

## *Freemasonry, Patriotism, and Despotism*

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Patriotism is continually on the mind of the Scottish Rite Freemason, but perhaps more especially so at this time of the year. One place to find lessons about patriotism within the Rite is the 30<sup>th</sup> Degree, Knight Kadosh, or Knight of the White and Black Eagle.

You will remember that in this degree, the candidate must make certain professions, one of which states his beliefs regarding political matters. The candidate is prompted to proclaim that he believes “In being a loyal and peaceable citizen and in government by the consent of the governed, with equal treatment for all.”<sup>1</sup> This statement clearly brings to mind the very foundations of our own republic here in the United States of America.

During this degree the candidate is informed that, “You know that we only admit among us those persons whose integrity, whose unsullied reputation, whose unimpeachable honesty, and whose honor lift them above the mass of mankind. Their courage, zeal, and fidelity make it impossible to doubt or distrust them. Free of prejudices and improper influences, they are prepared to labor in the great work of the Knights Kadosh. Many, my Brother, are called, but few are chosen. Many faint on the way, and many wander from it and are lost.”<sup>1</sup>

Are you ensuring that you do not wander, or faint, but can be among the few that are chosen? How is a Scottish Rite Freemason supposed to accomplish these things?

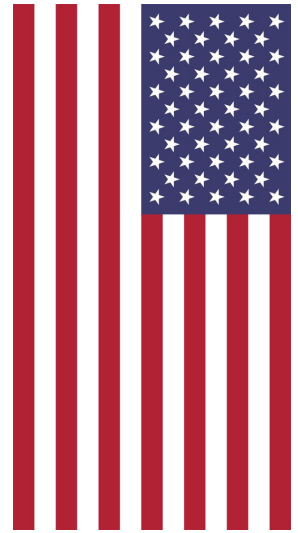
In the work, little, if anything, is left to the imagination in this regard. We are told that Knights Kadosh labor “to war against oppression, injustice, and usurpation. We labor to free men from their own ignorance, prejudice and error. These vices lead to the bondage of despotism and enslavement.”<sup>1</sup> To accomplish this, the Knight must have attained true manhood. “He is free from childish notions, capable of distinguishing the Truth, and is man enough to follow it. His empire is over himself. He has overcome the fear of death and sacrificed his weaknesses and passions on the alter of Masonry.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet, in true Masonic fashion, we are humbled by being reminded that we must appeal and defer to Deity. We do so through the motto *Nekam Adonai*, which we are taught means, “Vengeance is Thine, O Lord. Thou will repay.”<sup>1</sup> As such, it is indeed our duty to labor, but the motive of vengeance is not suitable for a Knight Kadosh.

At the birth of our nation, and before the Scottish Rite came to our shores, Benjamin Franklin, PGM of Pennsylvania, addressed the Constitutional Convention with these words: “I think a general Government necessary for us, and there is no form of Government but what may be a blessing to the people if well administered, and believe farther that this is likely to be well administered for a course of years, and can only end in Despotism, as other forms have done before it, when the people shall become so corrupted as to need despotic Government, being incapable of any other.”<sup>2</sup>

This despotism is what we are working to avoid, by freeing men from their own ignorance, prejudice and error.

As such, we are best to follow the advice of our first President, and PM, George Washington, wherein he admonished, “I shall expect you will confine yourself to your studies; and diligently attend to them; endeavouring to make yourself master of whatever is recommended to, or required of you.”<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor and Guide, p742-755

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Franklin's Speech at the Constitutional Convention, <http://www.benjamin-franklin-history.org/constitutional-convention/>

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Parke Custis, January 7, 1798