



Grand Collège des Rites Écossais

SUPRÊME CONSEIL DU 33^{DEGRÉ}
EN FRANCE
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GODF

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The Grand Lodge of Perfection of the Spring Equinox convened at Rouen/Forges-les-Eaux on March 16th 2019, after the “Sources” meetings were held on the subject of the transition from the sovereign to the sovereignty. A symposium followed on the subject of slavery. Several hundred participants took part in the whole event.

The 20 presentations at the symposium, all of them of an excellent level, will be published, some in *Rencontres Sources 3*, others in our yearly journal *Perspective Écossaise 159*, and the remainder, the symposium proceedings, will constitute n° 16 of *Les Essais Écossais*.

Slavery was not addressed from a theological point of view until the Valladolid debate in the 16th century, from a timid philosophical point of view in the 18th century, and from a masonic point of view at the beginning of the 19th century. In fact, according to the 1723 Constitutions of Anderson, a necessary condition for being admitted in Freemasonry was to be “*true men, free-born and of mature and discreet age, no Bondmen, no Women, no immoral or scandalous men, but of good report.*” Slaves (and women) were thus excluded de facto from that new institution.

The only societies which have kept clear of institutional slavery are the hunter-gatherer societies and modern democracies. All other societies, practising either internal or external slavery, produced their own specific variety of slavery all through history. The Negro slave trade, which took place between the biblical curse on Canaan and the 21st century trafficking of human beings, made the fortune of colonial Saint Domingue (roughly speaking the territory of the present day Haiti). Etienne Morin, our original founder, made it the birthplace of our Jurisdiction.

Slavery was abolished in France as late as in 1848, thanks to our Bro. Victor Schœlcher (1817-1895). The latest country where it was abolished in 1981 is Mauritania. Biram DAH ABEID, a Mauritanian Congressman, made a remarkable contribution on that matter during our symposium.

Traditional, historical slavery has been replaced by racial segregation. In the Western world, it takes the shape of white male supremacy and that of the modern forms of slavery, the trafficking of human beings, which is estimated to some 200 million persons across the world.

Here I would like to pay a tribute to all slaves by recalling the figure of Frederick Douglass (1817-1895), who published his autobiography in 1845, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, in which he set his own Declaration of Independence against the American Declaration of Independence, even though the latter had been drafted by Freemasons for whom coloured slaves remained “invisible”.

For the slaves, he wrote this programmatic sentence: “*You have seen how a man was made a slave: you shall see how a slave was made a man.*”

The mission of a modern Jurisdiction, rooted in Tradition and reaching towards the future, is, among other things, to contribute to the liberation of mankind from all voluntary or involuntary forms of servitude, thus helping all Frederick Douglasses to reach their full human stature. That is the cornerstone of the erection of the Temple of Mankind and of universalism.

Jacques ORÉFICE, 33°
Sovereign Grand Commander