

Further Light in Masonry



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FOREWORD

This publication has been prepared for presentation to you, a Master Mason, after your receipt of the Master Mason Degree. It is hoped that you welcome "further light" on the Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons.

It is safe to say that among the millions of men who have been raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, not one of them realized the full implication of the ceremony at the time. This would be impossible. The deeper meanings of the Master Mason Degree will be understood in the future as you continue to seek further light in Masonry.

FURTHER LIGHT IN MASONRY

The Hiramic Legend

This is the name given to the most distinctive section of the Master Mason Degree. The legend of Hiram Abif is considered one of the Landmarks of Masonry. It is the climax of the Degree. To understand and appreciate the richness of its profound meaning will be a prized possession as long as you live.

There is no proven historic basis for this legend. The tragedy of Hiram Abif is a ritualistic drama.

Drama is conflict between a man and other men, or other forces, resulting in a crisis in which his fate or fortune is at stake. The crisis, or problem, is followed by a resolution or solution. If it favors the man, the drama is a comedy, in the original meaning of the word. If it turns against him, and he becomes a victim or a sufferer, the drama is a tragedy.

A play in the theatre may be built around some historical figure or event, as in Shakespeare's plays about the English kings. If the figures and events are not actually historical, they are considered to be, so that time, place and identity are of importance. A ritualistic drama uses set words and fixed ceremonies addressed to the human spirit; time, space and particular individuals are not important. What is important is the ultimate lesson – victory over death and the immortality of the soul.

While there was a Hiram Abif in history, the Third Degree goes far beyond what history tells of him. Initially, you might have viewed Hiram Abif simply as a man who was faithful to his trust, a man who refused to disclose certain secrets he had promised to keep. In a more important sense, Hiram Abif is a symbol of the human soul. If you have been troubled with the thought that some of the events of the Drama of Hiram Abif could not have happened, you can ease your mind. If such events never happened in history, they are, nevertheless, symbols of what happens in the life of every man.

In the ritualistic drama, the work Hiram Abif was engaged to supervise is also the symbol of the work we do when we supervise, organize and direct our lives from birth to death. The enemies he met are symbols of those lusts and passions which also confront us. His death represents the man who becomes a victim of those enemies, who is interrupted in his work and who loses mastership over himself. He is buried under all manner of rubbish - demoralization, disgrace and scorn. He is then raised from death. Man can be raised from self-defeat to self-mastery through faith in the Supreme Being.

Why were you made to participate in the drama of Hiram Abif? Why you were not permitted to sit as a spectator? It was your drama, not another's! No man can ever be a mere spectator in dealing with his own soul.

Recall that the three enemies of Hiram Abif came from his own circle, not from outside. Man's greatest enemies come from within - his own ignorance, lust and sins. As the Great Light reminds us, it is not that which kills the body that we need most to avoid, but that which has the power to destroy the spirit.

The great lesson of the Master Mason Degree is to teach victory over death and the immortality of the soul. A further lesson is to teach one to lead his life in such a manner that it is worthy of such immortality.

Further Interpretation of the Ritual

The Third Degree has many additional meanings and interpretations.

Confusion

The work of the builders was stopped, and confusion came upon the Craft. Order was restored, however, and loyal craftsmen took up the burdens dropped by the traitors. At times, one's life appears to be in a state of confusion, but man must undo the harm brought by wrongful conduct and crime so that order might be restored.

Penalty and Pardon

The supreme penalty was imposed on those who possessed the will and actually carried out the destruction. Others, who acted not out of an evil will, but out of weakness, recanted. They were disciplined and pardoned. Forgiveness is possible if a man himself condemns his, own wrongful conduct, since in spite of his weakness he retains his faith in that which is good.

The Word

There is an historical background to the "search for that which was lost." To the early Jewish people, the name of God was held in extreme reverence. Sometimes it was secret and a substitute name was used in daily life. At times the holy name was never pronounced above a whisper and only certain priests were permitted to use it at certain times. The Master Mason Degree does not specifically address this matter of history, but the Lost Word is a symbol of many things. One of the interpretations is that if a man has lost his faith in truth and goodness, he must go in search of that which was lost and continue the search until he finds it. Exactly how this is to be done is not explained in the Degree. Each man, believing in a Supreme Being is left to work out the details according to his own need.

Trowel

The working tools of this Degree are all the implements of Masonry, "but more especially the Trowel." The Trowel teaches us to spread the cement of Brotherly Love and Affection which unites Freemasons into one society of friends and brothers. In a broader, sense, this extends to our relationships with all mankind.

Other Symbols

The Three Steps, the Pot of Incense, the Bee-hive, the Book of Constitutions guarded by the Tiler's Sword, the Sword pointing to the Naked Heart, the Anchor and the Ark, the 47th problem of Euclid, the Hour-glass, the Scythe, the Setting Maul, Spade, Coffin and the Sprig of Acacia are all discussed in the lecture near the end of the Degree. These emblems may be discussed more fully by you with your counselor, or you may wish to obtain an understanding of them by further reading of Masonic literature.

Short Talk Bulletins explaining almost all of the Masonic symbols are available for a nominal charge from The Masonic Service Association. The address appears at the end of this publication.

Laws of Freemasonry

The laws of Freemasonry consist of the following:

1. Ancient Landmarks
2. Constitution of the Grand Lodge
3. Ancient Common Law
4. Statutes of the Grand Lodge
5. Edicts
6. Decisions
7. By-Laws of the Lodge of which a Mason is a member

Similar to the civil law, a Mason must comply with the laws of his own jurisdiction as well as the jurisdiction in which he is physically present. Just as a United States citizen residing in a foreign country may have to pay federal income taxes, he may also have to pay income taxes to the country in which he is residing. Likewise, a Wisconsin Mason living in Florida must comply not only with the Masonic law of Wisconsin, but also the Masonic law of Florida.

The first six areas of Masonic law in Wisconsin, set forth above, can be found in the Masonic Code of Wisconsin. The Grand Lodge of Wisconsin provides each Lodge with two copies of this "Blue Book," one for the Master and the other for the Secretary. Also, any Master Mason may purchase a copy of the Masonic Code of Wisconsin from the Grand Secretary at the Grand Lodge Office. The Masonic Code of Wisconsin is in a loose-leaf form. Annually, any revised pages are sent to each Lodge. Also, a notice is published in the *Wisconsin Masonic Journal*, usually in the fall of each year, advising individual holders of the Code how they can obtain any revised pages. Generally, revisions are made as a result of actions taken by the Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication.

The By-Laws of the Lodge of which a Master Mason is a member can be obtained from the Lodge Secretary. Many Lodges present the new Master Mason with a copy of the Lodge By-Laws at the conclusion of the Master Mason Degree.

A general understanding of the Masonic Law in Wisconsin will be helpful.

1. **Ancient Landmarks;** The Ancient Landmarks of Freemasonry are the supreme Masonic Law and are immutable, irrevocable and unalterable. They are the ancient unwritten Masonic Laws, existing from time immemorial, which differentiate and distinguish the Masonic Fraternity from all other organizations. Some Grand Jurisdictions have adopted the twenty-five Landmarks of Albert G. Mackey, others more and others less. In recent years, considerable weight has been given to the Landmarks as defined by Roscoe Pound. Wisconsin has never officially adopted any specific set of Landmarks, but the Mackey and Pound interpretations are set forth in the Masonic Code of Wisconsin. One of the Landmarks is the requirement that every Mason must profess a belief in Deity.
2. **Constitution of the Grand Lodge;** The Constitution is the basic governing document of the Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge is the supreme Masonic authority in Wisconsin. Its members consist of the Masters and Wardens of all chartered Lodges plus the Grand Lodge Officers, Grand Trustees and a limited number of permanent members. The Grand Lodge holds an Annual Communication in June of each year.
3. **Ancient Common Law;** The Ancient Common Law of Freemasonry is the ancient usages, charges and regulations of Freemasonry, differing from the Ancient Landmarks in that the Ancient Common Law may be altered and amended by the Grand Lodge in those rare instances where the welfare of the Craft shall require

the proposed change. "Common Law" in Masonry, as in civil law, is unwritten in the sense that one cannot always find a precise set of rules to govern every situation. For example, although the Masonic Code of Wisconsin sets forth some examples of "un-Masonic conduct," such action is generally defined as "any conduct which may bring or has brought Masonry into disrepute or reproach to the institution." It must be left primarily with the Constituent Lodges to determine, in the light of the- surrounding circumstances, whether any Mason's conduct is un-Masonic.

4. **Statutes;** The Statutes of the Grand Lodge are the Laws of the Grand Lodge, Regulations for Lodges and the Trial Code. These provisions, found in the Masonic Code of Wisconsin, set forth the more detailed rules covering the Grand Lodge officers, Committees and finances, the administration of the Constituent Lodges and the disciplines of an individual Lodge or Mason.
5. **Edicts;** An Edict is a judicial and not a legislative action of the Grand Lodge. It is an approved Decision of a Grand Master, but such Decision shall only apply to the instant case and does not become a part of the statutes.
6. **Decisions;** A Decision is a determination, order or decree of a Grand Master, prior to its presentation to Grand Lodge. A Decision of a Grand Master is valid and controlling unless and until disapproved by the Grand Lodge.
7. **By-Laws;** Each Constituent Lodge has its own By-Laws setting forth the place and time of the meetings, the number of Trustees, the fees for degrees and the annual dues or the amount or method of determining the same. Other matters relating to the Lodge may be set forth in the By-Laws. All By-Law provisions must be in conformance with the Masonic Code of Wisconsin.

Duties, Rights and Privileges of a Master Mason

Obviously, a Master Mason's first duty is to live by and act consistently with his obligations. Unless this is done, he cannot perform his other duties, nor will he be able to claim his rights and privileges. With this foundation, a number of those duties, rights and privileges can be discussed in detail.

It is a Master Mason's duty, legal and moral, to pay his share of the financial costs of the Fraternity promptly.

He has the right of affiliation. If he moves permanently to some other community, a Master Mason is not required to maintain membership at a distance from his first Lodge, but may petition for membership in a more convenient Lodge. The Grand Lodge of Wisconsin permits a Master Mason to hold membership in more than one Lodge.

Visiting another Lodge in which he does not hold membership is both a right and a privilege, though not a duty. It is a right in the sense that a Master Mason may seek admittance to any Lodge chartered by the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin or by another Grand Lodge which is recognized by the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin. It is a privilege in the sense that his admission into that Lodge is contingent upon his being vouched for or examined and being permitted to enter by the Master of that Lodge. Generally, the sole requirement for admission to a Lodge in Wisconsin is the presentation by the visitor of a current dues card. In Wisconsin, normally, the Master does not require further evidence.

If a non-Mason asks to become a member of the Fraternity, a Master Mason in good standing has the privilege of recommending him. A petition of an applicant for the degrees shall be recommended and signed by at least two members in good standing of Lodges in this State, at least one of whom shall be a member of the Lodge to which the petition is presented. A

Master Mason is cautioned not to recommend an applicant unless satisfied that the applicant is qualified and will conform to the principles of Freemasonry and be a credit to the Craft. It is un-Masonic conduct in Wisconsin to improperly solicit a non-Mason to become a Mason. This does not mean, however, that a Master Mason is prohibited from discussing the qualifications for membership or the principles of Freemasonry with a non-Mason who expresses an interest in the Fraternity.

Forms of Address

In referring to a member, the proper form is "Brother," the plural of which is "Brethren." The form used with addressing the Master of a Lodge is "Worshipful Master." The form for the Grand Master is "Most Worshipful Grand Master." Elected officers of the Grand Lodge are addressed "Right Worshipful," and the appointed Grand Lodge officers are addressed "Worshipful."

Additional Light in Masonry

There are literally thousands of books and other publications on Masonic subjects. Your Counselor can assist you in selecting these books or materials. A catalog of such books can be obtained from:

Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co. P.O. Box 9759, 3011 Old Dumbarton Rd.
Richmond, VA 23228-0759

Masonic supplies are available from:

J.P. Luther Co.
P.O. Box 344, 1733 S. Pearl St. Berlin, WI 54923

A catalog of Masonic Digests and Short Talk Bulletins can be obtained from:

The Masonic Service Association 8120 Fenton Street
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Many Master Masons also pursue additional light in Masonry by joining York Rite and Scottish Rite Bodies. You are certainly encouraged to join these other Masonic organizations when you determine that it is appropriate. No Master Mason shall sign a petition for any other Masonic Body, however, until he shall have first passed his Master Mason examination. Always remember, however, "There is no higher degree in Freemasonry than that of Master Mason."

A true Master Mason is more than just a member of his Lodge. A Master Mason is one who truly understands the principles of Freemasonry and is one who conducts his daily life in accordance with these principles.