

Masonic Poetry

The Banks O' Doon

Ye flower banks o'bonnie Doon,
How can ye blume sae fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae fu' care!

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings upon the bough;
Thou minds me o' the happy days
When my fause love was true.

Thou'll break my heart, thou bonnie bird,
That sings beside thy mate;
For sae I sat, and sae I sang,
And wistna o' my fate.

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,
To see the woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its luvie,
And sae did I o' mine.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Upon a morn in June;
And sae I floursh'd on the morn,
And sae was pu'd or' noon.

Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose
Upon its thorny tree;
But my fause luvier staw my rose,
And left the thorn wi' me.

Robert Burns



Eastern Rose

The newsletter of the District of New South Wales-Shortland
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DISTRICT COMMANDERS MESSAGE

I am sure we all will agree that November 2015 was a great month to have been a member of our District. Prior to the regular meeting of the Saint Elizabeth Chapter on 7 November 2015 the 10^o, Elect of Fifteen, was exemplified under the Charter of the Lachlan Macquarie Chapter of Instruction by the same team as had previously exemplified the 9^o in June at Belmont. The chair was again occupied by Em.:Bro Roger Broadbent 32^o of the Saint Albans Chapter, the Candidates' role ably carried out by our own Terry Thomson. There was a good attendance by members of both Districts who complimented the ritual team on a job well done.

On the initiative of the Grand Commander the last daylight meeting of the Newcastle Northern Council in October was adjourned at the half way point to allow the 19^o, Grand Pontiff, to be demonstrated by members of the Council as an "open book" exercise. It is the first occasion that the Intermediate degrees of the 30^o ceremony have been seen outside of Sydney, and attracted a good level of interest from members of both Districts. To enable those attending to better understand the story as it developed I narrated the rubrics of the ritual, an innovation that was well received. The members of the ritual team were drawn from the Council members, Em.:Bro Dave Parsons 32^o OoM occupying the chair of the Puissant Grand Pontiff Commander. We were all pleased to see Ill.:Bro Gregor Stockert back from illness, reprising his accustomed role as Candidate.

Although I have not been informed officially it seems that I will not be succeeded by a member of our District when my term of office as District Commander expires in June. It is rumoured that it is the intention of the Supreme Council to amalgamate the Districts of NSW Shortland and Hunter under the superintendence of V.:Ill.: Bro David Padgett 33^o whose term of office does not expire until the Supreme Council meeting in June 2017. During my term I have enjoyed the friendship and spirit of co-operation that permeates our District, and I am saddened to realise that our history, that began when the Supreme Council 33^o for Scotland established a Chapter in Newcastle after the Second World War, is coming to its close. In common with Masonic organisations worldwide our Australian Order must consolidate to continue its high standards.

Tenth degree “Elect of Fifteen”



The Ninth and Tenth degrees superficially are concerned with the bringing to justice of the three Ruffians.

In the Ninth degree King Solomon dispatches a party of nine under the guidance of an “Unknown”, we are given no clue as to his identity other than that he is a shepherd. The tracing boards of the XVIII century depicts this “unknown” as a dog. A symbolism that is found in many quarters, e.g. the story of Tobias and the angel Raphael in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit, in which Tobias is accompanied by a dog, and the dog in the “Great Journey” of Yudhishtira preserved in the Mahabharata.

This party succeeds only in discovering the third Ruffian, hiding in a cave near Joppa. In the struggle to avoid arrest he is killed by Joabert (the candidate), who takes the Ruffians head back to Jerusalem as evidence that one of the villains has been accounted for. Solomon had given strict orders that the men were to be brought to Jerusalem alive in order that they might be properly tried. Joabert’s disobedience resulted in his own condemnation to death. However, his plea that he had acted in self-defence was accepted and he was received as a Master Elect of Nine.

Owing to one of the words occurring in the legend these degrees have become known as the “Vengeance Degrees”. This term is apt to give rise to the misconception that summary vengeance was inflicted, and to obscure the underlying moral...”Vengeance is mine sayeth the Lord”.

A second party, consisting of fifteen, is sent in the Tenth degree to investigate a report that two strangers had recently been seen in the neighbourhood of Gath. This expedition met with success, for Zerbal (the Captain of the Guard) and Benaiah (the Candidate) recognise the other two ruffians working in the quarry in the hill country. They offer no resistance and are carried back to Jerusalem, where they are tried, found guilty, and pay the penalty of their Obligations; after which they are decapitated, and their heads, together with that of the third ruffian, are exposed on the South, West and East gates of the city.

In both degrees the Chapter meets in King Solomon’s palace.

The symbolic age of the Elect of Nine is 8 years and 1 year Perfect; no age is mentioned for the Elect of Fifteen, but three times 5 years would be appropriate.

Nineteenth degree Grand Pontiff

“From this Degree we learn that to conquer ignorance and evil, we must solicit Divine help.”



Seated to the left of the
Illustrious Grand Commander
“prepared for action”
at the Council meeting are
Immediate Past Grand
Commander
Em.:Bro Peter Groves 31°OoM
Grand Orator
Ill.:Bro Kevin Short
Deputy Grand Commander
Em.:Bro Bill Bagnall 31°CoM



Our two District Commanders at
ease enjoying a quiet moment at the
Council Meeting.

V.:Ill.:Bro David Padgett 33°
District of NSW Hunter
and
V.:Ill.:Bro Ted Oldfield 33°
District of NSW Shortland



The Significance of the Numbering and of the Regalia of Certain of the Degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite

A mathematical extension of the figure 3 - the perfect number, symbol of the Trinity - would be a logical one for the Degree. i.e. $3 \times 3 = 9$, but the Ninth Degree is "Elect of Nine". Taking this a stage further to $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$, we find that the 27th Degree is "Commander of the Temple," clearly, also not applicable to the Degree of Perfection.

So, not to labour the point, but for the sake of emphasis, why eighteen? Have you ever considered this - or perhaps just accepted it?

The life of Jesus and in particular, his ministry on earth, provides the broad basis for our Order.

As a youth he attained his social majority when He was formally accepted as an adult 'member of the Sacraments' and of the Tribe.

At that stage of his life, a Jew is still referred to as "a son of .the Commandments." At the age of eighteen, the age of majority, according to the Jewish custom, the young man would have been deemed "able to draw the sword", to use the Biblical term, - that being the basis on which the tribes were numbered. He would thus be qualified, in every way, religiously, socially and functionally as an adult member of the tribe, - the Perfect Man as symbolized by the cubic stone.

Having attained His manhood, Jesus would thereafter have led the life of an ordinary member of the tribe, worshipping according to the Law and practising the trade of His earthly father, Joseph.

To digress slightly, it is of interest to note that in the New Testament in Greek, Joseph is described as a TEKHTON - that is, a builder or architect, rather than specifically, a carpenter.

Perhaps it is no co-incidence, between the two ancient languages in common use at the time, that the Hebrew character for "18" is pronounced very similarly to the Greek letter "PHI", itself the symbol for life and the fullness thereof and, in its anglicised extension "perfection". In view of the time which has elapsed, one can only surmise on this point, but the circumstantial evidence presented added to the facts stated above, appears to be quite adequate to justify the Eighteenth degree being so numbered. However, to return to the Jewish man of Biblical times, it was not until he gained maturity and experience that a man of the tribe was admitted to the Council of the Elders. This privilege was not accorded until the age of thirty was reached. The Sovereign of a Chapter, having fulfilled the ritual requirements of the Order, is elevated to the 30°, consistent with the ancient Jewish custom.

From the Book of Luke we learn that "and Jesus began to be about thirty years of age".

And again Luke tells us, "Jesus was baptised and the Holy Ghost descended upon Him and voice said, 'Thou art my beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased'."

There is a distinct parallel between the numbering of the Higher Degrees and their regalia and the three phases, of Jesus' ministry, ' which commenced, at this age. It is noteworthy that the symbol of the Trinity used when the various ranks of the Higher Degrees are written, thus further associates them with His ministry. You will doubtless have noticed this on the notice papers.

Understandably the first was a period of great difficulty accepted by only a few and some of them accepting Him, but not realizing who He was nor why He had come. St. Luke says, "Men mused whether He was the Christ or not". Naturally, anyone presenting people with a totally new doctrine has difficulties.

About this time, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness being forty days tempted of the Devil and He returned from the wilderness to His own country and preached in the synagogue.

Only rabbis were permitted to do this. Jesus is referred to in many instances in the various Gospels as "rabbi". This might seem a trifling point, but according to the Talmudic law, which governed the Jewish temple hierarchy, no bachelor could be a rabbi and the people asked: - "whence did he get this wisdom?. Is He not the carpenter's son?", and they were offended. They were filled with wrath and rose up and thrust Him out of the city to the brow of a hill, that they might cast Him headlong down. But He passed through the midst of them and went His way and He said, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country."

He was thought by many of the believers to have come to assume the kingship of the Jewish people and free them from Roman rule and this distressed Him. It troubled Him that they could not realize He had come with a higher purpose. St. Luke tells us, "He was in the world and the world knew Him not".

This first phase of His ministry was indeed a very difficult and stressful one.

Originally prepared by Ill.:Bro K. Hill-Griffiths 32°, Preceptor of the Holden Chapter of Improvement, Sydney, May 1989.

(to be continued)