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The Chevalier Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743), was born in Scotland and died in France. A Catholic Quietist (he was Fénelon's secretary) he was also a Jacobite and a tutor for James III's children.

In May 1723, he was made a "Knight of Justice of the Military and Hospitalier Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem", a military monastic order dating back to the crusades.

In 1727, he wrote a best-seller, *The Travels of Cyrus*, reprinted some thirty times in the XVIIIth as well as the XIXth century, in France and in England. He also wrote philosophical and theological works.

In those he envisioned "the whole world" as a "huge republic" giving shape to a form of universalism supported by the birth of a natural religion. He presented a plan for perpetual peace, and he even predicted the French revolution.

In 1730, in London, he was made a member of the Royal Society and a freemason in the Horn Lodge. In 1736, he produced his famous *Discourse*, which became extraordinarily popular among Masons, in each of its different versions.

Freemasons who had read *The Travels of Cyrus* and the *Discourse* were the heirs to the Egyptian, Greek, biblical and knightly cultures and they recognized themselves in those aspirations to more liberty, equality, fraternity.

Hundreds of rituals were written according to the proposed pattern: "the legend, the decorations and regalia, the symbols, the signs of recognition, the secrets, a dramatization and a hierarchy", generating a Scottish proliferation. Those rituals, *ordo ab chao*, were erected into system of Scottish Higher Degrees, first in the Rite of Perfection and later, from 1801 onwards, in the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite which we have been practising institutionally since 1804.

Thus the Chevalier de Ramsay originated in a concrete manner a combination of the operative way, the speculative way and the way of initiation. This makes him the inspirer and developer of the Masonry of Scottish higher degrees, characterized by the introduction of the spirit of monastic orders into Andersonian freemasonry.

From an anthropological standpoint, the way of initiation of Scottish Higher Degrees can be seen as an attempt to achieve the unity of being, integrating the trifunctional organisation of social groups brought to light by Georges Dumézil.

The original sequence of "farmers, warriors, and priests" becomes in a broader sense, "*laboratores, bellatores, oratores*", and that is who we are in turns and sometimes simultaneously. Indeed:

We apply ourselves to individual and collective tasks which we may not fear to name after their results, i.e. spiritual meditations.

We fight intellectual battles grounded on a detached reflexion, mutually tested against the thoughts of others.

We break free in every sense from morals messages which we permanently question, according to the principles laid out in the Constitution of the Grand Orient of France and the honour code of Knighthood.

We are bound to do so by our title of Knight, a constitutive element of our identity at various degrees of the Rite. I will return to this subject later.

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