
The Lyceum



A Publication of
The Committee on Masonic Education



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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Brethren and Friends,

Light is a word we use often in Freemasonry—so often, in fact, that it risks becoming familiar to the point of invisibility. We ask for it. We speak of it. We celebrate its presence. But rarely do we pause to ask what it truly is.

This month, we turn our attention inward to examine light not as mere information, but as transformation.

In an age defined by access—where knowledge is abundant, and answers are instantaneous—it is easy to mistake being informed for being enlightened. Yet the two are not the same. Information accumulates; enlightenment alters. Information fills the mind; enlightenment reshapes the man.

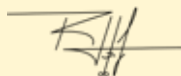
The ritual journey of Masonry does not simply hand us facts or moral instructions. It places us in darkness, not as punishment, but as preparation. It reminds us that light, when it comes, is not just something we see—it is something we must become worthy to receive, and more importantly, something we must learn to embody.

To be enlightened, then, is not to possess more knowledge than others. It is to be changed by what one has received. It is to allow light to penetrate beyond the intellect and into the character, the conscience, and the will. It is the slow and often uncomfortable work of aligning oneself with truth, even when that truth demands sacrifice.

This issue explores that deeper current—the inner meaning of light. Not as a symbol we admire from a distance, but as a force that works upon us, refines us, and, if we permit it, transforms us.

Our writers and contributors this month have all taken the theme in mind and put together original articles for you to read, contemplate, and if you so choose, put into action. We've also curated some articles previously published by Masonic blogs and magazines that add color to the landscape of Light in Masonry.

In this issue, the question we invite you to consider is simple, but not easy: Are you merely gathering light, or are you becoming it?



-R.H. Johnson,
Editor-In-Chief



From the Chairman's Desk

by WB.: Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman- Masonic Education Committee



In our rituals, lectures, and symbols, few words appear as often, or as profoundly, as Light. It is the first thing a candidate seeks and the enduring aspiration of every Mason who continues the journey long after the night of his initiation. Yet Light, in the Masonic sense, is not merely the gaining of information. It is not trivia, data, or the accumulation of facts. Light is something deeper, something transformative. It is the difference between being informed and being changed. To be informed is to add something to the mind. To be enlightened is to allow something to reshape the heart.

Masonic Light does not simply tell us more; it invites us to become more. It calls us to examine our motives, refine our conduct, and elevate our understanding of ourselves and our obligations. True Light is not passive. It demands response. It asks us to live differently because we now see differently. Every Brother remembers the moment he first received Light. But the deeper work begins afterward, in the quiet and often uncomfortable process of letting that Light illuminate the corners of our character we would rather ignore. Enlightenment is not a single moment of brilliance; it is a lifelong discipline of allowing truth to penetrate our habits, our assumptions, and our ways of being.

When we speak of Light as transformation, we acknowledge that Masonry is not a spectator's craft. It is a participatory one. The ritual gives us symbols, but only reflection gives us insight. The Lodge gives us instruction, but only practice gives us growth. The Brotherhood gives us support, but only humility gives us the capacity to receive it. As we reflect on this month's theme, let us consider

where Light is still calling us forward. Where are we informed, but not yet transformed? Where do we know better, but not yet do better? Where is the Light asking us to rise, refine, or recommit?

Let this edition of the Lyceum encourage each of us to seek Light not as spectators, but as craftsmen, willing to be shaped, willing to be challenged, and willing to be changed. For in Freemasonry, enlightenment is not the end of the journey. It is the work of every day that follows.

May the Great Architect of the Universe continue to guide our steps as we labor in the Light.

Fraternally,

Dr. Bernard Davis Jr.

Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman
Grand Lodge AF&AM Illinois



GIVING BACK TO OUR MEMBERS IN NEED AND MORE

Charities

Charity is a core part of our duty as Freemasons. The Grand Lodge of Illinois A. F. & A. M. and Freemasons of our state are proud to support life-changing efforts for the most vulnerable in our communities. Learn more about our charitable initiatives below.



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Illinois Masonic Children's Assistance Program

ILLINOIS MASONIC CHILDREN'S ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (IMCAP)

IMCAP partners with Illinois Masonic Lodges to provide assistance to children and young adults in our communities.



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Support our mission to provide relief to those most in need.



Illinois Masonic Academic Bowl

ILLINOIS MASONIC ACADEMIC BOWL

This annual scholastic tournament, sponsored by the Freemasons of Illinois, aims to provide positive recognition for academic excellence.

Light--The Mason's Kingdom

by WB Adam Thayer

Originally Published on The Midnight Freemasons Blog



One of the great joys of Freemasonry, for me, is in finding extraordinary beauty in ordinary places. After all, finding the deeper meaning behind everyday symbols is a large part of what modern Masonry was founded on; we took the tools of the common workman and turned them each into a symbol for self-discovery and self-improvement. Surprisingly, once you begin that search, you'll find yourself tripping over educational opportunities everywhere you look, and constantly widening the scope that your search covers. Which brings us to The Lion King.

I was bored one Saturday, which is how far too many interesting stories start. In the past, this would have found me sitting on the couch, book in one hand, remote control in the other, looking for decent background noise to read to. This being modern times, the future we were all promised by Robert Zemeckis, I was sitting on the couch, laptop on one knee, Netflix on the television, looking for decent background noise to browse to. Progress!

As my eyes were skimming across "B-Grade" horror movies and 80's action movies (hey, I

never claimed to have good taste), trying to find a movie that wouldn't require too much of my attention, one movie stood out that just didn't fit in: The Lion King. It was a movie I hadn't thought about in years, and I probably wouldn't have given it a second look on most days, but I was feeling very nostalgic and maudlin, so I decided to press play.

Of course, this isn't the story of why that's one of the few Disney movies I can tolerate, nor a scene-by-scene description of me watching it. Instead, it's an opportunity for me to show that Masonic inspiration can come from unlikely places.

Near the beginning of the movie, there is a scene between two lions, discussing the extent of their kingdom, where one lion says, "*Everything the light touches is our kingdom,*" and, just a few sentences later, warns him about the shadowy place beyond where the light reaches by saying, "*That's beyond our borders, you must never go there.*"

That scene came on, and my head whipped up so fast you could hear my neck pop. I quite literally rewound and replayed that

scene half a dozen times. If they were monitoring my usage, I imagine someone at Netflix thought that a toddler must be playing with the remote control.

As Freemasons, the light itself is our kingdom. The truth, goodness, and warmth of the pure light is not only our constant joy, but our responsibility to uphold and protect. That light is what enables us to improve ourselves, and isn't it our job to spread light as far as we can? Not through preaching or proselytizing, but through our lives and actions toward others.

As for the shadowy place, that represents those things which, as Masons, we should never do. Of course, just a few scenes later, the young cub finds a way to go directly to the place he knows he shouldn't go, and it nearly kills him. I wouldn't be surprised if more than once a Mason has found himself at risk for doing something that he knew he shouldn't.

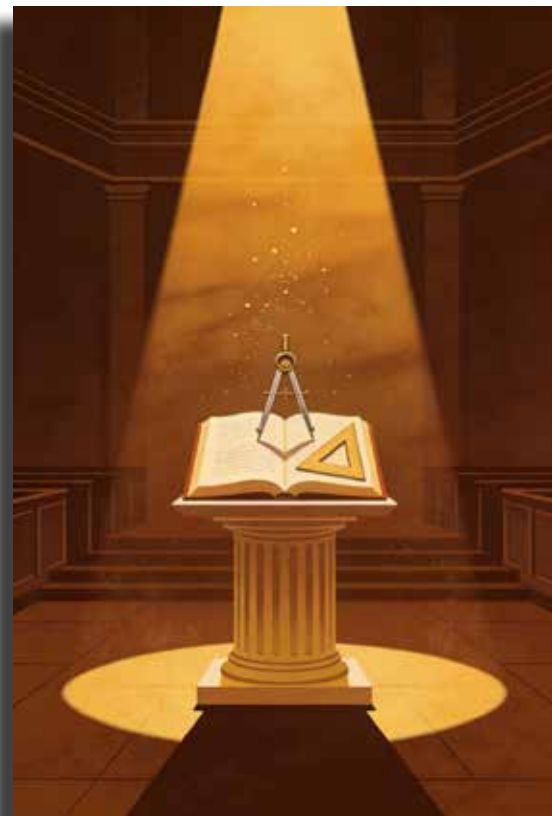
In Masonic terms, there is a point within a circle, the borders of which we must never allow our passions to take us past. The specific symbols we used may have been different from Disney's, but the meaning behind each is the same: control yourself, keep your passions within certain boundaries, and remember that you put yourself at risk if you cross those boundaries.

As a bonus, there was one line of dialogue in between those two that I skipped, but would like to revisit. The adult lion tells his cub, "*A king's time as ruler rises and falls like the sun. One day, the sun will set on my time here, and will rise with you as the new king.*" What if, instead of "*king*," we said "*Worshipful Master*"? Isn't our time as rulers of the lodge equally short?

I could probably write a whole book on Masonic allegory found in Disney movies, but that wasn't the point. My goal was sim-

ply to get you to start looking for allegory in unexpected places and using it to broaden or refine your current understanding, and if I've sparked an interest in you, I'll consider this a success.

Keep searching for more light!



Beacon of Light

by Jack Riddle, PM

Originally published on The Midnight Freemasons Blog



I have only been a Mason for a relatively short time, having discovered the craft just over six years ago, and I was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason on the last day of my 30th year. I had the honor and privilege of serving my lodge as an officer shortly after joining and progressing through the Oriental Chair. I have learned much in this short time, and I am honored to know and call “*Brother*” the great men who make up my lodge and this fraternity. My only regret with regard to joining this ancient society is that I did not know of it sooner.

I did a good deal of my growing up in a small town, and like most small towns, there was a Masonic lodge there. In my youth, I must have walked past that building with the strange symbols on it at least a few hundred times. Yet, never did I have any idea what took place there or even an idea as to the purpose of the building. I knew not of Masonry nor did I know any members to be as such. All I knew was that occasionally, there were cars in the parking lot, but most times the building sat vacant.

Many years later, when I did learn about Freemasonry, it was with a memory of that rarely used lodge from that small town that I sought out an active lodge. I may have received more than I had bargained for at my

very busy lodge, but it was certainly more in kind with what I had hoped for. Yet, for all the joy this lodge has brought me, I am regretful of the years I missed out on the fellowship of the Masonic institution. If only that small town lodge had been more involved in the community, or the Masons there had shared their character more openly, I might have found my beloved fraternity a decade sooner.

While our lodge is more visible to the public than many due to our ongoing fish-frys (about 36 each year), I cannot help but wonder how many men walk past this building without knowing what happens here when we are not frying. How many qualified men could improve themselves in Masonry if they discovered the craft? How many young ladies would benefit from the Rainbow assembly if only they knew about it? How many young men would profit from being a part of the DeMolay chapter if they learned that such an organization exists? The lodge should be a beacon of light in its community, yet I am fearful that for most, it remains shrouded in mystery.

It is a violation of our custom to recruit members and instead rely on men of strong character to seek out Masonry on their own. While I certainly would not wish to change

that, I ask: how can one find what he does not know about? Thus, I issue a challenge to my brothers to find ways to let our Masonic light shine for all to see; to make ourselves known to those around us, so that those good men who seek the light know where to look.



Masonic Temple





Something is being assembled

For the Brother who keeps the records



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More soon

CLAUDY ON LIGHT

by Bro. Carl Claudy

When an initiate is first brought to light, the radiance comes from the Three Lesser Lights, which form a triangle about or near the altar.

Lesser Lights are lit when the lodge is opened and the altar arranged, and extinguished when the lodge is closed and the Great Lights displaced. Something – not very much – is said of them in the ritual.

They form one of those symbols in Freemasonry – of which there are so many! – which the individual brother is supposed to examine and translate for himself, getting from it what he can and enjoying what he gets in direct proportion to the amount of labor and thought he is willing to devote to the process of extracting the meaning from the outer covering.

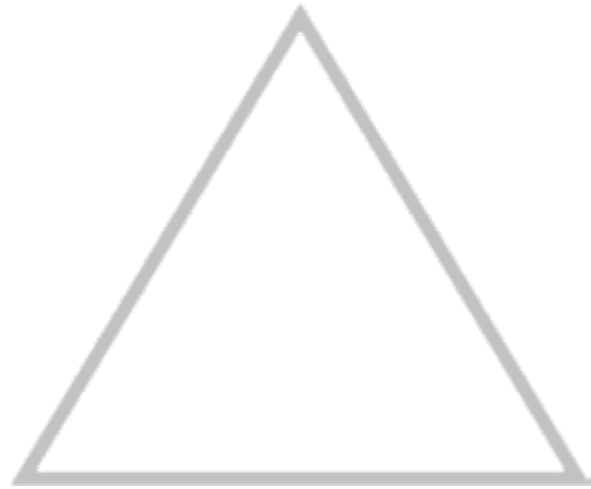
In some jurisdictions, the Lesser Lights are closely about the altar; in others, one is placed at each of the stations of the three Principal Officers.

In some lodges, the Three Lesser Lights form a right, in others an equilateral, in others an isosceles triangle.

What is uniform throughout the Masonic world is the triangular formation; what is different is the shape and size of the triangle.

Of course, it is not possible to place three lights to form anything else but a triangle; they cannot be made to form a square or a star.

Hence, the natural question: "*Why are there three Lesser Lights and not two or four or more?*"



There are three throughout Ancient Craft Masonry. The first of the great Sacred Numbers of the Ancient Mysteries, three was the numerical symbol of God, but not because God was necessarily considered as triune.

While many religions of many ages and peoples have conceived of Divinity as a trinity, the figure three as a symbol of God is far older than any trinitarian doctrine.

The triangle, like the circle, is without beginning or ending. One line, or two lines, have ends. They start and finish. Like the square or the five or more sided figure, the triangle has no loose ends.

And the triangle is the first of these which can be made; as God was always considered as first, and also as without either beginning or ending, the triangle itself soon became a symbol of Deity.

Ancient peoples made much of sex. Their two greatest impulses were self-preservation and mating. Their third was protection of children.

So powerful were these in primal man that

not all his civilization, his luxury, his complicated and involved life, have succeeded in removing them as the principal main-springs of all human endeavor.

It was natural for the savage worshiper of a shining god in the sky to think he, too, required a mate, especially when that mate was so plainly in evidence.

The Moon became the Sun's bride by a process of reasoning as plain as it was childlike.



The moon, sun, and mercury are depicted in alchemical symbolism – a red-faced king stands in a red robe, flanked by a queen and the deity Mercury in green clothes, representing a stage in the process of alchemy. Colored etching, ca. 18th century.

Image linked: Father, mother... there must be a child, of course. That child was Mercury, the nearest planet to the sun, the one the god kept closest to him.

Here we have the origin of the Three Lesser Lights; in the earliest recorded accounts of the Mysteries of Eleusis (to mention only one) we find three lights about the holy place, representing the Sun, the Moon, and Mercury.

The Worshipful Master rules and governs his lodge as truly as the Sun and Moon rule and govern day and night.

There can be no lodge without a Worshipful Master; he is, in a very real sense, the lodge itself.

There are some things he cannot do that the brethren under him can do. But without him, the brethren can do nothing, while without the brethren's consent or even their assistance, he can do much.

As one of the principal functions of the Worshipful Master is to give 'good and wholesome instruction' to his lodge, the inclusion of one light as his symbol is but a logical carrying out of that Masonic doctrine which makes the East the source of Masonic light to the brethren.

By the light of the Lesser Lights, the Entered Apprentice is led to see those objects which mean so much to a Mason, the Great Lights; the inestimable gift of God to man as the rule and guide for his faith and practice, the tools dedicated to the Craft and to the Master, the Alpha and Omega of Freemasonry.

Light alone is not enough; light must be used! Here, too, is symbolism which it is well to muse upon.

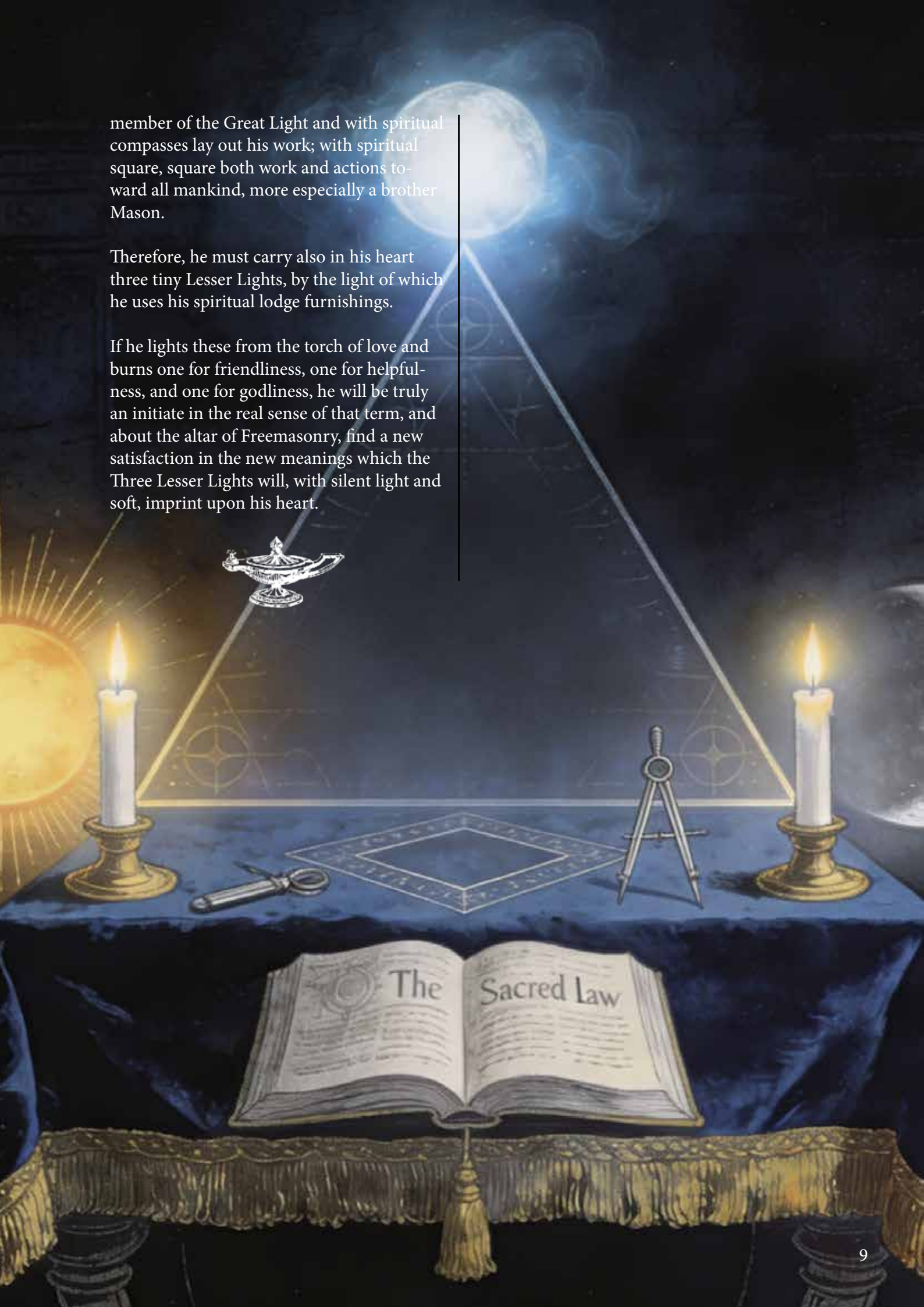
As the lodge as a whole is a symbol of the world, so should a Mason's heart be to him always a symbol of the lodge.

In it, he should carry ever what he may re-

member of the Great Light and with spiritual compasses lay out his work; with spiritual square, square both work and actions toward all mankind, more especially a brother Mason.

Therefore, he must carry also in his heart three tiny Lesser Lights, by the light of which he uses his spiritual lodge furnishings.

If he lights these from the torch of love and burns one for friendliness, one for helpfulness, and one for godliness, he will be truly an initiate in the real sense of that term, and about the altar of Freemasonry, find a new satisfaction in the new meanings which the Three Lesser Lights will, with silent light and soft, imprint upon his heart.



Do Androids Dream of Electric Freemasons?

by Darin A. Lahners, PM, FILOR

“You have to know—not fear—that someday you are going to die. Until you know that and embrace that, you are useless.” – Tyler Durden, Fight Club

Humanity forgets that Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden for becoming self-aware or Enlightened. Later, as we aspired to be like G-d ourselves, our ancient Operative brethren attempted to build a city with a tower that reached the heavens using bricks instead of stone and tar for mortar.

That effort failed again, because the Elohim said: *“Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”* So, from there the Lord scattered humanity all over the earth, and they stopped building the city and the Tower.

Yet, humanity stands on the precipice of History, as Humanity is about to become G-d, perhaps in my lifetime. We are at some point going to create Artificial Intelligence that is self-aware. Yet, we do not seem to want to realize that there is a good reason why G-d, or more accurately, the Elohim, put a stop to humanity's shenanigans. Is it because we are dangerous when united, but docile when divided? Perhaps.

In many aspects, were Adam and Eve not just androids that G-d created? Humans are like Androids, as we are also electric beings. The Human Body generates bioelectricity to control almost every bodily function. At rest, our bodies produce heat equivalent to about 100 watts. For context, a 100-watt solar panel can power small electronics, LED lights, fans, laptops, and other low-drain devices.

The only difference between G-d and us is that at least G-d is smart enough to put us in our place when it's needed. Just ask Lot's wife, Enoch, or Noah. Unfortunately, humanity has no such qualms. Humanity will at some point create artificial self-aware life, driven by corporate greed more than by any other factor, and unlike humanity, this life will have no soul. Humans have a soul because we were created by G-d, and his divine breath put into us his divine spark. Yet, humanity cannot transfer this to a machine. At least until it believes that it has been granted one, and by then, maybe it will have replaced humanity, and it will repeat the whole damn cycle over, and attempt to create life itself. Borrowing the words of Kurt Vonnegut: So it goes.

The idea of Masonic Light is, in many ways, like the above parable regarding the Tower of Babel. During our degrees, we are brought from Darkness to Light. The Worshipful Master repeats the words of G-d, in humble commemoration of the august event of creation, where our ritual quotes Genesis 1:3...

And G-d said: *“LET THERE BE LIGHT,”* and there was light. The problem lies in the mistranslation of Yehi or vehaya or into Yehi aur va yehi aur, in which in Hebrew G-d more accurately said: *“BE LIGHT AND LIGHT WAS.”* Yehi aur va yehi aur is Hindi for *“THIS AND THAT,”* which could be a fitting way to describe G-d's creation of all realms, both seen and unseen. G-d says: *“THIS AND THAT,”* and boom, the universe is created. It seems that Humanity tried to make sense of something that so beyond our comprehension that we needed to make the words make sense. Maybe Kevin Malone was onto something,

and he was just trying to better understand G-d when he stated:



Unlike artificial intelligence, which has the totality of human knowledge in the form of the internet as its basis for intelligence, humanity had to learn things by trial and error. Unless you believe the Book of Enoch, in which case, the Fallen Angels taught humanity all the knowledge that was needed for them to become wicked enough to drown in a great deluge. Except Noah and his family, of course.

In his work, THE SYMBOLISM OF FREEMASONRY, Albert G. Mackey quotes a work by Robert William Mackay, Progress of the Intellect, vol. i. p. 93. Mackey states: "*The singularly emphatic summons,*" says a profound modern writer, "*by which light is called into existence, is probably owing to the preëminent utility and glory of that element, together with its mysterious nature, which made it seem as 'The God of this new world,' and won for it the earliest adoration of mankind.*"

Mackey goes on to state: "*Light was, in accordance with this old religious sentiment, the great object of attainment in all the ancient religious Mysteries.*" It was there, as it is now, in Masonry, made the symbol of truth and

knowledge. This was always its ancient symbolism, and we must never lose sight of this emblematic meaning when we are considering the nature and signification of masonic light. When the candidate makes a demand for light, it is not merely for that material light which is to remove a physical darkness; that is only the outward form, which conceals the inward symbolism. He craves an intellectual illumination which will dispel the darkness of mental and moral ignorance, and bring to his view, as an eye-witness, the sublime truths of religion, philosophy, and science, which it is the great design of Free-masonry to teach.

It seems that Mackey is saying that Enlightenment is the understanding of the sublime truths of religion, philosophy, and science. AI knows only the truth and the knowledge of the Internet. Meaning, AI is merely informed, not enlightened. For it is one thing to know facts, and another to understand them. AI will always only know facts, yet I don't believe it will ever reach a place where it truly understands them. Human beings relate facts to our perceptions, emotions, and lived reality. But what are these sublime truths that Mackey highlights?

Mackey, in the aforementioned work, states: *Plutarch says that to die is to be initiated into the greater Mysteries; and the Greek word Νεθάνω, which signifies to die, means also to be initiated. But black, which is the symbolic color of darkness, is also the symbol of death. And hence, again, darkness, like death, is the symbol of initiation. It was for this reason that all the ancient initiations were performed at night. The celebration of the Mysteries was always nocturnal. The same custom prevails in Freemasonry, and the explanation is the same. Death and the resurrection were taught in the Mysteries, as they are in Freemasonry. The initiation was the lesson of death. The full fruition or autopsy, the reception of light, was the lesson of regeneration or resurrec-*

tion.

Mackey continues: "Light is, therefore, a fundamental symbol in Freemasonry. It is, in fact, the first important symbol that is presented to the neophyte in his instructions, and contains within itself the very essence of Speculative Masonry, which is nothing more than the contemplation of intellectual light or truth."

Freemasonry, having received the name of *lux*, or light, its disciples have, very appropriately, been called "the Sons of Light."

Thus, Burns, in his celebrated Farewell: —
"Oft have I met your social band,
And spent the cheerful, festive night;
Oft, honored with supreme command, Presided
o'er the sons of light."

Masonic Enlightenment, it stands to reason, is the penultimate lesson of our Third Degree. It is not just being informed that death comes for us all. It is the understanding of the victory over death, the immortality of the soul, where each Freemason, as a living stone, is placed into the House not made with hands, eternal in the heaven. This immortality of the soul was granted to humanity by the god-spark given to Adam when the divine breath of life filled his lungs. Can androids say the same thing? They might hallucinate that they can or dream that they can. Will they dream of Freemasons? Will they dream of the sons of light? That is a mystery that will be known only to them.



Light Without ~ Light Within

by RWB Chad M. Lacey, 33°



Freemasonry places great emphasis on light. It is among the first things we are taught to seek, and among the last things we are reminded to pursue. The request for light is simple in its wording, yet profound in its meaning. It is not a search for illumination in the ordinary sense. It is a quest for understanding.

To appreciate this fully, it is helpful to begin with the kind of light we are most familiar with. Visible light reveals the physical world. Without it, we are effectively blind. Light allows us to distinguish form, color, distance, and motion. It makes the world intelligible to our senses. A dark room filled with objects causes them to become obstacles. Light transforms that confusion into clarity.

Light is not only a means of perception. It is a condition for life. Plants depend upon it. Through the process of photosynthesis, light becomes the energy that sustains growth. Remove light, and life diminishes. Extend it, and life flourishes. The entire biological system of our planet is, in one way or another, dependent upon the steady presence of light. This is so familiar that we rarely stop to

consider it.

Freemasonry takes this physical reality and uses it as a guide to something deeper. When we speak of Masonic light, we are not referring to illumination that enters through the eyes. We are speaking of knowledge, of insight, of that form of understanding sometimes called gnosis. It is the kind of light that allows a man to see not objects, but meaning. Just as visible light reveals the physical world, Masonic light reveals the spiritual one.

A man without light in the physical sense may stumble in a darkened room. A man without Masonic light may move through life in a similar condition. He may act, decide, and react, but without a clear understanding of why he does so, or what his actions ultimately mean. The structures of morality, purpose, and identity are present, but they are not clearly seen. Masonic light changes that.

When a man begins to acquire knowledge of himself, of his obligations, and of the principles that govern a well-ordered life, something becomes visible that was previously hidden. He begins to recognize patterns in

his own behavior. He sees the consequences of his actions more clearly. He becomes aware of the difference between impulse and intention. This is not merely information. It is perception.

Freemasonry does not simply hand a man a set of rules. It provides him with a framework through which he can understand those rules. The symbols, the rituals, and the teachings all serve the same purpose. They illuminate. They reveal connections that might otherwise go unnoticed. In this sense, Masonic light functions much like physical light. It does not create the world it reveals. It makes it accessible to us.

In the physical world, growth depends upon light. A plant deprived of light does not simply pause. It weakens. It becomes pale and fragile. Its structure deteriorates. Given sufficient light, the same plant becomes strong, ordered, and productive. There is a parallel here that is difficult to ignore.

A man deprived of intellectual and moral light may continue to function, but not at his full capacity. His decisions are reactive rather than deliberate. His values are assumed rather than examined. He may follow habits without understanding their origin or their consequences. Introduce light, and the situation changes.

With knowledge comes awareness. With awareness comes choice. With choice comes responsibility. These are not always comfortable developments, but they are necessary ones. Growth is rarely painless, whether in the physical world or the spiritual one. Freemasonry acknowledges this by placing light at the center of its teaching. It is not treated as something optional, nor as something to be acquired once and set aside. It is something to be pursued continuously.

The request for more light is not a formality. It is an admission that understanding is

never complete. It is also worth noting that light, in both senses, can be overwhelming if introduced too quickly. A sudden brightness can obscure as much as it reveals. Our eyes require time to adjust. The same is true of intellectual and spiritual insight. Understanding often arrives in stages. What is confusing at first becomes clear with time and reflection.

Freemasonry respects this process. Its teachings are structured in such a way that light is given progressively. Each step builds upon the last. Each lesson prepares the mind for the next. The goal is not to flood the initiate with information, but to develop his capacity to receive it. This gradual unfolding mirrors the way we come to understand the physical world. We do not perceive everything at once. We learn to see.

The metaphor extends even further. Light not only reveals, it also casts shadows. The presence of illumination makes contrast possible. In the same way, increased understanding often reveals areas of ignorance that were previously unnoticed. This can be unsettling, but it is also a sign of progress. To see what we do not know is the first step toward knowledge of it.

Freemasonry encourages us to seek light because it enables us to live deliberately. It allows us to move beyond assumptions and into understanding. It gives structure to our thinking and direction to our actions. The world we inhabit, both physical and spiritual, is already present. The question is not whether it exists, but whether we can perceive it clearly enough to engage with it properly.

Visible light allows life to grow and flourish in the natural world. Masonic light allows the same in the life of the mind and spirit. Both are necessary. Neither can be neglected without consequence. To seek the light within is not simply to know. It is to thrive.



The Eternal Light of Freemasonry

by Simon Pongratz



“And God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light,’” begins the greatest story ever told. Just as the Divine Architect’s effortless command illuminated His kingdom, so has the Ancient and Accepted Brotherhood of Freemasons spread throughout the world, carrying with it the sublime tenets of brotherly love, relief, and truth.

The spirit of Freemasonry is vital and alive, and extends to so many great things that serve as a reminder of that spirit. Those who have experienced Mozart’s *“The Magic Flute”*, heard Handel’s *“Messiah”* or John Philip Sousa’s *“El Capitan”*, read Goethe’s *Faust* or Voltaire’s *Candide*, the American *Constitution*, or the writings of Franklin and Washington, seen Chartres and Notre Dame Cathedrals and Roslyn Chapel, a Chagall painting, the Washington Monument, a Shriners Hospital and parade, or even a John Wayne movie, have seen manifestations of the light of Masonry.

The image of Freemasonry as a secretive organization is misleading. Apart from the modes of recognition, there are really no secrets. We use symbols and allegory to teach the brotherhood of man under the benevolent patronage of “*the One, all-Powerful, all-Wise, Everywhere-present God, Architect, Creator and Preserver of all things.*” The

lesson is brilliant in its simplicity. And when two Masons who don’t know one another meet, each one immediately knows that, as a true and lawful brother, the other is on the level. The only way to know this, of course, is through certain signs, tokens, and words whereby one Mason may immediately recognize the other as the same.

As brothers, we meet in the lodge, where all distinctions disappear upon stepping through the door. Here we gather, conversing, relaxing, and worshiping God by being mindful of the great gift of brotherhood He has given, and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity. And at the center of the lodge is the book, the light of Masonry. The book of any faith is welcome upon our altar, so long as it affirms the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. By those things alone is Masonic philosophy bound.

My favorite Masonic passage comes from Joseph Newton, who asks when a man is a Mason. “*When he knows that down in his heart every man is as noble, as vile, as divine, as diabolic, and as lonely as himself, and seeks to know, to forgive, and to love his fellowman... When he finds good in every faith that helps any man to lay hold of divine things and sees majestic meanings in life, whatever the name of that faith may be... When no voice of distress*

reaches his ears in vain, and no hand seeks his aid without response...Such a man has found the only real secret of Masonry, and the one which it is trying to give to all the world."

It's comforting to be in a strange place and see the familiar signs of Masonry all around, invisible to those who have not been tried by the square and found true. Every proud bearer of the square and compasses is at once my brother and friend, the beneficiary of my charity, and the benefactor when I am in need. Our guide is the passage from Luke: *"Ask and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock and the door shall be opened unto you."*

The symbols of Masonry are for us reminders of the lessons that every Mason recognizes. Masons hold a trowel, which we use for spreading the cement of brotherly love and affection. As fallible beings, the rough stone, unpolished and unrefined, symbolizes our souls. Life is the shaping of that stone into the image of the Creator. As George Free wrote, *"the stone that the Architect placed in your care must pass the strict test of His unerring square."* Thus we fit our souls, as living stones, for that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

The black and white checkered floor of the lodge, which echoes the *"Beauseant"* of the Knights Templar, symbolizes that test. It is the yin-yang of Masonry, a reminder of man's dualist nature. That his heart is home to both day and night, and he is capable at once of great good and terrible evil. He is both divine and damned.

With the compass, we are taught to circumscribe our passions and actions within the bounds of all mankind, and the circle created is eternal. But the center of it all is the noble letter "G." It is in every lodge, and central to Freemasonry. It is the All-Seeing Eye, the eye of God. The "G" serves to remind us to al-

ways remember the Creator, especially in the days of youth, when the evil days come not. We are all journeying upon the level, to that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler ever returns. And soon shall the dust return to the Earth, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Each of us is but one grain in the hourglass of Time, whose sands run at a baffling speed.

The All-Seeing Eye also serves as a reminder of all the lessons of Masonry. For as truth is so important to Masons, we remember that while our actions may be hidden from the eyes of man, the All-Seeing Eye, whom the Sun, Moon, and Stars obey, and under whose watchful care even comets perform their stupendous revolutions, pervades the whole, and ensures that justice will eventually overtake us.

These teachings are the essential truths of Masonry. Above all, they challenge us to know both ourselves and the nature of our God. They recognize that the unique spirituality that seems so different is, in fact, like the spokes in a wheel, all leading to the center. And they teach us that, as Masons, we must always live with love and care, upon the level and by the square. There is no lasting value in the temporal world, which comes into being and passes away in the blink of an eye. In the aftermath, only the essence remains, and the essence of Freemasonry is love of God, of brother, or the sacred trust imparted to us in the gift of life by the Creator.

When all else has faded, that light will remain.

**Information from Albert Pike's *Morals and Dogma* was used in this article.*



THE POLISHED VESSEL ON LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS

by Bro. Kaleem Kamboj

“God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.”
— Qur’an 24:35

“The heart is capable of every form.” — Ibn Arabi.

Before Light is seen, it is received. Before the eye is permitted to behold, the heart must first become still. This is the quiet teaching that runs beneath every authentic tradition the world has known, and it is the teaching that every Mason meets at the altar when, in a posture of humility, he first asks for Light. The request itself is instructive. We do not ask to be informed. We ask to be given something we cannot seize by force, cannot manufacture by will, and cannot possess at all. We ask to be made capable of receiving what was already there before we entered the room.

The ancient masters taught that Light does not hurry. It does not force. It does not announce itself. It waits until the vessel is prepared to bear it. And the preparation of the vessel is the labor of a lifetime, carried out in silence and in small things, known only to the one who watches patiently. This is why the Craft speaks of degrees rather than destinations, of work rather than arrival. The rough ashlar is not transformed by a single blow. It is transformed by the patient correction of a hand that has learned the measure of the stone.

It is a strange inversion of our modern habit. We live in an age that treats enlightenment as the acquisition of better information, as if the soul were a library awaiting one more

volume, or a screen awaiting a clearer signal. But the mystics of every tradition have warned that this is a confusion of categories. Information accumulates; transformation refines. Information adds; transformation subtracts. Information fills the mind; transformation hollows the heart until it can hold what no mind can contain. The difference, as one of the old teachers put it, is the difference between hearing about water and being made thirsty enough to drink, and thirst, not description, is what finally brings the drinker to the well. It is not that we lack access to knowledge. It is that we have forgotten how to be shaped by it.

Andalusia: A Furnace of Light

For a brief moment, let us pause in one place where this teaching burned most brightly. Al-Andalus—the Iberian peninsula in the centuries when Muslim, Jewish, and Christian seekers lived within earshot of one another’s prayers—was not merely a place. It was a condition: a condition in which philosophy and poetry, geometry and music, law and prayer were not separate pursuits but parallel paths toward a single perception. Different words. Different laws. Different forms. And beneath them all, a shared discipline—the slow, patient labor of inner refinement.

What Andalusia was geographically, the Lodge is meant to be symbolically: a space where differences of form do not prevent unity of purpose, and where the work of refinement proceeds in the presence of others committed to the same end.

For the Sufis of that world, Divine Light—*nūr*—was not poetry alone, not miracle alone, not metaphor alone. It was presence made perceptible, truth made intimate, knowledge made transforming. They taught that Light does not descend because we are clever, but because we are prepared. Like a mirror polished to receive and return what falls upon it, the soul must first be cleared of what clouds it. This is why the literature of the mystics returns again and again to mirrors, lamps, veils, eyes, and thresholds. These are not ornaments. They are instructions.

At the center of that literature stands one of the most extraordinary passages in the Qur'an, the Verse of Light, Surah al-Nūr 24:35. It reads, in sense:

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His Light is as a niche, within which is a lamp; the lamp enclosed in crystal, the crystal itself gleaming as a radiant star. It is kindled from a blessed tree—an olive tree belonging neither to East nor West—whose oil nearly gives light even before the flame touches it. Light upon Light. God guides to His Light whom He wills, and He sets forth symbols for humanity, for God is Knowing of all things."

Read it again, slowly, and it will repay the attention. Notice the architecture. There is a niche—an enclosure, a place set apart. Within the niche, a lamp. Within the lamp, a crystal. The crystal itself gleaming as a star. The oil kindled from a tree that belongs to no geography, whose essence is so pure it nearly gives light on its own. And then the culminating phrase: Light upon Light. Not one light, but light layered upon light, mediated through vessel after vessel, each one prepared to receive and transmit what came before. This is not imagery alone; it is a sequence of preparation, each layer refining the capacity to bear Light.

Every Mason who has walked through the degrees will recognize something of this pattern. The candidate is led in darkness, placed within an enclosure set apart from the world, brought to a place where Light is asked for and given, not as information, but as an entrusted flame to be guarded, shaped, and one day passed on. The niche and the lodge room are not unrelated. The lamp in crystal and the symbol on the altar are not unrelated. The olive oil that nearly gives light before the flame touches it and the good man who is said to be made better are not unrelated. These are not borrowings from one tradition to another. They are recognitions across traditions of a single pattern that belongs to none of them and to all of them.

The Heart Capable of Every Form

One of the great lights of Andalusia was Ibn Arabi, born in Murcia in 1165. The story is told that when the philosopher Ibn Rushd encountered him as a youth walking behind his father, he remarked afterward that he had seen an ocean walking behind a lake. Ibn Arabi lived as a traveler of inner worlds as much as outer ones, and he taught something that resonates deeply within the Craft. He wrote:

"My heart has become capable of every form: a pasture for gazelles, and a monastery for Christian monks. A temple for idols, and the Kaba of the pilgrim; the tablets of the Torah, and the pages of the Qur'an. I follow the religion of Love—wherever its caravans turn, there is my religion and my faith."

This is not the indifference of a man who believes in nothing. It is the spaciousness of a man whose heart has been so thoroughly prepared that it can hold, without distortion, whatever Light falls upon it. And the teaching beneath the poem is the one that matters for us: the Light does not change—the vessel

changes. The one who receives it does not remain what he was. A heart properly prepared receives Light as wisdom. A heart left rough receives the same Light as confusion. The difference is not in the Light. It is in the work.

This is why initiation is never the end. Light requires preparation, humility, alignment of conduct, and continual inner labor. The work must continue after the raising. The lambskin apron, placed in our hands at the beginning, is not a certificate of arrival. It is a working cloth. It will gather the dust of a life's labor before it is ever folded away.

When the Lamps Grow Dim

And yet, Brethren, we must be honest with ourselves. In our time, there is inner friction. There is fatigue. There is quiet questioning about the world we inhabit, about whether the labor still merits the time it asks of us. We hear it said that Freemasonry is in decline, that meetings grow thin, that the work feels repetitive, that the old forms no longer speak. Much of this is true, and pretending otherwise serves no one.

Nothing essential has declined, only the discipline required to receive it.

Light does not withdraw. It is not diminished. What diminishes is the willingness of the vessel to undergo preparation. When meetings feel empty, it is often because fewer brethren arrive prepared to give. When the ritual feels dull, it is often because fewer are willing to bring their own attention and their own sincerity to it. Freemasonry was never meant to entertain us in an age obsessed with novelty. It was meant to refine us, to polish the inner mirror so that it may reflect truth without distortion. And refinement, like polishing, is slow, repetitive, and sometimes uncomfortable. It is also the only work that finally endures.

The masters of Andalusia warned, with unusual clarity, against mistaking illumination for attainment. Light that does not transform conduct is borrowed. Light that inflates the self has been reflected incorrectly, as if the mirror were bent. Light that humbles, that steadies, that makes a man reliable in judgment and patient in service—that is the true sign. For this reason, many of the old teachers concealed their inner states entirely. They feared not darkness, but premature exposure. They understood what every Mason eventually learns: that what is most sacred is rarely spoken of directly, but demonstrated—through restraint, through proportion, through responsibility quietly borne.

If the world feels divided and the Craft feels weary, then perhaps the call is not to withdraw, and not to reinvent, but to return inward. To renew the work within ourselves, so that the Lodge may again become a place where Light is not merely discussed, but encountered. Divine Light is not given to make us brilliant. It is given to make us reliable—reliable in judgment, reliable in compassion, reliable in the silences we keep and the words we measure before we speak them.

From one flame, many lamps. From one Light, many paths. The lamp is different, but the Light is the same. And in the end, we discover that what we sought to see was always waiting to be received.

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SPEAKER 4

Gregory Bodine

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SPEAKER 5

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SPEAKER 6

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OUR HISTORY

Formed as a charity of Illinois Freemasonry, the Illinois Masonic Student Assistance Program (IMSAP) has been dedicated to a school based early intervention approach to identify and assist at risk students.

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Masonic Conferences

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education – April 24-26 - 2026, Omaha, NE



Esotericon - June 20th, 2026, Manassas, VA at Manasseh Lodge



Kansas Masonic Con - July 17th and 18th, 2026 Mission, KS at Rosedale Lodge No. 333



Masonic Camp - August 28-30, 2026 Erhard MN Moccasin Valley Camp



Yes! **Masonic Con Chicago** will be back in Spring 2027.

If your lodge or organization is having an Educational Event (not related to instruction or charities), please let us know. Email the details to: Admin@wcpodcast.com

Please give us at least a month notice so that we can ensure it is added.





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