

Zoroaster and the Symbolism of the 32nd Degree

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Also Sprach Zarathustra was composed by Richard Strauss in 1896. It means "Thus spoke Zarathustra", and it's initial fanfare, "Sunrise", should be familiar to most moviegoers: It was the theme to "2001: A Space Odyssey". This fanfare was also adopted by Elvis Presley as his introductory music for every concert from 1969 until his death. An interesting footnote, the Nazi party wanted to use this theme as the national anthem for Germany, but Strauss refused. This composition, called a tone poem, was based on Nietzsche's book of the same name. I would love to tell you that both Strauss and Nietzsche were Freemasons and thus there was some deeper connection between them, but unfortunately I can't find evidence for either.

Zoroaster

Zarathustra in Greek is pronounced Zoroaster. Zoroaster was an Iranian prophet who lived from 628 BC to 551 BC. He wrote down all his teachings in the book, "Avesta". Among them, he taught, "Good Thoughts, Good Speech, and Good Deeds". This religion, known as Zoroastrianism, was a major religion in Iran and India for over a thousand years. His followers are known as Zoroastrians, of which there are less than 200,000 today. Those in India became known as Parsi, or "Persians". Their ceremonies include purification by fire and clean water.



Zoroaster stands out as one of the earliest prophets to believe in monotheism, or one God, whom he referred to as Ahura Mazda, or "Wise Lord". He also advanced the concept of dualism, drawing a distinction between good and evil, and that every man had both good and evil within him. It is believed that Zoroastrianism greatly influenced the emerging Middle Eastern religions, specifically Judaism.

Ahura Mazda was the creator of heaven and earth, or the material and the spiritual realm. He is the source of the alternation of light and darkness, the giver of law, and the absolute center of nature. He surrounds himself with seven beings, the "beneficent immortals", of which there were four male, and three female. These beings personify the positive qualities that all men should seek: Goodness, Justice, Truth, Righteous Thinking, Devotion, Desirable Dominion, Wholeness, and Immortality. He taught that gods and mankind are both bound to observe these good principles. If men and gods follow these principles, it will bring the material and the spiritual worlds closer together.

You will see the similarities between Zoroastrianism and the three major western religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Not only are they all monotheistic, but they require actions and proper behavior from their followers. Earlier religions, such as Greek and Norse mythology, speak of the various gods, which demand sacrifice and tribute in order to gain their favors, but which do not require their followers to observe any sort of moral code. Zoroastrianism demands proper behavior as well as worship.

Regarding dualism: Ahura Mazda has an opponent, Angra Mainyu, the Destructive Spirit. He represents evil, and his followers who freely chose him, are also evil. Spenta Mainyu, the first immortal, known as the "Good Spirit", had a meeting with Angra Mainyu, and they were both given the choice of "life or not life", good or evil. This choice is also given to man. Just as there are good and evil spirits in the world, there are good and evil impulses within all men. This we can relate to the equilibrium we are told to seek in the 32nd degree, a balance within ourselves of dark and light forces.

Albert Pike wrote at length in *Morals and Dogma of the ancient Aryan religion*, which he thought was the earliest religion. Little is known of the Aryans, but this religion is said to have influenced two early religions, Zoroastrianism in Persia, and Hindu in India. Both religions are discussed and symbolically represented in the 32nd degree.

Trivium and Quadrivium

There are several references to sacred numbers in the 32nd degree: one, three, five, seven and nine. The geometric shapes that comprise the camp begin with a nonagon, or nine-sided figure, and conclude with a circle, the symbol of one. Recall there are seven immortal beings in Zoroastrianism, four male and three female.



These beings are mentioned in the seven voices when the Great Tetractys is lit:

"The Seven are all of One Mind. One is their Thought, one their Word, one their Act."

"The Seven are four male and three female."

In the Fellowcraft's Degree Lecture in the Symbolic Lodge, the Trivium and Quadrivium are introduced. The Trivium are the first three Liberal Arts and Sciences: Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic. They are followed by the

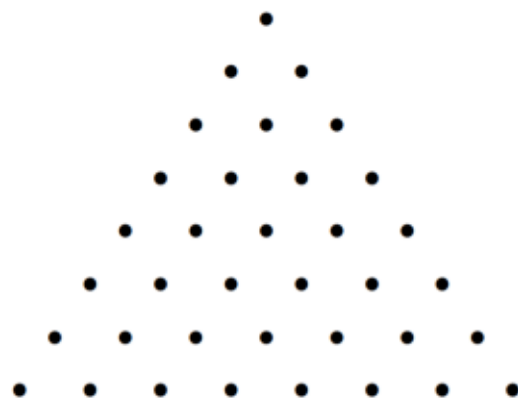


Quadrivium: Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. The candidate is instructed that each of them affords a wide field for the accomplished scholar and Mason to dilate upon. When received in the East, the candidate is taught these liberal arts are a

valuable branch of education, which tends so effectually to polish and adorn the mind.

Yet they are always identified as the SEVEN Liberal Arts and Sciences without distinction, and many Masons may live their whole lives referring to them only as such. In the classical method of education established by Plato, the student was first taught the Trivium. After they have mastered the three basic subjects, they are permitted to learn the Quadrivium, the four higher subjects that require a solid foundation before study can begin. Four and three, together makes seven.

The Great Tetractys of Pythagoras, revealed in the 32nd degree, is a triangle of points. It has eight rows, with one point at the top growing to eight points at the bottom, with an additional row of eight points forming the left and right sides of the triangle. This symbol is presented to the Aspirant without explanation.



He is told that unlike in the three degrees of Symbolic Masonry, where meanings are spoon-fed to the candidate, it is your responsibility as a Master of the Royal Secret to uncover the meaning of this symbol for yourself. This admonition occurs over and over again in this degree. Remember, you are here to think, if you CAN think. And to learn, if you CAN learn.

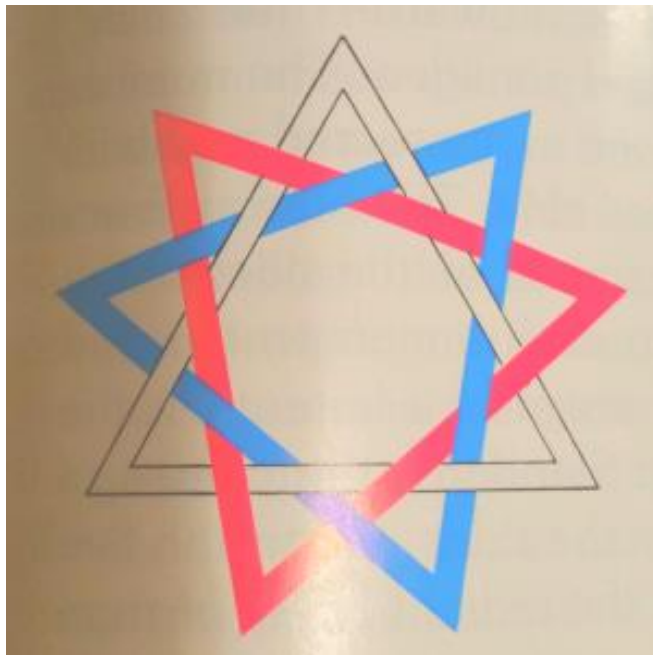
One meaning Pike alludes to in Morals and Dogma is that the Great Tetractys is a diagram of the Beneficent, or Bountiful, Immortals of Zoroastrianism. The single point at the top is Ahura Mazda. Each row adds an additional immortal, and the final row contains all eight beings.

The Three Faced Bust and Triple Triangle

The three faced bust is a symbol of trinity, and you will recall that three is one of the sacred numbers. This bust could mean the trinity of Ahura Mazda, Varuna of the Vedas, and Mithra. This trinity was a fallback to polytheism that occurred after Zoroaster's death, and became the centerpiece of the Mithraic religion, also detailed in the 32nd degree. Another trinity is Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva of the Hindu religion, representing the concepts of creation, preservation, and destruction. The third trinity Pike refers to is Agni, Usha, and Mitra, or AUM, represented in the triple triangle placed on the altar.



The triple triangle, when displayed on a backdrop, are interlocking red, white, and blue triangles. Around the altar are situated red, white, and blue candles or light bulbs. The



significance of these colors have several related explanations. To the alchemist blue, red and white may represent certain qualities or materials, to the Kabbalists something else entirely. For a Master of the Royal Secret, red denotes the material aspect of man, the virtue of zeal and the vice of anger. Blue denotes his spiritual aspect, reflected in the canopy of every lodge and of Earth itself, drawing man's eyes and thoughts heavenward toward that divine

inspiration for all our actions as Masons. White represents the human soul, the purity of its original state and demands from us the highest standards of conduct.

The interlacing of the triangles symbolizes the interconnection of the material and the spiritual world. While we are separated in one sense, we are at the same time, overlapping and interacting at many points. It also means the interlacing of the mortal with the divine. When faith successfully interlaces with reason, man achieves harmony, or equilibrium, the Royal Secret of which we are all supposed to be Masters. As the wise philosopher Alywn Macomber said, "Faith and reason are the shoes on your feet. You can travel further with both than you can with just one."

Conclusion

Masonry is not merely a sphinx; it is a sphinx that has been buried under centuries of sand. The second password's translation is literally "a secret, a mystery". It teaches you that by the attainment of wisdom and the application of justice you may arrive at great truths which are hidden from the ignorant, the cruel, and the rapacious. Only by studying the symbolism of Scottish Rite Freemasonry may you discover these hidden truths for yourself.

One of the lessons of the 32nd degree is "To work is to worship". It is not enough to simply receive the degrees and pay your dues. You must be involved in the Scottish Rite, participate in the degrees, attend the meetings, join a study group, read the numerous books available, complete the correspondence courses. Our Valley is a living, breathing thing. You are not helping your Valley to grow by sitting at home, ignoring the various lessons and philosophies which have been laid at your feet. You are not helping yourself, or any of our brethren, by keeping your light under a bushel.