

# A DISCUSSION ON MASONIC SYMBOLISM

## Part Six, A Glimmer of Light in the Dawn

PLEASE NOTE: In all of these essays, I am referring only to the Symbolism in the Ritual as used within the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York.

“What do you most desire?” If someone were to ask you that question today, how would you answer? Financial security? Repaired relationships? Success? Of all the things that come to your mind, both tangible and non-tangible, which would you choose as your answer to that question? Well, there was a time when you were asked that question and you found that you were prompted to give a specific answer...“Light in Masonry.” An interesting choice of answers when you consider all there is that a man could wish for in any circumstance. It could be that you were prompted to give that answer because it was the only thing within our power to give at that time – and that would be partly true. But, on further reflection, you should understand that what we had to offer was something we knew to be of more value than the gold wrought into the statues of ancient kings, of the jewels fit to grace the diadem of eastern potentates. What we had to offer to you was knowledge of such value that mere words could not describe. In fact, it was knowledge of such depth that we would have to resort to symbolism to help define it. We would have to show you a symbolic representation of the surface knowledge and hope you would, through our encouragement, delve into a deeper study of the symbolism to find that light that the ancients discovered during their similar philosophical journeys.....

As you requested light in Masonry, so you were first given your first look at the symbolic Craft. As the light of the rising sun first permeating the darkness in which you had been wandering, you were brought to Masonic light, light in which you were permitted to view the first three symbolic representations of our wealth we could give you. They were there, before you, dimly illuminated but visible in the dawning of a new awareness; symbols of all that we believe to be the essence of behaviour to which we, as Masons, aspire.

What did you first behold? The Three Great Lights in Masonry as illuminated by the Three Lesser Lights. And how were they explained? You were first directed to examine the Holy Bible where you were told you would find the principles upon which to build a righteous life. Note that you were not told what those principles were. You were told that somewhere between the covers of that massive book, you would find those principles and you were told that you should study therein to discover them for yourself. The Great Light was there for you to find and interpret for yourself. You were not told where to find it. Nor were you told how to find it. You were simply told that within the covers of that Volume of Sacred Law, there was information that you could use to build a righteous life.

It should be obvious by now that Masonry considers this Book to be something of value. It should also be obvious that Masonry is not going to hand you its secrets. We may take you by the hand and lead you to the altar where we will point to this volume,

but we are not going to hand you the wealth of information within. That is for you to find through study and contemplation. Masonry uses this symbol as a starting point in your journey, a starting point from which you will, for yourself, discover the hidden mysteries of Freemasonry. Freemasonry is a journey. This book is your road map. Need I say more?

This was our first symbolic challenge to you! We expected you to study within that sacred book, or the one book that is sacred to you, to find and build upon those principles. This was our first challenge to you. We expected you to come to an understanding of how you are inexorably connected to the Great Architect of the Universe. This was our first challenge to you – to listen, to read, to learn...

But wait! There are yet two more symbols visible to you; the Square and the Compasses. Or, are they in reality but one symbol? What do they suggest to us? Perhaps what they inform us is this: If we look upon ourselves as a building block - an ashlar - in some greater plan or design, and upon examination – testing with the square of virtue - we find that not all of the corners of our lives are a perfect (symbolic) 90 degrees, then how is it possible for us to build a life that is completely on the level? How will it be possible for us to meet with other Masons upon the square? If we cannot test the angles of our lives against the perfection of the circle within which we live and apply the light we find within our book of sacred law, how can our lives, or actions, be completely plumb – upright – in our dealings with God and Man? No edifice, whether physical or spiritual, can withstand the test of time if all within is neither plumb nor level. Eventually, it will fall and crumble into worthless rubble.

These three symbols, taken together, are to inform us of the architect's plans for us and to sketch out, in a preliminary fashion, how we are to apply them. Together, they are Freemasonry's introduction of its requirements upon each of us to read, to listen, to study, to learn, and to move closer toward that perfect ashlar.

©Dave Upham, ERAC Lodge 163, F&AM