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THE LIGHT OF FREEMASONRY

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"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth, was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said let there be light; and there was light."

So begins the story of the Creation as written by an ancient scribe, and the essence of this story has not been changed by knowledge acquired since it was written. We know by spectrochemical analysis that both the sun and the earth are composed of the same chemical elements. This has given rise to the belief that our planet is an offspring of the sun. As such it must have departed from its fiery parent as a whirling mass of incandescent gas "without form and void." The chemical elements composing this mass, being heated to approximately 12000 degrees Fahrenheit, were in no mood to unite and form chemical compounds. Only when sufficient cooling and contraction had taken place were they able to combine and form molten compounds which finally cooled to form the earth's crust. Left over from the gigantic chemical reactions which took place was a prodigious amount of mixed gases, notably oxygen, hydrogen and nitrogen. When the oxygen and hydrogen had cooled to 4000 degrees it was no trick at all for them to get together and make water, but owing to the heat of the earth this water was obliged to remain as vapor in the skies. When the earth became cooler it was pelted with torrential rains and shrouded in dense clouds of rising steam as the oceans in the skies sought to settle in their appointed place. The steaming waters gave off an impenetrable mist and it was then that

"darkness was upon the face of the deep." Finally, the waters cooled, the mists grew fainter, the rays of the sun broke through and "there was light."

It is fitting that the Biblical account of the birth of a world should be used as a prologue to the birth of a Freemason. Both events are by no means common. Being brought to light is an unique experience in the life of a Mason, not unlike when once before he was brought out of darkness into the light. On that occasion he was born into the world, a helpless and perhaps unwilling actor in the great drama of life. But now as a man he is born into the Masonic world Masonically helpless but of his own free will and accord.

It is also fitting that the coming of sunlight to the world should be associated with the birth of a Mason. By being brought to light the infant world received the force essential for life. For all living things depend upon the manufacture of food by an organic synthesis powered by the energy of sunlight. This process of photo-synthesis takes place in the fundamental food factory of the world, the chloroplast, a very tiny particle of matter located in the leaves of green plants. The chloroplast has a power plant called chlorophyl, the green coloring matter of leaves, and this taps the energy of sunlight. The raw materials which enter the tiny factory are water and carbon dioxide gas. The product out turned is sugar. From the sugar thus manufactured a great variety of products are mysteriously constructed in the marvellous workshops of plants. From it starch, fats and oils are made. It is the primary source of proteins and vitamins. From it cellulose or wood is fashioned. Even the color of the flowers, their alluring perfume and the sweet nectars that attract the honey bee come from the synthesized sugar. And so it is that green plants manufacture food not only for themselves but for every other living creature. This biological fact is told in the story of the Creation in these words: "And to every beast of the earth and to every fowl of the air and to everything that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is life I have given every green herb for meat."

Not everyone is qualified to enter Masonic life. According to the Constitutions of the Freemasons published by James Anderson in 1723 and which is a model employed by nearly all Grand Lodges:- "The Persons admitted members of a Lodge must be good and true men, free-born, and of mature and discreet age, no Bondman, no women, no immoral or scandalous men, but of good report."

When the ancient charges or constitutions were written not all men were free, some form of serfdom was common, and in as much as a slave or a serf was uneducated and had no legal status he was unfit for membership in a society of Freemasons. In many of the Masonic constitutions of today the term "free men" is found in place of the words "free-born" and "bondmen." From the Masonic point of view a free man is one who is free to carry out the obligations of a Mason. In this sense not all men are free owing to restrictions imposed by state or church. Where free associations are not allowed by the state, freedom does not exist and the Fraternity can not operate. Even in countries where the Fraternity carries on its noble enterprise not all men are free to join it. Good men and true they may be but mostly by chance of birth such men are members of a church which is opposed to Freemasonry. Prominent among the few opponents in this respect is the Church of Rome. The reason for its opposition is a long story.

Briefly stated, the Roman Church patterned its organization on the government of the Roman Empire. In so doing the Church adopted Rome's policy of opposition to free associations and this developed into the doctrine that free associations are wicked. Now; the Roman Church has within itself a principle which makes its doctrines infallible. ,For this reason the doctrine that free associations are wicked cannot be retracked, it must remain forever on the books of the Church to be used when expedient. It was not until the year 1738 that it was found expedient to apply that doctrine to Freemasonry. The attack was primarily directed against the Duke of Tuscany who had assisted in organizing lodges in Italy after Pope Clement XII had forbidden him to do so. Consequently, the Pope, then 86 years of age, signed a Bull which his advisers had composed for him. This was the first Papal Bull against Freemasonry. But according to an ancient law of the Church a Bull does not become effective in a diocese unless it is published therein and means are set up to enforce it. Little attention was paid to Clement's Bull except in certain Latin countries and Roman Catholics continued to be made Masons. Indeed, a half-century later the Craft in Ireland was predominately Roman Catholic and there were lodges composed wholly of priests. There is evidence that Pope Benedict XIV who issued the second Papal Bull in 1751 was a Mason. Apparently, he was a man of liberal outlook and it is thought that he was forced by the Jesuits to sign the Bull after they had failed to get control of the Scottish

Rite. It is well known that Pius IX who in 1846 issued the first of six documents involving Masonry was made a Mason in Chile in 1823. During the years 1738 to 1890 eight Popes in all signed seventeen documents in which Freemasonry was attacked. It is evident, therefore, that the opposition to Masonry was not popular in the Roman Catholic world; and that it required many years of patient toil by the Church to get Roman Catholics out of the Fraternity. The reason for this is not hard to find. The doermentary charges against Masonry are unreasonable and mostly untrue, many of the Church's dignitaries were Masons, and the penalty of excommunication for being a Mason surely did not make sense to a Roman Catholic who was one. The real issue was, and is, that the Fraternity is a free association which the Church can not control or tolerate. Consequently, her sons are not allowed to become Masons.

As for women being unqualified for membership, the work of our ancient brethren, the Operative Masons, was beyond the scope of the feminine touch. The situation with regard to Speculative Masonry doubtless has not changed since 1764 when the following verse appeared in a Masonic publication:-

The Ladies claim right
To come to our Light,
Since the apron they say is their bearing,
Can they subject their will,
Can they keep their tongues still,
And let talking be changed to hearing?
This difficult task
Is the least we can ask,
To secure us on sundry occasions,
When with this they comply,
Our utmost we'll try
To raise lodges for Lady Freemasons.

One enters the world of Freemasonry neither naked nor clothed, neither barefoot nor shod and divested of anything of a mettalic kind. Of course, this is not intended to humiliate but rather to show that whatever the title or worldly possessions held by a man, they have in Masonry another standard of value, and that their most important use is in the cause of others. One might contend that this unique lesson in philanthropy has not the same force today as it once **had**, that in this age of organized relief, of compulsory contributions to a state that tends to take care of the in-

dividual from cradle to the grave, that under such conditions there is little opportunity for the individual Mason to practice relief. While this may be true in a material sense, there is plenty of **room** left for the exercise of brotherly love. This tenet of our profession usually is in short supply. Yet the need is always great, especially in these days when a land of cold war tends to permeate human society.

The Masonic life is not without its obligations. Being both an oath and a vow the obligation covers an allegiance to the Fraternity and a promise to fulfill its demands. Since the obligation is not received under compulsion, but is freely accepted and binds a man forever to the Fraternity, a Mason is honor-bound to fulfill it. Perhaps the nature of the penalties attached to the obligation has detracted from its seriousness. For if the penalties should be carried out the Fraternity would violate its own principles. Yet centuries ago such penalties were exacted for certain crimes. Witness, for example, an ordinance of Henry the Sixth for the proper conduct of the Court of Admiralty. To be within proper jurisdiction of the Admiralty the punishments were usually carried out at low-water mark. One punishment cited reads, when slightly abridged, as follows: "If you or any of you discover or disclose anything of the king's secret counsel or of the counsel of your fellows, you are to be, and shall be, had down to the low-water mark, and then and there this punishment, by the law prescribed, shall be inflicted upon them, that is, their hands and feet bound, their throat cut, their tongue pulled out, and their bodies thrown into the sea." How such penalties became associated with the obligation in Masonry is unknown, but it is probable that they were introduced in the early eighteenth century. At any rate they are not found in the Charges of the Operative Masons. This brings up the question of their retention in the ritual of today. It would seem desirable to have the penalties conform with the seriousness of the obligation and yet be more realistic to a man of these times. As it is, the penalties can not be taken literally but may be regarded as indicating the awfulness of the crime of violating a Masonic obligation. When so interpreted the penalties serve the purpose.

The undertaking which confronts the Apprentice in Masonic life is a formidable **one**. All will agree that to subdue the passions and improve oneself in Masonry is a task which is rarely, if ever, completed. Through indifference to the influences of Freemasonry we are liable to remain standing as an Apprentice

in the north-east corner of Masonic life, no matter how many degrees we may receive. This corner, of course, is neither in the North, a symbol of the profane world, nor in the East, which represents perfection in Masonic life, but between the two. Therefore, to make our way to the East becomes the main purpose of our Masonic labors.

Before the Apprentice in Operative Masonry could become a Fellow of the Craft he was obliged to pass an examination or test. Heretofore he had worked under the direction of a Master who was responsible for his moral behaviour. As a Fellow he was his own master but was subject to a set of rules or points which governed the actions of the Craft. This custom of passing from an Apprentice to a Fellow has been retained by the Fraternity and is exemplified in the first section of the Fellowcraft Degree. The Operative's rules or points on behaviour have been adapted to suit the Speculative art. They are symbolized in the working tools of a Fellowcraft and find expression as the five cardinal virtues. Thus the ethics associated with ancient craft Masonry became a basis for the moral teachings of the Fraternity.

The second section of the Fellowcraft Degree is cast in the form of a drama of education. For this educational feature we are indebted to a Scotchman, William Preston. He was born in 1742. When twelve years of age Preston was compelled to leave school owing to the death of his father. He was apprenticed to a printer and later in London found employment as a printer. Joining a Lodge of Scotchmen in London, he became Master at the age of twenty-three. Accepting the obligations of a Mason with more than usual seriousness he set out to master the history and symbolism of the Fraternity. Preston was disturbed by the usual ceremony of initiation which consisted mainly of reading the Ancient Charges followed by an oral explanation which often was sketchy. Accordingly he set himself the task of writing a new system of lectures more in keeping with the dignity of the Fraternity and which would be of real value in the initiation ceremony. For he was conscious of the necessity of education in a land without a free public school system and like many other men of his day regarded Knowledge as the universal solvent of all problems. Preston therefore "undertook to transform Masonry into an academy of learning." After many delays and much criticism Preston's perseverance was finally rewarded. His lectures were sanctioned by the Grand Lodge of England, but in 1813 they were replaced by those of Dr. Hemming. In the meantime Pres-

ton's lectures had found their way to America, where they were modified by Thomas Webb. As such they are the foundation of Craft lectures in most Grand Jurisdictions of the U. S. A. In as much as our ritual came from Massachusetts it contains remnants of the modified Prestonian system. When introduced by Preston the Middle Chamber lectures had an educational value, what remains of them today has little. One may wonder, therefore, why much that is known to most any school-boy should have been retained in the ritual for so long a time. They could be modernized, not with the intention of dealing with the present subjects of a liberal education, but rather to confine the lectures to subjects concerned with Freemasonry. In this way they could be made of Masonic educational value. However, the present Middle Chamber lectures are important, first, because without some educational feature Masonry would be wholly inadequate as a system of life, secondly, the lectures are a continual reminder that mental development and cultural pursuits are part of the work of a Fellowcraft. For this reason, it is fitting that reference is made in the lectures to the five senses, for only through their successful operation can knowledge be gained. Moreover, that the lectures should be associated with the instruction given on ethics is as it should be because a sound moral foundation is a requisite for a satisfactory intellectual attainment. The Fellowcraft represents a man who carries the responsibility of family and business, a man on whom the arts and sciences depend for support, to whom the community may look for leadership in worth-while enterprises. Surely such a man to be successful should possess not only good morals, he needs also the finest skill and fullest knowledge. Therefore, it is Masonry of the mind and its associated ethics with which the Fellowcraft Degree is mostly concerned.

The writer of an historical novel or play mixes fiction with historical facts to suit his purpose. So did the authors of the ritual in dealing with the symbolism of King Solomon's Temple. For example, there is no evidence that the temple had a middle chamber. If it had it is unlikely that this chamber being part of so sacred a building as the temple would have been used as a pay office to which the Fellowcraft came to receive their wages. Modern Biblical scholars interpret the word "chamber" as meaning a "storey" and show that there were three such storeys on one outside wall of the temple containing small rooms for the use of the priests. Accordingly, a winding staircase built against the outer wall of the temple communicated with these small rooms constructed in the temple wall. The fictional account

the Fellowcrafts going to the Middle Chamber does not, of course, detract from its usefulness in the ritual. As a symbol, the Middle Chamber stands for the place in life where we receive the rewards of our endeavours. As for the industrious Fellowcraft the wages he receives in the Middle Chamber of life includes the satisfaction which comes to the builder of an upright character and a well-trained and richly-furnished mind.

Not much is known concerning the Masonic situation in London, England, in the year 1717 except that there were at least four Operative Lodges which met at various taverns. Each was an independent body composed of a mixed company of Gentleman or Accepted Masons and mechanics or Operatives. There appeared to be a need for co-operation between these Lodges, perhaps to regulate dues or to stop some irregular practise. Whatever the reason, delegates from the Lodges met one day in 1716 and resolved to constitute themselves into a "Grand Lodge pro tempore." They voted to hold an annual assembly at which a Grand Master was to be chosen. Accordingly, in the following year on June 24, 1717, an assembly was held, a Grand Master and Wardens were elected and the first Grand Lodge was thereby created. Within three years, twenty Lodges were ~~on~~ the register of Grand Lodge. They brought with them a variety of ritualistic material, probably semi-speculative in character, which learned members of Grand Lodge set about to revise and remodel. Out of this work came in due time a ritual redressed to attract the speculative mind. Apparently, the new ritual, like the older ones on which it was based, consisted only of a so-called Apprentice Part and a Master's Part, but so much had been added in revising these parts that the ceremonies became too long to be given in the usual time allotted. It is believed that betoken the years 1723 and 1738 the Apprentice Part was divided and the latter half was made the Fellowcraft Degree, and the Master's Part with additions became the third or Master Degree. However, the new Third Degree took some time to gain a foothold among the Brethren. At first it was worked only in Grand Lodge because few knew the ritual and it was not until after 1770 that the Degree became common in Scotch Lodges.

The symbolism of the first two Degrees is based largely on architecture, whereas in the Third Degree the symbolism centres around the Temple of Solomon and speaks of a living and a dying and a rising again. The latter theme is an old one. For example, religious cults of ancient Egypt and Greece had as their central.

action the violent death of some person and his being raised again. Down through the ages the same notion has been presented in one form or another but conveying the same truth, namely, that there is something in man that cannot die and that this something is akin to the divine.

Perhaps no more fitting introduction to the Third Degree could have been chosen than the Scripture Reading wherein youth is admonished to give thought to things spiritual and not wait until decrepid old age creeps in or until death cycles up and carries him away to the grave. This warning is linked to the tragedy of H. A. by that strange dialogue which is concerned with a quest for that which was lost. What is it that was lost? This question raises some interesting observations. According to the ritual the quest is for the secrets of a Master Mason. In Operative Masonry the keystone of the secrets of a Master Mason was a word which was communicated to the candidate by a Master who collected a fee for so doing. Then in its ancient usage a secret in common was called a "Word" and by secret was meant some special knowledge hard to obtain. Therefore, as used in the ritual the secrets of a Master Mason and the Master's word *appear* to be synonymous terms. Another answer to the question may be found in the realm of Jewish theology. According to Jewish tradition God's name was known at one time to the Jews who with deep reverence and secrecy dare not pronounce it above a whisper. "The Third Commandment when translated literally reads: "Thou shalt not utter the name of thy God idly." Again, in Leviticus there is the warning: "He that pronounceth the name of the Lord distinctly shall be put to death." To be sure, the name was recorded in the sacred literature but written in ancient Hebrew in which vowels were not used, only consonants, the vowels being understood by a qualified reader. God's name was written JHWH. Subsequently the true name was known only to the high priest. While the Jews were in exile the missing vowels became lost to the Jews owing, perhaps, to the sudden death of a high priest which prevented the passing of the true pronounciation to his successor. After the return from exile the search for that which was lost began and this quest for something precious and lost to humanity has found its way in various disguises into the literature of many lands. The search for the secrets of a Master Mason appear to be the Masonic version of the Jewish legend. Evidence of this is found in the symbolism of the lost word which appears in the tragedy of H. A. As in the Jewish legend the word was lost owing to the sudden passing

of the only one possessing it, so in the tragedy of H. A. the Master's word was lost because of the murder of the one in possession of it. *It is said* that when the English translators of the Old Testament came across the word J H W H it became necessary to supply the missing vowels. They got around the problem by using the Greek word Jehovah, which means Lord. It is a substitute word. And so in the ceremony of the Third Degree when the Master's Word is lost a substitute word is given. In searching for the secrets of a Master Mason the Speculative Mason seeks not some mystic word but something more precious and profound. It is for the truth about God, to find the divine in himself and in the world.

No single subject in Freemasonry has received more attention by Masonic writers than the legend of H. A. Yet as to its origin and how and when it found its way into the ritual are questions which remain unanswered. There are as many theories on the subject as there are interpretations of the drama itself. That the tragedy ranks high as a work of art may be gathered from the words of the late Edwin Booth, one of the great actors of his day. "In all my research and study, in all my close analysis of the masterpieces of Shakespeare, in my earnest determination to make those plays appear real on the mimetic stage, I have never, and nowhere, met tragedy so real, so sublime, so magnificent as the legend of Hiram. It is substance without shadow—the manifest destiny of life which requires no picture and scarcely a word to make a lasting impression upon all who can understand. To be a Worshipful Master and to throw my whole soul into that work, with the candidate for my audience and the Lodge for my stage, would be a greater personal distinction than to receive the plaudits of people in the theatre of the world." In view of Brother Booth's evaluation and because of the solemnity of the play, it is unfortunate that through a misunderstanding merriment and clowning sometimes are allowed to mar the proceedings.

As for the interpretation of its symbolism one can find in the tragedy an inspiring lesson in fidelity and honor of a virtuous man and a reminder of man's faith in a resurrection and in a life hereafter. This simple interpretation is a satisfying one and perhaps we should let it go at that. But the inquiring mind might wonder about the significance of other symbolism of the Degree and their connection with the tragedy. For example, there is the Scripture Reading and the symbolism of the search for that which was lost. Then there is the ceremony of circumambulation wherein a procession of the brethren circle the Lodge in a di-

lection taken by the sun as it traverses the heaven from east; to west. A similar rite was practised by the ancient sun worshippers who circled an altar erected to the sun god. The basis of this ancient rite is a belief held by most early or primitive peoples that by imitating an object its properties may be thereby acquired. Therefore, in imitating the sun its life-giving-power is sought. Translated into modern terms, our ceremony of circumambulation expresses an act of brotherly co-operation in assisting to restore to another the spiritual life which symbolically he has lost. Then there is the part played by the Lion's Paw. As king of the beasts, the lion has been venerated for ages as a symbol of power. It appears carved on ancient Egyptian monuments and adorns Christian churches erected during the Middle Ages. To the Egyptian the lion was "a symbol of the life-giving power of the sun and its ability to bring about the resurrection of vegetation in the spring time." It's Christian significance is that Christ was called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and associated with Christ, of course, is the raising of Lazarus from the dead and also the resurrection. The Lion's Paw, therefore, may be regarded as a symbol of life-giving power. Lastly, there is the temple of Solomon. From all accounts the temple proper was not a large building, being no bigger than a parish church. But it must have been an architectural gem, beautiful to behold. It was indeed a notable engineering feat to level up a rocky prominence for the erection of the temple and to build around it at different elevations numerous spacious courts, separated from each other by terraced steps. The numerous buildings within the temple grounds served the many activities which made the temple area a city in itself. All was enclosed by a massive wall. The magnificence of the structure as a whole made Solomon's Temple not only the wonder of its day but gave it a lasting place in the literature of many peoples. Reference to the Temple is found in the sacred literature of the Jews, the Mohammedans, Hindus and Christians alike, thus giving to the Temple, as no other building could do, an universality which makes it an appropriate symbol in Freemasonry. As such, the Temple of Solomon represents human life at its best. The building of such a life is -the ambitious program of Freemasonry. Therefore, the death of H. A. symbolizes a break in the building program as applied to the life of an individual.

Having regard to the several symbolic links mentioned, one may read in the symbolism of the Third Degree the story of a man who long ago ceased work on the building of his Temple,

who succumbed to attacks by such ruffians as greed, envy and hate, whose spiritual body lies buried in the rubbish of materialism. But he was not always thus. As a youth he possessed high principles and kept faith with his Creator. Now, looking back over his life, he becomes conscious of its deplorable state and recalls the days of his youth. He resolves to recover that which he has lost. He makes amends as best he can but the task is beyond his own power. Only by sharing in acts of brotherly love and by drawing on divine power is he raised from the dead level of materialism to a living perpendicular again. But because of the wasted years he can not hope to complete the Temple according to the plans laid down for him by the Great Architect. He must be contented with an inferior substitute, an unfinished temple, an impaired life. In some degree this is the life story of every man.

The Third Degree is the final chapter in the textbook of the Fraternity. Throughout the book the dominant theme is building, working on an invisible structure, that part of man which is associated with eternity. There is in this the theosophical conception of the evolution of man, not only his physical body but more particularly the part which is eternal. Progress in this evolution depends on the efforts of the individual concerned. From this point of view, one finds in the teachings of Freemasonry that the physical and mental bodies are but servants of the spiritual and should be made to act accordingly, and that since the spirit gone survives it is the only part that counts.

And so the light of Freemasonry shines in the thousands of lodges throughout the world, illuminating the lives of free men of all kinds, rich and poor, of high estate and low, teaching them, not by dogma or creed, but by gentle persuasion, aided by symbols, emblems, and allegories, the truth about man's destiny. Surely Freemasonry is the noblest of sciences and it can claim a place among the great witnesses to religion.