

FIRST DEGREE INNER WORK

(Draft 10/95)

1. Outer Opening

A. The Sign of Silence

When this is given, all Companions visualize a barrier of darkness surrounding the lodge space, separating it from the outside world.

2. First Degree Opening

A. The Sign of Entering

When this is given, all Companions visualize four angelic figures with outspread wings, one at the middle of each wall of the lodge. From them, a protective barrier of light spreads around the hall, just within the barrier of darkness.

B. Purification and Consecration

The cup and censer are each visualized as being at the center of a sphere of light of the appropriate color (blue for water, red for fire), and each traces a circle of this color around the lodge as they are taken to the four stations.

C. The Circumambulation

During the circumambulation, those who are circumambulating visualize themselves moving upwards, as though climbing a spiral stair. As they do this, a sphere of golden-white light comes into being above the altar: the Hidden Sun. The invocation to the Lord of the Universe is directed toward this.

D. The Awakening of the Thrones

Chief, Warden and Guide all have special patterns of energy to set up in the First Degree lodge. This is done as each of these officers takes his or her staff and throne; the Chief does this near the beginning, the others after the circumambulation. Other members should visualize a sphere of light - red for Chief, black for Warden, white for Guide - forming around the officer as the staff is taken up.

E. The Establishing of the Lodge

As the lodge is established, Companions should again visualize the four angelic figures at the sides of the lodge room, the spheres of light for water and fire at the appropriate stations, the spheres for the three major officers, and the Hidden Sun over the altar. This visualization should be maintained until the Chief seats the lodge at the end of the Opening.

3. First Degree Initiation

A. Introduction of the Candidate

The candidate is visualized, when first brought in, as though wrapped in a egg-shaped veil of murky darkness, but with a sphere of light above his or her head. The two Pillars are very faintly visible at his or her sides; as in the Qabalistic Cross, the White Pillar of Mercy is to the candidate's left, the Black Pillar of Severity to the candidate's right.

B. Purification and Consecration

Each time the candidate is purified with water and consecrated with fire, the veil of darkness disperses and the candidate's Sphere of Sensation becomes clearer and more luminous, with the images of the two Pillars at his or her sides more visible. The effect is slight at the first purification and consecration, substantial at the next two, and complete at the last; at the closing, the veil has been wholly transformed into an aura of light, with the Pillars clearly shown.

C. The Accuser and the Higher Self

These are the two main invisible stations on the floor of a lodge open in the First Degree. The station of the Accuser is east of the Altar, between the Altar and the Pillars; the station of the Higher Self is between the two Pillars themselves, in the station of the Guide. Both of these become visible when the candidate is called to the foot of the Altar by the Chief, prior to taking the Obligation.

The Accuser, the Archangel Samael, takes the form of a great angel in dark robes, its face stern and terrible. It bears a flaming sword in both hands. The Higher Self takes the form of an image of the candidate made wholly of light. This latter image first appears in the Sign of Entering, and remains in that Sign while the obligation is taken.

When the candidate bows his or her head, the Accuser sheaths the flaming sword, takes on the Sign of Osiris Risen, and disappears. At the same moment, the Higher Self takes on the Sign of Silence.

D. The Descent of the Light

When the circumambulations are complete and the candidate is brought again to the Altar, the Companions visualize the Hidden Sun above the Altar. As the hoodwink is removed and the candidate received into the Order, a ray of the Sun shines on him or her, illuminating all of his or her aura. When the officers knock and invoke the Light, the group of Companions around the Altar is enclosed in a sphere of brilliant golden-white light, which expands outward from the Hidden Sun; this image is held for a moment, and then expands further outward, merging with the borders of the lodge space. Thereafter, the candidate bears in his or her aura, above and before the forehead, the astral image of a white triangle.

E. The Candidate at the Pillars

When the candidate is brought to the west of the Pillars, he or she stands in the place of the Accuser. When he or she comes between the Pillars for the final purification and consecration, he or she stands in the

place of the Higher Self. At this point the aura of the candidate should be seen to blaze like the Sun, and a white monas-symbol takes shape within the white triangle on his or her aura. (These two together make up the astral seal of the Order.)

4. First Degree Closing

A. Purification and Consecration

This is done as in the Opening.

B. The Circumambulation

This is the reverse of the Opening circumambulation. Members visualize themselves spiralling downwards, as though descending a spiral stair, while the Hidden Sun fades but does not disappear.

B. The Veiling of the Thrones

The Warden and Guide take down their special energy patterns before the circumambulation, while the Purification and Consecration is being finished. Chief does the same thing as the altar is retired from the center of the lodge. Other members visualize the spheres of colored light disappearing from around each officer at these times.

C. The Closing of the Lodge

When the Summoner proclaims that "the Sun has set but its light remains," members visualize the faded Hidden Sun expanding outward into infinite space and dissipating. The remaining structures of the inner lodge disappear in this process as well, the barrier of darkness alone remaining.

5. Outer Closing

A. The Sign of Silence

When this is given, all Companions visualize the barrier of darkness unraveling and fading out into nothingness.

FIRST DEGREE INITIATION

Draft Inner Work

(Fall 1995)

Special Material for Chief of the Rite

In The First Degree Opening:

The Chief is responsible for the primary current of energy in the First Degree system of rituals. This energy is visualized as a just-risen Sun in the East of the lodge (the Sun behind the Sun), and as a vast angelic figure (corresponding to Metatron); these two images coincide, as though the Sun shines through the angel or the angel stands behind the Sun.

This imagery is first visualized when the Chief takes up his staff and awakens his throne, near the beginning. When the circumambulation begins, the angelic figure places itself in the Sign of Entering, and light streams into the lodge. (Cf. the Particular Exordium; the lodge officers here correspond to the Aeons.) The Hidden Sun above the altar takes its light from this light, like a candle being lit from a bonfire. The angelic figure remains in the Sign of Entering until the end of the threefold invocation, when it takes the Sign of Silence.

In The First Degree Ceremony:

The same image of angel and Sun is revisualized twice in the First Degree initiation itself. First, when the candidate first advances to the altar and stands before the Accuser, the image of Metatron, in the Sign of Entering, is formulated again, and takes the Sign of Silence when the candidate bows his or her head. (Note that the images of the Higher Self and Metatron move in unison.) Secondly, when the candidate circumambulates after passing between the Pillars, the angel and Sun are formulated; in this case the angel does not take one of the Signs, but is simply present.

In The First Degree Closing:

Here the image of the angelic figure and the Sun is revisualized, and the same Signs are made during the circumambulation and threefold invocation. In the Closing, though, the light flows the other way, from the lodge toward the Sun behind the Sun, and the Sign of Silence made by the angelic figure at the close of the threefold invocation closes off the energy from the East.