



The Temple of Solomon

October 2009 Knights Templar Education

Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Florida

In our several Masonic rituals, nothing is more impressive and profound than the Chamber of Reflection. We see it in the first degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite and in our own Chivalric orders. We found an article on the Chamber of Reflection. It is more reflective of the Chamber used in the first degree of other rites but it gives us an idea of its use in our rite. Due to its length, we divided the same in three issues. Enjoy!

The Chamber of Reflection Part Two

by W. Bro. Helio L. DaCosta Jr.

BREAD AND WATER

The chunk of bread and the pitcher of water are symbols of simplicity, pointing to the future initiate how he should conduct his life. Bread is made of wheat, an element connected to the goddesses Isis and Demeter. Isis is the Egyptian mother goddess and also the goddess of the dead, again, two of the aspects of the Chamber of Reflection. Furthermore, according to the ancient description of an initiation into the Mysteries of Isis by Apuleus, the candidate was placed in a secluded cell and subsequently participated in a



ceremony in which he had to overcome trials. Demeter was celebrated at the great festival at the Temple of Eleusis, which became known as the Eleusinian mysteries. The bread and water represent the elements necessary to life, but even though food and the material body are indispensable, they remind the candidate that the physical aspect should not be the main objective in one's existence. Moreover, these elements remind us of the biblical narrative regarding the prophet Elijah, who is also connected with these elements and a cave (see I Kings 17: 8-11). He established a school of prophets in a cavern on a mountain. Furthermore, Elijah after eating bread and water, climbed the mount of God, in the same way that our future initiate nourished by these symbols can withstand the trials ahead and climb his own mountain. Elijah, once on the mount, also heard God as the still small voice, just as our candidate should follow his inner voice throughout his life, as we can read in I Kings 19: 5-13.

ALCHEMICAL ELEMENTS

Three of the alchemical elements used in the great work were sulphur, salt and mercury, all of which are present in the Chamber of Reflection. Sulphur is symbolical of the spirit, being a masculine principle, referring to enthusiasm and corresponding to the virtue of Faith. Salt is a symbol for wisdom, being considered neutral, as far as gender is concerned, referring to pondering (something the candidate does in the Chamber of Reflection) and corresponding to the virtue of Charity. Mercury appears as the rooster drawn on the 16 Freemasonry Victoria Spring 2008 wall of the Chamber of



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Reflection. This animal is connected to the deity Hermes, that is, Mercury. It is a feminine principle, referring to Vigilance and it also corresponds to Faith. As the rooster sings at dawn announcing the light of day, so it announces to our future initiate, the Light he may receive.

THE HOURGLASS

This object is a reminder of mortality. It also brings to mind that time runs fast, just as the sand runs through the hourglass. It also conveys the meaning that we should make good use of the time given us. Moreover, our candidate is reminded that therefore, he should write his answers and philosophical testament within the allotted time.

V.I.T.R.I.O.L. (U.M.)

Vitriol is a sulphuric acid or a sulphate used in the alchemical operations of yore. This word is the origin of the adjective vitriolic, meaning caustic or hostile, referring to speech or criticism. However, in the esoteric sense, it is an acronym for the Latin phrase: *Visita interioraterrae, rectificandoque, invenies occultum lapidem*, which means: "visit the interior of the earth, and rectifying it, you will find the hidden stone." Sometimes this acronym appears with the addition of U.M. at the end, which means, *veram medicinam*, the true medicine. If one takes this advice metaphorically, the meaning conveyed is that, one must search within oneself, as the truth is hidden there, and this truth is the real solution to our problems. Again, a very appropriate acronym to be placed on the wall before the future initiate, while he has to write his philosophical testament.

PERSEVERANCE AND VIGILANCE

In some rites these two words are also placed on the wall. The word perseverance is placed under the hourglass, if one is not physically present but painted on the wall, while the word vigilance is placed under the figure of the rooster. These two words intimate to the candidate that he must possess these qualities in order to succeed in his Masonic life. The symbols, allusions, allegories and metaphors of the rituals are not plain. The Freemason must scrutinize them persistently in order to appreciate their richness and deep significance, and be vigilant that the lessons learned there from be not forgotten.

(To continue in our next issue)

If your Commandery has any ideas or topics they would like to be included in future monthly newsletters, please contact one of the members of the Knights Templar Education and Leadership Committee:

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