

### **Eighth Degree: Intendant of the Building**

1. A nine-pointed star is an important symbol in this Degree. Discuss some of the various symbolic meanings and significance of the number 9 and its multiples.

On page 136 of *Morals and Dogma*, in the essay for the eighth degree, Intendant of the Building, Brother Albert Pike writes that “you still advance toward the Light, toward that star, blazing in the distance, which is an emblem of the Divine Truth, given by God to the first men.” A light blazing in the east is a familiar symbol to all Master Masons, for “as the sun rises in the east,” so we are taught that symbolically the light of knowledge comes from the east. That is why the Worshipful Master sits in the east, so that he can “rule and govern his lodge” with the light of his wisdom, just as the sun rules and governs the day. This idea of light/knowledge/life coming from the east is not new. Remember, for instance, that the wise men followed a star that was shining in the east, leading them to the “Light of the World.” Likewise, a few decades later, Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (what Christians now celebrate as Palm Sunday) from Bethany — from the east — symbolizing the triumph of light over darkness, freedom over oppression, and the Kingdom of Heaven over the Kingdom of Earth.

In the eighth degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite we are told specifically that the star shining in the east is a nine-pointed star. Because symbols, colors, numbers, and other elements of the regalia, sets, or dramas of the Scottish Rite almost always mean something, the question one must ask is: why nine? Most symbols of stars have five points (the stars on the U.S. flag, the symbol of the Order of the Eastern Star); some have six (the Star of David, “classic” sheriffs’ badges); and some even have seven points (the stars on the flag of Australia, the heptagram used in Kabbalah or alchemy). So what is the significance of a nine-pointed star, or enneagram? And what is important about the number nine?

To make a nine-pointed star, one can connect the corners of a nonagon by drawing a line between every second point, or every fourth point. This will yield two different types of nine-pointed stars. Neither of these, however, will result in the symbol used in the eighth degree. To create this particular nine-pointed star, one must interlace three equilateral triangles. By this point in his Masonic journey, every Mason knows that

the triangle is a symbol of Deity. In the lecture of the Entered Apprentice degree we first learn of the three columns, representing Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. In the lecture of the Master Mason degree we associate these columns with the three Grand Masters and, if we are astute, recognize that together they represent the triune aspects of God, who had the “wisdom to contrive, strength to support, and beauty to adorn” the Creation — the first triangle. Add to this the lessons we just learned in the seventh degree, Provost and Judge, that God is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, as well as just, equitable, and impartial in his judgments, and we three triangles which can be interlaced to create this nine-pointed symbol of Deity or, as Pike wrote, Divine Truth.

The number nine itself is unique among all numbers in many ways that can lead to its being used as a symbol of perfection or completion. First, it is the only number that, when multiplied by whole integers, yields results whose individual digits add up to nine. For example,  $9 \times 5 = 45$ , and  $4 + 5 = 9$ . Or  $9 \times 13 = 117$ , and  $1 + 1 + 7 = 9$ . Second, the difference between any whole integer and the sum of its digits will be a multiple of nine. For example,  $76 - 13$  (which is  $7 + 6 = 13$ ) =  $63$ , and  $6 + 3 = 9$ . Third, the difference between two positive integers that are transpositions of each other will yield a multiple of nine. For example,  $82 - 28 = 54$ , and  $5 + 4 = 9$ . There are many other interesting and unique mathematical characteristics of the number nine. (See Wikipedia’s article “9 (number)”.) One can imagine the Deity having fun playing with these properties and delighting when men figured them out.

Of symbolic importance to Masons, the number nine is a trinity of trinities:  $3 + 3 + 3 = 9$ , or  $3 \times 3 = 9$ . And because it is the last and highest single digit in a base-10 numbering system, it can represent the end of a cycle, or perfection — an apt symbol for the Lodge of Perfection. (Note that the ninth degree, the Elu of the Nine, is directly at the center of the Lodge of Perfection, with five degrees before it, and five after it.)

In the ritual of the eighth degree the lodge is lit by 27 lights, in three groups of nine, each forming a triple triangle. Thus we see the triple triangle represented three times. Twenty-seven is the cube of the divine number three,  $3 \times 3 \times 3 = 27$  (put another way, it is three nines), and  $2 + 7 = 9$ . In the lodge there are five more lights in front of the Venerable Master’s station. Not only is five the difference between two and seven, but adding them to the other lights we come up with:  $27 + 5 = 32$ , possibly emblematic of the

thirty-second degree of Scottish Rite Masonry — that goal to which the Intendant of the Building aspires.

Finally, in our quest for Masonic Light, we had to knock at the door of the Lodge three times in each degree. Only when we had knocked nine times did we receive further light as Master Masons. The lessons taught by the rituals of our Craft—including the obligations, the Working Tools, and the lectures—which admonish us to become better men as we build our spiritual temple, can perhaps be best summed up by Galatians 5:22-23, where Paul lists the *nine* fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.