

## Let There Be Light

The first question asked of the candidate after taking each of the Obligations is “*Brother John Doe what do you now most desire?*” In each case the answer is always something to do with “Light”; just the one word “Light” for the First Degree, “More Light” for the Second, and finally “Further Light” after the third Obligation. So it would seem that Light is of great importance to us as Masons.

LIGHT: What is it? Here are three definitions; 1) the physical form of the electromagnetic radiation spectrum within the human visible range; 2) referring to weight, as opposed to heavy, also metaphorically speaking, when applied to the depth, or intensity of subject matter; 3) illumination of the mind in a spiritual or educational sense.

All three can be applied to Masonry.

Physical light, electromagnetic radiation, applies to the degrees, especially the first degree, where the candidate is hoodwinked for the first time. Of course he wants light, to see what is going on around him. This is emphasized in the second degree where we talk of the five senses, sight being one of the most important, and sight requires light. The Great Architect of the Universe's first act of creation was to make light, so it is a prime feature coming directly from "God".

Light as weight, especially in reference to subject matter, has a great bearing on how educational material is accepted in Lodge. Many of our brothers are not inclined to complex thinking or in-depth analysis that is a stretch from their normal, day-to-day routine. As I once heard it put, "*Don't try to teach grade 12 material to kids in the sandbox*". So, to reach the masses, educational material must be kept "light".

Light as spiritual and educational illumination, this is the "biggie". Why the term "light" as meaning a good thing, or something of value? Most people's greatest fear is of the unknown, hidden things, and where is the most likely place to hide things – in the dark. As light repels the dark and lets us see these hidden things, so we take Light to be good and Dark to be bad.

Since ancient times knowledge, inspiration, and understanding have always been portrayed as a beam, or flash of light. Think of the "Blaze of Glory", or shining star radiating light, at the centre of the mosaic pavement as described in the First Degree Explanatory. Even in cartoons, having an idea or understanding something is shown as a light bulb turning on.

Another way to dispel fear of the unknown is to learn about it, to understand it, so light not only shows use hidden things, but in this sense also refers to knowledge and understanding. The more light we get, the more we can see, know, and understand. As our objective as Masons is to make ourselves better men, the more we know, the more light that we receive, the better we are able to understand various situations and thus the more appropriate, or better, we are able to respond. However, simply amassing knowledge is NOT our end goal.

There is a critical difference between knowledge and wisdom, and that comes through **Enlightenment**. Having a computer bias in my education, I correlate knowledge with data, and wisdom with information. Data or knowledge is an accumulation of separate facts (for example red, John, Buick, 1956, ownership), whereas information or wisdom is the ability to transform those separate data bits into something that makes sense and has meaning (using the former pieces of data we could say John owns a red, 1956, Buick).

This is also the difference between being "Educated" and being "Smart". Just because people have gone through many years of schooling, university, post-graduate work, etc.,

they may be well educated, but that does not automatically make them smart. Intelligence is required to convert the accumulated knowledge into a meaningful response to the world around us. I think of intelligence as a catalyst, just like in a chemical reaction, a catalyst causes the reaction to happen, but is not consumed by it. We all have different levels of this intelligence catalyst, so for everyone the conversion of knowledge to wisdom, ie. enlightenment, happens at different speeds, if at all.

To sum this up, Light, in all it's aspects is a critical factor for the development of Masons, and in it's highest form, as Enlightenment, it is a process which converts knowledge into wisdom, and as is so often said when this happens, "I see the light!".

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