

THE SYMBOLISM OF COLOURS¹

CHAPTER XV

PART II - SYMBOLISM AND THE TEACHINGS OF FREEMASONRY

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Colours can possess deep significance, transcending their purely decorative values. Mythology and ancient records are replete with examples of colours used as symbols.

LIGHT AND COLOUR

Light is part of the electromagnetic spectrum, which includes radio waves, infrared radiation, visible light, ultraviolet radiation, X-rays and gamma rays. The range of possible wavelengths or frequencies in the electromagnetic spectrum is limitless. The electromagnetic waves are oscillating electric and magnetic fields that travel through space at the speed of light, which is almost 300,000 kilometres per second. Light is considered to exhibit wave and particle properties, in which the fundamental particle or quantum of light is called a photon. White light contains the complete range of the wavelengths comprising visible light, all at the same intensity.

When refracted through a prism, white light is diffused into a spectrum of colours having wavelengths ranging from about 400 nanometres at the beginning of the violet band and increasing to about 770 nanometres at the end of the red band, where a nanometre is one thousand millionth or 10^{-9} of a metre. The seven colours of the spectrum in sequence from the shorter to the longer wavelengths are violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red. Within this spectrum an infinite range of shades and densities is possible. Colour is determined by the wavelength of the visible light emitted or reflected from an object. When a surface is illuminated some parts of the white light are absorbed and other parts are reflected, depending upon the molecular structure of the material and the dyes present in it.

An object that appears to be white is one that absorbs the minimum and reflects the maximum of light rays, therefore remaining relatively cool. An object that appears to be black is one that absorbs the maximum and reflects the minimum of light rays, therefore becoming relatively warm. An object that appears to be red absorbs light

¹ http://www.themasonictrowel.com/library_of_articles.htm

from the violet end of the spectrum and reflects light from the red end. Colour is a significant feature of the universe that has many practical applications, as well as being important aesthetically. It can have a profound influence on the human temperament, from cooling to warming, from soothing to stimulating and from calming to exciting.

In a practical sense colour enhances perspective and definition, probably best illustrated by comparing a photograph in black and white with one of the same subject in full colour, which adds depth of field and brings the scene to life. Colour also is valuable in wild life, serving to attract or repel with important consequences. Even in plant life and in the inanimate world colours have their uses, which range from the production of chlorophyll by leaves under the influence of sunlight, to the differential breakdown of rocks by weathering. Colour also is invaluable in the exploration of outer space, when interpreting information obtained by photographs, by laser ranging, by optical telescope and by radio telescope. Indeed, every aspect of man and his environment is influenced by colour.

Language is often enhanced by references to colour. For example, the use of the expression "colourful language" to describe a particular passage of the spoken or written word implies that it is neither ordinary nor monotonous, but that it stirs the imagination by incorporating interesting and picturesque phrases. When a proposal for consideration is "set out in black and white", this means that all of the factors for and against the proposal are clearly defined without ambiguity, thus avoiding "grey" or uncertain areas that could be misunderstood. When people are said to view the world through "rose tinted spectacles", it means that their outlook is optimistic even though the circumstances may be discouraging. By way of contrast, when people are said to believe that "the grass on the other side of the fence is always greener", it suggests that they are dissatisfied with their circumstances and believe that others are always better off than themselves, whence envious people are said to be "green eyed". These are only a few examples of the way in which the attributes of colours are used to convey particular shades of meaning.

COLOURS IN ANCIENT CULTURES

Colours can possess deep significance, transcending their purely decorative values. Mythology and ancient records are replete with examples of colours being used as symbols to convey important cultural and religious concepts. In Hinduism, the primordial Way of the people of India combines religious beliefs, rites, customs and daily practices, in which white signifies a state of cleanliness. Hindu men wear a white garment at their wedding and if they are very strict throughout the remainder of their lives. In deference to the cleanliness of the deceased, Hindu women wear a white sari when in mourning. Among the Parsees of India and the Farsis of Iran, who are the

faithful or Zardushti of the ancient Zoroastrian religion whose three principles or standards of life are Purity, Uprightness and Truth, white is the colour of purity and is worn by men and women alike. In China, Confucius insisted that scrupulously clean clothes of white linen should be worn when fasting, even though from ancient times white had been the traditional colour worn in mourning.

Those Buddhist monks in Tibet who are adepts in tumo, which is the skill of controlling their inner heat regardless of the cold, wear only a white cotton shirt even in the severest winter weather, as a mark of their accomplishment. In Japan from ancient times white was the symbol of death and traditionally a bride still wears white, to show that after her wedding she is dead to her family, thenceforth belonging to her husband alone. Brides in other cultures also wear white, but as a symbol of purity, innocence and virginity. In the ancient Mysteries, including the Osiric of Egypt, the Mithraic of Persia, the Cabiric of Thrace, the Adonisian of Syria, the Dionysiac and Eleusinian of Greece and the Druidical of the Celts, the aspirants all wore a white cloak at some stage of the ceremonies to signify their cleanliness, their innocence or their perfection.

Although white was more widely used as a religious or cultural symbol than any other colour in antiquity, other colours also were important emblems. In Hinduism red is a symbol of the lifeblood and it is the colour most frequently associated with women, who wear red saris at their weddings and are cremated in red cloths. A Hindu woman wears a bindi or tilak, the red spot in the centre of her forehead, to show that she is Shakti the feminine power or manifestation of the creative principle. The bindi is also the Third Eye that Gautama Buddha wore on his forehead and is depicted on images of saints. In ancient China red was a symbol of the ambition and power of the lower self, which was worn or used as a decoration as an emblem of good luck, as it still is.

Among the ancients red signified fire and was an emblem of the purification and regeneration of the soul, in which sense a candidate who had reached the summit of his perfection in the Druids was crowned with a red tiara. Green also was an important colour that was adopted as a symbol of the astral plane, which is the plane of growth through desire. In the Mysteries of ancient Egypt, the serpent Apep who was an inhabitant of the earthly Duat was depicted in green. Apep signified the illusory and transitory state of all things in the lower plane, which is gradually recognised by truth in the form of the soul, ultimately ridding the soul of all impious desires. Among the ancient Egyptians black was used in the negative sense to signify darkness, ignorance and evil, but they also used black in the positive sense to indicate the unknown or the potential for development. Green, blue and white were sacred colours to the Druids and respectively signified hope, truth, and light.

COLOURS IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Although several examples have been given of colours as symbols in ancient Egypt, they alone do not adequately illustrate the importance of symbolism to the Egyptians. In his interesting book entitled *Symbol & Magic in Egyptian Art*, Richard H. Wilkinson examines the importance of symbolism in all aspects of Egyptian life. He introduces the subject with the following statement:

"Egyptian painting and sculpture were symbolically oriented to a degree rarely equalled by other cultures, for it was mainly through symbols that the Egyptians sought to represent many of their ideas and beliefs about the nature of life and death."

His book covers all aspects of Egyptian symbolism, with chapters on form, size, location, materials, colour, numbers, hieroglyphs, actions and gestures. Colour is of particular importance in its own right, but it also complements most other forms of symbolism, especially hieroglyphs. This relationship is emphasized in a passage from the *Book of the Dead* that says "Bring me a water-pot and palette from the writing-kit of Thoth and the mysteries which are in them".

COLOURS AS MODERN SYMBOLS

All of the colours that were significant in ancient cultures are still important symbols. The descendants of those ancient cultures usually assigned a similar significance to a colour as that attributed by their forebears, even though the symbolism of a particular colour did not always develop in the same way among people of different cultures. Colours are as important in speculative freemasonry as they were in the ancient Mysteries, the ancient religions and modern religions alike. Although there is a recognisable arrangement of colours in speculative freemasonry, the system of colours that are in use was not designed specifically as an overall scheme or science of colours, such as those deriving from some of the ancient religions and found in some other orders of freemasonry.

Nevertheless the colours of vestments, ornaments, furniture and decorations in speculative freemasonry have not been adopted arbitrarily, but have been selected with regard to their symbolism either in relation to a moral lesson being imparted, or in reference to an historic event of importance in the ritual. Although the rituals of some of the orders and degrees in speculative freemasonry do include references to the relevant colours and explain their significance, the reasons for the presence of a particular colour must often be inferred from the circumstances. A review of the symbolic significance of the important colours, with appropriate references to their usage from antiquity to the present day, will assist in an understanding of their masonic symbolism.

White was the most ancient and the most widely diffused of the symbolic colours. It was used in all the ancient Mysteries and is still used in many religious orders. White represents light and is a symbol of truth, wisdom and knowledge, in which context a new Jerusalem is promised in Isaiah 60:1 which says: "Arise, shine; for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you". White also is an emblem of purity and innocence. Thus the clothing of a person in ceremonial robes of white, not only in the ancient Mysteries but also in modern religious rites, is intended to signify that the lusts of the flesh have been cast off, that previous sins have been cleansed and that the person is obligated thenceforth to maintain a spotless life, thus symbolising spiritual purification. From time immemorial it has been customary to swathe the dead in white, alluding to the triumph of the soul over the empire of death and symbolising rebirth or resurrection. For this reason the mourners in many ancient cultures wore white at funerals, contrasting starkly with the wearing of black in modern times to indicate the sadness of the mourner. In this context black lacks the deeper philosophic and symbolic significance of white. White also is emblematic of the earth from which we derive our nurture and to which our mortal bodies will return at the end of our earthly existence.

Black is primarily a symbol of darkness, of ignorance and of evil. It also is used to signify disapproval, as when depositing a black ball in a ballot box. Black also is an ancient emblem of grief and sorrow. However, it is important to realize that black, or darkness, is not used invariably to signify a bad or negative sense, because from ancient times black also has had a higher aspect that indicates the unknown or potential for development. For example, to the ancient Egyptians darkness was the mystery of all mysteries, beyond all intellectual conception and hence it was symbolic of the First Principle, the Complete One, which was the Absolute and Unknowable Spirit. In the Muslim faith, the black stone of the Kaaba in Mecca is a symbol of the Indwelling Spirit and it represents a temple or house of God, which is a similar symbolism to that of Psalm 18:11, which says of the Lord: "He made darkness around him his hiding place and dense vapour his canopy." The following quotation from Exodus 19:9 illustrates yet another use of black, or darkness, which is as a symbol of silence and secrecy, because we read that the Lord said to Moses:

"I am now coming to you in a thick cloud, so that I may speak to you in the hearing of the people, that the people may hear when I speak with you . . .".

Blue is an ancient emblem, which is derived from the colour of the vault of heaven and is often used as a symbol of heaven. The ancient Egyptians revered blue as a sacred colour, symbolising an exalted and heavenly stature. In the Trimurti, which is the divine triad of Hinduism, Vishnu the preserver is depicted in celestial or sky blue to indicate that all wisdom emanates from God. The Babylonians regarded blue as a symbol of the Deity. The high priests of the Israelites wore robes of blue and other

parts of their accoutrements were decorated with blue, signifying perfection. The Jewish historian and general, Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE), who became a Pharisee and commanded the Jews in their revolt against Rome from 66 CE, said that the blue in the veils of the tabernacle of the nomadic Israelites represented the element of air, alluding to purification and perfection. The Hebrew word used for the blue in the veils of the tabernacle is Tau Kaph Lamed Tau, or tekelet, which actually signifies purple-blue or Cerulian purple, although usually translated as sky blue. Tekelet is derived from another word Tau Kaph Lamed Yod Tau, or tekélet, which implies perfection because it indicates a purpose or end. The Druids regarded blue as a symbol of truth, whilst the medieval Christians considered it to be an emblem of immortality and a symbol of perfection, hope and constancy. Blue has retained all of its ancient meanings over a range of circumstances, but it is especially a symbol of the intellect, of universal friendship, of benevolence and also of the mildness and fidelity that ought to characterise every freemason.

Red, crimson and scarlet are sometimes considered to be equivalent colours and all are universally regarded as an emblem of faith, but as symbols they also have individual meanings. Red has been used as an emblem since antiquity, when it usually signified fire and was an ancient symbol of regeneration and the purification of souls. In this context the phoenix was said to have risen from the ashes. Crimson also is an emblem of purification and regeneration. Scarlet is a symbol of celestial truth, which alludes to the cleansing effect of fire. In the Egyptian Mysteries both red and scarlet were symbols of energy and life. In Hinduism red signifies blood, which is the life source and therefore symbolises the creative principle.

From ancient times the Chinese considered red to be a symbol of ambition and power, which is why red has always been an emblem of good luck to them. The ancient Israelites considered red to be a colour of dignity, appropriate to the most opulent and honourable persons, in which sense it was used to embellish the accoutrements of high priests and prophets and was the colour of the cloaks worn by the rulers of Israel. The red in the veils of the tabernacle represented fire and alluded to the purification and regeneration of the souls of those who sought atonement. The Druids also regarded red as a symbol of the purification and regeneration of the soul. Finally, red is used as an emblem of bloodshed and also is emblematic of fervency and zeal.

Purple is a blend of blue and red which combines the characteristics of those colours. It is an ancient symbol of wisdom and celestial good and is also called the "robe of glory" referring to the soul. Purple has been regarded as a colour of dignity from time immemorial. In ancient times purple became an emblem of exalted office and nowadays it is the insignia of regal and supreme authority. Notwithstanding its appropriation to high office, purple is also considered to be a symbol of friendly union. This interpretation is especially appropriate because the Hebrew word for

purple is Aleph Resh Gimel Mem Nun, or argaman, which is derived from Resh Gimel Mem, pronounced ragam or regem, one meaning of which means a friend. The purple in the veils of the tabernacle was emblematic of water and also symbolised constancy in spiritual combats, because blue signifies fidelity and red signifies war. Purple thus reminded the worshippers that they should steadfastly pursue the truth, in which sense purple is akin to blue and green. The famous Tyrian purple was costly to produce, on which account purple also became a symbol of luxury and power.

Green was an important symbol in the religion of ancient Egypt, in which Ptah was a personification of the creative force of the one absolute God who had a thousand faces and a thousand manifestations, of which Aten was regarded as the Complete One, later identified with Ra who was regarded as the Absolute Spirit and the Light and Conscience of the Universe. As the creative force, Ptah was known as the divine potter and worked in conjunction with Thoth, who was a personification of the divine intelligence and the instructor of men in the sacred doctrines of the truth. Both Ptah and Thoth were usually depicted with green flesh in the hieroglyphic records, whence green became a symbol of truth and the immortality of the divine spirit. This is why the evergreen bay tree symbolises the immutable nature of truth and a sprig of evergreen acacia symbolises hope for a moral resurrection and the immortality of the soul.

The Druids name derives from the Greek drus, meaning an oak. They regarded the evergreen oak tree as sacred and as an emblem of the immortality of the soul and of the doctrine of reincarnation that they taught. One of the Druidic rites was to cut a piece of mistletoe from an oak, because they considered it to be a cure for various ailments of old age. To the Druids green also was a symbol of hope. The green olive branch has been an emblem of reconciliation, peace and tranquillity from time immemorial. Green also was an emblem of victory in ancient times, from which arose the custom of presenting a wreath of aromatic evergreen laurel leaves to victorious athletes in the classical age. It is in this context that the green bay tree, the evergreen acacia, the evergreen oak tree and its mistletoe and the evergreen laurel leaves all signify the victory of the soul over mortal death and hence they allude to the immortality of the soul.

As yellow is derived from the sun, it is considered to be one of the most exalted colours and gold, which it also represents, is considered to be the most noble of the metals. Gold and also its substitute yellow, both signify love, constancy, dignity and wisdom. Gold also is a symbol of spiritual qualities and of the endowments of the soul that are above the mental plane. Gold also signifies the divine light of wisdom and celestial truth, which is the condition implied in Revelations 21:18 that says: "And the city was pure gold, like unto pure glass". Yellow also is a symbol of kingship and supremacy over lower nature. However, like black, yellow is a colour that can be

applied in a good or a bad sense. In the bad sense yellow is used to denote jealousy, cowardice or treason, for which reason Judas is usually depicted wearing a yellow robe in medieval paintings and stained glass windows. Orange is allied to yellow and gold and its symbolism is similar, but tinged with the fervency and zeal of its red component.

Silver is an emblem of the moon, which is the passive satellite of the earth. Silver is complementary to gold, which is an emblem of the sun, the active centre of our solar system. Silver symbolises the mental powers with which man is blessed. They comprise his passive or inner aspect, contrasting with and complementing the active aspect of his physical nature. Silver also alludes to the power of speech. The association between our mental powers and the divine light of wisdom is illustrated in the description of God's unfathomable wisdom given in Job 28:1-3 which says:

"There are mines for silver and places where men refine gold; where iron is won from the earth and copper smelted from the ore; the end of the seam lies in darkness and it is followed to its furthest limit".

In violet the red symbol of life is tinged with the blue of truth, perfection and immortality. In this context violet is an ancient symbol of mourning used by persons of high rank. Closely allied with violet is the rainbow, which is a symbol of the higher mental plane that forms a bridge between heaven and earth. The rainbow is an emblem of preservation and salvation and hence is an appropriate symbol of the divine promise that was given to Noah by God, as recorded in Genesis 9:12-14 in which God said:

"This is the sign of the covenant which I establish between myself and you and every living creature with you, to endless generations: 'My bow I set in the cloud, sign of the covenant between myself and earth. When I cloud the sky over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud.' Then will I remember the covenant which I have made . . .".

COLOURS IN FREEMASONRY

Modern speculative freemasonry includes, extends and greatly amplifies the content of the symbolic instruction that previously was given in lodges of operative freemasons. In one sense speculative freemasonry is the theoretical application of the operative art, although not in the sense that the operative freemason applied practical theory to solve the problems associated with the design and construction of buildings. Modern speculative freemasonry has many branches. One branch comprises a number of traditional degrees relating to the temples at Jerusalem, which are the basis of speculative craft freemasonry. Another important branch is the Ancient and Accepted

Scottish Rite, which is called Rite masonry under various titles. Rite masonry comprises a comprehensive series of degrees that include the old Rite of Perfection and extend its teachings. The Royal Order of Scotland, the Knights Templar, the Knight Templar Priests, the order of Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine, the Allied Masonic Degrees and several other orders and branches of freemasonry extend the teachings established in speculative craft freemasonry.

Each of the several branches of speculative freemasonry has one or more colours that are characteristic of it. The characteristic colours of a branch of freemasonry are symbols that are relevant either to the underlying themes of the work being carried out, or to the symbolic environment in which the work is taking place. The characteristic colours usually feature in the regalia of its culminating degree, or in that of another degree in which the work is central to the theme of that branch. These colours may be used, for example, in a cloak or mantle that is worn, or in the ribbon of a jewel, or in an apron. In many branches it also is customary to print the notice papers for meetings in the characteristic colours of those branches. There also are colours that are symbolic of particular functions or conditions relevant to the work of a degree, which are specifically explained in the ceremony. In all of these applications the symbolisms are similar to those that have already been discussed. Another way in which colours are used in speculative freemasonry is as a distinguishing emblem in the regalia of the Grand Lodge or other ruling body of the branch of freemasonry concerned.

CHARACTERISTIC COLOURS

Blue is the fundamental colour of ancient, free and accepted masonry, or that branch of speculative freemasonry commonly called craft freemasonry and meeting in what are known as blue lodges. Blue is the fundamental colour because, as a symbol of universal friendship and benevolence, it is intended to remind every brother that in his breast these virtues should be equally extensive. The degrees of craft freemasonry are the basis of speculative freemasonry and are a prerequisite for membership of all branches of freemasonry. Capitular freemasonry is an extension of craft freemasonry and relates to the rebuilding of the temple and symbolically to the rebuilding of life. It is typified by the colour red and meets in Royal Arch Chapters, commonly called red lodges. Cryptic masonry is concerned with a secret vault and interconnects the themes of craft and royal arch masonry. Its meetings are held in a Council convened by the king and its characteristic colour is purple in allusion to the royal setting.

Purple also is a reminder of the close and harmonious relationship that should be maintained between the blue and red lodges. The traditional degrees are completed in Councils of Knights of the East and West and also in some of the Allied Masonic Degrees, which extend the theme of the temples at Jerusalem to the time of Cyrus and

include the building of the second temple. Green is the characteristic colour of the Council degrees, which is most appropriate because the theme is deliverance and reference also is made to the waters of Babylon, by which the children of Israel sat down and wept. The rainbow is the typical colour of the associated degree of Royal Ark Mariner, which has been worked for centuries and may be regarded as a foundation degree in freemasonry.

The thirty-three degrees of Rite masonry are in groups relating to different themes, each of which has its characteristic colour. Green is the characteristic colour of the first fourteen degrees of the Rite, which begin with the preparatory degrees of the craft lodge and continue the story of King Solomon's temple at Jerusalem until its destruction. In this group green is a symbol of the immutable nature of truth that will flourish forever in immortal green, like the green bay tree. Green is also an emblem of victory and it is a symbol of the moral resurrection of the candidate, teaching him that he should be dead to vice and hope to revive in virtue. The next four degrees of the Rite are concerned with the construction of the second temple by Zerubbabel, which is followed by the erection of the third temple after the destruction of the second. The characteristic colour of these degrees is rose red, which is a symbol of love and like ruby also is a symbol of the higher qualities of the mind. Then follows a series of twelve degrees that are of a chivalric nature and culminate in a degree referred to as Kadosh, from the Hebrew Kaph Daleth Shin, which signifies holy or consecrated. There is a common theme in the Knights Templar and the Kadosh degrees, for which the characteristic colours are white and black, in allusion to consecration and in commemoration of the martyrdom of an important character in the narrative. White is the characteristic colour of the three culminating degrees of the Rite, in which equity, justice, purity and holiness are the predominant themes.

There is a tradition that in ancient times a primitive lodge in Jerusalem was dedicated to St John the Baptist, later to St John the Evangelist and finally to both Saints John, although neither is known to have had any special relation with building or masonry. Modern masonic lodges are said figuratively to have descended from that lodge in Jerusalem. The early speculative craft freemasons adopted the two Saint Johns as their patron saints and held their installations twice yearly in June and December, on the festivals of the Baptist and the Evangelist respectively. The Royal Order of Scotland was established to preserve the purity of St John's masonry as it was practised in Scotland from the earliest times. Nearly all of the work is carried out in the chapter and it traces the teachings of freemasonry from the first temple, through the second temple to the third temple. The characteristic colour of the chapter is crimson, as an emblem of purification and regeneration and as a reminder that the purity of freemasonry should be preserved with fervency and zeal. The culmination of the work is carried out in a lodge or council and relates to the rank of Knighthood conferred by

King Robert the Bruce on the masons who rendered conspicuous service when fighting under him at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. The characteristic colour of the council is green, in commemoration of the green fields of Bannockburn and also in allusion to the third temple and resurrection through the Messiah.

White and red are the characteristic colours of the Knights Templar, in reference to the purity of their purpose and their martyrdom respectively. White and black are the characteristic colours of the Hospitallers of St John, which are now attached to the Knights Templar, though originally they were a separate order. White is an emblem of their chastity, obedience and poverty, while black is an emblem of their humility and also commemorates those who sacrificed their lives defending the church against infidels. The characteristic colours of the Knight Templar Priests are white and red, white being emblematic of purity and holiness and red signifying faith. However green, blue, black and gold also feature in the furnishings of the tabernacle and have the usual symbolism. In the Order of Rome and the Red Cross of Constantine, which provides a link between Royal Arch masonry and the Christian rites, the characteristic colour of the conclave is purple, alluding to its royal founder and his wisdom. In the Order's appendant degrees of the Holy Sepulchre and St John the Evangelist white is the characteristic colour, emblematic of purity and holiness.

COLOURS AS TYPICAL SYMBOLS

Although an order or a series of degrees in freemasonry may have one or more characteristic colours, the individual degrees within the order or series may use other colours as specific symbols, typical of that degree. For example, although blue is the characteristic colour of speculative craft freemasonry, the typical colour appropriate to the first degree, or Entered Apprentice, is white emblematic of purity, innocence and initiation. Blue is the typical colour of the second degree, or Fellow of the Craft, because it is emblematic of the intellectual knowledge and practical skill of the craftsman and his faithfulness to the fraternity. Lastly, green is the typical colour of the third or sublime degree of a Master Mason, alluding to his discovery of the characteristics of divine truth, his belief in the immortality of the soul and his hope of a resurrection.

An example of several colours being used in combination is to be found among the degrees of the Royal Arch Chapter, for which the characteristic colour is red, from which is derived the expression "Red Masonry" to distinguish it from the craft which is commonly referred to as "Blue Masonry". In the degree of Excellent Master the ceremony requires veils of blue, purple, red and white to be passed successively. These separate veils allude to the colours woven together into the veil of the tabernacle and represent the elements of air, water, fire and earth. They also allude to the obstacles that must be overcome in the search for and acquisition of truth.

Individually the veils are symbols of universal friendship and benevolence, of union, of fervency and zeal and of purity. Collectively they represent the ultimate discovery of the Divine Truth.

The use of several colours also occurs in Rite masonry, as in the series of degrees for which the characteristic colour is green. In that series white and black are the colours appropriate to the Secret Master, alluding to the sanctity of priesthood and the secrecy of the assignment. The degree of Perfect Master relates to the search for and discovery of the body of the Grand Master who was assassinated. The appropriate colour of a Perfect Master is green, a symbol of gladness and rejoicing for the recovery of the Grand Master's body and alluding to the resurrection of his soul. Black, scarlet and white are appropriate colours for the two degrees that recount the capture and bringing to justice of the ruffians, reminding us that "Vengeance is mine saith the Lord". In those degrees black commemorates the untimely death, scarlet alludes to the Lord's divine love and white alludes to the Lord's wisdom and is a symbol of truth. As a final example, the colour appropriate to the Royal Arch of Enoch is yellow, in allusion to the mystical plate of gold that is a symbol of the divine light of wisdom and also refers to the symbolic pillar of brass.

The clothing and regalia for each of the individual degrees in Rite masonry makes use of one or more of the colours white, black, green, royal blue, scarlet and purple to illustrate specific aspects of the allegorical teachings. Yellow or gold is always appropriate in relation to the Divinity and is frequently the colour that is used when depicting the All-seeing Eye. All-seeing Eye is used extensively in Scottish and American speculative craft freemasonry and it is also used in other orders. In speculative craft freemasonry the Sacred Symbol in the centre of the building, as well as the Glory in the Centre or Blazing Star, all are or ought to be depicted in gold. The rays of the Divine Light of Wisdom in Rite masonry and some other orders should always be depicted in gold. A final example of the symbolic use of yellow or gold is to depict the sun and its rays on tracing boards in speculative craft freemasonry and in capitular freemasonry.

LODGE AND GRAND LODGE COLOURS

In lodges held under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England, which was established in 1813, a Master Mason's apron is edged in Cambridge blue and the officers' collars are of the same colour. This was the original sky blue of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, which was adopted for use by the earliest lodges in England. However it is not the colour presently used in the Order, because soon after the accession of George I in 1714 the colour was changed to a much deeper blue, to distinguish the decorations from those previously conferred by the Stuarts on their adherents. This purple-blue is called royal blue and was adopted for the regalia of

officers of the Grand Lodge. It is referred to as garter blue in the Book of Constitutions, but is often incorrectly called purple. However the Grand Stewards' regalia is not royal blue, but the crimson of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, which was re-established by George I in 1725 as a reward for service.

The Grand Lodge of Ireland was constituted in about 1725. Whether by coincidence or design is not known, but the light sky blue used in the regalia of the Grand Lodge of Ireland and its private lodges is the same as that used in the Most Illustrious Order of St Patrick, which was founded by George III in 1783. The light sky blue is paler than the Cambridge blue used in English lodges. The aprons used in private Irish lodges are similar to English aprons, except that the blue edging incorporates a central silver stripe that is replaced by a gold stripe in Grand Lodge aprons. The Grand Lodge of Scotland was established in 1736, when it adopted the thistle green of the Most Noble Order of the Thistle, which James II restored in 1687 and Queen Anne re-established in 1703. Private lodges under the Grand Lodge of Scotland choose their own colours for their regalia, including blue, green, red and appropriate tartans. Scottish aprons have a rounded flap and are often embellished with silver or gold fringes and edging.