages that could be construed as disparaging to Islam were reworded. Much of the dialogue, which was deemed to be overly long or extraneous to the dramatic action, such as the recital of a lengthy biography of St. Andrew, was abridged or deleted entirely. The most significant deletion was the long dialogue on toleration at the end of the allegory which had replaced the lecture in the 1978 ritual. Consistent with the criticism made by Lichliter many years before, this material was considered unnecessary and anticlimactic to the dramatic action that already had communicated the lesson of the degree. Nevertheless, this deletion also was not without its critics. Thus, the allegory was ended on the dramatic climax, the Sultan being created a Knight of St. Andrew. This revision, approved as the 29° Ritual of 2003, resulted in a much shortened playing time and a more acceptable presentation for a contemporary audience.

The substance of the allegory, as well as the timeless lesson of the degree, toleration, remains the same today as when it first was introduced more than 140 years ago. The dramatic theme of the 29° was remarkably prescient of the sectarian strife, purportedly arising from religious differences, that has taken center stage again in the world of the 21st century.

## Practice Justice — The Thirtieth Degree

The ritual of the 30° appeared in the *Francken Manuscript* as the 24° of the Rite of Perfection, under the grandiose title “Grand Elected Knight of Kadosh or Knight of the White and Black Eagle.” The Hebrew word *Kadosh* was translated as “consecrated, or set apart.” According to Albert Mackey, the degree originated in France in 1743 and by 1758 had acquired the title “Grand Elect Knight Kadosh.”

The Francken ritual consisted of 25 manuscript pages. The brief opening was followed by the reception, which included an address on the history of Masonry from the time of King Solomon to the Crusades. After the obligation and a series of admonitions, the candidate was required to ascend and descend the so-called “Mysterious Ladder” of seven steps. There followed a long history of the suppression of the Knights Templar and the martyrdom of Grand Master Jacques DeMolay, which was likened to the murder of Hiram Abif, the investiture, and a concluding lecture in the form of a catechism.

By the middle of the 19th century three major versions of the 30° ritual were in use — those of Killian Van Rensselaer, Charles Laffon-Ladebat, and Albert Pike. In each of these rituals the dramatic elements were much enhanced from Francken. The candidate was conducted through a succession of apartments and faced a panel of judges. Melodramatic symbols, such as tombs and coffins, skulls and skeletons, were introduced. A multiplicity of vows became more militant. Van Rensselaer took the candidate on a pilgrimage. Pike, apparently following the lead of Laffon-Ladebat, introduced an indictment of intolerance and bigotry allegedly practiced by the Roman Catholic Church. Of course, the end result of all these embellishments was an increase in the length of the ritual.

An abridgment of the Van Rensselaer ritual apparently was in use in this jurisdiction at the Union of 1867, which, with adaptations from the Pike ritual, was approved as the 30° ritual in 1875. The ritual was further revised and condensed in 1904, and, for the first time, issued separately from the rituals for the 31° and 32°. Previously, the 30° had been considered part of a trilogy with the 31° and 32°. Only minor changes were made to the ritual in 1930 and 1938.

The attempted synthesis of the Van Rensselaer and Pike rituals was not easily accomplished and would contribute to future difficulties in acceptance of the ritual. The fact that the 1904 ritual continued substantially intact for a century, that no revisions at all were made in the ritual from the 1930's until the 21st century, and its absence from the agenda of the Committee on Rituals during all that period did not signify a vote of confidence. Quite the contrary, it was evidence of disuse and disinterest as was amply demonstrated by the infrequency of its presentation across the Jurisdiction.

All of this came as no surprise to McIlyar Lichliter, who spared few words in his 1946 criticism of the 30° ritual. He found its evolution haphazard, without a logical or orderly pattern. As a result, its staging was awkward its action tiresome, its message confused. Aside from obvious shortcomings of inordinate length and archaic, obscure language, it was anticlimactic, both internally and in comparison with the highly dramatic allegories of the Consistorial degrees that preceded it. In essence, it was a ritualistic dinosaur, a survivor of the didactic style that had been characteristic of Masonic ritual in an earlier age. His solution was that the ritual would have to be entirely reconstructed and rewritten.

In 2004, the Committee on Ritualistic Matters finally took the long overdue step of confronting the ritual of the 30°. The committee quickly arrived at the same conclusion Lichliter had reached nearly 60 years earlier. Attempts to salvage the ritual by rewrite ended in frustration. The ritual simply did not express a meaningful lesson for Scottish Rite Masons of the 21st century. Hence, the decision was made to recommend withdrawal of the ritual and its replacement by a highly modified version of what then was the ritual of the 31°.

The replacement ritual, taken from the 31°, itself presented problems. Although its current form was comparatively recent by ritualistic standards, dating only from 1949, the script ran to some 45 pages. Use in the dialogue of such archaic English words as “wot” (know) and “yclept” (named), and the legal term “thwert-ut-nay” (general denial) required that a glossary be appended to the ritual. That, of course, did nothing for the audience, for many of whom the experience was almost like a journey to Tolkien's Middle Earth.



The 31° Ritual of 1949 consisted of the usual ceremonial opening and prologue, followed by a dramatization of a civil trial in 14th century England. The primary author of the trial scene had been Ill. Harold Whittaker Connell, 33°, a member of the Valley of Milwaukee and a consultant to the Committee on Rituals. A lawyer by profession, Connell devoted two years to researching and recreating a medieval English trial. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the fruits of his labors. The trial scene was approved as part of the 31° tentative ritual in 1938, a year after Connell's untimely death. The Scottish Rite degree system thereby acquired a third ritual, in addition to the 7° and the 21°, that used a dramatized trial scene in an historical setting to portray a similar lesson, justice.

The 2004 committee recognized the merits in the work. The trial scene was easy to stage and could be entertaining as well as instructive. However, there would have to be extensive editing of the dialogue into more contemporary English and condensation of the ritual to the essence of the trial scene. The vocabulary and grammar of the dialogue was "modernized," but the substance and sequence, as well as the cast, of the scene were left intact. Significant shortening of the ritual was accomplished by elimination of the ceremonial opening, as mandated by the policy adopted by the Supreme Council in 1995, and by deleting the opening portion of the trial scene, in which the judges identified themselves with famous lawgivers of history, an exercise that contributed nothing to the dramatic action.

Finally, the former title of the 31°, "Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander," was abbreviated by dropping the last two words and replaced the meaningless title of the 30°, "Grand Elect Knight Kadosh or Knight of the White and Black Eagle." These changes and transfer of the modified ritual from the 31° were approved by the Supreme Council as the 30° Ritual of 2004, "Grand Inspector."

## **Knight Aspirant — The Thirty-first Degree**

Neither the 31° nor any recognizable predecessor to the degree was part of the Rite of Perfection and recorded in the *Francken Manuscript*. Nothing is known of the ritual of the degree previous to Killian Van Rensselaer's manuscript, written in 1845 or shortly thereafter. For much of the 19th century the 30°-32° were considered and probably conferred as a unit, the "Kadosh", and they were recorded in that manner by Van Rensselaer. However, ten or so pages of Van Rensselaer's manuscript can be identified with what later became the 31°, "Grand Inspector Inquisitor Commander."

The first distinct ritual of the 31° was completed by Albert Pike in 1859. From its central principle, justice, Pike created a ceremonial and dramatic ritual that portrayed the training of a judge. The Pike ritual was adopted by this jurisdiction at the Union of 1867. Subsequent revisions of the 31° ritual in 1875, 1904, and 1930 attempted the difficult task of synthesizing the Pike ritual with the earlier ritual of Van Rensselaer.

In the mid-1930's Ill. Harold Whittaker Connell, 33°, a member of the Valley of Milwaukee and a consultant to the Committee on Rituals, undertook the scholarly recreation of a 14th century English trial court as a dramatic scene for the 31°. In 1938, a year after Connell's untimely death, the product of his labors was adopted as part of the tentative ritual of the 31°, a dramatic portrayal of justice, which Pike had defined as the central principle of the degree. The tentative ritual subsequently was approved as the 31° Ritual of 1949 and remained in place for more than half a century.

In 2004, the Committee on Ritualistic Matters recommended withdrawal of the traditional ritual of the 30° and its replacement with an extensively modified version of the trial scene from the 31°. In place of the transplanted ritual, the committee recommended that the "Constans Allegory" be moved from the 32° and made the new ritual of the 31°, to be called "Knight Aspirant." The allegory, with a medieval setting, dramatized the Vigil of an aspirant for knighthood, his spiritual trial by the temptations of personal self-interest, and ultimately his supreme sacrifice in the cause of the "Royal Secret" to which all Scottish Rite Masons aspire.

Although by the late 20th century dramatic allegories were featured in most of the degree rituals of the Scottish Rite, it was the allegory of the 32° that came to be identified simply as “the allegory.” For many Scottish Rite Masons, “the allegory” had come to represent the epitome of the degree rituals of the Rite. Because of its unique status, the allegory was considered capable of standing alone as a degree ritual in its own right, rather than continuing to serve simply as the dramatic component of a larger, more complex ritual. Indeed, the degree schedules of many Consistories in the jurisdiction already were treating the allegory as if it were a separate degree instead of an integral part of the 32°.

To introduce the new ritual of the 31°, a new prologue was written, which consisted, in essence, of the former closing dialogue of the 32° ceremonial section that had introduced the allegory. No changes were made in the dialogue of the allegory.

Given the prominence that the allegory has attained, it may come as a surprise to many Scottish Rite Masons that it had not been a traditional part of the 32° ritual and cannot be traced back to the origins of the degree. It did not become part of the degree until it was added to the ceremonial in 1916. The prime author of the allegory was Ill. John Lloyd Thomas, 33°, Active Member for New York and a member of the Committee on Rituals. Thomas earlier had authored the ceremonial section of the 32° as well as what later became the rituals of the 5° and the 9°.

The allegory, still substantially as Thomas had written it, and the new prologue were approved as the 31° Ritual of 2004, “Knight Aspirant.” Nevertheless, the so-called “bifurcation” of the 32° ritual and the transfer of the allegory to the 31° provoked more intense controversy than normally has been aroused by ritualistic changes. An adverse and at times highly emotional reaction across the jurisdiction stemmed largely from attachment to the long-standing practice of presenting the allegory as the finale to Consistory degree conferrals.

The most recent version is the 31° Ritual of 2008. It incorporated a number of revisions in wording, most of which preceded the vigil. The most significant change was the addition to the prologue of several lines from Tennyson’s *Guinevere*, describing knightly virtues. These lines formerly had been part

of the introduction of the allegory in the closing dialogue of the 32° ceremonial that had been adapted as the prologue of the 31° in 2004. The change thus was more a matter of restoration than of innovation.

## Sublime Prince — The Thirty-second Degree

The 32° of the Scottish Rite had its origin as the 25th and last degree of the 18th century Rite of Perfection and may be traced back to a French degree that was extant 250 years ago. The *Francken Manuscript* of 1783 did not record the ritual of the degree, but it did describe a major component, the symbolism of the camp, disclosed the signs and passwords of the degree, and provided the motto, then as now, "*Spes Mea in Deo Est.*" Also then as now, a person admitted to the degree was styled "Sublime Prince of the Royal Secret."

The earliest surviving ritual of the degree appeared in 1845, or soon thereafter, in the manuscript of Killian Van Rensselaer. At the time a single ritual encompassed the 30°, 31°, and 32°. In that portion of the composite ritual associated with the 32°, set in the period of the Crusades, the candidate was made a prisoner by Moslems and rescued by Knights Templar. By 1875, perhaps under the influence of the American Civil War and its veterans' organization, the Grand Army of the Republic, the 32° had become a military degree with a Grand Masonic Army attired in a prescribed Consistory uniform. The rescue of the candidate was made in a dramatic battle scene.

By the turn of the 20th century, however, the military influence had run its course. Reflecting the changing trend, Ill. John Lloyd Thomas, 33°, later to become an Active Member for New York and a member of the Committee on Rituals, proposed a new ritual for the 32°. What Thomas proposed was a dignified ceremonial with much improved dialogue, and without dramatization. Adopted as a tentative ritual in 1912, it became the basis of the later ceremonial section and the current ritual of the 32°.

A few years later, because of continuing interest in a dramatic ritual, Thomas revised the tentative ritual, separating it into two sections. The first was the ceremonial ritual with the symbolism of the camp, obligation, and investiture, climaxing in a stirring call to patriotism. This was followed by a new dramatic allegory, a medieval scene that portrayed the vigil of Constans, an aspirant for knighthood, who overcame the temptations of personal self-interest and ultimately made the supreme sacrifice in the cause of the "Royal Secret." The new ritual with ceremonial and allegory was approved as the

32° Ritual of 1916 and remained substantially unchanged for almost 90 years.<sup>11</sup>

The ritual of 1950 added to the obligation a statement on the unity of Freemasonry, which dated back to the Union of 1867, but which had been deleted from the 1875 ritual. The tentative ritual of 1978 introduced changes in the allegory, reassigning some passages of dialogue from the Prince Commander to the Bishop. More significantly, the tentative ritual introduced Constans' soliloquy over his armor during the vigil. The closing ceremony was eliminated as anticlimactic, so that the degree ended when the curtain fell on the allegory. These changes were incorporated in the ritual of 1981.

In 2003 a further revision to the allegory eliminated one of Constans' four tempters as being unconvincing and adding nothing to the dramatic action that was not already provided by another of the tempters.

The following year the Committee on Ritualistic Matters recommended "bifurcation" of the 32° ritual, by removing the allegory from the degree and reassigning it as the ritual of the 31° to replace the former ritual of that degree which had been transferred to the 30°. There were several reasons for this decision which had been under consideration by the committee for several years.

Firstly, the 32° had become an overly-long ritualistic anomaly, containing both a ceremonial and a dramatic component, notwithstanding that this format had been discontinued in every other degree ritual. Secondly, the allegory was not traditionally a part of the 32°, having been added to the ritual, and, comprising 17 pages of dialogue, it could stand alone as a credible degree ritual in its own right. Thirdly, the two components of the 32° ritual, a formal Masonic ceremonial and a dramatic medieval allegory, were so different in character that in practice they had become virtually two separate degrees. In many Consistories, their presentation usually was scheduled as such, not in immediate sequence as two successive acts of a single dramatic presentation, as originally intended. This development gave rise to concern that in practice the Allegory had come to overshadow the ceremonial, which often took on the appearance of a mere preface or interlude.

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<sup>11</sup> Ill. Brother Thomas was eminently qualified for the task of rewriting the 32° ritual during 1911-16. He previously had authored the rituals of the 23° and 24°, now the rituals of the 5° and 9°.

Moreover, despite the need for change, tradition must count for something. As we have seen, the last three degrees of the Scottish Rite had been considered as a ritualistic unit for much of their history. Thus, it seemed logical that the ritualistic replacement for the 31° should come from the 32°. Finally, the ceremonial was directly representative of what originally had been the last degree of the Rite. It contained an overview of the philosophical lessons exemplified in all the preceding degrees including that dramatized in the allegory. It embraced the obligation, investiture, and proclamation of a Sublime Prince, 32° Scottish Rite Mason. Hence, the ceremonial should remain in place as the ritual of the 32°, as it always had been.

With removal of the allegory, several modifications were required in the ceremonial. The concluding dialogue, designed to introduce the allegory, also was removed from the 32° and became the new prologue of the 31°. The sequence of the flag presentation was altered so as to follow the investiture and proclamation of the new Sublime Prince. The ceremonial was given a climactic conclusion with the stirring call to patriotism and universality, "... looking forward to the day when love of country shall be joined to love of humanity and the Scottish Rite standard shall rise in peaceful triumph over a worldwide brotherhood of man."

The foregoing changes, as recommended by the Committee on Ritualistic Matters, were approved as the 32° Ritual of 2004.

A complete review of the 32° ritual was made four years later, resulting in the revised 32° Ritual of 2008. This revision included a number of stylistic changes, most of them deletions of words or phrases considered superfluous or of questionable meaning. Reference to the "Holy Bible" was changed to "Volume of the Sacred Law." The most obvious change was the replacement of "Constans" by the "Knight Aspirant" in the cast of characters. The purpose of this substitution was to prevent possible misidentification of this character with the protagonist of the allegory of the 31° and to represent advancement of the candidate from Knight Aspirant of the 31° to Sublime Prince in the 32°.

## Epilogue

The mission of the Supreme Council Committee on Rituals (Ritualistic Matters), as stated in the report of the committee for 1976, the year III. Brother Partridge, 33°, published *The Rituals*, is to “study our degrees in a continuing effort to make the presentation of our degree lessons more impressive and inspiring.”

Nearly 30 years later the committee reported that its “pervasive challenge . . . is to provide a degree system that embodies the philosophy of Scottish Rite Masonry, and that can be communicated in an understandable and inspirational manner by all Valleys . . .”

Truth is fixed and unchanging, but the revelation of truth is progressive. We interpret life in terms of the moral and philosophical teachings of the past. From these lessons we must develop a moral code and philosophy in our own day so that men might have a guide, a moral compass as it were, to the truth which they can understand and interpret in their own time.

The degree rituals of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry always have been a work in progress. They never are a finished thing.



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**Chronological Development of  
Northern Masonic Jurisdiction  
Degree Rituals from the Union of 1867**

*By Date of Supreme Council Approval of Ritual or Revision*

**Lodge of Perfection**

4° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1953T, 1955, 2004T, 2007T

5° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1958T, 1960, 1988T, 1996, 2007

6° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1962T, 1966, 1993T, 1996, 2003

7° - 1871, 1894, 1915, 1941, 1970T, 1974T, 1980, 2005

8° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1981, 2006

9° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1965T, 1966T, 1980T, 1986T, 1992, 2003

10° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1965T, 1966T, 1980T, 1986T, 1992, 2006

11° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1967T, 1973T, 1974, 2004

12° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1968T, 1976, 1993T, 1996T, 2002

13° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1941, 1971T, 1977, 2004

14° - 1871, 1894, 1917, 1927, 1938, 1946, 1976, 1995T, 2000, 2006

**Council, Princes of Jerusalem**

15° - 1878, 1911, 1920, 1943, 1959, 1999, 2005

16° - 1878, 1911, 1920, 1959, 1992, 2007

**Chapter, Rose Croix**

17° - 1870, 1914, 1942, 1957, 1994T, 2002, 2007

18° - 1870, 1936T, 1942, 1958T, 1961T, 1964, 1994T, 1999, 2007

**Consistory**

- 19° - 1880, 1886, 1934, 1953, 1993T, 2002  
20° - 1880, 1886, 1896, 1922, 1939, 1951, 1994, 2004, 2007  
21° - 1880, 1886, 1915, 1919, 1933, 1936, 1974, 2003, 2004  
22° - 1880, 1896, 1920, 1939, 1994, 2007  
22° (Musical Version) - 1942, 1993T, 1994, 2007  
23° - 1880, 1908, 1988T, 1996, 2008  
24° - 1880, 1908, 1918, 1930, 1988T, 1996, 2003  
25° - 1880, 1896, 1909, 1951, 1993T, 2000, 2003  
26° - 1880, 1911, 1940T, 1942, 1981, 1992T, 1999, 2006T  
27° - 1880, 1896, 1930, 1944, 1983, 2003  
28° - 1880, 1911, 1920, 1940T, 1984, 2006  
29° - 1880, 1896, 1907, 1915, 1933, 1978, 2003  
30° - 1875, 1904, 1930, 1938, 2004  
31° - 1875, 1904, 1930, 1938T, 1949, 2004, 2008  
32° - 1875, 1912T, 1916, 1934, 1950, 1978T, 1981, 2003, 2004, 2008

T = Tentative Ritual

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**Chairman of the Supreme Council  
Committees on Rituals (Ritualistic Matters)**

Enoch Terry Carson	Ohio	1868-1882
Charles Thomson McClenachan	New York	1882-1896
Nicholas Randle Ruckle	Indiana	1897-1900
James Isaac Buchanan	Pennsylvania	1900-1916
William Geake	Indiana	1916-1927
John Prouty McCune	Ohio	1927-1930
Norris Greenleaf Abbott	Rhode Island	1930-1934
Delmar Duane Darrah	Illinois	1934-1944
George Edward Bushnell	Michigan	1944-1945
McIlyar Hamilton Lichliter	Ohio	1945-1957
Irving Emerson Partridge Jr.	Connecticut	1957-1972
Albert Newton Hepler Jr.	Indiana	1972-1973
William Henry Cantwell	Delaware	1973-1975
Wayne Edward Stichter	Ohio	1975-1977
Irving Emerson Partridge Jr.	Connecticut	1977-1978
Robert Lowell Miller Sr.	Indiana	1978-1994
Richard Waldo Parker	Vermont	1994-2001
Charles DeForrest Trexler	Pennsylvania	2001-

## **Bibliography**

The primary source material for this work are the texts of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction Scottish Rite degree rituals in use during the period since 1975; selected Rituals in use prior to that year; and the reports of the Supreme Council Committee on Rituals (Ritualistic Matters) for 1974 and subsequent years, published annually in the Abstract of Proceedings of the Supreme Council.

Secondary sources are the historical notes that accompany the text of most Degree Rituals; the 1996 updated edition of Newbury and Williams' *A History of the Supreme Council, 33°*, A.A.S.R., N.M.J., U.S.A.; Samuel H. Baynard's 1938 *History of the Supreme Council, 33°*, A.A.S.R., N.M.J. U.S.A.; Robert L. Miller's *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, a readable and often tongue-in-cheek memoir of the author's long tenure as a member and chairman of the Supreme Council Committee on Rituals; selected manuscript notes on the degree rituals prepared by McIllyar Lichliter, on file in the archives of the Scottish Rite Masonic Library at Lexington, MA; Partridge's *The Rituals of the Supreme Council, 33°*, for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, U.S.A.; Paul T. Million's Report on the Ritual, Scottish Rite Leadership Conference 2000 (S.J.); Arturo De Hoyos' article "Development of the Scottish Rite Rituals", published in *The Plumline*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Spring 2007); and *Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor and Guide* (2007) by the same author.

