

AN ILLUMINATION OF MASONIC COLOURS

An Abbreviated Version of his ANZMRC Kellerman Lecture 2010 Given by WBro Kevin Allen, PGBB, to the Hawke's Bay Research Lodge No 305 on 1st November 2010

*"The covering of a Freemasons Lodge is a celestial canopy of divers colours, even the heavens."*¹

Brethren, I first became interested in Masonic colours when listening to a Pod cast from the Digital Freemason. The Pod cast² was a paper written by Brother Tuckwood³ and briefly detailed some observations on colours in Freemasonry. I discussed my interest with a close friend and he recommended I look into the subject with a view to doing a paper expanding on the broadcast.

My first point of reference was to look at what is colour? Colour is simply light of different wavelengths and frequencies and light is just one form of energy that we can actually see that is made up from photons. We are surrounded by electromagnetic waves of energy of which colour is just a small part. The visible spectrum of colour as we see it consists of seven main colours: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

The retinas in our eyes though have three types of colour receptors in the form of cones. We can actually only detect three of these visible colours – red, blue and green. These colours are called additive primaries. It is these three colours that are mixed in our brain to create all of the other colours we see... how clever we are!

The wavelength and frequency of light we see, also influences the colour we see. The seven colours of the spectrum all have varying wavelengths and frequencies. Red is at the lower end of the spectrum and has a higher wavelength but lower frequency to that of violet at the top end of the spectrum, which has a lower wavelength and higher frequency.⁴

Colour simply comes from light. So let's look at light as the source of colour. For all practical purposes, light travels in straight lines unless the pressure from some stellar body, near which it is passing, deflects it. It can be reflected by a mirror, refracted by a prism, or focused by a lens. Hence by such means it may be used to extend the realms of knowledge through the agency of such instruments as the telescope, the microscope, and the spectroscope; or to increase the sum total of human happiness through the medium of such devices as the camera, the cinema, and sound films.

Light supplies the energy that enables the plant to build up in its tissues all those substances on which alone the whole animal creation and we depend on food. Without light neither plant nor animal can maintain a healthy existence; and many disorders to which our bodies are prone are now cured by regulated exposure to solar radiation. Thus rickets and various skin diseases are said to disappear as the result of a few hours' exposure to the unfiltered rays of the sun.⁵

In Freemasonry our ritual uses light in the first degree as a symbolic sign of knowledge and truth. In the second degree the candidate affirms that as the sun is constantly revolving on its axis in its orbit round the sun, and as Freemasonry is universally spread across its surface, it necessarily follows that the sun must always be at its meridian with respect to Freemasonry.

In the second degree we are told that when Joshua fought the battles of the Lord in the going down to Beth-horon and he spoke those memorable words "Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon: and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon and it is written in the volume of the sacred law that the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies".

¹ All references from New Zealand Ritual Page 79

² <http://www.thedigitalfreemason.com>

³ <http://www.iosphere.net/~dixonr/colors.html>

⁴ <http://www.colourtherapyhealing.com>

⁵ MARTIN W. M. B.sc., F.R.G.S. Masonic Light, Research Lodge of Wellington No 194, Paper 133

Therefore it was the extended light of the day that allowed Joshua to finish his battle. In a paper Bro C F Thomas explains that science has proved that light is vocal, that is to say the rapid vibrations in the ether waves that constitute light cause a peculiar sound although not audible to the unassisted organs of human hearing. It is the opinion of many scientists that it is the action of the Sun upon this Globe, which causes the daily revolutions on its axis. Mr E W Maunder, RRAS, of the Royal Observatory, Greenwich, has written on this subject and confirmed the occurrence in history when the sun, moon and earth were in that position to allow such a long day.⁶

Light is again referred to in the third degree in the charge after raising when the brother is told about the bright morning star whose rising brings peace and tranquillity to the faithful and obedient of the human race. Freemasons are called Sons of Light because they are in possession of the true meaning of the symbol, while the uninitiated who have not received this knowledge are said to be in darkness. This is amply illustrated in a publication *Sons of Light*.⁷

In a Volume of Sacred Law (Good News Bible) it states, "In the beginning, when God created the universe, the earth was without form and desolate. The raging ocean that covered everything was engulfed in total darkness, and the power of God was moving over the water. Then God commanded "Let there be light" and light appeared. God was pleased with what he saw. Then he separated the light from the darkness, and he named the light Day and the darkness Night".

We as Masons have both Night and Daylight Lodges. But is DARKNESS but a shade of light? Indeed light can produce all the colours of the rainbow. A simple experiment with light shone through a prism produces a rainbow of colour. Both Dark and Light can be used to describe shades of the colour we see. *LUX E TENEBRIS*: Latin meaning "Light out of darkness." *DARKNESS*: Symbolizes that state of ignorance before light (knowledge) is received.

Light in history has been revered as an object of adoration, as the primordial source of knowledge and goodness. It is a source of positive happiness and without it life could barely exist. Darkness by placing nature, as it were, into a state of nothingness, and depriving man of the pleasurable emotions conveyed through sight, was ever held in abhorrence, as a source of misery and fear.

In speculative Masonry light refers to both truth and knowledge. Our system uses the words interchangeably. A Freemason uses light as a symbol of the search for truth and knowledge.

Darkness in speculative Freemasonry is deemed a symbol of ignorance, and so opposed to light, which is a symbol of knowledge. Hence the rule that the eye should not see until the heart has conceived the true nature of those beauties, which constitute the mysteries of the Order.

Darkness in the 3rd Degree is a symbol of death where the room is in darkness. While the subsequent renewal of light refers to that other and subsequent lesson of eternal light.⁸

The Masonic Colours

Having referred to the source of colours let us now look at colours in Freemasonry. The Masonic colours, like those used in the Jewish tabernacle, are intended to represent the four elements. The white typifies the earth, the sea is represented by the purple, the sky-blue is an emblem of the air, and the crimson of fire.

Blue - this is emphatically the colour of Freemasonry. It is the appropriate tincture of the ancient craft degrees. It is to the Freemason a symbol of universal friendship and benevolence, because, as it is the colour of the vault of heaven, which embraces and covers the whole globe, we are thus reminded that in the breast of every brother these virtues should be equally as extensive.

⁶ THOMAS Bro. C. F. Address on the Second Degree 7th February 1949, Hawks Bay Research Lodge No 305 Paper 54

⁷ Linton. Kenneth G. Sons of Light, 1983 United Grand Lodge of Victoria.

⁸ MACKEY Albert C. MD Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences on line version <http://www.freemasonrysaust.org.au/edumaterials.html>

In the Volume of Sacred Law, there are many references to blue. It was a sacred colour to the priests of Israel in biblical times. It is first used in the VSL in Exodus 25:3-4 "And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goat's hair." There are also references to blue in Numbers, Chronicles 2, Esther, Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Albert Mackey, Freemason historian and scholar, notes that the blue of the Old Testament is a translation of the Hebrew "tekelet" which is derived from a root word signifying "perfection." He develops the idea that blue was anciently, and universally, sacred. Down through not just the centuries, but also the millenniums (thousands of years), we see evidence of blue as denoting many sacred attributes.⁹

Blue signified Deity - Early Religious Forms of Sun Worship:

Man's earliest forms of worship were of the sun and fire. The sun rose up against a blue sky, travelled and set in a realm of blue; so to associate the colour with Deity is as obvious today as it was, then.

The Egyptians, too, believed that the colour blue was a sacred colour. Their god, Amun, was painted light blue. The ancient Babylonians clothed their Pagan idols in blue, as we may read from the prophet, Jeremiah (Jeremiah 10:6-10). In mystical Chinese philosophy, blue represented the symbol of the Deity. They believe blue to be composed of black and red which represent the male and the female and the active and passive principles. The Hindus believe that their God, Vishnu, who is represented by a celestial or sky "blue," symbolized the wisdom, which emanated from God.

Jacob, Abraham's grandson, saw a ladder ascending from earth up into the blue of the heavens. Henceforth, it has been known as "Jacob's Ladder". Among the Druids, (wise men and philosophers) blue was the symbol of truth and the candidate, in the initiation into the sacred rights of Druidism, was invested with a robe composed of the colours, white, blue and green.

Blue is not only the colour of the sky, but of the oceans, of pure mountain streams and lakes. It is an emblem of purity and beauty.

The colour blue has long been held to signify eternity and immortality; pale blue is especially associated with peace. In royal heraldry, blue or azure symbolizes chastity, loyalty and fidelity.

In painting, the colour blue is frequently used in ethereal settings, such as of clouds and angels. Thus blue signifies humility, fidelity as well as hope and faith. We are taught that the covering of a Lodge is the clouded canopy or starry-decked heaven.

In the United States, lodges are called "blue" lodges. Freemasons in other parts of the world do not call their lodges "blue" lodges, and they find this to be a particularly "American" curiosity.

And down through the ages, no matter which language, which country or which era in history, the colour "blue" has universally signified the virtues - Truth, Faith, Hope - as well as peace, humility, fidelity, chastity, purity, eternity, immortality, beauty and wisdom. And, of course, "True Blue" denotes loyalty.

Royal Blue in England - it has been suggested by Bernard Jones that the deep blue colour, Oxford Blue, was borrowed from the ribbon of the Most Noble Order of the Garter (an English order of chivalry or knighthood, circa 1348). During 1344-1351 (Medieval England) the Most Noble Order of the Garter was founded by King Edward III as a society, a fellowship and college of knights.

Previous to the 16th century, the "mantle" vestments (robes) worn by members of royalty were made of wool. By the 16th century, they were made of velvet. Circa 1600s and 1700s: The mantle was originally purple, but varied during the 17th and 18th centuries between celestial blue, pale blue, royal blue, dark blue, violet and ultramarine. Today, mantles are dark blue and lined with white taffeta.

⁹ Mackey's Encyclopedia

The Garter itself is worn on ceremonial occasions around the left calf by knights and around the left arm by ladies. It is a buckled, dark blue (originally a light blue) velvet strap and bears this motto in gold letters: "Shamed be the person who thinks evil of it" (translated from the French).

The Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle is a Scottish order of chivalry with the original date of its inception unknown. James VII of Scotland (also known as England's King James II) instituted the modern order in 1687, however there are legends that go back to 787 as to its original inception.

The Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle is comprised of the sovereign (ruler) and sixteen Knights and their ladies. These sixteen members were required to be Scottish-born. In addition to the sovereign and the Knights and their ladies, the Order also included "extra" knights (members of the British royal family and foreign monarchs).

The Order's primary emblem is the thistle, the national flower of Scotland. Scotland's Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle is equivalent in England to the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the oldest documented order of chivalry, dating back to the middle of the 14th century.

In 1687, the colour of the "ribbon" was purple-blue. The Order was allowed to become non-operative for many years, however when Queen Anne came to the throne in 1733, it was re-founded and the colour of the ribbon was changed. Today the ribbon of the Order is a broad dark green sash worn across the body from left shoulder to right hip.

Where does the blue dye come from? The Hebrew Bible mentions a specific blue dye, called Tekhelet (also spelled as Techelet), for use in the priestly garments as well as was incorporated in the layman's tzitzit (the formal tassels or fringes of clothing), which some believe refers to the azure-turquoise-indigo blue dye from a sea snail called a *Chilazon* or *Hexaplex trunculus*. Initially purple in colour, when the dye is allowed to be placed in the sun, it turns into a bright azure/turquoise/ indigo colour of blue. The Chilazon was also known as the *Murex* snail.

Another source of blue dye was woad (*isatis tinctoria*), also known as Asp of Jerusalem. It is grown in Europe and was until the 16th Century the only source of blue dye. From then on indigo was brought back from the Far East by traders and was also used.

Azure, the clear blue colour of the sky although Cerulean is also used to mean sky-blue but it is really from a Latin word, *Caeruleus*, meaning dark blue, the appropriate colour of the symbolic degrees sometimes termed "Blue Degrees". Azure means blue in heraldry and in an engraving to show the coats-of-arms it is represented by horizontal lines of shading.

Purple is the appropriate colour of those degrees, which, in the American Rite, have been interpolated between the Royal Arch and Ancient Craft Masonry, namely, the Mark, the Past, and the Most Excellent Masters.

It is in Freemasonry a symbol of fraternal union, because, being compounded of blue, the colour of the Ancient Craft, and red, which is that of the Royal Arch, it is intended to signify the close connection and harmony which should ever exist between those two portions of the Masonic system. It may be observed that this allusion to the union and harmony between blue and red Masonry is singularly carried out in the Hebrew word that signifies purple. This word, which is *argamun*, is derived from *ragam* or *reham*, one of whose significations is "a friend". But Portal, in his "Comparison of Egyptian Symbols with Those of the Hebrews", says that purple, in the profane language of colours, signifies constancy in spiritual combats, because blue denotes fidelity, and red denotes war.

In American Freemasonry, the purple colour seems to be confined to the intermediate degrees between the Master and the Royal Arch, except that it is sometimes employed in the vestments of officers representing either kings or men of eminent authority, for instance, as the Scribe in a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons.

In the United Grand Lodge of England, Grand Lodge Officers and Provincial Grand Lodge Officers wear purple collars and aprons as the symbolic colour of the Past Master's degree, to which all Grand Lodge Officers should have attained. It is also considered in the United States as the appropriate colour for the collars of officers of a Grand Lodge.¹⁰

In English Freemasonry, the officers of the Grand Lodge and the Past Grand and Deputy Grand Masters and Past and Present Provincial Grand Masters are called purple brethren, because of the colour of their decorations, and at meetings of the Grand Lodge are privileged to sit on the dais.¹¹ Grand and Provincial Grand Lodges are thus designated by Doctor Oliver in his "Institutes of Masonic Jurisprudence". The term is not used in the United States.¹²

Violet - this is not a Masonic colour, except in some of the advanced degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, where it is a symbol of mourning, and thus becomes one of the decorations of a "Sorrow Lodge" or "Lodge of Sorrow". Portal in *Couleurs Symboliques* (page 236) says that persons of high rank adopted this colour for mourning. Gampini in *Vetera Monumenta* states that violet was the mark of grief, especially among Kings and Cardinals.

In Christian art, the Saviour is clothed in a purple robe during His passion; and it is the colour appropriated, says Count de Gebelin in *Monde Primetif viii* (page 201), to martyrs, because, like their Divine Master, they undergo the punishment of the Passion. Prevost in *Histoire des Voltages vi* (page 152) says that in China, violet is the colour of mourning. Among those people blue is appropriated to the dead and red to the living, because with them red represents the vital heat, and blue, immortality. Hence, says Portal, violet, which is made by an equal admixture of blue and red, is a symbol of the resurrection to eternal life. Such an idea is peculiarly appropriate to the use of violet in the advanced degrees of Freemasonry as a symbol of mourning. It would be equally appropriate in the First Degree, for everywhere in Freemasonry we are taught to mourn not as those who have no hope. Our grief for the dead is that of those who believe in the immortal life. The red symbol of life is tinged with the blue of immortality, and thus we would wear the violet as our mourning to declare our trust in the resurrection.¹³

Scarlet is a symbol of fervency and zeal, and is appropriated to the Royal Arch Degree because it is by these qualities that the neophyte, now so far advanced in his progress, must expect to be successful in his search. The Mosaic sign of changing water into blood bears the same symbolic reference to a change for the better - from a lower to a higher state - from the elemental water in which there is no life to the blood, which is the life itself, from darkness to light. The progress is still onward to the recovery of that which had been lost, but which is yet to be found.

Scarlet was the distinctive colour of the Order of the Golden Fleece, established in 1429 by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (1419-67). Not only was the mantle scarlet, but also the robe and a special hat called the chaperon with hanging streamers.¹⁴

Red or crimson, for it is indifferently called by each of those names, is the appropriate colour of the Royal Arch degree and is said to represent the ardour and zeal which should actuate all who are in possession of that sublime portion of Freemasonry. Portal's *Couleurs Symboliques* (page 116) refers

¹⁰ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 161

¹¹ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 161

¹² Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 161

¹³ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 858

¹⁴ MACKEY Albert C. MD Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences on line version.

the colour red to fire, which was the symbol of the regeneration and purification of souls. Red or crimson, the colour of fire and heat is traditionally associated with war and the military. In Rome the paludamentum, the robe worn by generals, was red. The colour of blood is naturally connected with the idea of sacrifice, struggle and heroism. It also signifies charity, devotion, and abnegation, perhaps recalling the pelican that feeds its progeny with its own blood. In the degree of Rose Croix, red is the predominating colour, and symbolises the ardent zeal, which should inspire all who are in search of that which is lost.

The colours Red, Blue, Purple were called in the former English Lectures “the old colours of Freemasonry,” and were said to have been selected “because they are Royal, and such as the ancient Kings and Princes used to wear” and sacred history informs us that the veil of the Temple was composed of these colours.

In Hebrew, the name of the first man, Adam, is akin to red, blood and earth. This connection with earth may explain, perhaps, the connection of red with the passions, carnal love and the cosmetics used by women to attract their lovers. It is the colour of youth. Generally, it represents expansive force and vitality. It is the emblem of faith and fortitude and, in the Royal Arch, of fervency and zeal. It has also a darker side, connected with the flames of hell, the appearance of demons, the apoplectic face of rage.¹⁵

Green, as a Masonic colour, is almost confined to the four degrees of Perfect Master, Knight of the East, Knight of the Red Cross, and Prince of Mercy. In the degree of Perfect Master it is a symbol of the moral resurrection of the candidate, teaching him that being dead to vice he should hope to revive in virtue.

In the degree of Knight of the Red Cross, this colour is employed as a symbol of the immutable nature of truth, which, like the bay tree, will ever flourish in immortal green. This idea of the unchanging immortality of that which is divine and true, was always connected by the ancients with the colour of green. Among the Egyptians, the god Phtha, the active spirit, the creator and regenerator of the world, the goddess Pascht, the Divine preserver, and Thoth, the instructor of men in the sacred doctrines of truth, were all painted in the hieroglyphic system with green flesh.

In the degree of Prince of Mercy, or the twenty-sixth degree of the Scottish Rite, green is also symbolic of truth, and is the appropriate colour of the Degree, because truth is there said to be the palladium or safeguard of the Order.

In the degree of Knight of the East, in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, green is also the symbolic colour. We may very readily suppose, from the close connection of this degree in its ritual with that of the Companion of the Red Cross, that the same symbolic explanation of the colour would apply to both, and Brother Mackey was of opinion that such an explanation might very properly be made; but it is generally supposed by its possessors that the green of the Knights of the East alludes to the waters of the river Euphrates, and hence its symbolism is not moral but historical.

The evergreen of the Third Degree is to the Master Mason an emblem of immortality. Green was with the Druids a symbol of hope, and the virtue of hope with a Freemason illustrates the hope of immortality. In all the Ancient Mysteries, this idea was carried out, and green symbolized the birth of the world, and the moral creation or resurrection of the initiate. If we apply this to the evergreen of the Master Mason we shall again find a resemblance, for the acacia is emblematic of a new creation of the body, and a moral and physical resurrection. The acacia or Masonic evergreen has been suggested as a symbol of a moral life of rebirth and also of immortality and is so used in the Masonic Memorial Service to a departed brother who has gone to the “Grand Lodge Above”.

¹⁵ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Albert G MACKEY, 1906 Louis H Everts & Co, Philadelphia. Pages 634, 635

The Bible has but few references to it as a liturgical colour. In the Book of Esther, it mentions the green hangings in the King's palace, but uses green to indicate the products of the good earth, in this sense associated with plenty, the opposite of famine.

The Grand Lodge of Scotland has adopted thistle green as its emblematic colour and a green ribbon or collar was part of the regalia of the Country Steward's Lodge, originally No. 540, which had a short life and was constituted in 1789 for the particular association of stewards charged with making arrangements for an annual festival that met out of London. Grand Lodge permitted the members to wear a special jewel suspended from a green ribbon or collar, the colour having been chosen apparently because of its suggestion of the countryside. The members were also given the right to wear a green apron, a privilege withdrawn about 1797, although that of wearing the green collar was retained.

In the Masonic fraternity, the Scottish Rite, a Perfect Master is the title of the 5th rank of the 33rd Degrees. Its symbolic colour is green to remind the Master that "being dead in vice, he must hope to revive in virtue", and his symbol is a compass extended in sixty degrees to remind him that he should act within measure and justice.¹⁶

Yellow is used in Freemasonry only as gold, the symbol of the sun and therefore of constancy, while silver represents the moon. Universally, yellow has been held to represent jealousy, incontinence and treachery. But in heraldry whereas in masonry, yellow represents gold - its significance being entirely reversed, which as yellow is derived from the sun, the most exalted of colours, gold is the noblest of metals.

Among the ancients, divine light or wisdom was represented by yellow. The golden candlestick of seven branches, which is part of the furniture of a Royal Arch Chapter, is derived from the holy candlestick, which Moses was instructed to construct of beaten gold for the use of the tabernacle. It is referred to in the first degree when the candidate is clothed with his apron - "more ancient than the golden fleece". It is also the colour referred to in the third degree "or the golden bowl be broken". In which the golden bowl is metaphorically the brain.¹⁷

In the old instructions of the Scottish and Hermetic Degree of Knight of the Sun, yellow was the symbol of wisdom darting its rays, like the yellow beams of the morning, to enlighten a waking world. In the Prince of Jerusalem, it was also formerly the characteristic colour, perhaps with the same meaning, in reference to the elevated position that degree occupied in the Rite of Perfection, and afterward in the Antient and Accepted Scottish Rite.

Years ago, yellow was the characteristic colour of the Mark Master's Degree, derived, perhaps, from the colour of the Princes of Jerusalem, who originally issued charters for Mark Lodges; for it does not seem to have possessed any symbolic meaning. In fact, as has been already intimated, all the symbolism of yellow must be referred to and explained by the symbolism of the gold of the sun, of which it is simply the representative.¹⁸

Prichard says that in the early part of the eighteenth century the following formed a part of the Catechism:

*Have you seen your Master to day?
How was he clothed?
In a yellow jacket and a blue pair of breeches.*

¹⁶ Wikipedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masonic>

¹⁷ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co.

¹⁸ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co.
Page 900

And he explains it by saying that "the yellow jacket is the compasses, and the blue breeches the steel points".¹⁹

In the Antient and Accepted Scottish Rite, the volume in which the transactions, statutes, decrees, balusters, and protocols of the Supreme Council or a Grand Consistory are contained is called the *Book of Gold*.²⁰

The colour white, like life itself, is the base colour for Freemasonry. When an initiate is made a Brother in Freemasonry he is clothed in a white apron. He is told when he is invested that the apron is from the skin of a lamb, a symbol of purity and innocence. In the New Zealand Constitution this base white continues to be the basic colour of an apron, even to the Grand Master. The only difference being other colours and filigree added to denote status.

White is one of the most widely used colours of the ancient mysteries. In the Bible, white is widely used to represent purity.

Some examples are found in the Bible, Masonic Edition²¹: -

Isaiah 1:18 "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

Daniel 12:10, "Many shall be purified, and made white."

Daniel 11:35 "And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed."

Matthew 17:2, "and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."

Revelations 20:11 "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them."

John 20:12 "And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

In the religious observances of the Hebrews white was the colour of one of the curtains in the tabernacle, where, according to Josephus, it was a symbol of the element of earth; and it was employed in the construction of the ephod of the High Priest, of his girdle and of the breastplate.

White among the ancients was consecrated to the dead because it was the symbol of the regeneration of the soul. In the 33rd degree of the Antient and Accepted Scottish Rite, the Sovereign Inspector has been invested with a white scarf as inculcating that vigorous department above the tongue of all reproach, which should distinguish the possessors of that degree, the highest in the Rite.²²

The gentiles likewise used white for purity. The Egyptians wrapped their dead in white; in Pythagoras' school the sacred hymns were chanted while wearing white robes; the druids dressed their initiates in white; and in Persia the Magi wore white robes.

On 24th June 1727, the United Grand Lodge of England decided that Masters and Wardens were to wear their Jewels hanging to a white ribbon.²³ In Freemasonry we use white and black balls: the white being the affirmative vote. This custom appears to be derived from the Romans who in the

¹⁹ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 900

²⁰ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co.

²¹ The Bible in Freemasonry, A Lewis (Masonic Publishers) LTD, 1975

²² Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co.

²³ MARTIN A.W. Further understanding of Craft Freemasonry 2007, Peacock Publications Page 65.

early days of the Republic used white and black balls in judicial trials; the balls were cast into an urn, the former acquitting and the latter condemning the accused.

Black - different writers have different views on this colour. Black in the Masonic ritual is constantly the sign of grief. When a Brother dies and the lodge is in mourning, a black ribbon is worn by the Brethren at the next appropriate meeting. Often a eulogy is delivered in lodge. This is perfectly consistent with its use in the world where, from ancient times, black has been adopted as the garment of mourning.

In Freemasonry, this colour is confined to but a few degrees, but everywhere has the single meaning of sorrow. Thus in the French rite, during a ceremony of raising in one of the degrees, the lodge is clothed in black, strewn with the representation of tears as tokens of grief for the loss of a distinguished member of the fraternity, whose tragic history is commemorated in that degree. This usage is not, however, observed in the York Rite.

The black of the Elected Knights of Nine, the Illustrious Elect of Fifteen, and the Sublime Knights Elected, in the Scottish Rite, has a similar import. Black appears to have been adopted in the degree of Noachite, as a symbol of grief, tempered with humility, which is the virtue principally dilated on in the ceremony.

The garments of the Knights Templar were originally white, but after the death of their martyred Grand Master, James DeMolay, the modern Knights assumed a black dress as a token of grief for his loss. The same reason led to the adoption of black as the appropriate colour in the Scottish Rite of the Knights of Kadosh and the Sublime Princes of the Royal Secret.

The modern American modification of the Templar costume abandons all reference to this historical fact. One exception to this symbolism of black is to be found in the degree of Select Master, where the vestments are of black bordered with red, the combination of the two colours showing that the degree is properly placed between the Royal Arch and Templar degrees, while the black is a symbol of silence and secrecy, the distinguishing virtues of a Select Master.²⁴

Those who do not wish the candidate to be admitted use the "blackball" in a Masonic ballot. Hence, when an applicant is rejected, he is said to be "blackballed". The use of black balls may be traced as far back as the ancient Romans. Thus, Ovid says in the *Metamorphoses* (xv, 41), that in trials it was the custom of the ancients to condemn the prisoner by black pebbles or to acquit him by white ones: *Mos erat antiquus, niveis atrisque lapillis, His dammare reos, illis absolvere culpa.*²⁵

In German Lodges the "Schwarze Tafel", or Blackboard, is that on which the names of applicants for admission are inscribed, so that every visitor may make the necessary inquiries whether they are or are not worthy of acceptance.²⁶

The "Ebony Box" is a symbol, in the advanced degrees, of the human heart, which is intended to teach reserve and taciturnity, which should be inviolably maintained in regard to the incommunicable secrets of the Order. When it is said that the ebony box contained the plans of the

²⁴ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 115

²⁵ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 115

²⁶ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 115

Temple of Solomon, the symbolic teaching is, that in the human heart are deposited the secret designs and motives of our conduct by which we propose to erect the spiritual temple of our lives.²⁷

Silver is the colour of the tassels and tau cross appended to the apron of a Master of the Lodge. It is impossible to say when the silver tassels made their first appearance as standard decoration for the MM's apron but they were officially prescribed for the first time in 1841, Book of Constitutions (UGLE)²⁸

In the Third Degree in our Ritual, taken from Ecclesiastes, we find the expression "or ever the silver cord be loosed". An opinion of this reference is that the silver cord is the spinal marrow; its loosening is the cessation of all nervous sensibility. It forms part of an introduction to the ceremony whose object is to teach symbolically the resurrection and life eternal.²⁹

Tartan - this is an interesting subject, as in New Zealand we see members of the Scottish Constitution wearing aprons showing Scottish tartan worn over Scottish kilt and jacket in traditional Scottish dress with the tartan socks often with their dirk (contrary to the laws of Freemasonry where no weapon of offence or defence about them).

There are several tartans in existence around the world with a "Universal Tartan" produced by Utah Grand Lodge. In 2004, the Grand Lodge of Utah sponsored the design and production of a tartan fabric that would represent Freemasonry in Utah, as well as elsewhere.

Scottish tartan plaids have been used for centuries by Scottish clans as a means of identifying and unifying families across the country. This tartan was designed with the family of Freemasonry in mind. Anne Carroll Gilmour, an internationally known weaver specializing in traditional Scottish tartan weaving, designed the pattern and submitted it to the Scottish Tartans Authority in Perthshire, Scotland for registration. The pattern was deemed unique and the Registration Certificate issued. A mill near Edinburgh was then commissioned to weave the cloth in bulk.

The colours in the cloth were carefully chosen to represent the various Masonic family organizations, including, but not limited to, the Blue Lodge, Scottish Rite, York Rite, Shrine of North America, Job's Daughters International, DeMolay International, Order of the Eastern Star, Daughters of the Nile, et cetera. The main field of blue in a prominent pivotal position represents the dome of the universe as in Blue Lodge Masonry. The dominance of royal purple in the opposite pivotal field represents Scottish Rite Masonry, York Rite Masonry, Job's Daughters International and many other Masonic organizations. The prominent Red Cross carries with it much symbolism used throughout Masonry. It also represented the colours of the five points of the Eastern Star, red, white, blue, green and gold/yellow as well as related colours connected with the Social Order of the Beauceants, the White Shrine of Jerusalem, the Daughter's of the Nile and many others.

As a Scottish family's unique tartan represents that family throughout the world, so too does the Freemason's Universal Tartan represent the family of Freemasonry and its goals to make this world a better place to live in. The Freemason's Universal Tartan in action.³⁰

In Scotland the only official tartan is for the Grand Lodge of Scotland, which is registered in the Scottish Register of Tartans Act 2008. This splendid tartan is based on the colours as used by Grand Lodge since its inception in 1736 as well as other colours of Masonic and/or Scottish significance. The main colours are thistle green and gold. The minor colours are blue and black.

²⁷ Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences. Comprising the whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution. Albert G. Mackey M.D., 1906 Philadelphia Louis H Everts & Co. Page 238

²⁸ The Apron and its symbolism, Brother F.R. Worts, M.A., P.A.G.D.C. Ars Quator Coronatorum 2076

²⁹ The Ritual of the Three Degrees of Freemasonry Revised Edition 1981, Wright & Carmen Ltd (N.Z.) Page 224. (Opinion of Albert G. Mackey M.D)

³⁰ <http://www.utahgrandlodge.org/freemasons-universal-tartan.html>

The Grand Lodge of Scotland possibly chose thistle green because the founder members were inspired by the Order of the Thistle (founded in 1687) - the highest Order of Chivalry in Scotland. Thistle green also reminds us of the national flower (some would say weed!).

The thistle and the associated legend that an invading Viking army went barefoot to sneak up on sleeping Scots and when they stood on thistles the Scots were alerted and the Vikings were defeated. Green is also the colour of good luck.

Gold - the Grand Lodge of Scotland's motto is 'In the Lord is all our Trust' and is reflected in the use of gold in the tartan as this colour represents TGGOTU. Gold also represents the masculine, entirely appropriate for an all male organisation.

Dark blue is symbolic of wisdom and loyalty. The former reminds us of Solomon and the latter he who is the most prominent in our final ceremony. The colour also serves to remind us of the main colour of our national flag - the Saltire.

Whilst recognising that black is not a 'real' colour, as such, it is used in the tartan because of its paramount symbolic importance in the highest degree in Freemasonry - that of a Master Mason. When wearing this tartan every Freemason will be constantly reminded of the lessons of the Third Degree and to regulate his thoughts and actions accordingly. Although this is the significance of black in this tartan, black also has for Freemasons, the symbolic attributes of mystery, which is entirely appropriate for those who have been initiated into the Mysteries of Freemasonry.³¹

Other Tartans are worn around the world where affiliated to Grand Lodge of Scotland. For example in Korea, Lodge Han Yang 1048 (SC) which became a 100 years old on May 29th 2009.³²

Rainbow - we are all familiar with the rainbow that is caused by the sunlight being refracted through rain, similar to shining light through a prism. There are organisations associated with the rainbow that are Masonic.³³

³¹ Personal communication with COOPER R. L. D. Curator of Grand Lodge of Scotland Museum and Library

³² http://www.investkorea.org/InvestKoreaWar/work/journal/content/content_main.jsp?code=4580410

³³ ***International Order of the Rainbow for Girls:*** A Masonic youth service organisation, which teaches leadership training through community service. Seven Bow stations teach about their colours and its corresponding virtue. Red/Love, Orange/Religion, Yellow/Nature, Green/Immortality, Blue/Fidelity, Indigo/Patriotism, Violet/Service. ***Order of the Eastern Star:*** The largest fraternal organization in the world to which women and men belong. The insignia of the Order is a 5-pointed star (point down pentagram) with each of the Star Points has a colour, a flower, a symbol and an emblem. For Adah, the colour is Blue, and the additional symbols are the Violet, the open Bible and Sword and veil united, representing fidelity to vows and honour. For Ruth, the colour is yellow, and the additional symbols are the yellow Jessamine, Lily of the Valley and Sheaf, representing constancy, patient industry and the dignity due those who may find themselves at the lowest spoke of its wheel. For Esher, the colour is White, and the additional symbols are the Lily, Sun and Crown and Sceptre, representing light, justice and loyalty to the welfare of others. For Martha, the colour is Green, and the additional symbols are the fern, lamb and broken column, representing humility, immortality and hope when bearing the uncertainties of human life. For Electa, the colour is Red, and the additional symbols are the red rose, lion and cup, representing fervency, courage, charity and hospitality.

Banners in the Royal Arch:

There are four banners used in the Royal Arch and their colours are blue, purple, scarlet and white. In America the symbols on the banners are a Lion, an Ox, a Man and an Eagle.³⁴

Flags displayed in lodges vary according to their relationship to a Grand Lodge and the flag of their country. The colours depicted on each country's flag being individualised and entirely symbolic of that country.

Use of Colour to Illustrate Culture:

"From Rite to Ritual" is a painting by an Australian artist Danie Mellor. The picture is a contemporary indigenous piece. It explores the fragile relationship between white and black Australia.

The picture appears to show the inside of a lodge room with numerous Masonic symbols. It is mainly in blue with the addition of some colours to highlight Australian features of the picture. The presence of indigenous Australian animals throughout the picture provides a different focus but allow for more diverse thoughts in relation to the painting.

Perhaps the Rite here is the solemn observance of Australia how it was and the Ritual is the way order has been proscribed in modern Australian society. It is certainly a use of colour to make a point and was an award winning painting in 2009 year's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award.³⁵

Use of Colour to Personalise Identity:

The Organisation that we are members of, the Australian and New Zealand Masonic Research Council, have their own colour symbols. A blue circle edged with silver with the gold, square and

³⁴ 1. An eagle, on a blue banner. This represents the Tribe of Dan, and is borne by the Grand Master of the First Veil.

2. A man, on a purple banner. This represents the Tribe of Reuben, and is borne by the Grand Master of the Second Veil.

3. An ox, on a scarlet banner. This represents the Tribe of Ephraim, and is borne by the Grand Master of the Third Veil.

4. A lion, on a white banner. This represents the Tribe of Judah, and is borne by the Royal Arch Captain.

³⁵ Art proves culture's not skin deep

Mackay-born Danie Mellor with his artwork From Rite to Ritual, which won the major prize in the 26th Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award this week. It is being displayed at the Museum and Art Gallery Northern Territory. The artwork of a blue tent thrown between two floating skeletons looks more like a very large medieval illustration rather than a contemporary indigenous piece. Then again, the ginger-haired artist who created it looks far from indigenous himself. But appearances can be deceiving, and cultural identities are more than skin deep.

It is a concept Mackay-born artist Danie Mellor has explored throughout his career as an artist, and the judges of this year's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award were impressed.

Mr Mellor took out the top indigenous art award this week in Darwin with his work From Rite to Ritual. It was a surprising choice for the judges as the blue and white paper-based work was the polar opposite to the usual dot paintings associated with indigenous art.

Yesterday his colleagues at Sydney College of the Arts were celebrating Mr Mellor's win which is not only a top Australian art award but also a lucrative one with \$40,000 in prize money.

Mr Mellor was born in Mackay in 1971, but his indigenous roots are further north in the Atherton Tablelands, which was his mother's country. His mother was Irish and Aboriginal while his father was American-Australian.

Mr Mellor said his artworks explored the concept of "shared history" between indigenous and European Australians. He has a distinguished career in Australian art with his works displayed in major galleries nationwide.

His original training was in printmaking specialising in mezzotint engraving. Mr Mellor now lectures in art theory at the College of Fine Arts Sydney.

<http://www.dailymercury.com.au/story/2009/08/15/art-proves-cultures-not-skin-deep/>

compasses. It shows the two countries in white with a torch in the background. Bro Michael Leon, at Grand Lodge New Zealand, to improve the colour and the message, recently enhanced the current logo originally designed by WBro Andy Walker in 2000.

The message being to communicate research within Australia and New Zealand for the benefit of all Freemasonry worldwide.³⁶

Lodge Roland's Mural:

This small mural by John Lendis features some of the symbols found in a Freemason's Lodge. The columns, tessellated pavement, blazing star, square and compasses are all referred to in their ceremonies and have a deep significance for Freemasons.³⁷



The mural was sponsored by the Lodge Roland, which is situated in Sheffield, Tasmania. The town is known as the mural town and features many more murals. This not only demonstrates the use of colour in an exciting and modern way but it also advertises Freemasonry in a positive light.

³⁶The aims of the Council are:

- Promote Masonic research & education on an inter-jurisdictional basis;
- Provide liaison between research lodges;
- Organise conferences;
- Organise and coordinate lecture tours by international Masonic scholars; and
- Publish the tour lectures, conference proceedings and other books.

³⁷ Painted by John Lendis, 1992 and located at High Street, Sheffield, Tasmania. The original sponsors are Roland Lodge and the copyright owner is SMARTA Inc. Reference: Sheffield - Town of Murals, Tasmania. Sixth Edition 2009, Page 26.