

The Kirkwall Scroll

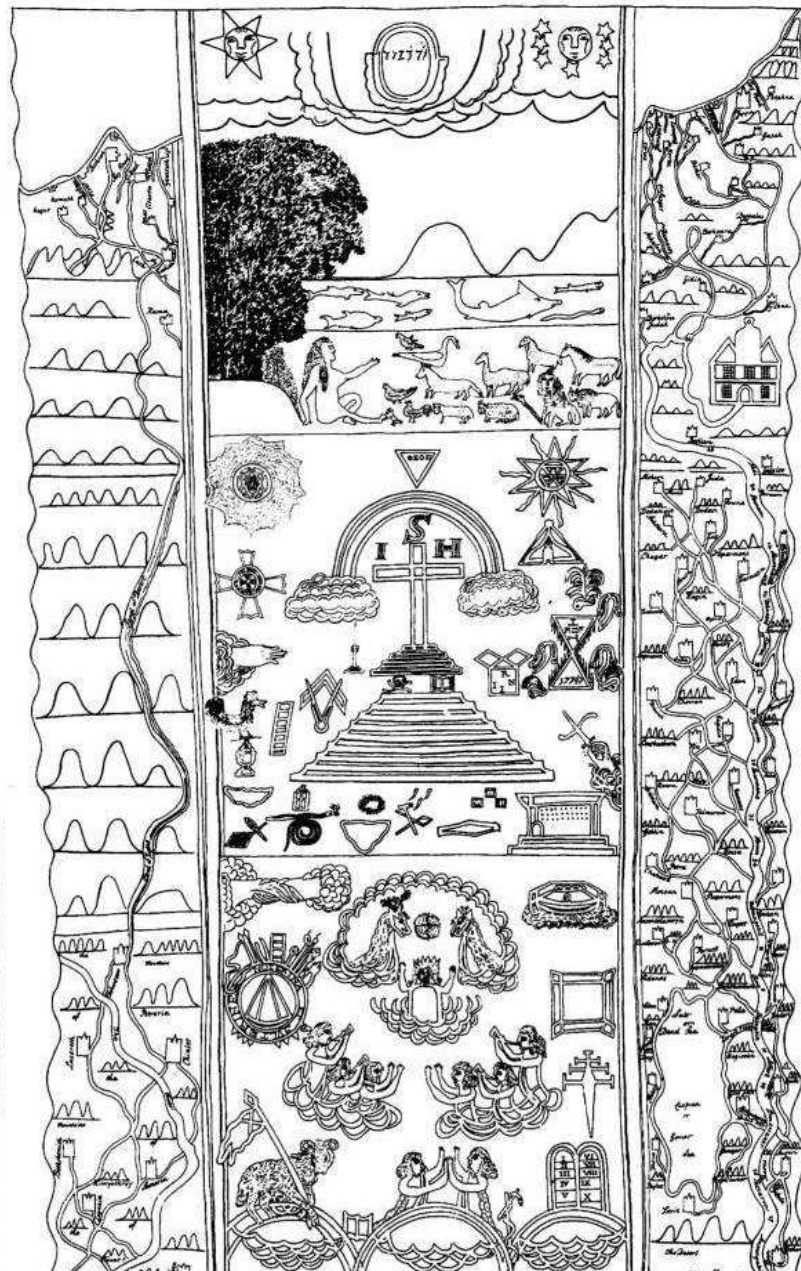


Lodge No 38' Kirkwall Kilwinning,
Castle Street, Kirkwall

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The Scroll, measures 18 feet 6 inches in length, and 5 feet 6 inches in width. The material of which it is composed is a strong linen, and consists of a full width of cloth in the centre with a divided width sewn along each side. It occupies the west wall of the Lodge room, but the height of the apartment is not sufficient to show the whole scroll at one time. It is very roughly painted in oil; the emblem down the centre being mainly in pale blue, but the top panel shows some attempt to imitate nature, the hills being brown, the sea green, the trees brown, and ground reddish, Eve and the animals and fishes pink. On each side of the centre strip runs a ribbon of three colours - blue, yellow and green - the blue being inside. On the left side the rivers and cities are green, the trees and hills brown, and the same may be said of the other side, the tents and symbols being, however, blue. The margin all round is a dark slate colour.

The Kirkwall Scroll.



The border on the spectator's left hand would seem to represent a map of the wanderings of the Hebrews until their settlement in Egypt. The rivers Tigris and Euphrates run down the centre, through a pastoral country almost devoid of cities, but in the lower-most panel we are landed in Egypt, with the "Nillus" running through it, and many cities and buildings depicted. The right hand border should apparently be read from the bottom to the top, and seems to portray the wanderings of the Israelites in the desert. The central ribbon is not a river but evidently a road and is marked off in years, beginning at year 1, and ending at the year 46. We start from the Land of Midian and Mount Sinai, and have the first camp, the fall of Manna, a graveyard, the Waters of the Rock, the Worship of the Golden Calf, Sepulchre of Sarah, or Aaron, the elevation of the Serpent, &c., &c., while at the 46th year the road branches into numerous small paths, one leading to a building which probably is intended for the Temple at Jerusalem. Both margins, especially the right hand one, are covered with place and city names, but Bro. R. Muir, who has kindly collated our drawings with the original for me, writes that "The names appear to be of more modern date than the scroll itself, and have not been all written at the same time even, the ink is different and fresher in certain instances, and some of the writing is plainly by a different hand."

The central panels speak for themselves. They commence at the top with Eve and the

animals in the Garden of Eden -but why Adam is omitted would be difficult to say - and end at the bottom with the Craft degrees. There are several cryptograms, some of which I have deciphered, but others have eluded my skill. At the very top is one such word and another will be found at the base of the hour-glass-like figure in the second panel. On the cornice of the altar within the Arch, is a third. The next panel shows a cryptogram on the face of the altar, which I have partially solved, the chief difficulty consisting in the fact that many of the characters are incorrectly depicted. But, making the needful alterations, it reads :-

I am hath sent me
unto you. I am that
I am; I am the Rose
of Sharon and the Lily
of the valley. **Hegee**
as her hejah. I am
that I am, or I will
bee that I will bee
Jaldadaiah.

I have made 4 words in the body of the inscription bold, because I can make no sense of them, or even suggest any corrections in the writing which would make sense. I have merely translated them as they stand. The last word of all is in exactly the same case, but I am inclined to think that it was intended for Hallelujah.

To the left of this is something which might be a highlander's feather bonnet, or a fountain, or even a tree, with a scroll beneath. On the ribbon is a word thrice repeated, which if written in the same cypher would read, **Jugee Jugee Jugee!** If not in the same cypher, then it is almost impossible to guess what it means, as there is not enough of it to furnish a clue. The words Three Three Three would obviously be possible,* and it may be an allusion to the 3 x 3 so well known in Masonry. The altar in the lowest panel has also a cryptogram on its cornice and face, which, being transliterated without making any allowance for incorrect writing, reads:

1 Chronikils, 2d captr 48, 49

Judges cgaptr 12, 6, 7

Hensis Chapr 4, 22

1 Kings, chapr 7, 21

Mashew Cgapr, 16, 18

This represents the kind of faults to be found in the verses given above; they arise from the want of a dot, or the redundancy of one, or from a line more or less in the different characters.

It may be worthy of consideration whether the original purpose of the scroll was not to serve as a floor cloth for the Lodge, for which its size would be suitable. The earliest form of our modern movable tracing board was that of a floor cloth, consisting of various symbolic designs, of which the mosaic pavement was usually, though not always, a feature. The actual tracing board, sometimes called also a square, was black. Gradually the design was transferred to the board, and the floor cloth preserved only the pavement. If this supposition be correct, the date of the scroll would fall into the first half of the eighteenth century, or very little later. Failing some clue, which we can scarcely hope to find except at Kirkwall, itself, its origin is likely to remain a mystery. The scroll can scarcely have been intended to hang on the wall, as it does now; unless, indeed, a lodge chamber 20 feet high was contemplated! - **G. W. Speth.**

□

*Or any other word composed of three different letters followed by a double letter, such as Bliss, Bless, Dress, Smell, Still &c. &c.

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