

In every mythology the world has ever known, there is the story of the Hero's quest. It is the search of Gilgamesh for the Flower of Immortality, of Odysseus for home, of Parsifal for the Holy Grail. It is also the quest of the Master Mason for the Lost Word and of the Scottish Rite Mason for the Royal Secret. If we, as Masonic Brothers, are to get the full benefit of what Freemasonry and the Scottish Rite have to offer, it is important that we first understand why we are Masons. The purpose of our systems of Degrees is to set each of us on a personal path to enlightenment.

When one approaches the Degrees for the first time or returns to enjoy a Reunion of his Valley, he is participating in a most ancient tradition. He is actively engaged in the eternal quest for a higher awareness; he is reaching across the generations to join his Brothers, both living and dead, in the timeless pursuit of that which is noble in man. Certainly, that pursuit begins in the Degrees of the Symbolic Lodge. Indeed, one of the first things we learn in the Craft Degrees is that Masonry is a progressive science, meaning that we learn by our own stages of experience and that all the Degrees of Masonry represent a journey.

We are taught in the Entered Apprentice Degree, for instance, that the Lodge is a representation of the world and that our journey through it is a representation of our own journey through life. As we progress through the Degree, we learn the importance of our outward relationships with others and with the institutions of our society. Then in the Fellowcraft Degree, we are taught that it takes a combination of intellect, experience, intuition, feeling, emotion, and education to make real progress in life. We discover our dual nature and that there is a spirit within us which can lead us to improve ourselves. In the Master Mason Degree, we turn inward and come face to face with our own worst enemy, our ego. Then

The Quests Of The Scottish Rite

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*The Scottish Rite extends Masonry's
quest for what is noble in man.*



we are given the opportunity to transcend our passions and prejudices, and become true to who we truly are.

And it is only when we have thus prepared ourselves (through the quarries of our own effort) to this level of insight and understanding that we are ready to advance to the higher awareness that can then be discovered in our journey through the Scottish Rite. Indeed, the experience of the Candidate in the ceremonies of Freemasonry is supposed to be a transforming one in the human psyche. As we begin our journey, there is an important reason for Masonic ritual. The words are there for a purpose. Everything is allegorical, and we each discover that, when we are ready, when we have prepared ourselves enough to become receptive to the meanings which underlie our ritual words, only then will we be transformed as men. We will not only be better men for our families and in our society, but we will also improve ourselves.

The journey in Masonry, then, is indeed a quest for what is noble in man. But it does not end with the Craft Degrees. The Scottish Rite is designed to take the Master Mason, from whatever point of awareness he has gained in his journey through the Lodge, and carry him to a new level of insight. And it's a different kind of experience than the Blue Lodge Degrees.

The Blue Lodge hopes to give the Candidate a personal adventure and, through that participatory experience, to engage his emotions, moving him beyond those emotions to his intellect. The Rite has as its task engaging the Candidate's intellect directly, and, in so doing, encouraging his introspection which will then result in his personal enlightenment. That is why the Blue Lodge and Scottish Rite work well together. The one continues in knowledge and reason what the other introduces in form and discipline.

Clearly, the Scottish Rite is a progressive system of Degrees, and each Degree has a series of lessons, a context in time, a grouping (Lodge of Perfection, Chapter of Rose Croix,



27° costume



etc.), and a historical association. Each Degree then explores a specific set of ideas, has an overall theme (religion, knighthood, etc.), and comprises a guidepost, or marker, which gives us insight about our own Masonic journey, our personal quest.

It is important to note that these ideas and associations are almost never directly stated. They are supposed to be discovered. And we are free to disagree on whether or not all of the above elements can be found in every Degree. After all, we are each a little different, and we find ourselves in unique situations. There are often no right answers, although there are some which are clearly wrong. The power of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry is its ability to integrate its lessons into the psyche of each individual, meeting him on the level of his own experience and giving him an opportunity to be transformed by the path of his own quest.

From my perspective, the instruction of the Rite takes the form of four quests, with each Body of the Rite concerning itself primarily with one of these journeys to new knowledge and self-understanding. And again, these quests

never really end. They continue throughout our lives. But, taken together, they do some pretty profound things within. So when thinking about the Rite, it may be helpful to look at your journey as a series of milestones to attain while following the four quests. These quests can be generally described as follows:

Lodge of Perfection—The quest for Masonic enlightenment and the awakening of one's personal spirituality.

Chapter of Rose Croix—The quest to strengthen the spark ignited by the Lodge of Perfection and to make it the guiding force of one's life.

Council of Kadosh—The quest to find ways to express that strengthened spark in the matters and affairs of the world at large.

Consistory—The quest for self-examination and empowerment which completes the process.

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These quests, I believe, relate the Scottish Rite to the great mythic cycles in which the Hero goes in search of that which will benefit himself and his people. It is a quest for Masonic Light, which means self-development, independence of thought, and the ability to live freely, profitably, and



creatively in the world. We learn that we do, in fact, create our own future by our actions, and every action we take—or fail to take—has consequences which echo unto the end of time.

The Scottish Rite teaches that what we build matters. There is no such thing as an unimportant action. We primarily build ourselves, and the selection of the materials we use for our own intellectual and spiritual life are the most important decisions we will ever make.

The Scottish Rite gives us the tools to have whatever life we want. We need only to select well, examine carefully, decide fairly, live spiritually, and love mightily. Our search for the beautiful and new

is a never-ending story of great adventure as we seek a greater understanding of our own being and a deeper awareness of the spark of the divine within each of us.

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