While it is the intention of this paper to discuss the symbol of the Caduceus, the rod and/or staff with two snakes entwined around its shaft, and its associated possible symbolic meanings in regards to the Sublime degree of Masonry. It can not be done using the written knowledge of the day without realizing that there is an inherent syncretism of Occult knowledge dating all the way back, and even prior to, whatever written source we may suggest as pure or uncorrupted. In fact, this very process of syncretism is what is at the heart of most research papers, as these types of papers take surrounding sources of information to reveal, support or unify a new thought or idea to an existing One.

Syncretism according to Wikipedia, is the combining of different, often seemingly contradictory practices and symbols of various schools of thought. Syncretism involves the merger and analogizing of several originally discrete traditions, especially in the theology and mythology of religion, thus asserting an underlying unity and allowing for an inclusive approach to other faiths into a present school of thought.

The diagram to the left is a prime example of what may be considered syncretism in the Mystical arts. The three Hebrew Mother Letters -- Shin, Mem and Aleph in the diagram to the left have been arranged as a Hermetic Caduceus, the letters symbolizing the action or relationships hidden or inherent within the symbol of the Caduceus.

Syncretism should by no means be thought of as a correct or incorrect method of unification, the only purpose for which I bring this to your attention is so that you may recognize it and give it what weight it may deserve.

My reason for bringing up this process of syncretism or mixing of doctrines in meaningful ways, is so that you might understand that syncretism is only possible if there is a universal underlaying Truth to which any doctrine, if it contains Truth, must resolve to.
Eliphas Levi, in his introduction to “Transcendental Magic”, puts it this way...

“Behind the veil of all the hieraic and mystic allegories of ancient doctrines, behind the darkness and strange ordeals of all initiations, under the seal of all sacred writings, in the ruins of Nineveh or Thebes, on the crumbling stones of old temples and on the blackened visage of the Assyrian or Egyptian sphinx, in the monstrous or marvellous paintings which interpret to the faithful of India the inspired pages of the Vedas, in the cryptic emblems of our old books on alchemy, in the ceremonies practised at reception by all secret societies, there are found indications of a doctrine which is everywhere the same and everywhere carefully concealed.”

Let’s start out with a little background or history surrounding the Caduceus so that we might have a sense of just how prevalent and far back this symbol integrates with known doctrine, Mythology or Mysticism.

Caduceus is the name given to a number of different symbolic wands, first appearing in ancient Mesopotamian cultures around 2600 BC. These wands generally consisted of two serpents or basilisks twisted around a rod, but not always.

Both Plato and Pythagoras who date back to around 500 years BC, have both included in their writings the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus. Hermes is described as coming to Ancient Egypt from the stars some 26,000 years BC, bringing the wisdom & knowledge of all the ages and holding in his hand the caduceus, the symbol of man as a Whole healthy being.

The word “caduceus” comes from the Greek word “kerykeion” which literally means “Herald’s staff”. A herald was originally a messenger sent by monarchs to convey a message or proclamation. A staff, rod or wand as symbol, is known as being a magical artifact associated with wisdom and the ability to perform mystical actions. This aspect of a staff, rod or wand is repeatedly shown in the scriptures of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The staff is also a symbol of power and is said to be the axis or pole by which the ancient messenger gods travel between Heaven and Earth.

Legend has it that the Greek wand of Hermes was simply an olive branch around which were placed two fillets of ribbon. But in Roman mythology, when Mercury now the holder of Hermes wand, was in Arcadia, he encountered two serpents engaged in deadly combat. These he separated with his wand; hence the olive wand became the symbol of peace, and the two fillets were replaced by the two serpents, thus giving to the Caduceus its well-known form of a rod or staff, around which two serpents are entwined.
Over the centuries, the caduceus was brought into the esoteric Gnostic tradition and reappears as symbolic of power and the balance between polarities, positive and negative or darkness and light. As Eastern and Western symbology mixed and merged (Syncretism) in the 20th century, the ancient caduceus has emerged as a symbol of enlightenment and acquisition of the ancient wisdom.

The attributes of the wand or rod with two serpents twisted round, seem to mostly revolve around communication with the dead or resurrecting the dead. For instance, Mercury, it is said, was invoked by the Romans for the purpose of Necromancy. Necromancy being the sorcery employed for express purpose of communication with the dead.

In Masonry, it is said that the Orator is a representation of Hermes as herald. Albert Pike states: “Of Hermes, he was the inventor of letters and of Oratory, the winged messenger of the Gods, bearing the Caduceus wreathed with serpents; and in our council he is represented by the orator.” Albert Pike, also claims that Mercury is the “Guardian and guide of Souls.”

We further find that the Deacons of the lodge are also said to be messengers, from East to West and West to East, about the lodge as directed. In their hands are held a specialized form of the Caduceus; this specialization aspect, not to get to far ahead of myself, is what enables the resurrection of the body spoken of in the sublime degree of Masonry.

A quick search of the internet will convince you of the astounding number of doctrines that use the symbolism of the caduceus in a somewhat similar manner or purpose, that purpose being the method by which an individual may become enlightened, reborn, resurrected or immortal, either in this life or the afterlife.

The one thing to keep in mind when we start down such esoterical paths is that almost all doctrines revolve around a three into one description of the process or method of achieving this raised or immortal state. The three being, Body, Mind, and Spirit. The one being an actual duplication and/or progression from the Original Source or God.

Masonry is no exception, veiled by degree. The first degree is said to be the degree of the Body. The second degree is said to be of the Mind, and the third degree is said to be of the Spirit. And the three into one for Masonry is symbolized in the Sublime degree of Masonry. Indeed, Masonry is no less veiled than any other doctrine in that our three Great Lights and there related Lessor Lights, by aid of the Perfect points must be understood and acted on correctly, thereby allowing us as Masons to be resurrected into the immortal, “My Father And I Are One”, liberated class.
But, before I can take you any further along this process of de-veiling the caduceus and the method of your individual resurrection into said class, we need to understand what is meant by Universal and Individual as it pertains to the all pervading Supreme Being we all have attested exists, and the self-contemplation by same, which started the Beginning or Ray of Creation right on down to ourselves, in general.

Let us take as an example, the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament, in general, is concerned with the development of the race of mankind and his capacity to grasp conceptual ideas as related to Mans Universal conscious origins, the idea of one God, or Unity consciousness. The image of Man, his evolution in general, is complete when man has the general capacity to self contemplate the Universal in himself.

The New Testament, in general, is concerned with the development or evolution of the Individual. Whereby, in the individuals recognition of the Source of it's consciousness and life, is liberated into a new immortal class by which the progression of Source or evolution of same, may continue anew.

In a nutshell, the All pervading Supreme Being in self-contemplating starts the Ray of Creation or Word in form along a path in which only Natural or generic all pervading Laws or Principles can exist. This Ray evolves in form and spirit until it's image, the image of God, is manifest in form where it must necessarily stop, as a Universal generic manifestation.

In the generic, it can go no further in its evolution or progression unless the perfected image, Man the individual, through his free will and desires, objectively recognizes God as his source of life. With the individual's will aligning with his Will, the individual becomes born again, wielding an unlimited source of expression by and through His recognition.
Allow me to further expound or reiterate. Man is evolved to the image of God by the Word of God from the Beginning, and is therefore of God, and so has the same qualities and desires of more Life and expression through form.

However, Man having no conscious connection with the Creative Spirit due to the principle or law of free will, inherited from same, must of his own personal volition while still in control of the bodies objective mind, seek out and choose the spiritual kingdom of God, or be trapped and bound into a Spiritual subjective World of his own limited creation that he has made with his free will and choices while embodied. I will come back to this again for a fuller explanation.

A story of resurrection for our purposes that best fits into the universal Truth of creation from whence we came, and supports my thoughts on the symbolism of the Caduceus being the method of resurrecting ourselves into this born again, or Liberated class is, “Poimanders, The Vision Of Hermes”.

Since time and space are short in the present discourse, I have extracted three quotes from this vision to support the method I wish to expound upon.

POIMANDRES, THE VISION OF HERMES

1.) “O Hermes, and meditate deeply upon the mystery. That which in you sees and hears is not of the earth, but is the Word of God incarnate. So it is said that Divine Light dwells in the midst of mortal darkness, and ignorance cannot divide them. The union of the Word and the Mind produces that mystery which is called Life. As the darkness without you is divided against itself, so the darkness within you is likewise divided. The Light and the fire which rise are the divine man, ascending in the path of the Word, and that which fails to ascend is the mortal man, which may not partake of immortality. Learn deeply of the Mind and its mystery, for therein lies the secret of immortality.”

2.) “To the ignorant the body is supreme and they are incapable of realizing the immortality that is within them. Knowing only the body which is subject to death, they believe in death because they worship that substance which is the cause and reality of death.”

3.) “That which the Word of God said, say I: ‘Because the Father of all things consists of Life and Light, whereof man is made.’ If, therefore, a man shall learn and understand the nature of Life and Light, then he shall pass into the eternity of Life and Light.”

The Mind and its mystery, is that to which the method presents itself in the Caduceus. There are two aspects of Mind present in Man, in life. The Mind of the body in form and the Mind of the spirit without form.

The Mind of the body has one mode of thought and one associated mode of reasoning. This is objective thought which reasons inductively from chosen premises (free will). The Mind of spirit is subjective thought, which reasons deductively only from a given premise which it regards as true. The Mind of the spirit is mostly subjective and can only operate from the limitations or premises (beliefs), held at the time of the bodies physical death.
Forgiveness is a major factor in religious beliefs for this very reason. The forgiveness of sins unshackles the spiritual mind from limiting beliefs, such as, “I’m going to Hell to pay for my sins”. In the subjective spiritual afterlife this belief will be the reality to the extent and period of the individuals belief in it while in physical form.

Now the one thing we absolutely know is that the objective Mind of the body must be free of the Will of God. God has unlimited free will, therefore we as the perfect individual images of God must also have the same unlimited free will.

It is by the Mind of the body that the objective recognition of God, enabled by inductive reasoning and personal volition of choice, that makes this unlimited source available to us. It is the meaning behind Jacobs ladder and the anointment of the stone. The angles ascending and descending depicts the attunement of the Mind of man in body with the Cosmic Mind by the law of greater Reciprocity. The law or principle of greater Reciprocity is usually shown by more Angels descending the ladder than going up the ladder.

The anointment of the stone upon which Jacobs head laid, is an annology for a point of certainty. Certainty is needed in order to fix beliefs. Its why if you experience something profound and certain, it changes or fixes your beliefs in a new way or ways.

So it is, by the planting or fixing of the premise of a certainty in God as our source, by the objective Mind of the body, into the subjective Mind of spirit which cannot choose its own premises, that the law of greater Reciprocity from the source can communicate not only to the objective Mind of the body in the here and now, but also to the subjective Mind of the spirit in the afterlife, which holds a planted specialized version of the objective Mind.
In other words, if we fail to fully resurrect ourselves without limits while on the physical plane, we lose the objective Mind and choice of premise that belongs to it. Therefore, we must specialize a way to take the objective Mind with us into the afterlife whereby the law of greater Reciprocity from our source, is still able to communicate with us, enabling us to be born again, without limits, immortal.

“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.”
~ Jesus, in John 3:1-7

It is my sincere hope that you may find yourself some day, at the root of your individual being, absent duality in that “My Father and I are One”, liberated class.