THE COLLECTED WORKS OF
WALTER LESLIE WILMSHURST
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Contents

Chronology of Writings ix
  Articles, Reviews and Lectures ....................... ix
  Books and Booklets .................................... ix
  Miscellaneous .......................................... x
  Note-book’s Material ................................. x

Brief Masonic Biography xi
  Birthday .............................................. xii
  The Huddersfield Lodge No. 290 .................... xii
  Prosperity Chapter H.R.A., No. 290 .............. xii
  The Lodge of Harmony No. 275 ..................... xii
  Lodge of Living Stones ............................. xiii
  Province of West Yorks ............................. xiii
  Grand Lodge .......................................... xiii

I  Articles, Reviews and Lectures 1
  1  Reason and Vision 3
  2  The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal 11
  3  Spurious Ecstasy and Ceremonial Magic 19
  4  The Mystical Basis of Freemasonry 25
  5  The Working Tools of an Old York Master 35
  6  Notes on Cosmic Consciousness 41
  7  The Fundamental Philosopher Secrets Within Masonry 53
# The Collected Works of Walter Leslie Wilmshurst

## II The Meaning of Masonry

1. **Introduction**
   - The Position and Possibilities of the Masonic Order

2. **The Deeper Symbolism of Masonry**

3. **Masonry as a Philosophy**

4. **Further Notes on Craft Symbolism**
   - The Form of the Lodge
   - The Positions of the Officers of the Lodge
   - The Greater and Lesser Lights
   - Opening and closing the Lodge
   - First or Entered Apprentice Degree
   - Second or Fellow-Craft Degree
   - Third, or Master-Mason's Degree
   - The Masonic Apron
   - A Prayer at Lodge Closing

5. **The Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem**
   - The Ceremony of Exaltation

6. **The Relation of Masonry to the Ancient Mysteries**

## III Masonic Initiation

1. **Introduction**
   - The Position and Possibilities of the Masonic Order

2. **From Darkness to Light**
   - Initiation Real and Ceremonial
   - The Purpose of the Mysteries
   - The Ideal Lodge

3. **Light on the Way**
   - The Knowledge of Yourself
   - The G
   - The Ladder
   - The Superstructure
   - The Cable-Tow
CONTENTS

6.- The Apron ................................................................. 247
7.- The Wind ................................................................. 250
8.- Seeking a Master ....................................................... 252
9.- Wages ................................................................. 257
10.- The Law of the Mount ............................................. 260
11.- From Labour to Refreshment ..................................... 264
12.- The Grand Lodge Above ........................................... 268

4 Fullness of Light ....................................................... 273
1.- Observations and Examples ........................................ 273
2.- Apocalypsis ............................................................. 282
   An Allegory of Initiation ............................................. 282
   I ................................................................. 283
   II ................................................................. 287
   III ................................................................. 289
   IV ................................................................. 292
   V ................................................................. 294
   VI ................................................................. 297
   VII ................................................................. 301

5 Past and Future of the Masonic Order ............................ 303
1.- Observations and Examples ........................................ 303
II.- The Future ............................................................ 312
Postscript ................................................................. 324

IV The Ceremony of Initiation ........................................ 327

1 The Ceremony of Initiation ......................................... 331
   Introduction .......................................................... 331
   I ................................................................. 331
   II ................................................................. 332
   III ................................................................. 333
   IV ................................................................. 336
   Part I ................................................................. 338
      1.- The Admission .................................................. 338
      2.- The Prayer of Dedication ...................................... 339
      3.- The Perambulation or Mystical Journeying .................. 339
      4.- The Professions of Freedom, Motive, and Perseverance .... 341
      5.- The Advance from West to East ................................ 342
      6.- The Obligation .................................................. 343
V The Ceremony of Passing 367

1 The Ceremony of Passing 371
   Introductory ................................................... 371
   I. ........................................................................ 371
   II. ....................................................................... 373
   The Candidate’s Qualifications ......................... 375
   The Passport ..................................................... 377
      The Opening of the Fellow Craft Lodge ............. 381
      The Prayer of Dedication .................................. 382
      The Perambulations ......................................... 383
      The Obligation ............................................... 386
      The Silent Climax of the Ceremony .................... 389
      The Three Great Lights .................................... 390
      The Entrustment with the Secrets ..................... 392
      The Testing by the Wardens ............................ 398
      The Investiture with the Apron ....................... 400
      The Charge in the S.E. Corner ......................... 403
      The Working Tools ......................................... 405
      The Closing .................................................. 407
      Explanation of the Frontispiece ....................... 409

VI Note-book’s Material 413

1 Wilmshurst’s Tracing Board of the Centre 415
Chronology of Writings

Articles, Reviews and Lectures


Books and Booklets


**Miscellaneous**


(1906). *The chief scripture of India (the Bhagavad Gita) and its relation to present events*. London: W. Rider.


**Note-book’s Material**

Brief Masonic Biography

“One of the World’s greatest Masons, deepest Mystics and Most perfect of English Gentlemen.” (A.C.B.)

Walter Leslie Wilmshurst (1867-1939)
Birthday

- Born June 22 1867

The Huddersfield Lodge No. 290

- Initiated December 11th, 1889
- Passed January 8th, 1890
- Raised February 5th, 1890
- Steward 1891-1892
- Registrar 1894-1895
- Secretary 1896-1898
- Resigned December 28th, 1898

Prosperity Chapter H.R.A., No. 290

- Exalted February 11th, 1891
- Resigned December 30th, 1898

The Lodge of Harmony No. 275

- Joined October 12th, 1899
- Chaplain 1901
- Registrar 1902-1903
- J. W. 1908
- W.M. 1909
Lodge of Living Stones

- Founder Master December 16th, 1927
- W.M. 1928-1930 and 1937-1938

Province of West Yorks

- Prov. Grand Registrar 1913
- Past Prov. Sen. Grand Warden 1926

Grand Lodge

- Past Asst. Grand D. of C. 1929
- Died July 22 1939
Part I

Articles, Reviews and Lectures
Chapter 1

Reason and Vision

Published in *The Occult Review* Oct 1909.¹

There are two paths by which the human mind endeavours to approach the sanctuary of ultimate truth. The first, the more general, and, as it eventually proves, the inadequate method, is that of reason; ordered, calculated thought, based upon objective evidence and drawing its conclusions from within the limits of individual experience and from such phenomena as are found available. The faculty employed in this case is the rationalising intellect, which, as it works, enacts its own laws of logic and evidence, and formulates its own canons and criteria of judgement, thereby necessarily restricting its own capacities and conclusions to its own self-forged fetters. A formidable query-mark therefore always stands opposite the results of the rationalistic method, for, firstly, the quantum of experience varies with individual minds, and, secondly, the laws of logic applicable to one man’s measure of experience are apt to break down when applied to another’s. Follow the track of pure reason far enough and it leads to a position altogether impracticable and inconsistent with your own or some one else’s personal experience. Again, we have schools of both materialistic and of idealistic philosophy, and (to leave the former entirely out of account in the present consideration) the official professors of the latter are found to be seriously disunited in their conclusions. Does ultimate, perfected truth already exist? they ask; is it something static and directly cognizable, or still in the process of making? Are things moving towards an assured “divine event,’ or towards something undetermined and in futuro, the nature of which depends upon the way in which the totality of cosmic forces develop? Is Deity already fully extant and in control of

the universe or still only coming to birth concurrently with the universal evolution ary processes? Are there intermediate "lords many and gods many"? Is there an Absolute behind, encircling all? Even if monotheists, are we logically bound to be monists? Are there not strong reasons for being dualists, and still stronger ones for being pluralists? So far, and into such perplexities do reason and its organ the logical intellect, even when committed to a spiritualistic view of things, lead us.

The alternative and rarer method of approaching the final verities is by means of a faculty quite other than the reason, and indeed one in regard to which reason stands in constant conflict. It involves a direct act or state of consciousness which places the individual, though he touch but the hem of its garment, in first-hand relation with what he realises irrefutably to be a permanent Reality forming the woof of both himself and all else. Greek philosophy defined this faculty as the "active reason" as opposed to the "passive reason" or carnal mind; it is "the Knower" of Oriental religio-philosophy; it cognizes rather than intellectualizes; and it is, in fact, the only true and reliable organ of knowledge we possess. That it may be abused or allowed to act ill-regulated is as unquestioned as that a ship's engines will "race" when the propeller they drive becomes lifted above the water it is intended to work in. But given a duly balanced human organism, it is the intuitive faculty that should control and inspire the reason, whereas the reverse method usually prevails, and the subordinate faculty is allowed to usurp the throne and dispossess the rightful king. Thus it ensues that the value of any man's philosophy depends more upon the measure of his illumination than upon that of his intellectual power. "Where there is no vision the people perisheth." Excess of intellectualism produces an inadequate philosophy; illuminated reason alone can show us any good. As the Welsh mystic Thomas Vaughan quaintly puts it, "It is a terrible thing to prefer Aristotle to the Elohim."

Now the present position of the official philosophy taught in the academies of learning, and of which one phase is exhibited in Professor W. James's recent Gifford Lectures just issued under the title of A Pluralistic Universe, is extremely interesting and suggestive, because many of its exponents, if not yet arrived at the summit of the mount of vision, seem assuredly to be traversing the lower slopes that lead thereto. This brightest and breeziest of philosophers realizes fully the value of transcendental experience as distinct from mere intellectualism. "A man's vision is the great fact about him," he declares, not his reasons; and since "philosophy is essentially the vision of things seen from above," the wider the range of a man's consciousness, the greater the value to us of both himself and his philosophy.

It is then from the standpoint of empiricism — that is, from the expe-
Experiences of personal consciousness — that Professor James embarks upon a journey of protest against the monistic idealism obtaining in modern seats of philosophic learning. Briefly, his argument is this. An idealistic view of the universe may involve the following beliefs: (i) a dualistic theism, postulating God and man over against each other, a view which “makes us outsiders and keeps us foreigners to God. . . . His action can affect us, but He can never be affected by our reaction; not heart of our heart and reason of our reason, but our magistrate rather”; and (2) a pantheism involving intimacy between man and the creative principle, with which we may consider ourselves substantially one; “the divine, the most intimate of all our possessions; heart of our heart, in fact.” But this pantheistic belief can itself be subdivided into two forms: one, which conceives “that the divine exists authentically only when the world is experienced all at once, in its absolute totality” (which, it is urged, may never be actually experienced or realized in that shape at all); and another, which holds that an Absolute may not at present exist, and that “a disseminated, distributed, or incompletely unified appearance is the only form reality may yet have achieved.” It is this latter idea that Professor James champions at length; one that assumes a plurality of consciousnesses as against a divine mono-consciousness; one that, he claims, whilst making of God one of many conscious beings “affords the greater degree of intimacy” for us. For the ideally perfect Whole is one of which the parts are also perfect; but alas, we, the parts, are imperfect; hence, if the world is, as it appears to be, still incomplete and unfinished, instead of believing in one Absolute Reality, is it not more rational to conceive reality as existing distributively, not yet in an All, but in a set of eaches, or pluralistically? But even if the idea of an Absolute is dropped, is there no consciousness better than our own? Yes; “the tenderer parts of personal life are continuous with a more of the same quality operative in the universe outside us and with which we may keep in working touch; . . . we are continuous, to our own consciousness at any rate, with a wider self from which saving experiences flow in.” And here, because of such experiences, which reason would never have inferred in advance of their actual coming, but which, as they actually do come and are given, cause creation to widen to the view of the recipients, the Professor finds himself obliged to break away from logic and intellectualism and stands ranged, in a quite literal sense, upon the side of the angels. The impetus of his own argument leads him to a belief, similar to that held by the late German psychologist Fechner, in a pluralistic pan-psychic universe teeming with superhuman life with which, unknown to ourselves, we are co-conscious; “angels and men ordained and constituted in a wonderful order,” as the old Church collect has it.

In so far as the Professor’s treatise speculates upon the finiteness or other-
wise of Deity, of whom he claims we are indeed internal parts and not external creations, it may strike one as but un grand peut-être. Apparently he claims no more for it, nor need the problem vex even the most susceptible religious mind. To know even dimly the God of this world is all that men of this world need to know; and that there are still higher, and as yet undeclared, heights is not improbable in a universe whereof our world is but a grain of dust, nor are some forms of religion without warrants for such a supposition. But the significance of this doctrine at the present era of intellectual reconstruction is that it constrains rationalism henceforward to recognize that fulness of life exceeds the limits of logic by taking into account the experiences of the mystical consciousness and by furnishing a rationale for belief in those vast orders and hierarchies of intelligences transcending our own which Milton’s famous line summarises as—

"Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers,"

and which, under various names, are common to every theosophical system. And though with these we may as yet be disconnected in consciousness, yet this pluralistic universe, it is claimed, is self-reparative through ourselves, as getting its disconnections remedied in part by our behaviour. Truly a high and noble motive for human conduct.

Dr. Rufus Jones’ Studies in Mystical Religion, a substantial and admirably written volume from another American Professor, gives us a compilation of just those experiences upon which Professor James bases his hope for the future of both philosophy and religion. Again, how significant is the present day demand for the literature of mysticism and for what Dr. Jones calls “initiation into the Divine Secret”; betokening both a reaction from rationalism and a protest against the insufficiency of orthodox doctrine. An aphorism in Mr. A. E. Waite’s Steps to the Crown asserts that “The consolation of God is in His mystics rather than in His angels”; which sounds daring until one reflects that to-day the consolation of men also seems to be in the mystics and the literature concerning them rather than in the official schools and churches, and that in this as in many respects quod inferius sicut esf quod superius.

Dr. Jones book being in the nature of a historical record tracing Christian mysticism from its roots in Platonism and classical literature down to the seventeenth century, there is perhaps nothing new in it for those familiar with the subject and with its exponents. Its virtue lies in the skilful collation and presentation he has made from many scattered records of the experiences and testimony of men and women forming “a continuous prophetical procession; a mystical brotherhood, through the centuries, of those who have lived by the soul’s immediate vision.” In respect of a book of over 500 well-filled pages,
written with obvious sympathy and insight and with both historical and philosophical learning, we shall not complain if he has not exhausted his subject, especially as he promises a further volume to be devoted exclusively to that master-mystic Jacob Boehme and states that the present is but an introduction to a series of historical volumes by himself and others devoted to the development and spiritual environment of a particular branch of Christianity, the Society of Friends. What is given us is excellent, notably the introductory chapter on “The Nature and Value of First-Hand Experience in Religion,” in which he defines mysticism as “the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God; on direct and intimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage.” For those desiring a compendium of excerpts and mystical testimony from primitive and Alexandrian Christianity, from Montanism, Neo-Platonism, the Waldenses, the Franciscans, and numerous Brotherhood groups, or from the memorials of such great names as Augustine, Dionysius, John Scotus, Eckhart, Suso, Ruysbroek, and others down to George Fox, no more useful or impartial collection can be recommended.

Now, totally unlike that of the professional rationalists, the testimony of this innumerable cloud of witnesses, from the saint upon the mount of contemplation to the itinerant preaching Quaker, is uniform and it is certain. Their expression may vary with the fashion of their time or be tinctured by the intellectual environment of their age, but all testify to having had contact with and drawn upon one “matrix consciousness” wider than their natural selves, and all affirm that nothing can hinder any one from rising to the divine union if he but puts forth the will to rise. “Their testimony to unseen Realities,” says Dr. Jones, “gives the clue and stimulus to multitudes of others to gain a like experience, and it is, too, their testimony that makes God real to the great mass of men who are satisfied to believe on the strength of another’s belief.” The series of volumes, then, which this one inaugurates cannot but perform a great service as well in the interest of personal religion as in that of general history, and we accord to it our most sincere commendation.

By many tokens, including books such as these under review, proceeding though they do upon different but converging lines, it appears that we are at length moving away from an age of speculation and reason towards one of—at least, the desire for—intimacy with realities. And this advance accords, no doubt, with the cosmic order of development; “first that which is natural, afterwards that which is spiritual.” Intellectualism is beginning to readjust its functions to its appropriate limits that a greater light than itself may be revealed. The mystics, persecuted, despised and rejected for centuries, are at last coming into their own, and are bringing sheaves of others with them.
These followers of the inward way have constituted hitherto but a slender minority, but that minority is now coming to be recognized as having been the saving salt of the earth. With one voice they have testified to one truth and to one experience. They have risen superior to the methods of logic and to the academies of learning; they have transcended the letter and the formulae of official theological doctrine. Around them human life has come and gone in millions of legions, and but for them the long centuries have passed darkly. Can any progress be said to have occurred in the apprehension of things ultimate on the part of those who chose the broader path; the outward, intellectual way? It is doubtful. Possibly some slight elevation of the intellectual order has taken place, an advance commensurate with the development, since primitive times, of cranial capacity and brain-surface, if any value can derive from such merely physical increase. Doubtless the range of intellectual vision has been widened, though it has often been darkened, by the revelations of physical science; some obscure places have been clarified a little, and a store of concrete facts has been garnered, constituting for future generations a patrimony that will obviate the need of discovering and relearning everything da capo. But, after all, such advance is but quantitative, not qualitative; all it amounts to is a widening, not a deepening, of knowledge. Knowledge is no guarantee of sanctity and avails little until it is transmuted into wisdom; its mere widening tends to stupefy and paralyse the mind rather than to illumine it. “He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.” No man ever won to the heights or lifted the veil of Isis by bigness, and co-ordinating grasp, of brain merely. No; for every newborn life the old riddles recur in all their primal perplexity. To every soul upon entering this earthly prison-house the water of Lethe is given to drink. It forgets its own nature, and its native faculties become temporarily abrogated. Its eyes are bandaged by the veil of mortality which permits it but that substituted method of vision which we call human reason; and no matter who has previously passed this way, or what others may have divined before it in humanity’s great hall of initiation and testing, it still remains the personal private task of each of us to pluck out the heart of the mystery for himself. But let a man turn inwards and seek to rend the veil of his own temple from top to bottom; let him lift the hoodwink of reason that blinds his power of interior vision; let him bare the burnished mirror of his inward self to that unquenchable intra-cosmic Light which illuminates and alone makes possible all lesser lights whether of the physical, intellectual, or moral order, and there will open for him, and within him, what Russell Lowell has finely called—

"The soul’s east window of divine surprise,”

and once and for all he will pass beyond the vexation of merely intel-
lectual pseudo-problems; beyond the region of theological controversy and
philosophic speculation; and to all protests and challenges of objecting critics
he will answer and persistently affirm, “One thing I know; that whereas before
I was blind, now I see.”
Chapter 2

The Hidden Church of the Holy Graal

Published in *The Occult Review* March 1910.¹

What was, and is, the Holy Graal? Not to waste space in considering fatuous imaginings concerning any material reliquary that may once have served at a certain sacred feast and was supposed subsequently to have been concealed at Glastonbury or elsewhere, be it remembered that there has obtained no extensive or important system of religious expression, whether ethnic or Christian, but has instinctively formulated the conception of a feeding-dish communicating supernatural food; a cauldron brimming with some celestial brew; a cornucopia, bowl, or horn of plenty, exuberant with luscious fruits; each the symbol of that mystical, invisible, but unfailing cup or platter from which the inward life of man is, by all save those unconscious of an inward life, felt to be sustained. The Holy Graal is the gracious Christianized form of this catholic symbol. Besides the cup itself, it involves also the content of the cup; the Sangreal, or sacred vessel, as if language itself refused to dissociate the inward content from the outward vehicle, is also the Sang Real, the Royal Blood, or life-giving Spirit, imparted therefrom.

In its chief sacrament the official Christian Church perpetuates, after one manner or another, a rite or office whereby, it is taught, supernatural sustenance is communicated to the human soul. But if the doctrine affirmed in most schools of religious philosophy be correct — namely, that that which is below is in correspondence with that which is above, and that visible things are patterns of invisible, it follows that the terrestrial office is a shadow of a celestial one; that the Church militant upon earth is the reflection of a Church

triumpant beyond this earth, and that the sacramental bread and wine of the
former have their appropriate, exalted, and sublimated counterparts in the lat-
ter.

Suppose it, then, possible for human consciousness to transcend terres-
trial shadow-shapes, however sacred; to soar beyond the sacramental symbols
inevitable to the perishable plane of existence, and to participate in the im-
perishable reality which, out of normal ken, stands behind the symbol and
renders that symbol both possible and valid! Well, so do would be to gain
access to an interior Church hidden from this world and to partake of the arch-
natural Eucharist therein celebrated. In other words, it would be to achieve
that quest of the Holy Graal, to which, as its goal and summum bonum, the
knighthood of religio-romance literature was self-dedicated. That knighthood
no wise abjured or neglected the instituted temporal rite of which we all know
something. Rather did it strive to penetrate beyond the sacramental symbol
and to find that symbol’s legitimate and natural, or rather arch-natural, ex-
tension upon the spiritual plane. The symbol held good pro tanto; it was the
conduit, the promise, and the substitution in time and space of a vital reality
existent beyond those limitations; it was the base from which the questing
knights operated and advanced. They dared not neglect the formal rite, but
they ever realized that — “A substitute shines brightly as a king. Until the
king be by and then his state empties itself, as doth an inland brook into the
main of waters”; and the objective of their quest was the transcending of sym-
bol and substitute by attaining conscious cognition of the King— of kings —
Himself.

Listen to the simple, stately prose of Malory describing Galahad’s achieve-
ment of the Graal in Castle Corbenic:—

“It seemed them that there came a man and four angels from heaven,
clothed in the likeness of bishops, and had a cross in his hand; and the four an-
gels bear him up in a chair, and set him down before the table of silver where
the Sandgreal was; and it seemed that he had in the midst of his forehead
letters that said, “See ye here, Joseph, the first bishop of Christendom, the
same which our Lord succoured in Sarras, in the spiritual place” And then the
bishop made semblance as though he would have gone to the consecrating of
the mass, and then he took a wafer, which was made in the likeness of bread;
and at the lifting up there came a figure in the likeness of a child, and the
visage was as red and as bright as any fire, and smote himself into that bread,
so that they all saw the bread was formed of a fleshy man. And then he put it
into the holy vessel again and then he did that belonged unto a priest to do at
mass. Then looked they and saw a man come out of the holy vessel, that had
all the signs of the passion of Jesus Christ, bleeding all openly, and said, “My
knights, and my servants, and my true children, which be come out of deadly life, I will now no longer hide me from you, but ye shall see now a part of my secret and of my hidings. Now hold and receive the high meat which ye have so much desired.

It seems a far cry from these high mysteries to the body ecclesiastic we know; to its record of heresies and schisms; its conflicts concerning Transubstantiation and the Real Presence. But to recognize this fact is essential to the point to which I am leading up. Centuries ago Galahad achieved the quest, but, it is recorded, “since then was there never no man so hardy for to say that he had seen the Sancgreal.” It, and what it connotes, owing to human imperfection, was withdrawn into concealment. The inner Church passed out of men’s thought and consciousness, leaving the terrestrial Church desolate and in widowhood, practising maimed and impoverished rites; a cloud, as it were, resting upon the sanctuary. Yet, the legends run, there was given large promise of the restoration of the Graal; and of the remanifesting upon a larger scale than aforetime of all that was removed into hiddenness. And through the long years of inhibition and withdrawal the hidden Church has continued its work in silence but in real activity, whereof abundant tokens exist for those who have an eye for them. Finding no response in its external counterpart it has made its voice heard unmistakably elsewhere, not in its old-time tones, but in varying and feigned terms, if haply some few, hearing, might discern or be brought to the understanding of the withdrawn mysteries; terms of “subterfuge and allegory; terms of Alchemy, of Kabalism, of Rosicrucianism, of Masonry, of Templarism, of sundry secret schools; yet terms proclaiming, beneath whatsoever veils, always the same message, urging ever the same doctrine; the doctrine, that of the possibility of human regeneration; the message, that in due time the King will return to that Kingdom within us which we affirm in every Paternoster to be His.

So much may be premised by way of introduction to what is perhaps the most important and effective treatise upon Christian mysticism as yet published. Hitherto the Graal legends and romances have been the province, well nigh exclusively, of students of folklore and mediaeval letters, who have found in them only such worth as their special equipment enabled them to perceive. Even for them, when all has been said, there has remained over (as in the faint recognition of the idea of a Graal Church existing concurrently with but interiorly to the official Church of the day) a certain surplusage of refractory material, irresolvable because out of affinity with that which canons of folklore and scholarship are adapted to treat. But it is just this excess which, as Mr. Waite points out, belongs to, and is explicable only by, the mystic. And it is this which gives students of the varieties of mystical religious expression
the clue to the facts that the Graal literature is one of concealed intention; that it is the ashes, as it were, of a great fire; the records of a great religious experience; the reminiscences of a school of initiation into those mysteries the existence of which in Christian times has been, and still is, as veritable a fact as the old-time mysteries of Egypt, of Chaldea, and of Greece. “It is only in its mystic sense that the Graal literature can repay study,” Mr. Waite asserts. His book, accordingly is addressed exclusively to, and is intelligible only by, readers of mystical tendencies. From the standpoint of mysticism alone, therefore, it is best to speak of it here, though, to the credit of its author’s own abundant erudition, it must be recorded that, to justify his conclusions, he has skilfully collated and co-ordinated that literature, and at one stride has both met official scholarship upon its own ground and altogether surpassed its achievements by virtue of having applied to the subject his own special gifts and appropriate equipment.

Quite probably the customary reproach will be urged at him that the mystic has read into his subject more than was ever there or intended to be there. One might as ineptly complain at Ruskin for deducing ethics from the dust of the earth; or at Wordsworth for seeing more in a primrose than did Peter Bell. The most commercially minded may recall that even upon the material plane fortunes have been made by discerning eyes that have seen the potential value of waste products or that have detected diamonds or gold nuggets where others saw but clay-mire or river-gravel. Is the exercise of the like faculty to be denied the religious mystic who, recognizing the marks and signs-manual of fellow-mystics who have trodden the path that leads from natural to supernatural life before him, is able out of his own knowledge to interpret them, and out of his own experience to vouch for their veracity? The objection referred to notwithstanding, henceforth all consideration of the Graal literature, whether of that known or of that yet untraced, is destined to be subjected to the criterion of Mr. Waite’s interpretation; and, to dismiss the merely academic aspect of the subject, it may be asserted confidently that future scholarship will confirm rather than discredit the deductions he has reached. If the large and often conflicting Graal literature be, as Mr. Waite suggests, a progress from chaos towards order; a series, that is, of graduated efforts on the part of an old-world age to express, in terms of chivalry, the perennial problem, and to disclose the perpetual secret, of individual reintegration into that primal sanity humanity enjoyed before the Fall into matter,—efforts culminating in the record of the attainment of the Graal by Galahad, the perfected spiritual aspirant,—so, after a like manner, the extensive, but inconclusive, modern interrogation of that literature may be said to culminate here in this exhaustive and convincing volume by the most appropriately equipped of literary
knights.

Mr Waite has given us, however, not merely an exposition of the meaning and purpose of the Graal literature. His work is a guidebook to a variety of other mystical systems that since the outward Church became desolated have sprung up, have perpetuated in other forms a cognate doctrine, and have left behind them traces of their affiliation to that unmanifested centre which is none other than the Hidden Church of the Holy Graal. Casual inquirers into the perplexing literature of Alchemy have long desired some simple statement of what all that strange commixture of religion and chemistry really means. The equally monstrous unintelligibilities of Hermeticism and Kabalism; the doubtful value, historical and otherwise, of semi-secret schools of symbolic doctrine such as Masonry — all systems apparently foreign to, and yet not subversive of, orthodox doctrine and official religious institutions — have long needed justifying, interpreting, and co-ordinating. Mr Waite has supplied this need, and has furnished us with a common denominator to them all. He establishes beyond controversy the fact that they are all voices crying in the wilderness, in different tones, but expressive all of one truth, and testifying all to a common but concealed source of inspiration.

Is there now for the plain wayfaring man who is unable or unwilling to tread these devious paths of apparent heterodoxy any instructional method ready to hand whereby he may enter upon the heritage promised by them all? Can he, not being a knight-errant, behold the Graal to-day Can he, no alchemist, transmute base metals into gold; or, no builder of temples, discover a certain lost secret, by which he may rear one? Well, in each of these cases the goal is the same, and all the various methods of attainment are reducible to one; that one, as Mr. Waite succeeds in demonstrating, being involved in the true perception of the Catholic office of the Mass; an office which, in whatever other respects the Latin Church may have deflected from its purpose, it yet, by an unerring instinct, has perpetuated and preserved from desecration as a channel of supernatural grace and a criterion for universal guidance. It is perhaps a strange claim to be made by one outside that Church and to readers many of whom will be prejudiced against its communion. But Mr. Waite’s claim is not used at all as an argument for enlistment in the Roman Church. He knows too well that the offices of grace are administered upon all hands and are not restricted to any one ecclesiastical penfold. As an expert, if the term be permitted, in mysticism and symbolism, he merely records and emphasizes, with equal sincerity and impartiality, the fact that, despite all withdrawals of the hallows, despite all spiritual blindness in official places, one eloquent witness to a supernal sacrament has always survived, and that all other symbolic and mystical systems find their simplest and readiest ex-
pression in the Roman Office of the Mass. As in a great cathedral are found lesser shrines devoted to special purposes, and chapels subsidiary to the main sanctuary, so Mr Waite’s thesis is designed to show that all mystical schools and systems outside the main current of historic orthodoxy have in reality been but accessory to it; specialized forms appropriate at certain eras and to certain minds; yet all over-spanned by one common, embracing roof, and all capable of finding their diversified methods of expression unified at one central high altar. The alchemic mystery, for example, as Mr Waite proves, is put with almost naked simplicity in Eucharistic doctrine. To understand the Mass is to hold the key to all other mystical systems.

I have left small space for reference to Mr. Waite’s most important and instructive pronouncement upon the nature of that Hidden Church, which, never slumbering nor sleeping, has through the centuries of inhibition, watched over all the external churches and schools. Something of this unmanifested communion of saints we have learned before from those enlightening letters of Eckhartshausen’s in The Cloud upon the Sanctuary, and from other less well-known sources. Henceforth all such voices will find fuller and co-ordinated expression in Mr. Waite’s earnest and impressive closing pages. He defines it variously as the integration of sanctified souls in the higher consciousness; the cohort of just men made perfect; the lower mind of the official Churches raised to a higher plane of self-realization and rendered conscious of the unmanifested life involved within itself. It is not an organized community in time and space, and yet life within physical limitations need be no disqualification for admission there into. It is briefly that hidden House into which, in the passage quoted above, the purified spirit of man, typified by Galahad, is described as entering and participating in the celebration of the supreme mysteries of being; that House into which, as the Graal romances tell, and as our experience attests, the hallows have for a season been withdrawn, leaving a widowed Church with but their substitution, though not without promise of their restoration.

Is Mr. Waite’s book — as I have said, the most luminous and important work upon Christian mysticism yet given us — a presage that that restoration is impending? That is a question that will be answered affirmatively or negatively according to the measure of enlightenment and mystical consciousness of him to whom it is put. Assuredly no one will read this book without asking it of himself, and without wondering why, at the present juncture in human affairs, when the questing spirit for the things of final import is rife amongst us, so momentous an elucidation of matters that for so long have remained veiled and close-guarded should have taken place. And no understanding reader will close it without gratitude and without praying that it may fulfil its author’s…
purpose of helping many upon the path of attainment of that of which his book treats.
Chapter 3

Spurious Ecstasy and Ceremonial Magic

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THE strongest evidence of man’s dissatisfaction with his present status and surroundings is furnished by his desire to transcend the drab routine of life and to escape from himself. The yearning for *ec-stasis* — the desire to stand out beyond his physical limitations — manifests in many ways. Some of these — conventional amusements, aesthetic or religious emotionalism — are innocuous enough, but when they enter the region called occult, many become wholly evil even when initiated with good intentions, whilst one only is otherwise than entirely spurious, transient, and imperilous. Of the evil methods it may be premised that they are the shadows and perverted forms of the wholesome way; the homage of imitation and imperfection that vice pays to virtue and its attainment. The vulgar drunkard, for instance, enters after his own manner a spurious temple of the Mysteries to seek the joys of the pothouse, and his cup runneth over as surely, if in a grosser fashion, as his who is inebriated by the mystic Grail in the sanctuary of his own soul. The exhilaration of the aviator is a low-grade replica of that of the religious aspirant who, sighing for the wings of a dove, learns to soar — *superasque evadere ad auras* — otherwise than in modern airships. But the mild delights of the bottle and the thrills accruing from venturesome sports pale to nothingness before the gorgeous illuminations of consciousness inducible by certain drugs and anaesthetics. Few, however, care to undertake the experiences of the opium and hashish eater in view of the reaction and inexorable penalty exacted by outraged Nature from those who wilfully or through moral infir-

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mity explore the caverns and abysses of the subliminal mind. Of recent years experimental psychology has probed this matter, and Professor James has described very graphically the effects upon himself of intoxication by nitrous-oxide gas. There is produced, he says, an intense and rapturous metaphysical illumination in which truth lies open to the view in depth beneath depth of almost blinding evidence; where subject and object, meum and tuum, the centre and periphery of things, become one; and where one becomes consciously blended with the Infinite.

Important philosophical deductions result from these experiments and a treatise upon The Anaesthetic Revelation by an American citizen is, in its way, of undoubted educational value. But what is the effect of these practices upon the personal organism of the experimenter? It will vary in individuals proportionately to their native moral or immoral condition, and it may be assumed that in the morally degenerate the results would be much more appalling than those attending alcoholic delirium. But even the average clean-minded man, actuated by the good motive of scientific inquiry, testifies in the person of Professor James himself that he is left with “the sense of a dreadful and ineluctable fate; a pessimistic fatalism; depth within depth of impotence and indifference; . . . terminating either in a laugh at the ultimate nothingness, or in a mood of vertiginous amazement at a meaningless infinity.” So far, then, so bad; even at the best. The immature Icarus flying to the sun, gets his wings scorched for his pains and falls back into a sea of trouble.

Contraband illuminism is obtainable also by certain oriental yoga-practices and by the frenzy of the dance as exemplified by the whirling dervish who performs his gyrations with the object of deadening the senses and awakening higher centres of consciousness than those to which the senses are the portal. The dance has been used in the rites of sanctity, and perhaps even in connexion with the Christian Mass; but it has also served in the mysteries of iniquity as a sensuous and illicit attempt to capture elements latent in the depths of human nature to the legitimate possession of which that nature has not yet attained. This latter was the classic sin of Prometheus in stealing the Divine Fire and using it for carnal ends. But it is perhaps little known that the excitation of psychic passion and the promoting a spurious ecstasy by unlocking an imprisoned essence which, by its proper user, may be suffered to act as the purifier and baptizer of the lower nature, is illustrated, beneath a thick veil of dramatic imagery, in the biblical reference to the lascivious dancing-woman whose object was to reduce into possession what is figuratively described as “the head of John the Baptist in a charger.”

\(^2\)See Prof. James’s The Will to Believe, pp. 294-8, and his article in the Hibbert Journal, July, 1910.
The practices of Theurgy and Ceremonial Magic are cognate in character to those already named. At their best (if the epithet be not an abuse) they are attempts, undercover of pseudo-dedications of sanctity, to stimulate and exercise occult faculties by constraining to the ends of selfish gratification subhuman intelligences and forces that mercifully remain unmanifested to our ordinary perceptions; at their worst, and even at a stage far anterior to that, they are unnameable abominations. As one of the great series of studies upon the varied manifestations of the Secret Tradition in Christian times upon which Mr. A. E. Waite has now for long been engaged we have before us an elaborate volume, _The Book of Ceremonial Magic_; a most comprehensive treatise in that it supplies the texts of all the chief magical rituals extant, describes the methods and operations, and supplies much historical and critical commentary. But the author's avowed purpose being to show that Magic, Sorcery, Necromancy and their cognates are perverse corruptions and fungoid growths upon a body of doctrine that is high and holy, the book is negative rather than positive in value; its motive is that of the Spartan fathers when they paraded drunken helots in the presence of their sons; namely, to show them something well worth avoiding.

That definite results accrue from magical practices is of course indubitable, but if from following them one were to gain the whole world, or even an inconsiderable portion of it, there is probably no surer way by which to disintegrate eventually one's own soul. It is significant that these operations demand from their devotees preparations as arduous as, and certainly far more ingenious and troublesome than, are required from those who aim at that genuine occult wisdom of which art-magic is the complementary foolishness. The doctrine of both prescribes rigorous discipline of body and mind, but whilst in the one case the end proposed is that of assisting the Divine in man to find its rest in the Divine in the Universe, in the other it is to provoke auto-hypnosis and self-hallucination, to indulge in vanity and self-glory, to truckle with obscene powers, to steal nefarious marches upon and influence the freewill of one's neighbour, and to obtain abnormal facilities for practising lewdness unperceived. *Corruptio optimi pessima*; or as S. Francis of Sales once said in taking the pure and sweet scented lily as the symbol of the perfected soul, there is no scent so foully malodorous as that of rotten lilies. Mr Waite has performed considerable service, though doubtless a disagreeable task, in collating the literature of Ceremonial Magic, in indicating its methods and aims, and especially in demonstrating the invalidity of the distinction

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3 *The Book of Ceremonial Magic, including the Rites and Mysteries of Goetic Theurgy, Sorcery and Infernal Necromancy.* By A. E. Waite. 376 pp. with 180 engravings and plates. William Rider & Son, Ltd.
popularly made between magic that is thought to be White and that which is admittedly Black. It is perhaps too much to hope that efforts towards attaining artificial illuminism or that the prostituted use of occult powers will cease to be made as the result of this volume, but, so far as literature can pronounce it, for all but the ignorant, the imbecile, or the wantonly wicked, this book is as the Last Judgement thereupon.

One turns with relief from contemplating the ways of vanity and evil, to the one remaining path leading to the true ecstasy and veritable Magia; the path which I have said above is alone legitimate and safe as it alone is to be computed genuine occultism and the only one worth any one’s while to pursue. Given the fact, which lies at the basis of all occultism, that high and hidden centres of consciousness and power exist sealed up within the human organism, there exist also alternative ways of unlocking them. One is by forced, illicit methods conducing inevitably to mental and moral disintegration; the other is by a “graduated-fire” and methods inducing legitimate and normal growth towards, and ultimate absorption in, the focal source and holy centre of all consciousness and power, where, voided of all vain desires and in utter immunity from any peril, the soul

“In the ultimate Heart’s occult abode
May lie as in an oubliette of God.”

As regards the former of these methods the best of all authorities stigmatised as thieves and robbers those who sought to “climb up into the sheepfold by some other way” than that of growth in grace and sanctity and through the strait gate and narrow way prescribed by the law and the order; whilst a lesser one who learned the Secret Doctrine independently of the Christian fold has also testified that those few who find the hidden door legitimately are such as have been found specially worthy to be interiorly illumined or have won their title to the heights by an inflaming passion for holiness;

“Pauci, quos aequus amavit
Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad aethera virtus.
Dis geniti potuere.”

[Virgil, A en. VI. 129-131.]

I will add but one word, lest Mr. Waite’s new volume should by any be thought negligible because it treats of a subject that is so. In a succinct and powerful introduction he has himself provided the antidote and counter-thesis
to the main subject-matter of his book. No terser summary, yet no more explicit and luminous exposition of the one legitimate occult path, as often defined and often traversed during the age of Christendom, has to my knowledge appeared in public literature. And at a time when many minds are seeking for sound counsel and feeling after the true way, and yet when, to meet this demand, glittering temptations exist to divert them towards spurious and dangerous processes, Mr Waite’s introductory pages to the collated records of Pseudo-occultism come as a warning to inexperienced aspirants and as a trumpet-challenge that says, “Choose ye this day whom you will serve!”
Chapter 4

The Mystical Basis of Freemasonry

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When, in 1646, the founder of the Ashmolean Library recorded that he had been made a Freemason at Warrington, or when, some five decades later, the architects, contractors and superintendents of works engaged upon the reconstruction of the metropolitan cathedral foregathered after their day’s work in masonic assemblies of another character at the Goose and Gridiron Tavern in St. Paul’s Churchyard, no one was likely to have foreseen that during the ensuing two centuries, and out of the then exiguous community of Freemasons, the enormous Masonic organization that now flourishes in our midst would have sprung into being. At the present moment, holding warrants from the central authority — the Grand Lodge of England — alone, there exist roughly some three thousand Masonic Lodges with an estimated aggregate membership of 150,000. The Scottish and Irish divisions of Great Britain work under separate constitutions of their own but upon similar lines to the English, whilst the British dependencies, the United States and every other civilized country in the world, with the exception of Japan, contain Masonic organizations, the total membership of which constitutes a great multitude which there is no opportunity of numbering, and which is annually increasing. It is thus obvious that the Masonic idea has caught and continues to hold a firm grip upon the imaginations of a very considerable body of humanity and that distinction of race and language has proved no bar to a universal appreciation of it. The inwardness of the phenomenon passes unobserved even within the Masonic community itself, although the external fact of the diffusion of the Masonic system throughout the world is, of course, not merely notorious, but is one of which large and agreeable advantage is taken by members of the Fraternity,
and it may be profitable to accord a brief consideration to it here and to inquire what is the secret of the wide appeal Freemasonry has made during the last couple of centuries and still continues to make.

The problem is doubtless very complex, and to the question proposed a variety of offhand answers might be tendered, the value of which would depend largely upon the perspicuity of the respondent and his friendliness, or the reverse, towards the Masonic system. That that system provides occasion for social, fraternal — and, to meet the claims of the, cynic, I will add — convivial, intercourse amongst a number of individuals who choose to segregate themselves into a distinctive fraternity with no deeper purpose than this is, one may reasonably submit, an incredible motive to justify an organization so firmly entrenched, so robust and associated with such personalities of eminence and character as have been formerly or still are actively connected with it. That it is an instrument for furthering practical benevolence and philanthropy, which it certainly does and does handsomely, is a similarly inadequate pretext; Masonry was not intended to be, and is not, a high-grade Friendly Society and its charitable energies are merely an incident of, and not the motive for, its existence. That it is a school of morality, tending to promote peace and goodwill amongst men, which is also wholly true, again fails to suffice, for men need not join a secret society, or enter into the obligations of silence required therefrom, merely to learn rudimentary ethics which it is the common duty of the whole world to know and practise. That it is, as is not infrequently alleged, an engine for promoting the mutual temporal aggrandisment of its members to the prejudice of non-members; a cover for political intrigue, or a screen for propagating anti-religious ideas, are again idle suspicions. That political or other intrigues have in the past been conducted — as in connection with the pretensions of the Jacobites and Legitimists in both England and France in times of revolution — under the aegis of societies claiming to be Masonic, is doubtless a fact; but this, when established, proves merely that a fraud has been committed upon a system devoted to entirely different purposes. Speaking for British Masonry to-day it is as innocent of such purposes as a mothers’ meeting and, indeed, is wholly untinctured with even the political partisanship manifested, whether passively or actively, by the official churches of the land; whilst the notorious ban of the Roman Church upon the Masonic brotherhood as being a trespass against the exclusive spiritual and temporal rights of the former is, upon a moment’s reflection, stultified by that Church’s own insidious political record.

By an eliminative process, then, we arrive at the sole remaining raison d’etre for the spread and attractiveness of the Masonic system, namely, the significance and implications involved within its ceremonial rites. Now if
these, or some subtly-speaking voice in these, be not, when all irrelevant and accretionary considerations have been removed, the fundamental essence and the secret of the vitality and the development of Masonry, there remains no justification for its existence worthy of account. It matters not, that in the case of a large majority of the Fraternity that voice is not a loud one or that the significance, of its purport is but dimly recognized; and it may be admitted that among Masons themselves there are but few who have entered into a full intellectual realization of their own heritage. The fact remains that something veiled, latent and deep down in those rites speaks to something that is latent and responsive, however faintly, in those who participate in them; some remote causa causans, apart from the mere impressiveness and solemnity of the rites themselves, which for most remains unrealized and unformulated in the consciousness, but which, nevertheless, induces those who partake in them to feel that they are in the presence of a mystery that goes to the root of their being and that it is good for them to be there.

To what element in the Masonic rites, then, is to be traced the effectiveness and subtlety of the appeal alluded to? Among the Fraternity, as well as among the outside public, there are many who, in the absence of better information, suppose Masonry to be a system of immemorial antiquity, one which for some undefined reason or another, became instituted for no very definite object among primitive inhabitants of the East, and which for some equally indefinite purpose it is still desirable to perpetuate in the West. It is supposed also that the predecessors of the present Craft were concerned in operative building and erected, among other edifices of both earlier and later date, the national Temple of Israel at Jerusalem traditionally associated with the name of King Solomon. To dissipate the misconceptions inherent in these suppositions to dematerialise the outward veils and exhibit the inward and real significance of the matter, would take me far beyond the limits permitted to the present paper. It is a fact of commonest knowledge that systems of initiation into certain spiritual secrets and mysteries have obtained immemorially; it is doubtless true that guilds and trade-unions of operative builders possessing also elementary rites, secret signs, tokens, and privileges of membership, flourished from very remote epochs and subsisted until comparatively recent times; it is the fact also that at least the superiors and chief architects connected with such communities were profoundly instructed, as the fanes and monuments of the past and the great cathedrals of Christendom attest, in the principles of deep-reaching symbolism, and that with consecrated minds and reverent hands they introduced those principles into the construction of religious edifices byway of emblematizing in stone the perfect temple man should build in his mind and body if ultimately he is to participate in another temple
that is eternal and not built with hands. But this is far from saying that modern Masonry is the perpetuation, or the faithful, lineal image, either of ancient mystery-systems or of the operative masonic communities, though doubtless points of connection with both survive. Every Mason knows that his Craft purports to initiate into certain secrets and mysteries; every Mason knows that in that system the tools, tackle and terminology of operative masons are employed; but a moment’s reflection will tell him that the secrets and mysteries referred to are not those of any industrial trade (which, of course, can have none of other than commercial value); that the incidents of the operative trade have been merely used as the outward apparel within which to clothe truths of a moral, and spiritual order; and lastly that the chief of the Craft degrees — that which embodies its great and central legend or traditional history, and as a preparation for instruction in which the antecedent degrees are, in theory, processes of purification — is devoted, from the first word of its opening to the last of its closing, to the veiled presentation of something which, upon the one hand, is as unassociated with mundane architecture as the east is distant from the west, but which, upon the other, is an integral factor and root element of every system of religious initiation of antiquity.

In modern speculative Masonry, then, is to be traced a confluence of two distinct systems. Some time in the seventeenth century the elementary rites of membership used till then among the then virtually obsolete operative guilds became taken over, under circumstances now very obscure and by individuals almost equally so, and adapted to serve as the vehicle for the expression of a highly mystical and religio-philosophic doctrine disconnected altogether from mundane architecture and unrelated to any form of masonry other than that which, by employing metaphor, we may call the building — or perhaps the rebuilding and reintegration — of that incompeled temple, the human soul. It may be stated at this point that the credit of reaching the conclusion just mentioned is attributable wholly to Mr. A. E. Waite, who first gave voice to it in some illuminative papers in his Studies in Mysticism and added some confirmatory words in his subsequent book: The Hidden Church of the Holy Grail. The facts involved in the conclusion had previously escaped the observations of historians of Masonry, who speaking perhaps without any, and certainly without Mr Waite’s extensive, knowledge of the movements in occultism and mysticism that were occurring behind the scenes of public history in Europe and England during the past few centuries, have been without adequate equipment for tracing the real genesis of modern Masonry. It is notorious that at, and for long prior to, that genesis this country and the continent were alive with occultists and initiates — of pretensions both meritorious and the reverse — connected with schools of alchemy, magic, Rosicrucianism and
what not. The worthy name and written remains of Thomas Vaughan alone, apart from the wide testimony of contemporaneous literature to the prevalence of occult inquiry, testify that earnest students and genuine adepts were in the field at the date of the inception of the Masonic movement, and it is reasonable to deduce a connection between these and the movement itself. In the old operative system they, or some of them, found, as it were, a body prepared; they imported into that body a new spirit and gave it a transfigured life, a life which, in its maturer growth, is with us in such magnitude to-day. To use an expression of Mr. Waite;’s, “they made an experiment upon the mind of the age,” and, be it remembered, it was an experiment made, and perhaps made with shrewd insight and foresight, at the commencement of an epoch when the tide of spiritual life and understanding in the official churches was about to run extremely low and the tide of rationalistic thought and scientific materialism to rise extremely high, and when, maybe, it was found desirable, for the benefit of a few in the dark days that were to follow, to kindle a new beacon-light testifying to a truth and a doctrine that have never been absent from the world.

It being my purpose in this article to bespeak the attention alike of those who are technically Masons and of those who are not to a further and extremely valuable work upon the esoteric development and mystical aspect of Masonry and its numerous ramifications and allied rites, the foregoing considerations may perhaps not be misplaced, since their intention is to clear the somewhat befogged atmosphere in which the true history and vital purpose of the Masonic system have become involved in both the Masonic and the public mind. In the volumes referred to — and they deal not with the external and virtually negligible history of Masonry, but with its interior content, its mystical purport and its place in the long chain of occult tradition — Mr. Waite demonstrates after what manner Masonry, in both its Craft and High Grades and its cognate rites, is an expression, perhaps far from a full, but still an indubitable, one, of that Secret Tradition which throughout all time has been perpetuated with the object of instructing those that were keenly enough concerned with solving the riddle of existence to consent to adopt the methods which that Tradition accredits and guarantees. The quest after that solution is for ever proceeding, amongst however few. We may call it the quest of the Graal; we may call it the search for the Lost Word, or the guarding of an empty Sepulchre; we may term it the achievement of the Great Work, or the discovery of the Philosopher’s Stone; or we may refer to it in the terms of the Platonist as the task of re-integrating the divine element in man with the Divine Basis of the Universe. The systems have been many, but the quest, and the goal of the quest, are but one. Many of these systems, expressed some-
times in terms of baffling ingenuity lest the pearls they contain should fall into unworthy hands, have long since passed away, to be replaced by others. Like the ever-renewed branches of the Tree of Life — uno avulso non deficit alter aureus; when one has served its day another has manifested without fail, as if (but is it not part of the Tradition that it is so ?) there was watching over Israel — the small, but continuous body of dedicated, undaunted aspirants — that which slumbers not nor sleeps; a watch, of unseen wardens whose concern is to keep ever open and illumined the pathway to that Centre whereto all experience leads and wherein all quests end.

Mr. Waite defines the Secret Tradition as (i) the memorials of a cosmic loss which has befallen humanity, and (2) the records of a restitution in respect of that which is lost. It is innermost knowledge concerning man’s way of return whence he came, by a method of inward life. But, by a paradox, that method of inward life is also one of inward death. There has been no accredited system of mystery-teaching but has proclaimed, whether in legend, symbol, or dramatic representation, the fact that death, interpreted in a mystical sense, is the gate of that life which is not merely post-mortem existence, but conscious, irrefrangible union with the Eternal Basis of the Universe. It may be urged, and with truth, that this doctrine is, or was intended to be, that of official public religion. I am not concerned here to discuss to what extent the churches have conveyed or failed to convey this truth in its plenitude to the consciousness of their adherents, and I am far from asserting that the collateral Masonic system can claim an advantage in this respect. But there is none among the millions who have received the degree of Master-Mason but may reflect that not only has he symbolically undergone an experience which has been the crux and centre of all the great Mystery-schools of the past, but that in so doing he has in his own person testified to a truth which is inherent in the moral fabric of the Cosmos itself.

And herein lies the peculiar purpose and value of ceremonial initiation as against systems that are but didactic or mainly so. The doctrine imparted is given an immediately personal application. The imagination of the disciple is intended to be impressed through his being identified with, and made to enact ceremonially, that which it is essential for him to learn, to the intent that thereafter he may in his own life and consciousness become that which he has sacramentally portrayed.

Such being the nature and purpose of arcane rites, Mr. Waite, who appears to be in the probably exceptional position of being personally familiar with the entire range of those now extant, as well as with the records of many now in desuetude, has been enabled in this book to apply his well known qualifications as a mystic to collating them and assessing their respective values; a
laborious task conducted with unfailing skill and tact, for in dealing with mat-
ters to which covenants of privacy attach he has been confronted upon one
side with the difficulty of avoiding saying things to which those obligations
would apply, and, upon the other, with that of saying too little to render an im-
portant subject intelligible to the non-Masonic inquirer. This twofold problem
he has effectually surmounted. Faithful in respect of those matters which are
the private prescriptions of secret communities, he has been abundantly gen-
erous in his exposition of those which exceed the range of all the instituted
systems and can never become the monopoly of any since they are open to
humanity at large. For this reason, although those who are officially Masons
will in virtue of their inside knowledge stand at an advantage, the book need
in no sense be deemed as restricted to their consideration, but is, meant for a
far wider public. The Mason of whatever rank will receive from it an illumina-
tion perhaps little suspected as possible in regard to his own science, which is
now, and for the first time, subjected to an exegesis never hitherto undertaken;
whilst the non-Mason who may be interested no less than his initiated brother
in the development of mystical knowledge and philosophy, and the forms in
which these have found expression from time to time, will find ample scope
for profitable instruction and reflection.

Space does not avail here for detailed reference to the contents of Mr
Waite’s book, or to the interesting collection of illustrations of cryptic sym-
bols and of portraits of some of those who have been conspicuously associ-
ated with the expression and transmission of mystical doctrine and rites, and
of which a few are here reproduced. The two volumes themselves constitute
an extremely handsome setting to an unique work which, as a Mason myself,
I most gratefully welcome and commend to my brethren and all others whom
it may concern as the most important contribution to Masonic literature that
has hitherto appeared. I have preferred in this notice of it to limit myself to
emphasizing a conviction of its value and to indicating the fact that it must
needs mark an epoch in the history of a system which has developed as it
were from a mustard-seed until it has overgrown the whole earth. Masonry in
some at least of its grades may be, as Mr Waite shows, an imperfect expres-
sion of the Secret Tradition, and the average Mason may, and doubtless does,
enter into but an incomplete understanding of the full content of his system
even as imperfectly expressed, although reasonable excuses for his so doing
might perhaps be advanced. But the present work should make such excuses
henceforth impermissible, and for this reason it may be destined in time to
assist in transforming and elevating the whole conscience and motive of the
Masonic body. In a system which hitherto, with so intangible and obscure a
reason, has developed as Masonry already has done there lie, now that that
reason is unveiled and a new motive is displayed, enormous possibilities; and in this regard I am thinking less of its future numerical strength than of the augmented spiritual stature of its adherents.

Masonry may yet become an undreamed of power for good, especially when regard is had to the increasing decadence of the churches and the validity of their teaching. Connected with its future is the problem, already becoming urgent, of the admission of women, against which there is, of course, no a priori or other substantial objection. The natural conservatism inherent in vested interests and arising from long usage may eventually dissolve when a fuller realization of what is involved is attained. Upon the continent a few lodges are opening their doors to women, whilst the Co-Masonic movement working in connection with the Theosophical Society already numbers some dozen lodges admitting both sexes. Of this latter movement Mr. Waite speaks somewhat impatiently, but rather because of its reputed supervision by an elusive entity described as the Comte de Saint Germain than from prejudice against feminine rights to participate in mystical rites and philosophy. In the words of the apostle-initiate, the man is not without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Divine Idea, and, besides abundant precedents from antiquity, there are good warrants for associating them together in any system whose ultimate goal is the conscious realization of that Idea. There was once, it may be remembered, a building—which, through the mouth of a great prophet, was rejected and condemned by the Great Architect because it had been “daubed with untempered mortar.”

My references to Masonry in this article are, like Mr. Waite’s book, not meant to be restricted merely to the Craft grades and their extension, the Royal Arch; they extend to Masonic grades and cognate rites lying beyond these, and some of them are entirely beyond the range of the average Mason’s present vision. Those whose existence is a matter of public knowledge are, as Mr. Waite observes, analogous to what in former days were known as the Lesser Mysteries. But as beyond these there subsisted the more withdrawn and Greater Mysteries for those who were proficient and well equipped, so also, we are assured in these volumes, the corresponding form of the latter is amidst us to-day. It is of the Masonic method and the initiatory system as a whole that I have written, and if in what is here said I have done less than justice to the important volumes under notice, the deficiency is due to a desire to exhibit in the space at my disposal the standpoint from which they should be read. They form the greatest contribution in the way of expository literature that Masonry has received. It remains now with the Masonic Fraternity — and with doubtless many eager inquirers outside of it — to take advantage of them and to enlarge their borders of understanding in regard to a momentous and
underestimated subject.
Chapter 5

The Working Tools of an Old York Master

By W. Bro. W. L. Wilmshurst, P.A.G.D.C.¹

In certain Lodges in Yorkshire and elsewhere, where the impressive “Old York working” still lingers, three other Working Tools are known besides those allotted to the Three Degrees. They formerly belonged to the now obsolete Past Master’s Degree or Degree of Installed Master and were presented and explained to a new Master of a Lodge on his installation, Brethren below that rank remaining ignorant of them.

After the union of the two rival Grand Lodges in 1813 the Constitutions provided that only the three Degrees of Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason (plus the Royal Arch) were to be recognised. The Degree of Installed Master was therefore unfortunately dropped and the enthronement of a Master of a Lodge now takes place in the Third Degree, though in the presence of a “Board” of Past Masters only, the working of such “Board” being the emasculated remains of the old Degree of Installed Master.

Notwithstanding the abandonment of the latter Degree, many old pre-Union Lodges, jealous of their traditional ritual and unwilling to accept abridged modern standardisations such as the “Emulation” working, stubbornly clung to some valuable pieces of traditional teaching and brought them over into what is now the Installation Ceremony, where they are still worked (not always with the approval of critical but not well-enlightened formalists of today). One of these is the three Working Tools of an Installed Master; tools specially associated with the office of a Brother called to undertake the responsible office of Master of a Lodge and to serve as a Ruler in the Craft.

¹This paper was originally delivered to the Masonic Study Society, London in 1923.
The first of these tools is a Plumb-line, a cord depending from the fingers, with a plummet at the lower end, to enable the Master to determine the uprightness of a given stone or building. (On the walls of the old Lodge-room at York, where once the Grand Lodge of England met, may still be seen the biblical reference to the use of the Plumb-line in Amos 7, 7-8. Similar references are to be found in Zech. 4, io; Isaiah 28, 17; whilst Rev. 21, r5-17 is of similar moment).

The second is a Trowel, an implement for spreading mortar, with which (in its moral sense) the Master is to spread the cement of love among his Brethren and bind the living stones of his Lodge into unity.

The third (and most significant) is a Plan, containing secret designs to which an Installed Master must work; it is, as it were, a symbolical blue-print of the Great Architect’s plan for building the Temple of a perfected Humanity, a plan of such privacy that it is entrusted only to those qualified to know it and to co-operate in its execution.

Note here that the first of these tools (the Plumb-line) forms a vertical line; the second (the Trowel) involves a lateral horizontal spreading movement; and that these two in combination make a Cross. Of this Cross we will say more presently.

The rich significance and deep propriety of these three supreme Tools needs no emphasis here. It is a thousand pities that this luminous piece of Masonic tradition has passed out of general use and that these tools and their implications are now largely unknown among Masons. For are they not emblems giving completeness and final point to the whole series of Working Tools from the First Degree upwards; adding crowning dignity and beauty to the entire structure of Craft symbolism, and throwing a strong illuminating beam of light upon the purpose of Initiation and upon the goal to which it leads men, first from darkness to light, and then from light to active collaboration with Deity in the creative work of building new heavens and a new earth? Masonry being “a progressive science” must needs involve the use of progressive Working Tools, of which these three are the most advanced.

There is another reason for regretting their disuse. Were they known and their significance taught and appreciated, the knowledge would go far to counteract the utterly false and unworthy notion that installation in the Throne of Wisdom is a personal compliment to the new Master or that the office is due to him by virtue of seniority or routine or popularity, or because he has been an efficient officer or is good at ritual. The prospective occupant of the Chair would learn, on the contrary, that he is placed in it not for his own or his Lodge’s glory or to make a great feast for himself and his friends, but to advance the glory of God and the cosmic work of building the world into the
divine image.

For consider. By being entrusted with the Plumb-line he is impliedly de-legated to be the skilled tester and rectifier of the souls of those committed to his charge. How shall he be qualified to use it if he himself cannot pass the test of that Tool or be unconscious of his own soul ending as a “silver cord” from the fingers of the Almighty and in direct communion with Him?

As to the Trowel, how shall he be able to use it or hope to spread the cement of love among his Brethren unless his own soul has become a burning centre of love whose radiance subtly welds them into unity, knitting their separated persons into an inseparable group-soul and “making them to be of one mind in an house”?

Lastly, but chief of all-the Plan. How can a man of any imagination or spiritual sensitiveness think of himself being made privy to the secret counsels of the Almighty and permitted to become a co-worker with the Most High and His heavenly hierarchy, without the deepest sense of awe, unworthiness, and self-abasement?

But apart from this general sense the Tools signify much besides. Tools not merely express abstract ideas; they are implements with which some practical work must be done. How, then, does an Installed Master use these tools? What sort of work does he perform with them? Well, here we get to secrets; those “secrets of the Master’s Chair” which every new W.M. is sworn to preserve but of the nature of which he is usually completely ignorant. Can any P.M. who reads this say what those secrets are, Save for certain formal ones, pretty certainly he will have to say “no.”

They cannot, of course, be discussed here but one hint can be given. It was said above that the vertical Plumb-line and the horizontal line of motion of the Trowel combine to form a Cross, thus + or the Hebrew Tau-Cross T. The latter form is displayed on every P.M.’s apron; it appears on the badge with which every newly installed Master is invested, and implies that he knows its meaning and is expected to make use of it. Moreover its component lines are exhibited separately in the two columns on the Wardens’ pedestals, one of which is always erect and the other horizontal. No column appears on the Master’s pedestal. Why? Because he is the synthesis of the Wardens’ columns, combining their properties in himself. The Master is a Cross, a living Cross, and therefore wears the sign of the Cross upon his clothing. The profound implications of this must he left to personal reflection.

We refrain here from religious discussion and from reference to Christian associations. We are dealing with the Cross as a philosophical conception long antedating Christianity and taught in the mysteries of both the East and the West through the ages and perpetuated in our system. As Plato and others
voicing the ancient secret doctrine taught, the world itself is built upon the principle of the Cross, and is a manifestation resulting from the conflict of two opposed principles (spiritual and material) which have to be resolved into a unity transcending the dualism (just as the W.M. absorbs the functions of his two subordinate Wardens and transcends them). To “take up one’s Cross” is deliberately to engage in the work of resolving the crux of life by reducing the spiritual and the non-spiritual elements in oneself into balance and harmony. That is the “Great Work,” it is Masonic “labour” in its highest sense; in proportion as one achieves it in oneself one becomes qualified and able to help in the task of world-building. Moreover, a Master of the secret science employs the sign of the Cross for many purposes; “Per Signum Tau” is an ancient formula used in connection with constructive and beneficent work done by such a man, unknown to his less advanced fellows.

It may be useful to sum up about the Working Tools generally as follows:

1. The use of the Tools is to effect the conquest of one’s lower nature and will by the powers of one’s higher nature and the spiritual will. One who is not master of himself and of his lower faculties cannot function on loftier levels or understand the nature of cosmic work. “He who is faithful in small things shall become ruler over great things.”

2. The understanding and the use of the Tools are progressive and become disclosed more and more as one advances. It is hopeless to understand the more advanced Tools (those of the Third Degree and of an Installed Master) until the use of the First and Second Degree Tools has become the habit of one’s life.

3. The First Degree Tools provide a rule for outward objective conduct; the Second Degree Tools a rule for the mental subjective life and include all forms of abstract thought (not necessarily religious), meditation, prayer, and mind-control, leading to perception of supra-mental truth and illumination of the lower mind. The Third Degree Tools are only for those whose consciousness has become “raised” above the life of common reason and every-day events; and these, in turn, open the way to the “secrets of the Master’s Chair” and to knowledge of “The Plan,” that Divine Building Scheme at furthering which labour principalities and Powers, Angels and advanced men. Hence the Plan is the supreme Working Tool of our system and the last to be communicated ceremonially, since it is the final all-sufficing revelation to flood the intelli-gence of the aspiring Mason. When one knows that Plan, knows
oneself to be part of it and as called to collaborate with it, and sees everything around one as moving gradually though unconsciously to its fulfillment, one’s life-difficulties are at an end. The rest is easy, for, vast as still remains the unfinished work, that work is frictionless and joyous because it is identified and in harmony with the Almighty Will that steers the universe to its consummation.

Let me finish with a story illustrative of the use of the Tools. A man seen loitering and apparently idle in a lonely district was asked what he was doing there. He replied that he was building, a temple at a city many leagues away. “Do you think it necessary” (he said) “for me to be there in person and working physically? Others are doing that who know nothing of me, but who are unconsciously influenced by the directive control of my thought and will.” That man was a Master Mason.

Now it will be real and useful Masonic exercise (1) to think out clearly and in detail how that man made use of the Third Degree Working Tools, and (2) to realise that the Great Architect has built and sustains the universe upon the same principle and by like methods. You are unlikely to reach a solution all at once, but careful persistent thought upon such a subject opens out the mind and enables the inward Teacher to reveal things one has hitherto thought impossible and inconceivable.

Treat the story as fanciful and incredible if you will, but reflect that a few years ago any form of telekinesis (action at a distance) was so deemed; yet today telegraphy, telephony, “wireless,” and telepathy, are commonplace facts. Now if by his merely natural will and surface-wits man has produced these mechanical marvels, what greater miracles must be possible to him when the higher creative potencies dormant in his soul are awakened and he becomes able to wield his spiritual will and faculties, to manipulate cosmic energy and to mould it into building new heavens and a new earth and a new social order. It is certain we are left to do these things for ourselves; we should never appreciate them if they be done for us. But the Power with which to do them will always be provided and available to us.

“Coming events cast their shadows before.” “First the natural; afterwards the spiritual.” Evolution is being speeded up at the present time. The scientific mechanical inventions of our day are shadow’s and advance-omens of greater truths yet to be learned and practised upon a higher level by the still latent supermechanical faculties in us. Is there not an old promise: “Greater things than these shall ye do.” For this reason Masonic “science” and the understanding of spiritual building-principle, and working tools are to-day of momentous value and privilege to Masons individually and, through them, to the world at large.
Chapter 6

Notes on Cosmic Consciousness

From The Occult Review March 1924.

It is rather to be assumed that a man who writes about cosmic consciousness has undergone the experience in his own person. Otherwise what should lead to his writing on so strange and so abnormal an experience? We are not, however, entitled to assume that the individual who has had the experience in question is necessarily capable of writing a good book or even of writing convincingly on the subject. Perhaps in a certain sense the outsider who has had no such experience can write more dispassionately and therefore with less bias on the nature of this strange phenomenon.

The first edition of Dr. Bucke’s Cosmic Consciousness was published as long ago as 1901. The book has been out of print some time, and the present edition has been corrected and entirely reset throughout. It has, I believe, the outstanding merit of being, whatever its defects, the only comprehensive work on the subject in existence. Dr. Bucke describes his own sensations when, at the beginning of his thirty-sixth year, he met with this experience. As this incident is the foundation stone of the work in question and led to an entire change in the author’s whole mental and spiritual attitude, it is well to give an account of it in his own words. It will be noted that, though the account is his own, he writes of himself in the third person.

It was in the early spring, at the beginning of his thirty-sixth year. He and two friends had spent the evening reading Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Browning, and especially Whitman. They parted at midnight, and he had a long drive in a hansom (it was in an English city). His mind, deeply under

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the influence of the ideas, images and emotions called up by the reading and talk of the evening, was calm and peaceful. He was in a state of quiet, almost passive, enjoyment. All at once, without warning of any kind, he found himself wrapped around as it were by a flame-coloured cloud. For an instant he thought of fire, some sudden conflagration in the great city, the next, he knew that the light was within himself. Directly afterwards came upon him a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied, or immediately followed, by an intellectual illumination quite impossible to describe. Into his brain streamed one momentary lightning-flash of the Brahmic Splendour which has ever since lightened his life; upon his heart fell one drop of Brahmic Bliss, leaving thenceforward for always an aftertaste of heaven. Among other things he did not come to believe, he saw and knew that the Cosmos is not dead matter but a living Presence, that the soul of man is immortal, that the universe is so built and ordered that without any peradventure all things work together for the good of each and all, that the foundation principle of the world is what we call love, and that the happiness of every one is in the long run absolutely certain. He claims that he learned more within the few seconds during which the illumination lasted than in previous months or even years of study, and that he learned much that no study could ever have taught.

This experience that has altered, in this and other similar cases, the whole tenor of the percipient’s outlook on life appears, in its purer form, to have certain main characteristics. The person affected realizes as never before the oneness of the universe. He sees himself as part and parcel of this unity which he senses as the expression of a single conscious life. At the moment of the experience the realization of the consciousness of the separateness of the ego and the non-ego, the knower and the known, entirely disappears. The man who has once had it is no longer able to feel a shadow of doubt as to human immortality.

He knows it with a certainty that no argument or evidence can strengthen or shake. Jesus presumably had this experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the Buddha writes over and over again as if he was familiar with it, as for instance when he tells us how he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree.

Among earlier mystics who have had kindred experiences the case of St. Paul is probably the most familiar to readers, though we should hardly be justified in affirming in either of the two experiences recorded of him that they were certainly instances of what might strictly be termed cosmic consciousness, though perhaps the latter one to which he alludes in a very cryptic manner may have been more definitely of this nature. The first of these, it will be remembered, was on the road to Damascus, when he was converted
to Christianity, and had a vision of the Christ and saw a great light which had the effect of blinding him for some days afterwards. The other was many years later, when he was caught up into the third heaven and heard, as he says, “unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

The seeing of this great light is one of the phenomena which recur again and again in these records, and seems to show that St. Paul’s first experience was at least akin to other phenomena of the kind. We should perhaps associate with these experiences what has been termed the Beatific Vision, which comes to the religious devotee rather than to the mystical philosopher, and should (I would submit) be regarded as a more personal phase of the same experience. It may be that the beatific vision is in the nature of a realization of the Higher Self or the Christ in man, while cosmic consciousness is in the nature of an intuitive perception of the immanence of the Deity in all manifested life, and the essential oneness of the Universal Consciousness. According as the mind of the percipient is attuned by his past life and spiritual outlook, so does he attain to either one form of the experience or the other. Certainly the most noteworthy records in early days, outside those which may be set down as of a specifically religious character, are those recorded of the great mystical philosopher Plotinus, of whose experiences in the matter there is no suspicion of doubt. Plotinus was born AD. 204, and died approximately at the age of seventy. His philosophic training and ascetic life rendered him a peculiarly favourable subject for such an experience. His ideas as to the true inwardness of the cosmic scheme are beautifully expressed in the following passage:

“There is a raying out of all orders of existence, an external emanation from the ineffable One. There is again a returning impulse, drawing all upwards and inwards towards the centre from whence all came. Love, as Plato in the Banquet beautifully says, is child of poverty and plenty. In the amorous quest of the soul after the Good lies the painful sense of fall and deprivation. But that love is blessing, is salvation, is our guardian genius; without it the centrifugal law would overpower us and sweep our souls out far from their source toward the cold extremities of the material and the manifold. The wise man recognizes the idea of the Good within him. This he develops by withdrawal into the place of his soul. He who does not understand how the soul contains the beautiful within itself, seeks to realize beauty without, by laborious production. His aim should rather be to concentrate and simplify, and so to expand his being; instead of going out into the manifold, to forsake it for the One, and so to float upwards towards the divine fount of being whose stream flows within him.”

He asks how we can know the infinite, and replies that it cannot be known
by reason, but only by a faculty superior to this, which is attained by entering into a state in which man has his finite sense no longer, and in which the divine essence is communicated to him. This, he says, is “ecstasy” and clearly by this expression, “ecstasy” which really means standing outside of oneself, Plotinus is referring to the phenomenon of cosmic consciousness. For he adds, “When you thus cease to be finite, you become one with the infinite.” He also observes that this sublime condition is not of permanent duration and it is only now and then that it can be enjoyed. “I myself,” he says, “have realized it but three times as yet.” He tells us that “all that tends to purify and elevate the mind will assist us in this attainment, and will facilitate the approach and recurrence of these happy intervals.”

Plotinus offers a philosophical justification for such experiences. External objects, he tells us, present us only with appearances. The problem of true knowledge, on the other hand, deals with the ideal reality that exists behind these appearances. It follows, therefore, that the religion of truth is not to be investigated as a thing external to us, and so only imperfectly known. Rather, it is within us. Truth, therefore, he maintains, is not the agreement of our apprehension of an external object with the object itself, but it is the agreement of the mind with itself. Hence, he contends, knowledge has three degrees: opinions, science, and illumination. The instrument of the first is sense, of the second dialectic, and of the third intuition. This third is the absolute knowledge founded on the identity of the mind knowing with the object known.

We have little evidence bearing on this phenomenon between the post-classical times of Plotinus and the later Middle Ages. In these times, however, there are many noteworthy experiences recorded with greater or less historical truth of the Catholic saints of that period, conspicuous among whom may be named John Yepes, more commonly known as St. John of the Cross, and St. Theresa, both of whose lives date as recently as the sixteenth century AD. St. John of the Cross was born in 1542 and died in 1591. At the age of twenty-one he adopted the religious habit of the Carmelite friars. In 1578 he was imprisoned for some months for certain practices of a kind which were regarded by the ecclesiastical authorities as unorthodox, and it was during this period at the age of thirty-six that he had the mysterious psychic experience which is identified by Dr. Bucke with the phenomenon of cosmic consciousness, though it must be admitted that the evidence with regard to its specific character is not altogether conclusive. His biographer, David Lewis, gives the account of it as follows:–

“His cell became filled with light seen by the bodily eye. One night the friar who kept him went as usual to see that his prisoner was safe, and witnessed the heavenly light with which the cell was flooded. He did not
stop to consider it, but hurried to the prior, thinking that some one in the House had keys to open the doors of the prison. The prior, with two members of the order, went at once to the prison, but on his entering the room through which the prison was approached, the light vanished. The prior, however, entered the cell, and, finding it dark, opened the lantern with which he had provided himself, and asked the prisoner who had given him the light. St. John answered him, and said that no one in the house had done so, that no one could do it, and that there was neither candle nor lamp in the cell. The prior made no reply and went away, thinking that the gaoler had made a mistake.”

St. John, at a later time, told one of his brethren that the heavenly light, which God so mercifully sent him, lasted the night through, and that it filled his soul with joy and made the night pass away as if it were but a moment. When his imprisonment was drawing to its close he heard our Lord say to him, as it were out of the soft light that was around him, “John, I am here; be not afraid; I will set thee free.” A few moments later, while making his escape from the prison of the monastery, it is said that he had a repetition of the experience, as follows:—

“He saw a wonderful light, out of which came a voice, “Follow me.” He followed, and the light moved before him towards the wall which was on the bank, and then, he knew not how, he found himself on the summit of it without effort or fatigue. He descended into the street, and then the light vanished. So brilliant was it, that for two or three days afterwards, so he confessed at a later time, his eyes were weak, as if he had been looking at the sun in its strength.”

Elsewhere St. John of the Cross refers to his own spiritual experiences in language which suggests that these were of a similar character to those already recorded. But his language is vague, and deliberately so, as he says that his description of his experience “relates to matters so interior and spiritual as to baffle the powers of language. All I say,” he continues, “falls far short of that which passes in this intimate union of powers of the soul with God. . . . I stood enraptured in ecstasy beside myself, and in every sense no sense remained. My spirit was endowed with understanding, understanding not, all knowledge transcending. . . . He who really ascends so high annihilates himself and all his previous knowledge seems ever less and less.”

St. Theresa’s mystical experiences, as is well known, were legion. They included the stigmata, i.e., the imprint of the five wounds of the Crucifixion, levitation, clairvoyance, clairaudience, etc. She, too, had an experience which
she terms the “orison of union,” which corresponds closely by its description to cosmic consciousness.

In this orison of union [says St. Theresa], the soul is fully awake as regards God, but wholly asleep as regards things of this world, and in respect of herself. During the short time the union lasts she is as it were deprived of every feeling, and even if she would she could not think of any single thing. Thus she needs to employ no artifice in order to assist the use of her understanding. In short, she is utterly dead to the things of the world, and lives solely in God. . . . Thus does God when He raises the soul to union with Himself suspend the natural action of all faculties. But this time is always short, and it seems even shorter than it is. God establishes Himself in the interior of this soul in such a way that when she returns to herself it is wholly impossible for her to doubt that she has been in God and God in her. This truth remains so strongly impressed on her that even though many years should pass without the condition returning, she can neither forget the favour she received nor doubt of its reality. If you ask how it is possible that the soul can see and understand that she has been in God, since during the union she has neither sight nor understanding, I reply that she does not see it then, but that she sees it clearly later after she has returned to herself, not by any vision but by a certitude which abides with her and which God alone can give her.

Reverting to the same experience on another occasion, St. Theresa recounts how one day it was granted to her to perceive in one instant how all things are seen and contained in God.

“I did not” she adds, “perceive them in their proper form, and nevertheless the view I had of them was of a sovereign clearness and has remained vividly impressed upon my soul. This view was so subtile and delicate that the understanding cannot grasp it.”

Jacob Boehme is another classic example of this experience. His first illumination occurred in the year 1600, when he was twenty-five years of age, and he had a further and more vivid experience ten years later. Martensen describes Boehme’s first experience as follows:—

“Sitting one day in his room his eyes fell upon a burnished pewter dish, which reflected the sunshine with such marvellous splendour that he fell into an inward ecstasy, and it seemed to him as if he could now look into the principles and deepest foundation of things. He believed that it was only a fancy, and in order to banish it from his mind he went out upon the green. But here he remarked that he gazed into the very heart of things, the very herbs and grass, and that actual nature harmonized with what he had inwardly seen. He said nothing to anyone, but praised and thanked God in silence. He continued in the honest practice of his
craft, was attentive to his domestic affairs, and was on terms of goodwill with all men. Of his complete illumination ten years later he says himself:

The gate was opened to me that in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years together at a university, at which I exceedingly admired and thereupon turned my praise to God for it. For I saw and knew the being of all things, the byss and the abyss and the eternal generation of the Holy Trinity, the descent and the original of the world and of all creatures through the divine wisdom: I knew and saw in myself all the three worlds, namely, (1) the divine (angelical and paradisaical); and (2) the dark (the original of the nature to the fire), and then (3) the external and the visible world (being a procreation or external birth from both the internal and the spiritual worlds). And I saw and knew the whole working essence, in the evil and the good and the original and the existence of each of them; and likewise how the fruit-bearing womb of eternity brought forth. So that I not only did greatly wonder at it but did also exceedingly rejoice.”

Of men belonging to our modern world who have had the experience of cosmic consciousness, two only seem to my mind absolutely valid instances. One is Edward Carpenter, the author of *Towards Democracy*, a work of great breadth and insight, with which every reader of this magazine should make himself familiar if he has not already done so, and James Alien, the author of *From Poverty to Power, As a Man Thinketh*, and many other booklets which may be characterized as essays on the spiritual life. Edward Carpenter has himself stated that he had this experience, and in fact intimated as much in a letter to Dr. Bucke himself.

I really do not feel [he says in this letter] that I can tell you anything without falsifying and obscuring the matter. I have done my best to write it out in *Towards Democracy*. I had no experience of physical light in this relation. The perception seems to be one in which all the senses unite into one sense, in which you become the object, but this is unintelligible mentally speaking. I do not think the matter can be defined as yet, but I do not know that there is any harm in writing about it. Elsewhere, in *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure*, he writes more definitely on the subject:

“There is in every man a local consciousness connected with his quite external body. That we know. Is there not also in every man the making
of a universal consciousness? That there are in us phases of consciousness which transcend the limit of the bodily senses is a matter of daily experience. That we perceive and know things which are not conveyed to us by the bodily eyes and heard by our bodily ears is certain. That there arise in us waves of consciousness from those around us, from the people, the race to which we belong, is also certain. May there not then be in us the makings of a perception and knowledge which shall not be relative to this body which is here and now, but which shall be good for all time and everywhere? Does there not exist in truth, as we have already hinted, an inner illumination of which what we call light in the outer world is the partial expression and manifestation, by which we can ultimately see things as they are, beholding all creation, not by any local act of perception, but by a cosmical intuition and prescience, identifying ourselves with what we see? Does there not exist a perfected sense of hearing as of the morning stars singing together, an understanding of the words that are spoken all through the universe, the hidden meaning of all things, a profound and far-pervading sense of which our ordinary sense of sound is only the first novitiate and intuition?"

Mr. Carpenter refers elsewhere to “that inner vision which transcends sight as far as sight transcends touch” and to “a consciousness in which the contrast between the ego and the external world and the distinction between subject and object fall away.” These are surely the words of one who has himself undergone this experience. Carpenter, however, is careful to warn us that we are not to suppose that people who have this experience are in any way to be regarded as infallible as to its exact meaning. “In many cases indeed” he remarks, “the very novelty and strangeness of the experience may give rise to phantasmal trains of delusive speculation.”

In further interpretation of this mystery he observes that the whole body is only as it were one organ of the cosmic consciousness. “To attain this latter one must have the power of knowing oneself separate from the body, of passing into a state of ecstasy, in fact. Without this, cosmic consciousness cannot be experienced.” It is perhaps well that Mr Edward Carpenter has written of the matter so definitely and from such an aloof and impersonal standpoint as he has done, as those who have experienced the state have, as a rule, been both too reserved with regard to their spiritual experiences and too deficient in the critical faculty to give us anything that would appear to the ordinary mind as a satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon. We have nothing, for instance, in writing, from Mr James Alien, who claims to have had the experience more than once, which would throw any intimate light on what he saw and felt in connection with it, though it leaves its trace, as it must ever do, on his own standpoint in life, and on all that he has written. Mr Alien claimed to have had
this experience in the first instance at 24, an unusually early age, while later
on it returned after an interval of ten years in, as he says, a more permanent
form.

In three modern poets — Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Walt Whitmans —
there are suggestions which point to some experience of the kind, and Walt
Whitman especially, in his *Leaves of Grass*, has expressed in singularly beau-
tiful phraseology the mental attitude which we associate with the transmuta-
tion of the individual life by this mystical experience.

The lines written by Wordsworth on Tintern Abbey, in his twenty-ninth
year, are again singularly apposite as an expression of the mental state to
which cosmic consciousness serves as the portal. In these he speaks of

“That blessed mood
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened: that serene and blessed mood
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.”

Further lines in the same poem suggest the occurrence of an actual per-
sonal experience in this connection, and we should perhaps be right if we
classed this poet (albeit with some hesitancy) along with the others given in
these Notes as one of those who actually entered into this state of higher con-
sciousness, who have been put en rapport with the unity of all created life,
and have seen “with the bodily eye” and not in any mere poetical vision, “the
light that never was on land or sea.” Thus he writes once more:

“I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thought; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man-
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”

Tennyson’s verse again is steeped in a mysticism the depth of which the ordinary reader, and indeed the critic as well, have been too slow to appreciate. The author of Cosmic Consciousness himself speaks of this poet far too deprecatingly and must, I am afraid, be numbered with those who fail to gauge his true greatness, and the inwardness of what he wrote. The whole conception underlying the verses on the Holy Grail is steeped in mystical insight, and the thought of the deep reality underlying the entire phantasmagoria of the phenomenal world is seldom far absent from the poet’s thought.

The following lines from The Holy Grail may be given as an instance, but they are only one example out of many:

“Let the visions of the night, or of the day
Come as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air,
But vision—yea his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that one
Who rose again; ye have seen what ye have seen.”

Again in The Ancient Sage, as many readers will recall, he relates how

“…revolving in myself
The word that is the symbol of myself,
The mortal limit of the Self was loosed,
And passed into the nameless, as a cloud
MELTS INTO HEAVEN. I TOUCH'D MY LIMBS, THE LIMBS
WERE STRANGE, NOT MINE—AND YET NO SHADE OF DOUBT,
BUT UTTER CLEARNESS, AND THRO' LOSS OF SELF
THE GAIN OF SUCH LARGE LIFE AS MATCHED WITH OURS
WERE SUN TO SPARK — UNSHADOWABLE IN WORDS,
THEMSELVES BUT SHADOWS OF A SHADOW-WORLD.

This is admittedly the record of a personal experience and is referred to as such in the poet’s Life by his son, the present Lord Tennyson.

Dr. Bucke gives many instances in his work of men who, in his view, have experienced cosmic consciousness in some form or other, but by the critical mind many of these can hardly be regarded as legitimate. Among these may be mentioned Mohammed, whose illumination might be defended by some, but who to my thinking rather appears to have written the Koran in much the same way as Madame Blavatsky wrote Isis Unveiled, and whom I should class rather as a natural medium in this respect than as a real illuminate. Dante is again another instance given, with regard to whom, however, conclusive evidence is lacking. The Bacon and Shakespeare controversy is introduced rather unfortunately into the present work, from which it would be well, I cannot help thinking, that such fantastic and irrelevant controversies were omitted. Several of the instances given in the present Notes do not appear at all. No woman is named among the subjects of this experience. I myself have instanced St Theresa, and among the moderns in this connection Anna Kingsford, an illuminate of a very different type, should not be overlooked.

Probably at the present time, though Dr. Bucke cites only the case of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, this experience is more common among the saints and ascetics of India than in any other part of the world. A training which lends itself naturally to the production of such phenomena is the well-known yoga discipline, the goal of which is the attainment of samadhi, a state near akin to, if not practically identical with, that known in the West as cosmic consciousness.

Dr. Bucke claims that the cases of cosmic consciousness are steadily increasing as the world grows older, and this may well be so, but the instances chosen by him are not unfrequently so capricious, while other important ones are omitted, that the list he gives in support of his contention will hardly carry conviction, more especially as only one is given from India. In Dr. Bucke’s opinion there is a steady development of sentient life from that simple consciousness which is possessed by the higher types of the animal kingdom,
onward to the self-consciousness which, together with the use of language, is the differentiating characteristic of mankind, right up to that cosmic consciousness which he holds will be, in eons to come, the heritage of all alike. By that time it may be supposed mankind will have developed a more spiritual type of body and nervous organization which will be permanently responsive to influences which to-day reach only the rarest types of humanity in occasional and evanescent flashes.
Chapter 7

The Fundamental Philosophic Secrets Within Masonry

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We are to speak of the fundamental philosophic secrets concealed within the Masonic system. These our system declares to be many and invaluable and to be kept by Masons in their hearts. They are therefore obviously to be distinguished from the merely formal secrets imparted ceremonially, which are kept in the head and are neither many nor of any value, though (as we shall see) they are deeply significant.

By these secrets, then, is not meant some definite precise information that can be imparted to or withheld from another person at will, but the arcane truths inherent in the system itself; truths needing to be extracted from it, like poetry or music from the printed page, by personal effort and that can be recognised as truths only by the inward responsiveness of the soul itself after deeply meditating and assimilating them. Hence we are taught that they are matters of the heart, and that they are communicable only to brethren and fellows (that is, to those whose minds have developed a common measure of spirituality), and then not orally, but only by means of signs, tokens and perfect points of entrance. By points of entrance is meant appropriate faculties of perception and understanding. For just as to enter into perception and understanding of the outer world we need our five outward-pointing senses, so for perception and appreciation of the inner world, we need a corresponding inward sensorium. The pentagram or five pointed star indicates our five points of entrance into relations with the world of sense and phenomena by the limited imperfect channels of the senses; and, to cognise the secret things of

¹This paper was originally delivered to The Masonic Study Society, London in 1925.
supra-sensual life, we must have developed corresponding, but perfect points of entrance into it in the form of soul-faculty, inward vision, inward audition. Hence inward truths and mysteries are inevitably and automatically secret from those who have not yet acquired perfect points of entrance to them, not because of any capricious withholding of them by some better informed person, but because such men are without the appropriate faculty for perceiving them; their inner vision is as yet hoodwinked, darkened, and prevented from recognising them.

For all Masons, for all the world, ultimate Truth and all the mysteries of being are an ever-open secret. But because all the world isn’t yet ripe for knowing that secret, or doesn’t want to know it, or imagines either that it isn’t knowable or that it knows it already, or at least as much of it as is needed for present purposes, it continues secret, refusing to be revealed save on its own terms, and lying, as the old simile tells, at the dark bottom of a well, which well is our own soul-depths, from which it can only be drawn by our own industry and effort. Hence we find secret orders always existing for initiation into these secrets and mysteries, and in these days when we see our own Order so little concerning itself with such things but preferring to direct its energies rather to social and secular purposes, it is useful to reflect that the sole justification for a secret Order is that it is intended to provide specialised instruction and combined fraternal effort for those desirous to draw apart from these activities of the outer world and enter a quiet sanctuary where they may contemplate and, God helping, perchance attain personal realisation of things which, in their nature, must always remain secret to the uninitiated and outside their consciousness.

Before reaching the heart of our subject I wish to refer to a preliminary matter, and to point out that the text of our rituals and lectures discloses a strange combination of two very different and easily distinguishable levels of teaching; a lower and common-place level which is simple and intelligible to everyone; and a higher and distinctly esoteric level relating to matters of advanced philosophic wisdom.

To the lower level belong the various charges and counsels to morality, and such matters as the simple explanations of the cardinal and other virtues and of the elementary symbolism of building tools. These are matters of no philosophic significance. They have nothing about them distinctive of a secret science or an Initiatory Order. They inculcate only what might be imparted to non-Masons. The ideals of conduct they proclaim are not higher or other than any uninitiated man of rectitude and good feeling normally acts upon, whilst their interpretations of symbolism are adapted to a quite puerile order of intelligence. Of themselves they do not justify the existence of a Secret Order
and an elaborate organisation to perpetuate them, and their sole advantage is that they serve as the foothills to the higher peaks of doctrine and provide a common basis of elementary understanding and conduct among the members of a Society the majority of whom do not look for or aspire to anything more than good fellowship and pleasant social relations, which could just as easily he found in the outside world.

To the higher level, however, belong matters of an entirely different order of instructiveness, matters drawn from and linking us directly with older and advanced systems of philosophic and experimental Mysticism beyond the mental horizon of the average Brother who for want of requisite preparation and instruction (for which also he too often has neither aptitude nor desire), is not only at a loss to understand the main features of our system, but is precluded from vitally benefiting from it. So he remains an initiate in name only, not in fact, whilst the Order instead of cultivating the secret science and royal art to which, nevertheless, it pays much empty lip-service, degenerates into a vast semi-public social and benevolent institution conducted upon the same lines and in the same spirit as characterise the outer world, against which our doors are theoretically meant to be shut and closely tiled. How many Masons could say what initiation really is and involves? How many could explain the doctrine of the centre, the meaning of the circle and the point within it, and the two grand parallel lines bounding it, or the implications of the structure and contents of a Lodge, of the Blazing Star or Glory at the centre, or manifest any personal experience of the mystical death dramatised in our Third Degree? How many could explain all that is meant by the Star in the East or testify to its rising in actual spiritual experience and not merely in symbolic ceremony, bringing with its rising the peace and salvation to which that Degree alludes and that open vision, cosmic and beatific, which the Royal Arch ceremony attempts faintly to portray?

Yet all these matters and many more lie enshrined and embedded within the simpler and more obvious material of our system and in seeking to disentangle and consider them the question arises how is this admixture of elementary exoteric teaching with advanced esoteric references to be accounted for? Was it due to limited knowledge, clumsiness and muddleheadedness on the part of the compilers of Speculative Masonry (as has been suggested by some able Masonic exponents) or was it intentional? The former view is taken for instance in the admirable Masonic papers in Bro. A. E. Waite’s Studies in Mysticism, where it is suggested that the 18th century worthies who framed our rituals and lectures possessed little or no esoteric knowledge and a very imperfect conception of the real purpose of an Initiatory system. By some means, into which we need not now inquire, there had come into their
hands from remoter sources the salient features of such a system, obviously and faithfully perpetuating the self-perfecting doctrine taught in the philosophic Mysteries of the past and common to all the secret schools of both East and West; a system of whose full significance it is suggested that they were unaware yet one which they were intuitively moved to preserve, and which they amplified and put forward clothed with some well-meant but cheap and tawdry garnishings of their own. They were moralists rather than mystics. Their ideal seems to have been not the sublime attainments of the perfected initiate who finds and lives from his centre but, as their ponderous grandiloquence puts it, merely to “become a worthy member of Society,” to “rise in the scale of moral excellence” and to “live respected and die regretted.” Not spiritual Mastership, but smug respectability, seems on the surface to have been the limit of their ambition, consistently with which they obsequiously sought the patronage of royalty and aristocracy to give the Order social dignity and attractiveness and render it free from suspicion of being a cloak for political intrigue.

To this view of the conduct of our 18th century progenitors, there is a possible alternative which, in fairness to them, may be advanced rather because it is possible than that it can now be proved. It is that, in anticipation of Speculative Masonry proving attractive to numbers of men not yet likely to appreciate the profounder aspects of Initiation science, they deliberately diluted the system by weaving into it a body of simple ethical ideals within the compass of everyone’s understanding. In this way they conserved the vital points of the traditional secret doctrine for the benefit of those who could recognise and profit by them and at the same time they effectively crypticised and concealed them from those who could not.

To state a personal conviction, I do not believe that Speculative Masonry was instituted with the intention of becoming the social and money-raising organisation into which it has since drifted. Sociability and relief — but not merely financial relief — were obvious side-consequences of such an institution, but primarily it was a movement made from behind the scenes of public history towards perpetuating an ancient secret doctrine for the sake of those who might discern and profit by it in the epoch of spiritual sterility, materialism and religious disruption into which we had fallen and through which we are still passing. As one of our lectures truly affirms, the world is never left without witness to the ancient traditional science by following which man may recover “that which is lost,” the ruined empire of his own soul, and scrutiny of human events indicates that at all times, behind and within humanity, there stand watchers, guardians, guides, initiates, charged with the task of keeping the witness alive, however faintly, and unobtrusively steering
the race towards its destiny of ultimate spiritual perfection. So closely linked is our Masonic system with other and far more advanced expressions of that science that the conclusion is irresistible that it stands in the chain of direct succession with them and was designed to perpetuate the same doctrine. If this be so, the movement projected some 250 years ago has been justified in that it has familiarised vast numbers of minds with at least an elementary and notional acquaintance with a path of progress which sooner or later we must all realise in vital experience. We may regret, though we need not despair, that of those numbers so few even pass from the foot-hills of the subject to the heights of its full understanding and personal experiment, but was it not declared thousands of years ago that “the candidates are many but the perfected initiates few,” and again, still later, “that Many are called but few are chosen?” Yet those few are ever ready and anxious to pass on the torch to others and it is perhaps from its light that is due the increasing desire of so many in the Order to-day to rise to a fuller appreciation of what its doctrine holds in concealment and will yield up to those who truly seek it.

Leaving behind us now the mere elementary ethics and symbolism of the Craft and coming to its fundamental philosophic secrets, we have first to ask ourselves what has always been and still is the grand aim and purpose of initiation? Whether in the East, in Egypt, Greece, or elsewhere, and in all eras, it has been indicated by the formula “know thyself;” it has been to bring a man to conscious realisation of that which is the root and basic essence of his being. It is that and nothing else, and our 3rd Degree refers to this when it speaks of the chief of all human studies being the “knowledge of yourself.”

Now to realise a thing is not merely to have notions of it, but to become it, to make it a living reality, to become wholly identified with it. And what is the root and basic essence of our being with which we are to become identified, the self we are advised to get to know? And here we are at once driven against that which is the root-cause of all Masonic silence and secrecy. For this basic essence is something nameless, unspeakable, something beyond all verbal and mental categories, yet not, thank God, beyond feeling, for the heart can know and feel what the head fails to comprehend. Yet to cast it into verbal coinage for the purpose of exchanging ideas, it passes by several names. The East calls it the “Self” (Atman) the self-radiant, self-intelligent unitary root of being and deathless source of all derivative life and multiplicity. The Greek schools called it Autos, the self-contained or self-subsistent, the One or the Good. The Hebrews describe it as the sacred and un-pronounceable name of four letters, Tetragrammaton, or as Adonai, while Christians personalise it as God in so far as He is immanent in the soul as its concealed vitalising spirit. And Masonry describes it variously as the “vital and immortal principle,” as
Adoniram, as the Blazing Star or Glory at our centre, as the Light of a Master Mason which never goes out even when all our other lights (or faculties) fail, because it is eternal and immortal whilst our other faculties are temporal and perishable. But by whatever name we label it, however shadowy and imperfect our thought of it, that it is with which we are to become consciously identified by a direct act of self-knowledge, for, as the teaching uniformly declares, the secret of all secrets is that Thou art THAT.” To realise this, not merely notionally, but in fulness of direct experience, has always been and still is the goal of wisdom and the goal of Initiatory science. It is to become seated and established in the chair of King Solomon. It is to pass from mere manhood and the carnal understanding to conscious Godhood whilst we are still in the flesh. It is the realisation of our fundamental unity and identity with ultimate of ultimates. It is the ex-perience to which in our Third Degree the Mason is told to lift his eyes in expectation of realising it, and which is likened to the glory of a star whose rising brings peace and salvation, and is still more elaborately dramatised in the finding of the Lost Word and the great vision attained at the restoration to light in the Royal Arch ceremony.

If this, then, be the purpose and goal of Initiation, the fundamental hypothesis and philosophic secret of Masonry is the solemn fact that God and the human soul are in essence a unity, not a duality, and the sole intention of our Initiatory-system is, by instruction and discipline, to bring about in each of us the conscious realisation of that unity.

Is not such hypothesis of necessity a secret? For if it is to become realised in personal experience, it is an experience which must be prepared for in secret, be realised in secret, and remain secret, incomprehensible, and incommunicable to everyone save those in the silence of whose breast it becomes experimentally achieved. Moreover, treating Initiation-science purely from a historical standpoint, it could be shown that this was always the fundamental religious and philosophic arcanum of every Initiation-system that has existed, one, that under pain of dire penalties for its disclosure, was always rigorously withheld from the uninitiated world with whose less matured religious outlook it was bound to clash. Whence it comes that, following this wise practice, Masonry leaves every man to follow his own religion, in the certain knowledge that every religion, however crude or imperfect, leads ultimately to the one centre and is a preparation for what can be realised in its fulness only by initiation.

Masonry therefore, like every Initiation-system, is not non-religious, but super-sectarian, and directed to secrets and mysteries of Being with which popular religion does not deal. It is ontological and philosophic, but not theological. Indeed it jumps” all the theologies and so avoids the endless bicker-
ings and disputations to which in the outer world they have given birth, and it eschews all credal dogmas — save one. In its Constitutions Masonry posits and exacts acquiescence in but one sole dogma — the Being of God. It wisely leaves that dogma unexplained and to be interpreted by each according to his light. But its acceptance, as you know, is insisted upon as pre-requisite to membership of the Order, and the reason for the insistence is that unless God and conscious union with Him as our divine and basic Principle be postulated as our object of desire and goal of attainment, there is no merit, no virtue, no purpose, in initiation rites.

Religious thought and ideas of Deity have, of course, travelled a long way since the time when the arcanum we are speaking of could never he breathed outside Temples of Initiation from fear of clashing with popular religion. Today, despite the survival in certain quarters of much that is crude, anthropomorphic and unthinkable, a sincere and healthy agnosticism has broken up the caked soil of many former theological notions and made possible the growth of a new and mystical Gnosis. One might even say that in its great earnest quest for knowledge of the secrets and mysteries of life, society of to-day, in so far as it devotes attention to that quest, is collectively taking as it were a new degree of Initiation, and like a hoodwinked candidate shuffling along with irregular steps and uncertainty whither it is going, is slowly and darkly probing its way towards the Light. The need for disciplined instruction and initiation into the secrets and mysteries of Being, however, still exists for all of us as much as it ever did in antiquity, and we in the Craft possess, therefore, an advantage over those who are not in it, for if we will but rightly interpret and use it, we have in our Order a specialised system of guidance upon the path that leads to the Eternal East and the Master of Life. Shall we not therefore make the most of our privilege and with gratitude bow to that Master for the foresight which provided it for us?

Let us now pass on to seeing how the process of attaining self-knowledge and realisation of the basic essence of our being is inculcated in our system. Take first the Apron, that prominent, most personal, and most instructive of all our emblems, since it is the visible symbol of the constitution of each of us. It consists of a pyramidal or triangular flap superimposed upon a quadrangular base, thus representing the two main divisions into which each of us is separable. The triangular flap stands for the spiritual essence, the germ of Divine Fire; it expresses man as he subsists in perfection and in the Divine idea. The quadrangular base stands for material man as he exists imperfectly and as a personality in the flesh. The former is our ultimate real, true, immortal self, the latter is a transient, perishable and therefore unreal self. The normal uninitiated man knows only this unreal illusory self, and therefore exists in a
state of darkness and blindness to his concealed true being. The object and discipline of Initiation is to reverse this position by, as it were, turning a man inside out, so bringing forward into consciousness and function the higher part which has been obscured and submerged and, as a necessary corollary, repressing and putting out of action the contrary claims and activities of his lower ego, the natural Personality.

Our system therefore asks us to think of the triangular flap as the sacramental sign of the presence in ourselves of the Divine Essence, an Essence which, because it is Divine, comprises all the attributes of Divinity—all knowledge, all power, all wisdom, strength and beauty. In our basic, real self, each of us is all that; each of us is, as the flame-shaped pyramidal emblem is meant to indicate, a “tongue of fire,” a spiritual flamelet from the primordial infinite fire of Universal spirit, but as yet unconscious of the fact and without realised experience of it. And the reason of our unconsciousness of it is accounted for by the fact that this real essential has become imprisoned, obscured and submerged within a vesture or coating of something alien to it, of which the emblem is the quadrangular portion of the Apron. The union of the two parts of the Apron figures the union of the spiritual and material parts of our organisation, and the drawing down of the flap upon the base testifies to the fall of spirit into matter, a fall involving loss of consciousness on the part of the spirit through becoming straightened by the limitations and polluted by the impurities of sensual existence.

Now the science of initiation was and still is to promote the separation and eventual emancipation of the spiritual Essence, our true self, from this material thraldom, and the Craft Degrees are a dramatisation of the emancipating process. The misconception widely obtains, even among the Craft, that emancipation becomes automatically effected upon the death of the material body. But this is not the teaching of the ancient science, which declares that somatic death involves only the dissociation of the lower elements of our nature without ensuring the liberation of the enthralled Divine Essence, unless that liberation has been previously effected by initiation during physical life. Hence the supreme importance always attached to awaking that Essence into self-consciousness whilst we are still in the flesh and the requisite mechanism of all our parts and faculties is present. For the physical body is the “tomb of transformation” in which the great change-over has to be effected and, “the night cometh when no man can work” at this task of emancipation and, as the teaching runs, further physical incarnation will be necessary as opportunity to resume it.

The process of Initiation is therefore one of regeneration and bringing forward the inmost essence first to birth and eventually to full growth, and of
necessity it involves a corresponding degeneration, renunciation, and mystical death of all the lower principles that obstruct the transformation. It is outlined for us with utmost clearness in our three Degrees, and progress in it is signified by changes and elaborations in the Apron. The first stage involves the purification and subdual of the gross sense-nature and the killing out of desire for all material attractions and indifference to the allurements of the outer world. The second involves the discipline and clarifying of the mind till it becomes pure and strong enough to respond to a supernatural order of life and wisdom, and it is therefore in our Second Degree that in the discovery of a sacred symbol in the centre of the building is indicated the first glimpsing of the presence of the Divine Essence at our personal centre, and the desire to eradicate from the heart all obstacles to complete union with it. The third stage, the “last and greatest trial,” involves the voluntary dying down of the entire natural self-hood and even the destruction of our sense of ego-ism in separation from the Universal Life-Essence, until that Essence displaces the former limited personal Ego and rises into permanent consciousness as a bright morning star, one of those stars or self-radiant beings which, it is written, sang together” in the dawn of creation, and that will once more sing together in eternal union and harmony when the great work of emancipation of our spirits from material bondage has been consummated.

Turn now to a few minor secrets that still further illustrate what has been said and consider the concealed significance of the official signs of the Craft and Arch Degrees. In the surface explanation of those signs they are made to allude to penalties attached to breaches of our obligations, and it is well known that those penalties correspond with those formerly prescribed for high treason and other crimes against the State. This surface explanation, however, is but camouflage. The real significance lies deeper.

Take the sign of the 1st Degree. It is obviously a sign of decapitation, but a decapitation to be understood not physically but mystically. Its meaning is that the head (or natural human reason) being an inadequate faculty for apprehending the sublime supernatural facts of the spirit must be content to renounce its powers and become, as it were, cut off, beheaded, before ultimate supreme verities can be cognised. Among the spiritual alchemists this is often referred to as “cutting off the head of the black crow,” that sombre bird being taken as a figure of the natural reason. The natural mind is adapted solely to the cognition of natural phenomena; spiritual things, which to it are foolishness and unrealities, must be spiritually perceived; spirit alone can cognise spirit. It is of course true that the natural mind, when disciplined and purified, becomes lit up, illuminated and strengthened by the cognitions of the spirit; the point is that in virtue of its own natural powers it is not, and never can
be, the appropriate cognising organ; it must utterly abase itself and evacuate its powers, in other words be cut off. Summa scientia nihil scire is the maxim here applicable; supreme knowledge comes only when the mind is emptied of all lesser knowledge. When therefore in our first Degree the Mason stands to salute his Worshipful Master let him remember that the gesture signifies the homage he should pay to what is worshipful in himself, namely, his own Master-principle, the Divine Essence immanent in himself, for the Master of a Lodge symbolically personifies that Master-principle; let him reflect that he must abrogate and behead his natural reason and understanding if he ever hopes to participate in that supreme wisdom of which King Solomon and his symbolic successors are the personified types. And, as the Queen of Sheba abased herself to the dust before the regal and unparalleled splendour of that mon-arch, so let him read behind this allegory and recognise that the visions that open to the awakened spirit in man utterly transcend the ideas of our natural intelligence and that the natural eye hath not seen nor ear heard things which nevertheless can he seen and heard by those who make the necessary self-surrender and acquire the necessary faculty and points of entrance.

If the 1st Degree sign relates to the head, that of the 2nd Degree refers to the heart, and the heart must be kept with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life; out of it come the wellings forth of the central, self-radiant, self-knowing Essence. The sign therefore indicates the necessity of cleansing the affections and the mind, and casting out their impurities, so that the glory at the centre may the more effectually shine through. Not to the clever in head, but to the simple and pure in heart, comes the great experience of beatific vision disclosed later on in the Royal Arch Degree. The point is further emphasised in the Masonic steps. Following ancient tradition, every step is taken with the left foot, the right foot being then drawn up to it, for the left is the side of the heart as the right is associated with the head. In the pursuit of the mysteries of Being, precedence must ever be given to the intuitions of the heart; the rational understanding must be subordinated to those instincts, follow in their rear and be brought up into alignment with them, for “the heart has its reasons, of which the reason itself does not know.”

“When thou see’st in the pathway a severed head

2In further illustration, consider the beheading of John the Baptist as symbolising the necessity of renouncing the natural mentality before the Christ-consciousness can supersede it; “He must increase, and I must decrease” and see further the pointed allusion in Rev. xx., 4. W. Bro. Sir Frederick Pollock kindly sends me further confirmation by pointing to the frequent allusion in mystical writings to “headlessness,” as figuring total self-ahnegation and absorption of the mind in God (the super-conscious state of ecstasy or Sama'adhi), and by quoting the following from the great Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi (13th century)
Which is bounding towards our field,
Ask of it, ask of it, the secrets of the heart,
For of it thou wilt learn our hidden mystery.”

The Third Degree signs obviously refer to the Centre itself, and to experiences encountered upon our approach to it; they relate not only to certain functions of the physical centre (the solar plexus), but to the Divine Essence centralised within us and constituting the hidden basis of our being. The sign of the Royal Arch degree is equally obvious. It is that of those humble sanctified souls, the people who “have received mercy,” in that to them has been accorded the supreme grace of attaining conscious union with that which is perfect and all-holy and who shield their eyes before the overpowering splendour of the vision that has opened out to them.

Next let us turn to that impressive piece of ritual which lends so much awe and mystery to the closing of the Lodge in the Third Degree. The genuine secrets of Master Masonry are then declared to have become lost and, in the intimate posture of the five points of fellowship, words are uttered telling that the Master is smitten”; an announcement so solemn, so mysterious, that it is normally permitted to be uttered only beneath the breath. Yet no sooner has it thus been uttered than the Master directs it to be once more proclaimed, but this time aloud, so that all may hear and, if they have ears of inward hearing, realise its gravity and significance. What genuine secrets have been lost? What Master has been smitten? Why that hushed whisper and the subsequent proclamation of the words aloud? And why are those words directed to serve as substituted secrets and to distinguish all Master Masons until time and circumstances restore the genuine ones?

If Brethren understood the implication they would surely better appreciate the purpose of the Craft and put it to higher uses than they do. For in this incident is not only enshrined the fundamental doctrine of the Order, but a truth is declared affecting all human life. It is a pronouncement of cosmic loss and dereliction. Not a historic Hiram or any allegoric personality is it that is smitten, but the Divine and Grand Master-principle of our being “slain from the foundation of the world,” of which Hiram is used as the personified type. This it is which in our present natural state is cut off from us, smitten and overpowered by our own ruffian disorderly wills and sensual effections, so that we live, not by its light, but in outer darkness of our own making; not in conscious possession of the genuine secrets of our true being; not in fulness of wisdom and perfection of faculty, but by virtue only of our limited natural reason and our illusory senses. As we are now we do not live front the centre of life, but from its circumference; we do not know Reality and Being
in its wholeness and perfection; we know only phenomena, relativity and the shadows and husks of real things; we live but a secondary derivative existence at the periphery — a life of endless flux and decay, of strife and pain, futility and death, which are the signs that must and will continue to distinguish us until time and circumstances restore to us that which is lost, conscious union with our root of being. And so finding this peripheral existence one of relative illusion and unsatisfying vanities, as sooner or later we all do, we recognise that some vital factor is wanting to us, and we go here and there in our blind searchings after it, as it were exclaiming M—! M—! and with bated breath whispering to one another the dread secret that the Master is smitten and that with him the true secrets of our being are lost also.

This is the great truth so dramatically testified to in the closing of the Third Degree, and it is the truth which alone explains and justifies the existence of Initiation-systems to remedy it. For the purpose of Initiation ever was, and still is, to effect the restoration in the individual soul of its candidates of that which from their heart they recognise they have lost, but desire to regain. A real initiate is one in whom that restoration has become fully (or even partially) achieved, as it may be by any of us by our own industry and the assistance of the Master-principle within us. The full, complete restoration is graphically depicted for us ceremonially in the Third Degree in the symbolic act of raising the candidate from — to — and his becoming then drawn into identic union and fellowship with his Master-principle, whilst it is elaborated still farther in the gorgeous rite of the Royal Arch. For him who has received the mercy of this great experience in fact and not merely in ceremony, the words The Master is smitten!” no longer apply, but rather “The Master is risen!” for he has reached the soul’s true Easter-day, and that vital and immortal principle which has risen in him can proclaim through his regenerated organism “I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and hold the keys of hell and of death!” For that is Mastership, the goal of the excellent and perfect Mason, and the recovery of both the lost secrets and the lost powers of our genuine being, for attaining which it is open to each of us whose desire is ardent enough, to make our own time and create the requisite circumstances.

This would appear to be the conclusion of our subject. But one more point must he made, for, far as our Craft Degrees and their extension in the Royal Arch carry us, there remains one greater height still. The supreme climax of our system is to he looked for in the implications of the Ceremony of Installation. This, I regret, cannot be spoken of adequately or with the fulness it deserves except inside a Board of Installed Masters. Yet let a word be said upon it here, for if there be one piece of our ritual more than another that one
would fain see rescued from the misunderstanding that so often desecrates it, it is that of the enthronement into the chair of King Solomon.

Blind are the eyes that see in this wonderful and moving rite merely the induction of an annually chosen new governor of a Lodge. More darkened still is the mind that treats attainment to the Chair of Wisdom as a matter of self-satisfaction at the fulfilment of a private ambition and makes it, after the manner of the secular world, an occasion for personal glorification and intensified carousal. For behind all the personal compliment and the formal conventions necessarily attaching to it as a temporal event, there lurks the profound and pride-humbling spiritual significance of its symbolism, the sacramental veils of which our vision should be trained to pierce.

In that symbolism Royal Solomon is no historic character, but our latent Master-principle personified; he is the embodiment of the conjoined wisdom, strength and beauty characterising the root of our being from which we are now cut off, but to regain which is the end of the philosophical quest. The “Chair of King Solomon,” is a metaphor of the perfected soul’s ultimate sedes gestatoria, and the occasion of installation should be regarded as the symbol of its Feast of Assumption thereinto. For there, after the aspirant’s upward toil, the path of Initiation terminates, and the builder of the house not made with hands enters that rest which remaineth for those who outgrow the ranks of humanity and pass into the order of Divinity and Mastership. In words used in another connection he is made to “sit down at the right of God,” clothed with all the attributes and executive powers of divine vice-regency.

Thus behind the personal honour accorded to a Brother called to the chair of Wisdom is dramatised the enthronement of the soul upon the utmost height of its being; and when we look up to and salute a newly installed Master, wearing the regalia of that supreme office, bearing the symbols of plenary power and entrusted with absolute control of his Lodge and its property, let us translate this visible imagery into its spiritual and impersonal value, and lift our eyes and hearts to contemplation of that sublime moment when the perfected soul, reaching its throne of rest and peace surpassing understanding, enters its true kingdom, receives the power, and wears the self-radiant vesture of glory, for ever and ever.

In these reflections I have tried to dissect some of the deeper and more vital arcana of the Craft from the mass of superficial moral teaching amidst which it lies imbedded and, as I think, deliberately veiled. There remain for contemplation many other valuable philosophic secrets which would require not one, but a series of papers to discuss. Some of these would probably startle and even give offence to the natural mind until it learns to abase and behead itself and to receive hidden wisdom with the unsophisticated vision of a child.
Better therefore defer their consideration for the present. When as the result of the discipline and industry prescribed by our system, we become conscious of the Blazing Star or Glory at our centre rising and expanding more and more in us its self-convincing light will itself disclose to us and justify all that now lies secret and unexplained, but, as the Great Master of the West enjoined, until it be risen from the dead in our hearts we are to tell the vision to no man (see Matthew xvii., 9.), whilst following the same instruction, Masonry directs us to lock up our secrets in the heart’s safe, and sacred repository.

Yet what has been said may perhaps suffice to indicate something of the invaluable light and wisdom concealed within our system, and since there is nothing hid which shall not be revealed in due course and to the properly prepared, we may regard the increasing anxiety of so many Brethren to-day to realise more fully the true content and purpose of our Order, as a sign that at last, after a long period of darkness and perversity, the Light of the Centre is gradually breaking over the Craft and restoring, to at least the more faithful and zealous of its members, the knowledge of the lost but genuine secrets of their being.
Part II

The Meaning of Masonry
Walter Leslie Wilmshurst
P.M. 275; Past Provincial Grand Registrar in West Yorkshire, UGLE.

THE MEANING OF MASONRY

A philosophical exposition of the character of the Craft

London — 1920
William Rider & Son, 8, Paternoster Row &
Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 3, Amen Corner
“We must, then, demonstrate that ours is a Hierarchy of inspired, divine and deifying science, of efficacy and of consecration for those initiated with the initiation of the revelation derived from the hierarchical mysteries.

Head of this Hierarchy is the Fountain of Life, the Essence of Goodness, the one Triad, Cause of things that be, assimilation to and union with Whom, as far as attainable, is deification.

And this is the common goal of every Hierarchy, — persistent devotion towards God and divine things divinely and uniformly ministered; prior to which there must be a complete and unswerving removal of things contrary; a knowledge of things as they are in themselves; the vision and science of sacred truth; the inspired communication of the uniform perfection of the One Itself, as far as attainable; the banquet of contemplation, nourishing intelligibly and deifying every man elevated towards it.”

DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITICUS, De Eccles. Hierarch., I, t-3.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Position and Possibilities of the Masonic Order

The papers here collected are written solely for members of the Masonic Order, constituted under the United Grand Lodge of England. To all such they are offered in the best spirit of fraternity and goodwill and with the wish to render to the Order some small return for the profit the author has received from his association with it extending over thirty-two years. They have been written with a view to promoting the deeper understanding of the meaning of Masonry; to providing the explanation of it that one constantly hears called for and that becomes all the more necessary in view of the unprecedented increase of interest in, and membership of, the Order at the present day.

The meaning of Masonry, however, is a subject usually left entirely unex- pounded and that accordingly remains largely unrealized by its members save such few as make it their private study; the authorities of what in all other respects is an elaborately organized and admirably controlled community have hitherto made no provision for explaining and teaching the “noble science” which Masonry proclaims itself to be and was certainly designed to impart. It seems taken for granted that reception into the Order will automatically be accompanied by an ability to appreciate forthwith and at its full value all that one there finds. The contrary is the case, for Masonry is a veiled and cryptic expression of the difficult science of spirit life, and the understanding of it calls for special informed guidance on the one hand, and on other a genuine and earnest desire for knowledge and no small capacity for spiritual perception on part of those seeking to be instructed; and infrequently one finds Brethren discontinuing their interest or their membership because they find that Ma-
sonry means nothing to them and that explanation or guidance is vouchsafed
them. Were such instruction provided, assimilated and responded to, the life
of the Order would be enormously quickened and deepened and its efficiency
as a means of Initiation intensified, whilst incidentally the fact would prove an
added safeguard against the admission into the Order of unsuitable members
which is meant not merely persons who fail to satisfy conventional qualifica-
tions, but also those who, whilst fitted in these respects, are as yet either so
intellectually or spiritually unprogressed as to incapable of benefiting from
Initiation in its true sense although passing formally through Initiation rites.
Spiritual quality rather than numbers, ability to understand the Masonic sys-
tem and reduce implications into personal experience rather than perfunctory
conferment of its rites, are the desiderata of the Craft to-day.

As a contribution to repairing the absence explanation referred to these pa-
pers have be compiled. The first two of them have often been read as lectures
at Lodge meetings. Many requests that they should be printed and made more
widely available led to my expanding their subject-matter into greater detail
than could be used for occasional lectures, and accordingly they are here am-
plified by a paper containing fuller notes upon Craft symbolism. To complete
the consideration of the Craft system it was necessary also to add a chap-
ter upon that which forms the crown and culmination of the Craft Degrees
and without which they would be imperfect—the Order of the Royal Arch.
Lastly a chapter has been added upon the important subject which forms the
background of the rest—the relationship of modern Masonry to the Ancient
Mysteries, from which it is the direct, though greatly attenuated, spiritual de-
scendant.

Thus in the five papers I have sought to provide a survey of the whole Ma-
sonic subject as expressed by the Craft and Arch Degrees, which it is hoped
may prove illuminating to the increasing number of Brethren who feel that
Freemasonry enshrines something deeper and greater than, in the absence of
guidance, they have been able to realize. It does not profess to be more than an
elementary and far from exhaustive survey; the subject might be treated much
more fully, in more technical terminology and with abundant references to au-
thorities, were one compiling a more ambitious and scholarly treatise. But to
the average Mason such a treatise would probably prove less serviceable than
a summary expressed in as simple and un-technical terms as may be and un-
burdened by numerous literary references. Some repetition, due to the papers
having been written at different times, may be found in later chapters of points
already dealt with in previous ones, though the restatement may be advanta-
geous in emphasizing those points and maintaining continuity of exposition.
For reasons explained in the chapter itself, that on the Holy Royal Arch will
probably prove difficult of comprehension by those unversed in the literature and psychology of religious mysticism; if so, the reading of it may be deferred or neglected. But since a survey of the Masonic system would, like the system itself, be incomplete without reference to that supreme Degree, and since that Degree deals with matters of advanced psychological and spiritual experience about which explanation must always be difficult, the subject has been treated here with as much simplicity of statement as is possible and rather with a view to indicating to what great heights of spiritual attainment the Craft Degrees point as achievable, than with the expectation that they will be readily comprehended by readers without some measure of mystical experience and perhaps unfamiliar with the testimony of the mystics thereto.

Purposely these papers avoid dealing with matters of Craft history and of merely antiquarian or archaeological interest. Dates, particulars of Masonic constitutions, historical changes and developments in the external aspects of the Craft, references to old Lodges and the names of outstanding people connected therewith — these and such like matters can be read about elsewhere. They are all subordinate to what alone is of vital moment and what so many Brethren are hungering for — knowledge of the spiritual purpose and lineage of the Order and the present-day value of rites of Initiation.

In giving these pages to publication care has been taken to observe due reticence in respect of essential matters. The general nature of the Masonic system is, however, nowadays widely known to outsiders and easily ascertainable from many printed sources, whilst the large interest in, and output of literature upon mystical religion and the science of the inward life during the last few years has familiarized many with a subject of which, as is shown in these papers, Masonry is but a specialized form. To explain Masonry in general outline is, therefore, not to divulge a subject which is entirely exclusive to its members, but merely to show that Masonry stands in line with other doctrinal systems inculcating the same principles and to which no secrecy attaches, and that it is a specialized and highly effective method of inculcating those principles. Truth, whether as expressed in Masonry or otherwise, is at all times an open secret, but is as a pillar of light to those able to receive and profit by it, and to all others but one of darkness and unintelligibility. An elementary and formal secrecy is requisite as a practical precaution against the intrusion of improper persons and for preventing profanation. In other respects the vital secrets of life, and of any system expounding life, protect themselves even though shouted from the housetops, because they mean nothing to those as yet unqualified for the knowledge and unready to identify themselves with it by incorporating it into their habitual thought and conduct.

In view of the great spread and popularity of Masonry to-day—when there
are some three thousand Lodges in Great Britain alone—it is as well to consider its present bearings and tendencies and to give a thought to future possibilities. The Order is a semi-secret, semi-public institution; secret in respect of its activities intra moenia, but otherwise of full public notoriety, with its doors open to any applicant for admission who is of ordinary good character and repute. Those who enter it, as the majority do, entirely ignorant of what they will find there, usually because they have friends there or know Masonry to be an institution devoted to high ideals and benevolence and with which it may be socially desirable to be connected, may or may not be attracted and profit by what is disclosed to them, and may or may not see anything beyond the bare form of the symbol or hear anything beyond the mere letter of the word. Their admission is quite a lottery; their Initiation too often remains but a formality, not an actual awakening into an order and quality of life previously unexperienced; their membership, unless such an awakening eventually ensues from the careful study and faithful practice of the Order’s teaching, has little, if any, greater influence upon them than would ensue from their joining a purely social club.

For “Initiation” — for which there are so many candidates little conscious of what is implied in that for which they ask—what does it really mean and intend? It means a new beginning (initium); a break-away from an old method and order of life and the entrance upon a new one of larger self knowledge, deepened understanding and intensified virtue. It means a transition from the merely natural state and standards of life towards a regenerate and supernatural state and standard. It means a turning away from the pursuit of the popular ideals of the outer world, in the conviction that those ideals are but shadows, images and temporal substitutions for the eternal Reality that underlies them, to the keen and undivertible quest of that Reality itself and the recovery of those genuine secrets of our being which lie buried and hidden at “the centre” or innermost part of our souls. It means the awakening of those hitherto dormant higher faculties of the soul which endue their possessor with “light” in the form of new enhanced consciousness and enlarged perceptive faculty. And lastly, in words with which every Mason is familiar, it means that the postulant will henceforth dedicate and devote his life to the Divine rather than to his own or any other service, so that by the principles of the Order he may be the better enabled to display that beauty of godliness which previously perhaps has not manifested through him.

To comply with this definition of Initiation which it might be useful to apply as a test not only to those who seek for admission into the Order, but to ourselves who are already within it — it is obvious that special qualifications of mind and intention are essential in a candidate of the type likely
to be benefited by the Order in the way that its doctrine contemplates, and that it is not necessarily the ordinary man of the world, personal friend and good fellow though he be according to usual social standards, who is either properly prepared for, or likely to benefit in any vital sense by, reception into it. The true candidate must indeed needs be, as the word candidus implies, a “white man,” white within as symbolically he is white-vestured without, so that no inward stain or soilure may obstruct the dawn within his soul of that Light which he professes to be the predominant wish of his heart on asking for admission; whilst, if really desirous of learning the secrets and mysteries of his own being, he must be prepared to divest himself of all past preconceptions and thought-habits and, with childlike meekness and docility, surrender his mind to the reception of some perhaps novel and unexpected truths which Initiation promises to impart and which will more and more unfold and justify themselves within those, and those only, who are, and continue to keep themselves, properly prepared for them. “Know thyself!” was the injunction inscribed over the portals of ancient temples of Initiation, for with that knowledge was promised the knowledge of all secrets and all mysteries. And Masonry was designed to teach self-knowledge. But self knowledge involves a knowledge much deeper, vaster and more difficult than is popularly conceived. It is not to be acquired by the formal passage through three or four degrees in as many months; it is a knowledge impossible of full achievement until knowledge of every other kind has been laid aside and a difficult path of life long and strenuously pursued that alone fits and leads its followers to its attainment. The wisest and most advanced of us is perhaps still but an Entered Apprentice at this knowledge, however high his titular rank. Here and there may be one worthy of being hailed as a Fellow-Craft in the true sense. The full Master—Mason—the just man made perfect who has actually and not merely ceremonially travelled the entire path, endured all its tests and ordeals, and become raised into conscious union with the Author and Masonic Giver of Life and able to mediate and impart that Order life to others is at all times hard to find.

So high, so ideal an attainment, it may be urged, is beyond our reach; we are but ordinary men of the world sufficiently occupied already with our primary civic, social and family obligations and following the obvious normal path of natural life! Granted. Nevertheless to point to that attainment as possible to us and as our destiny, to indicate that path of self-perfecting to those who care and dare to follow it, modern Speculative Masonry was instituted, and to emphasizing the fact these papers are devoted. For Masonry means this or it means nothing worth the serious pursuit of thoughtful men; nothing that cannot be pursued as well outside the Craft as within it. It proclaims the fact
that there exists a higher and more secret path of life than that which we normally tread, and that when the outer world and its pursuits and rewards lose their attractiveness for us and prove insufficient to our deeper needs, as sooner or later they will, we are compelled to turn back upon ourselves, to seek and knock at the door of a world within; and it is upon this inner world, and the path to and through it, that Masonry promises light, charts the way, and indicates the qualifications and conditions of progress. This is the sole aim and intention of Masonry. Behind its more elementary and obvious symbolism, behind its counsels to virtue and conventional morality, behind the platitudes and and sententious phraseology (which nowadays might well be subjected to competent and intelligent revision) with which, after the fashion of their day, the eighteenth-century compilers of its ceremonies clothed its teaching, there exists the framework of a scheme of initiation into that higher path of life where alone the secrets and mysteries of our being are to be learned; a scheme moreover that, as will be shown later in these pages, reproduces for the modern world the main features of the Ancient Mysteries, and that has been well described by a learned writer on the subject as “an epitome or it reflection at a far distance of the once universal science”.

But because, for long and for many, Masonry has meant less than this, it has not as yet fulfilled its original purpose of being the efficient initiating instrument it was designed to be; its energies have been diverted from its true instructional purpose into social and philanthropic channels, excellent in their way, but foreign to and accretions upon the primal main intention. Indeed, so little perceived or appreciated is that central intention that one frequently hears it confessed by men of eminent position in the Craft and warm devotion to it that only their interest in its great charitable institutions keeps alive their connection with the Order. Relief is indeed a duty incumbent upon a Mason, but its Masonic interpretation is not meant to be limited to physical necessities. The spiritually as well as the financially poor and distressed are always with us and to the former, equally with the latter, Masonry was designed to minister. Theoretically every man upon reception into the Craft acknowledges himself as within the category of the spiritually poor, and as content to renounce all temporal riches if haply by that sacrifice his hungry heart may be filled with those good things which money cannot purchase, but to which the truly initiated can help him.

But if Masonry has not as yet fulfilled its primary purpose and, though engaged in admirable secondary activities, is as yet an initiating instrument of low efficiency, it may be that, with enlarged understanding of its designs, that efficiency may yet become very considerably increased. During the last two centuries the Craft has been gradually developing from small and crude
beginnings into its present vast and highly elaborated organization. To-day the number of Lodges and the membership of the Craft are increasing beyond all precedent. One asks oneself what this growing interest portends, and to what it will, or can be made to, lead? The growth synchronizes with a corresponding defection of interest in orthodox religion and public worship. It need not now be enquired whether or to what extent the simple principles of faith and the humanitarian ideals of Masonry are with some men taking the place of the theology offered in the various Churches; it is probable that to some extent they do so. But the fact is with us that the ideals of the Masonic Order are making a wide appeal to the best instincts of large numbers of men and that the Order has imperceptibly become the greatest social institution in the Empire. Its principles of faith and ethics are simple, and of virtually universal acceptance. Providing means for the expression of universal fraternity under a common Divine Fatherhood and of a common loyalty to the headship and established government of the State, it leaves room for divergences of private belief and view upon matters upon which unity is impracticable and perhaps undesirable. It is utterly clean of politics and political intrigue, but nevertheless has unconsciously become a real, though unobtrusive, asset of political value, both in stabilizing the social fabric and tending to foster international amity. The elaborateness of its organization, the care and admirable control of its affairs by its higher authorities, are praiseworthy in the extreme, whilst in the conduct of its individual Lodges there has been and is a progressive endeavour to raise the standard of ceremonial work to a far higher degree of reverence and intelligence than was perhaps possible under conditions existing not long ago. The Masonic Craft has grown and ramified to dimensions undreamed of by its original founders and, at its present rate of increase, its potentialities and influence in the future are quite incalculable.

What seems now needed to intensify the worth and usefulness of this great Brotherhood is to deepen its understanding of its own system, to educate its members in the deeper meaning and true purpose of its rites and its philosophy. Were this achieved the Masonic Order would become, in proportion to that achievement, a spiritual force greater than it can ever be so long as it continues content with a formal and unintelligent perpetuation of rites, the real and sacred purpose of which remains largely unperceived, and participation in which too often means nothing more than association with an agreeable, semi-religious, social institution. Carried to its fullest, that achievement would involve the revival, in a form adapted to modern conditions, of the ancient Wisdom-teaching and the practice of, those Mysteries which became proscribed fifteen centuries ago, but of which modern Masonry is the, direct and representative descendant, as will appear later in these pages.
The future development and the value of the Order as a moral force in society depend, therefore, upon the view its members take of their system. If they do not spiritualize it they will but increasingly materialize it. If they fail to interpret its veiled purport, to enter into the understanding of its underlying philosophy, and to translate its symbolism into what is signified thereby, they will be mistaking shadow for substance, a husk for the kernel, and secularizing what was designed as a means of spiritual instruction and grace. It is from lack of instruction rather than of desire to learn the meaning of Masonry that the Craft suffers to-day. But, as one finds everywhere, that desire exists; and so, for what they may be worth, these papers are offered to the Craft as a contribution towards satisfying it.

Let me conclude with an apologue and an aspiration.

In the Chronicles of Israel it may be read how that, after long preparatory labour, after employing the choicest material and the most skilful artificers, Solomon the King at last made an end of building and beautifying his Temple, and dedicated to the service of the Most High that work of his hands in a state as perfect as human provision could make it; and how that then, but not till then, his offering was accepted and the acceptance was signified by a Divine descent upon it so that the glory of the Lord shone through and filled the whole house.

So — if we will have it so — may it be with the temple of the Masonic Order. Since the inception of Speculative Masonry it has been a-building and expanding now these last three hundred years. Fashioned of living stones into a far-reaching organic structure; brought gradually, under the good guidance of its rulers, to high perfection on its temporal side and in respect of its external observances, and made available for high purposes and giving godly witness in a dark and troubled world; upon these preliminary efforts let there now be invoked this crowning and completing blessing that the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding may descend upon the work of our hands in abundant measure, prospering it still farther, and filling and transfiguring our whole Masonic house.
Chapter 2

The Deeper Symbolism of Masonry

A candidate proposing to enter Freemasonry has seldom formed any definite idea of the nature of what he is engaging in. Even after his admission he usually remains quite at a loss to explain satisfactorily what Masonry is and for what purpose his Order exists. He finds, indeed, that it is “a system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols,” but that explanation, whilst true, is but partial and does not carry him very far. For many members of the Craft to be a Mason implies merely connection with a body which seems to be something combining the natures of a club and a benefit society. They find, of course, a certain religious element in it, but as they are told that religious discussion, which means, of course, sectarian religious discussion, is forbidden in the Lodge, they infer that Masonry is not a religious institution, and that its teachings are intended to be merely secondary and supplemental to any religious tenets they may happen to hold. One sometimes hears it remarked that Masonry is “not a religion”; which in a sense is quite true; and sometimes that it is a secondary or supplementary religion, which is quite untrue. Again Masonry is often supposed, even by its own members, to be a system of extreme antiquity, that was practised and that has come down in well-nigh its present form from Egyptian or at least from early Hebrew sources a view which again possesses the merest modicum of truth. In brief, the vaguest notions obtain about the origin and history of the Craft, whilst the still more vital subject of its immediate and present purpose, and of its possibilities, remains almost entirely outside the consciousness of many of its own members. We meet in our Lodges regularly we perform our ceremonial work and repeat catechetical instruction-lectures night after night with a less or greater degree of intelligence and verbal perfection, and there our work ends, though the abil-
ity to perform this work creditably were the be-all and the end-all of Masonic work: Seldom or never do we employ our Lodge meeting for that purpose for which, quite as much as for ceremonial purposes, they were intended, for “expatiating on the mysteries of the Craft,” and perhaps our neglect to do so is because we have ourselves imperfectly realized what those mysteries are into which our Order was primarily formed to introduce us.

Yet, there exists a large number of brethren who would willingly repair this obvious deficiency brethren to whose natures Masonry, even in the more limited aspect of it, makes a profound appeal and who feel their membership of the Craft to be privilege which has brought them into the presence of something greater than they know, and that enshrines a purpose and that could unfold a message deeper than they at present realize.

In a brief address like this it is hopeless to attempt to deal at all adequately with what I have suggested are deficiencies in our knowledge of the system we belong to. The most one can hope to do is to offer a few hints or clues, which those who so desire may develop for themselves in the privacy of their own thought. For in the last resource no one can communicate the deeper things in Masonry to another. Every man must discover and learn them for himself, although a friend or brother may be able to conduct him a certain distance on the path of understanding. We know that even the elementary and superficial secrets of the Order must not be communicated to unqualified persons, and the reason for this injunction is not so much because those secrets have any special value, but because that silence is intended to be typical of that which applies to the greater, deeper secrets, some of which, for appropriate reasons, must not be communicated, and some of which indeed are not communicable at all, because they transcend the power of communication.

It is well to emphasize then, at the outset, that Masonry is a sacramental system possessing, like all sacraments, an outward and visible side consisting of its ceremonial, its doctrine and its symbols which we can see and hear, and an inward, intellectual, and spiritual side, which is concealed behind the ceremonial, the doctrine and the symbols, and which is available only to the Mason who has learned to use his spiritual imagination and who can appreciate the reality that lies behind the veil of outward symbol. Anyone, of course, can understand the simpler meaning of our symbols, especially with the help of the explanatory lectures; but he may still miss the meaning of the scheme as a vital whole. It is absurd to think that a vast organization like Masonry was ordained merely to teach to grown men of the world the symbolical meaning of a few simple builders’ tools, or to impress upon us such elementary virtues as temperance and justice:– the children in every village school are taught such things; or to enforce such simple principles morals as brotherly love,
which every church and every religion teaches; or as relief, which is practised quite as much by non-Masons as by us; or of truth which every infant learns upon its mother’s knee. There is surely, too, no need for us to join a secret society to be taught that the volume of the Sacred Law is a fountain of truth and instruction; or to go through the great and elaborate ceremony of the third degree merely to learn that we have each to die. The Craft whose work we are taught to honour with the name of a “science,” a “royal art,” has surely some larger end in view than merely inculcating the practice of social virtues common to all the world and by no means the monopoly of Freemasons. Surely, then, it behoves us to acquaint ourselves with what that larger end consists, to enquire why the fulfilment of that purpose is worthy to be called a science, and to ascertain what are those “mysteries” to which our doctrine promises we may ultimately attain if we apply ourselves assiduously enough to understanding what Masonry is capable of teaching us. Realizing, then, what Masonry cannot be deemed to be, let us ask what it is. But before answering that question, let me put you in possession of certain facts that will enable you the better to appreciate the answer when I formulate it. In all periods the world’s history, and in every part of the globe, The secret orders and societies have existed outside the limits of the official churches for the purpose of teaching what are called “the Mysteries”: for imparting to suitable and prepared minds certain truths of human life, certain instructions about divine things, about the things that belong to our peace, about human nature and human destiny, which it was undesirable to publish to the multitude who would but profane those teachings and apply the esoteric knowledge that was communicated to perverse and perhaps to disastrous ends.

These Mysteries were formerly taught, we are told, “on the highest hills and in the lowest valleys,” which is merely a figure of speech for saying, first, that they have been taught in circumstances of the greatest seclusion and secrecy, and secondly, that they have been taught in both advanced and simple forms according to the understanding of their disciples. It is, of course, common knowledge that great secret systems of the Mysteries (referred to in, our lectures as “noble orders of architecture,” i.e., of soul-building) existed in the East, in Chaldea, Assyria, Egypt, Greece, Italy, amongst the Hebrews, amongst Mahommedans and amongst Christians; even among uncivilized African races they are to be found. All the great teachers of humanity, Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Moses, Aristotle, Virgil, the author of the Homeric poems, and the great Greek tragedians, along with St. John, St. Paul and innumerable other great names — were initiates of the Sacred Mysteries. The form of the teaching communicated has varied considerably from age to age; it has been expressed under different veils; but since the ultimate truth the
Mysteries aim at teaching is always one and the same, there has always been taught, and can only be taught, one and the same doctrine. What the doctrine was, and still is, we will consider presently so far as we are able to speak of it, and so far a Masonry gives expression to it. For the moment let me merely say that behind all the official religion systems of the world, and behind all the great more movements and developments in the history of humanity, have stood what St. Paul called the keepers or "stewards of the Mysteries." From that source Christianity itself came into the world. From them originated the great school of Kabalism that marvellous system of secret, oral tradition of the Hebrews, a strong element of which has been introduced into our Masonic system. From them too, also issued many fraternities and orders, such for instance, as the great orders of Chivalry and of the Rosicrucians, and the school of spiritual alchemy. Lastly, from them too also issued, in the seventeen century, modern speculative Freemasonry. To trace the genesis of the movement, which came into activity some 250 years ago (our rituals and ceremonies having been compiled round about the year 1700), is beyond the purpose of my present remarks. It may merely be stated that the movement itself incorporated the slender ritual and the elementary symbolism that, for centuries previously had been employed in connection with the mediaeval Building Guilds, but it gave to them a far fuller meaning and a far wider scope. It has always been the custom for Trade Guilds, and even for modern Friendly Societies, to spiritualize their trades, and to make the tools of their trade point some simple moral. No trade, perhaps, lends itself more readily to such treatment than the builder's trade; but wherever a great industry has flourished, there you will find traces of that industry becoming allegorized, and of the allegory being employed for the simple moral instruction of those who were operative members of the industry. I am acquainted, for instance, with an Egyptian ceremonial system, some 5,000 years old, which taught precisely the same things as Masonry does, but in the terms of shipbuilding instead of in the terms of architecture. But the terms of architecture were employed by those who originated modern Masonry because they were ready to hand; because they were in use among certain trade-guilds then in existence; and lastly, because they are extremely effective and significant from the symbolic point of view.

All that I wish to emphasize at this stage is that our present system is not one coming from remote antiquity: that there is no direct continuity between us and the Egyptians, or even those ancient Hebrews who built, in the reign of King Solomon, a certain Temple at Jerusalem. What is extremely ancient in Freemasonry is the spiritual doctrine concealed within the architectural phraseology; for this doctrine is an elementary form of the doctrine that has been taught in all ages, no matter in what garb it has been expressed.
Our own teaching, for instance, recognizes Pythagoras as having undergone numerous initiations in different parts of the world, and as having attained great eminence in the science. Now it is perfectly certain that Pythagoras was not a Mason at all in our present sense of the word but it is also perfectly certain that Pythagoras was a very highly advanced master in the knowledge of the secret schools of the Mysteries, of whose doctrine some small portion is enshrined for us in our Masonic system.

What then was the purpose the framers of our Masonic system had in view when they compiled it? To this question you will find no satisfying answer in ordinary Masonic books. Indeed there is nothing more dreary and dismal than Masonic literature and Masonic histories, which are usually devoted to considering merely unessential material relating to the external development of the Craft and to its antiquarian aspect. They fail entirely to deal with its vital meaning and essence, a failure that, in some cases, may be intentional, but the more often seems due to lack of knowledge and perception, for the true, inner history of Masonry has never yet been given forth even to the Craft itself. There are members of the Craft to whom it is familiar, and who in due time may feel justified in gradually making public at any rate some portion of what is known in interior circles. But ere that time comes, and that the Craft itself may the better appreciate what can be told, it is desirable, nay even necessary, that its own members should make some effort to realize the meaning of their own institution and should display symptoms of earnest desire to treat it less as a system of archaic and perfunctory rites, and more as a vital reality capable of entering into and dominating their lives; less as a merely pleasant social order, and more as a sacred and serious method of initiation into the profoundest truths of life. It is written that “to him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath”; and it remains with the Craft itself to determine by its own action whether it shall enter into its full heritage, or whether, by failing to realize and to safeguard the value of what it possesses, by suffering its own mysteries to be vulgarized and profaned, its organization will degenerate and pass into disrepute and deserved oblivion, as has been the fate of many secret orders in the past.

There are signs, however, of a well-nigh universal increase of interest, of a genuine desire for knowledge of the spiritual content of our Masonic system, and I am glad to be able to offer to my Brethren some slight and imperfect outline of what I conceive to be the true purpose of our work, which may tend to deepen their interest in the work of the Order they belong to, and (what is of more moment still) help to make Masonry for them a vital factor, and a living, serious reality, rather than a mere pleasurable appendage to social life.
To state things briefly, Masonry offers us, in dramatic form and by means of dramatic ceremonial a philosophy of the spiritual life of man and a diagram of the process of regeneration. We shall see presently that that philosophy is not only consistent with the doctrine of every religious system taught outside the ranks of the Order, but that it explains, elucidates and more sharply defines, the fundamental doctrines common to every religious system in the world, whether past or present, whether Christian or non-Christian. The religions of the world, though all aiming at teaching truth, express that truth in different ways, and we are more prone to emphasize the differences than to look for the correspondences in what they teach. In some Masonic Lodges the candidate makes his first entrance to the Lodge room amid the clash of swords and the sounds of strife, to intimate to him that he is leaving the confusion and jarring of the religious sects of the exterior world, and is passing into a Temple wherein the Brethren dwell together in unity of thought in regard to the basal truths of life, truths which can permit of no difference or schism.

Allied with no external religious system itself, Masonry is yet a synthesis, a concordat, for men of every race, of every creed, of every sect, and its foundation principles being common to them all, admit of no variation. “As it was in the beginning, so it is now and ever shall be, into the ages of ages.” Hence it is that every Master of a Lodge is called upon to swear that no innovation in the body of Masonry (i.e., in its substantial doctrine) is possible, since it already contains a minimum, and yet a sufficiency, of truth which none may add to nor alter, and from which none may take away; and since the Order accords perfect liberty of opinion to all men, the truths it has to offer are entirely “free to” us according to our capacity to assimilate them, whilst those to whom they do not appeal, those who think they can find a more sufficing philosophy elsewhere, are equally at liberty to be “free from” them, and men of honour will find it their duty to withdraw from the Order rather than suffer the harmony of thought that should characterize the Craft to be disturbed by their presence.

The admission of every Mason into the Order is, we are taught, “an emblematical representation of the entrance of all men upon this mortal existence.” Let us reflect a little upon these pregnant words. To those deep persistent questionings which present themselves to every thinking mind, What am I? Whence come I? Whither go I?, Masonry offers emphatic and luminous answers. Each of us, it tells us, has come from that mystical “East,” the eternal source of all light and life, and our life here is described as being spent in the “West” (that is, in a world which is the antipodes of our original home, and under conditions of existence as far removed from those we came from and to which we are returning, as is West from East in our ordinary computation...
of space). Hence every Candidate upon admission finds himself, in a state of darkness, in the West of the Lodge. Thereby he is repeating symbolically the incident of his actual birth into this world, which he entered as a blind and helpless babe, and through which in his early years, not knowing whither he was going, after many stumbling and irregular steps, after many deviations from the true path and after many tribulations and adversities incident to human life, he may at length ascend, purified and chastened by experience, to larger life in the eternal East. Hence in the E.A. degree, we ask, “As a Mason, whence come you?” and the answer, coming from an apprentice (i.e., from the natural man of undeveloped knowledge) is “From the West,” since he supposes that his life has originated in this world. But, in the advanced degree of M.M. the answer is that he comes “From the East,” for by this time the Mason is supposed to have so enlarged his knowledge as to realize that the primal source of life is not in the “West,” not in this world; that existence upon this planet is but a transitory sojourn, spent in search of “the genuine secrets,” the ultimate realities, of life; and that as the spirit of man must return to God who gave it, so he is now returning from this temporary world of “substituted secrets” to the “East” from which he originally came. As the admission of every candidate into a Lodge presupposes his prior existence in the world without the Lodge, so our doctrine presupposes that ever soul born into this world has lived in, and has come hither from, an anterior state of life. It has lives elsewhere before it entered this world: it will live elsewhere when it passes hence, human life being but a parenthesis in the midst of eternity. But upon entering this world, the soul must needs assume material form; in other words it takes upon itself a physical body to enable it to enter into relations with the physical world, and to perform the functions appropriate to it in this particular phase of its career. Need I say that the physical form with which we have all been invested by the Creator upon our entrance into this world, and of which we shall all divest ourselves when we leave the Lodge of this life, is represented among us by our Masonic apron? This, our body of mortality, this veil of flesh and blood clothing the inner soul of us, this is the real “badge of innocence,” the common “bond of friendship,” with which the Great Architect has been pleased to invest us all this, the human body, is the badge which is “older and nobler than that of any other Order in existence”: and though it be but a body of humiliation compared with that body of incorruption which is the promised inheritance of him who endures to the end, let us never forget that if we never do anything to disgrace the badge of flesh with which God has endowed each of us, that badge will never disgrace us.

Brethren, I charge you to regard your apron as one of the most precious and speaking symbols our Order has to give you. Remember that when you
first wore it it was a piece of pure white lambskin; an emblem of that purity and innocence which we always associate with the lamb and with the newborn child. Remember that you first wore it with the flap raised, it being thus a five-cornered badge, indicating the five senses, by means of which we enter into relations with the material world around us (our “five points of fellowship” with the material world), but indicating also by the triangular portion above, in conjunction with the quadrangular portion below, that man’s nature is a combination of soul and body; the three-sided emblem at the top added to the four-sided emblem beneath making seven, the perfect number; for, as it is written in an ancient Hebrew doctrine with which Masonry is closely allied, “God blessed and loved the number the seven more than all things under His throne,” by which is meant that man, the seven-fold being, is the most cherished of all the Creator’s works. And hence also it is that the Lodge has seven principal officers, and that a Lodge, to be perfect, requires the presence of seven brethren; though the deeper meaning of this phrase is that the individual man, in virtue of his seven-fold constitution, in himself constitutes the “perfect Lodge,” if he will but know himself and analyse his own nature aright.

To each of us also from our birth have been given three lesser lights, by which the Lodge within ourselves may be illumined. For the “sun” symbolizes our spiritual consciousness, the higher aspirations and emotions of the soul; the “moon” betokens our reasoning or intellectual faculties, which (as the moon reflects the light of the sun) should reflect the light coming from the higher spiritual faculty and transmit it into our daily conduct; whilst “the Master of the Lodge” is a symbolical phrase denoting the will-power of man, which should enable him to be master of his own life, to control his own actions and keep down the impulses of his lower nature, even as the stroke of the Master’s gavel controls the Lodge and calls to order and obedience the Brethren under his direction. By the assistance of these lesser lights within us, a man is enabled to perceive what is, again symbolically, called the “form of the Lodge,” i.e. the way in which his own human nature has been composed and constituted, the length, breadth, height and depth of his own being. By their help, too, he will perceive that he himself, his body and his soul, are “holy ground,” upon which he should build the altar of his own spiritual life, an altar which he should suffer no “iron tool,” no debasing habit of thought or conduct, to defile. By them, too, he will perceive how Wisdom, Strength and Beauty have been employed by the Creator, like three grand supporting pillars, in the structure of his own organism. And by these finally he will discern how that there is a mystical “ladder of many rounds or staves,” i.e., that there are innumerable paths or methods by means of which men are led upwards
to the spiritual Light encircling us all, and in which we live and move and have our being, but that of the three principal methods, the greatest of these, the one that comprehends them all and brings us nearest heaven, is Love, in the full exercise of which God-like virtue a Mason reaches the summit of his profession; that summit being God Himself, whose name is Love.

I cannot too strongly impress upon you, Brethren, the fact that, throughout our rituals and our lectures, the references made to the Lodge are not to the building in which we meet. That building itself is intended to be but a symbol, a veil of allegory concealing something else. “Know ye not” says the great initiate St. Paul, “that ye are the temples of the Most High; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” The real Lodge referred to throughout our rituals is our own individual personalities, and if we interpret our doctrine in the light of this fact we shall find that it reveals an entirely new aspect of the purpose of our Craft.

It is after investment with the apron that the initiate is placed in the N.E. corner. Thereby he is intended to learn that at his birth into this world the foundation-stone of his spiritual life was duly and truly laid and implanted within himself; and he is charged to develop it; to create a super-structure upon it. Two paths are open to him at this stage, a path of light and a path of darkness; a path of good and a path of evil. The N.E. corner is the symbolic dividing place between the two. In symbolical language, the N. always signifies the place of imperfection and un-development; in olden times the bodies of suicides, reprobates and unbaptized children were always buried in the north or sunless side of a churchyard. The seat of the junior members of the Craft is allotted to the north, for, symbolically, it represents the condition of the spiritually unenlightened man; the novice in whom the spiritual light latent within him has not yet risen above the horizon of consciousness and dispersed the clouds of material interests and the impulses of the lower and merely sensual life. The initiate placed in the N.E. corner is intended to see, then, that on the one side of him is the path that leads to the perpetual light of the East, into which he is encouraged to proceed, and that on the other is that of spiritual obscurity and ignorance into which it is possible for him to remain or relapse. It is a parable of the dual paths of life open to each one of us; on the one hand the path of selfishness, material desires and sensual indulgence, of intellectual blindness and moral stagnation; on the other the path of moral and spiritual progress, in pursuing which one may decorate and adorn the Lodge within him with the ornaments and jewels of grace and with the invaluable furniture of true knowledge, and which he may dedicate, in all his actions, to the service of God and of his fellow men. And mark that of those jewels some are said to be moveable and transferable, because when displayed in our
own lives and natures their influence becomes transferred and communicated to others and helps to uplift and sweeten the lives of our fellows; whilst some are immoveable because they are permanently fixed and planted in the roots of our own being, and are indeed the raw material which has been entrusted to us to work out of chaos and roughness into due and true form.

The Ceremony of our first degree, then, is a swift and comprehensive portrayal of the entrance of all men into, first, physical life, and second, into spiritual life; and as we extend congratulations when a child is born into the world, so also we receive with acclamation the candidate for Masonry who, symbolically, is seeking for spiritual re-birth; and herein we emulate what is written of the joy that exists among the angels of heaven over every sinner who repents and turns towards the light. The first degree is also eminently the degree of preparation, of self-discipline and purification. It corresponds with that symbolical cleansing accorded in the sacrament of Baptism, which, in the churches, is, so to speak, the first degree in the religious life; and which is administered, appropriately, at the font, near the entrance of the church, even as the act itself takes place at the entrance of the spiritual career. For to all of us such initial cleansing and purifying is necessary. As has been beautifully written by a fellow-worker in the Craft:–

"Tis scarcely true that souls come naked down
To take abode up in this earthly town,
Or naked pass, of all they wear denied.
We enter slipshod and with clothes awry,
And we take with us much that by-and-by
May prove no easy task to put aside.
Cleanse, therefore, that which round about us clings,
We pray Thee, Master, ere Thy sacred halls
We enter. Strip us of redundant things,
And meetly clothe us in pontificals.

***[Strange Houses of Sleep by A. E. Waite.]***

In the schools of the Mysteries, when aspirants for the higher life were wont to quit the outer world and enter temples or sanctuaries of initiation, prolonged periods were allotted to the practical achievement of what is briefly summarized in our first degree. We are told seven or more years was the normal period, though less sufficed in worthy cases. The most severe tests of
discipline, of purity, of self-balance were required before a neophyte was per-
mittted to pass forward, and a reminiscence of these tests of fitness is preserved
in our own working by the conducting of the candidate to the two wardens,
and submitting him to a merely formal trial of efficiency. For it is impossible
to-day, as it was impossible in ancient times, for a man to reach the heights of
moral perfection and spiritual consciousness which were then, and are now,
the goal and aim of all the schools of the Mysteries and all the secret orders,
without purification and trial. Complete stainlessness of body, utter purity of
mind, are absolute essentials to the attainment of things of great and final
moment “Who?” says the Psalmist (and remember that the Psalms were the
sacred hymns used in the Hebrew Mysteries), “Who will go up to the hill of
the Lord, and ascend to His holy place? Even he that hath clean hands and a
pure heart”; whence it comes that we wear white gloves and aprons as em-
blems that we have purified our hearts and washed our hands in innocency.
So also our Patron Saint (St. John) teaches, “He who hath this hope in him
purifieth himself, even as He (i.e., the Master whom he is seeking) is pure.”
For he who is not pure in body and mind he who is enslaved by passions and
desires, or by bondage to the material interests of this world, is, by the very
fact of his uncleanness, prevented from passing on. Nothing unclean or that
defileth a man, we are told, can enter into the kingdom; and, therefore, our
candidates are told that if they have “money or metals about them”; if, that
is, they are subject to any physical attraction or mental defilement, their real
initiation into the higher things, of which our ceremony is but a dramatic sym-
bol, must be deferred and repeated again and again until they are cleansed and
fitted to pass on.

After purification come contemplation and enlightenment, which are the
special subjects of the second degree. Aforetime the candidate for the Myster-
ies, after protracted discipline and purification enabling his mind to acquire
complete control over his passions and his lower physical nature, was ad-
vanced, as he may advance himself to-day, to the study of his more interior
faculties, to understand the science of the human soul, and to trace these fac-
ulties in their development from their elementary stage until he realizes that
they connect with, and terminate in, the Divine itself. The secrets of his men-
tal nature and the principles of intellectual life became at this stage gradually
unfolded to his view. You will thus perceive, Brethren, that the F.C. degree,
sometimes regarded by us as a somewhat uninteresting one, typifies in reality
a long course of personal development requiring the most profound knowl-
edge of the mental and psychical side of our nature. It involves not merely
the cleansing and control of the mind, but a full comprehension of our in-
ner constitution, of the more hidden mysteries of our nature and of spiritual
psychology. In this degree it is that our attention is called to the fact that the Mason who has attained proficiency in this grade has been enabled to discover a sacred symbol, placed in the centre of the building, and alluding to the G.G.O.T.U. Doubtless we have often asked ourselves what that phrase and what that symbol imply. Need I repeat that the building alluded to is not the edifice we meet in, but is our own selves, and that the sacred symbol at the centre of the roof and of the floor of this outward temple is but symbolic of that which exists at the centre of ourselves, and which was spoken of by the Christian Master when He proclaimed that “the kingdom of heaven is within you”; that at the depths of our own being, concealed beneath the heavy veils of the sensual, lower nature, there resides that vital and immortal principle, which is said to “allude to” the G.G. because it is nothing other than a spark of God Himself immanent within us. Over the old temples of the Mysteries was written the injunction “Man, know thyself, and thou shalt know the universe and God.” Happy then is the Mason who has so far purified and developed his own nature as to realize in its fulness the meaning of the “sacred symbol” of the second degree, and found God present not outside but within himself. But in order to find the “perfect points of entrance” to this secret (and we are told elsewhere that “straight is the way and narrow the gate, and few there be that find it”) emphasis again is laid in our teaching upon the necessity of complete moral rectitude, of utter exactness of thought, word and action, as exemplified by rigid observance of the symbolic principles of the square, level and plumb-rule.

Here again the symbolism of our work becomes extremely profound and interesting. He who desires to rise to the heights of his own being must first crush and crucify his own lower nature and inclinations; he must perforce tread what elsewhere is described as the way of the Cross; and that Cross is indicated by the conjunction of those working tools (which when united form a cross); and that “way” is involved in the scrupulous performance of all that we know those working tools signify. By perfecting his conduct, by struggles against his own natural propensities, the candidate is working the rough ashlar of his own nature into the perfect cube, and I would ask you to observe also that the cube itself contains a secret, for unfolded, it itself denotes and takes the form of the cross.

The inward development which the second degree symbolizes is typified by the lowering of the triangular flap of the apron upon the rectangular portion below. This is equivalent to the rite of Confirmation in the Christian Churches. It denotes “the progress we have made in the science,” or in other words it indicates that the higher nature of the man, symbolized by the trinity of spirit, has descended into and is now permeating his lower nature. Hitherto, in his
state of ignorance and moral blindness, the spiritual part of his nature has, as it were, but hovered above him; he has been unconscious of its presence in his constitution; but now, having realized its existence, the day-spring from on high has visited him, and the nobler part of him descends into his lower nature, illuminating and enriching it.

Now the man who so develops himself, speedily becomes more conscious of the difficulties of his task, more sensitive to the obstacles the life of the outer world places in the way of the spiritual life. But he is taught to persist with fortitude and with prudence, to develop the highest within him with “ferocity and zeal.” Upon self-scrutiny, too, i.e., upon entering into that “porchway” of contemplation which like a winding staircase leads inward to the Holy of Holies within himself, he realizes that difficulties and obstacles placed in his way are utilised by the Eternal Wisdom as the necessary means of developing the latent and potential good in him, and that as the rough ashlar can only be squared and perfected by chipping and polishing, so he also can be made perfect only by toil and by suffering. He sees that difficulty, adversity and persecution serve a beneficent purpose. These are his “wages”: and he learns to accept them “without scruple and without diffidence, knowing that he is justly entitled to them, and from the confidence he has in the integrity” of that Employer who has sent him into this far-off world to prepare the materials for building the temple of the heavenly city. And so, as the sign peculiar to the degree suggests, he endeavours to examine and lay bare his heart, to cast away all impurity from it, and he stands, like Joshua, praying that the light of day may be extended to him until he has accomplished the overthrow of his own inward enemies and of every obstacle to his complete development.

The aspirant who attains proficiency in the work of self-perfecting to which the F.C. grade alludes, has passed away from the N. side of the Lodge, the side of darkness and imperfection; and now stands on the S.E. side in the meridian sunlight of moral illumination (so far as the natural man may possess it), but yet still far removed from that fuller realization of himself and of the mysteries of his own nature which it is possible for the spiritual adept or Master Mason to attain. Before that attainment is reached there remains for him “that last and greatest trial” by which alone he can enter into the great consolations and make acquaintance with the supreme realities of existence. In the places where the great Mysteries have always been taught, what is ceremonially performed in our third degree is no mere symbolical representation as with us, but an actual, vital experience of a most severe character: one the nature of which can hardly be made intelligible, or even credible, to those unfamiliar with the subject. I refrain, therefore, from more than mere mention of it, observing only that it is one not involving physical death, and in this
respect only is our ceremony in accord with the experience symbolized. For if you follow closely the raising ceremony, although distinct reference to the death of the body is made, yet such death is obviously intended to be merely symbolical of another kind of death, since the candidate is eventually restored to his former worldly circumstances and material comforts, and his earthly Masonic career is not represented as coming to a close at this stage. All that has happened in the third degree is that he has symbolically passed through a great and striking change: a rebirth, or regeneration of his whole nature. He has been “sown a corruptible body”; and in virtue of the self-discipline and self-development he has undergone, there has been raised in him “an incorruptible body,” and death has been swallowed up in the victory he has attained over himself. I sometimes fear that the too conspicuous display of the emblems and trappings of mortality in our Lodges is apt to create the false impression that the death to which the third degree alludes is the mere physical change that awaits all men. But a far deeper meaning is intended. The Mason who knows his science knows that the death of the body is only a natural transition of which he need have no dread whatever; he knows also that when the due time for it arrives, that transition will be a welcome respite from the bondage of this world, from his prison-like husk of mortality, and from the daily burdens incident to existence in this lower plane of life. All that he fears is that when the time comes, he may not be free from those “stains of falsehood and dishonour,” those imperfections of his own nature, that may delay his after-progress. No! the death to which Masonry alludes, using the analogy of bodily death and under the veil of a reference to it, is that death-in-life to a man’s own lower self which St. Paul referred to when he protested “I die daily”. It is over the grave, not of one’s dead body but of one’s lower self, that the aspirant must walk before attaining to the heights. What is meant is that complete self-sacrifice and self-crucifixion which, as all religions teach, are essential before the soul can be raised in glory “from a figurative death to a reunion with the companions of its former toils” both here and in the unseen world. The perfect cube must pass through the metamorphosis of the Cross. The soul must voluntarily and consciously pass through a state of utter helplessness from which no earthly hand can rescue it, and in trying to raise him from which the grip of any succouring human hand will prove but a slip: until at length Divine Help itself descends from the Throne above and, with the “lion’s grip” of almighty power, raises the faithful and regenerated soul to union with itself in an embrace of reconciliation and at-one-ment.

In all the schools of the Mysteries, as well as in all the great religions of the world, the attainment of the spiritual goal just described is enacted or taught under the veil of a tragic episode analogous to that of our third degree;
and in each there is a Master whose death the aspirant is instructed he must imitate in his own person. In Masonry that prototype is Hiram Abiff: but it must be made clear that there is no historical basis whatever for the legendary account of Hiram’s death. The entire story is symbolical and was purposely invented for the symbolical purposes of our teaching. If you examine it closely you will perceive how obvious the correspondence is between this story and the story of the death of the Christian Master related in the Gospels; and it is needless to say that the Mason who realizes the meaning of the latter will comprehend the former and the veiled allusion that is implied. In the one case the Master is crucified between the two thieves; in the other he is done to death between two villains. In the one case appear the penitent and the impenitent thief; in the other we have the conspirators who make a voluntary confession of their guilt and were pardoned, and the others who were found guilty and put to death; whilst the moral and spiritual lessons deducible from the stories correspond. As every Christian is taught that in his own life he must imitate the life and death of Christ, so every Mason is “made to represent one of the brightest characters recorded in our annals”; but as the annals of Masonry are contained in the volume of the Sacred Law and not elsewhere, it is easy to see who the character is who is alluded to. As that great authority and initiate of the Mysteries, St. Paul, taught, we can only attain to the Master’s resurrection by “being made conformable unto His death”, and we “must die with Him if we are to be raised like Him” and it is in virtue of that conformity, in virtue of being individually made to imitate the Grand Master in His death, that we are made worthy of certain “points of fellowship” with Him: for the “five points of fellowship” of the third degree are the five wounds of Christ. The three years’ ministry of the Christian Master ended with His death and, these refer to the three degrees of the Craft which also end in the mystical death of the Masonic candidate and his subsequent raising or resurrection.

The name Hiram Abiff signifies in Hebrew “the teacher (Guru, or enlightened one) from the Father”: a fact which may help you still further to recognize the concealed purpose of the teaching. Under the name of Hiram, then, and beneath a veil of allegory, we see an allusion to another Master; and it is this Master, this Elder Brother who is alluded to in our lectures, whose “character we preserve, whether absent or present”, i.e., whether He is present to our minds or no, and in regard to whom we “adopt the excellent principle, silence,” lest at any time there should be among us trained in some other than the Christian Faith, and to whom on that account the mention of the Christian Master’s name might possibly prove an offence or provoke contention.

To typify the advance by the candidate at this stage of his development, the apron here assumes greater elaborateness. It is garnished with a light blue
border and rosettes, indicating that a higher than the natural light now permeates his being and radiates from his person, and that the wilderness of the natural man is now blossoming as the rose, in the flowers and graces incident to his regenerated nature; whilst upon either side of the apron are seen two columns of light descending from above, streaming into the depths of his whole being, and terminating in the seven-fold tassels which typify the seven-fold prismatic spectrum of the supernal Light. He is now lord of himself; the true Master Mason; able to govern that lodge which is within himself; and as he has passed through the three degrees of purifying and self-perfecting, and squared, levelled, and harmonized his triple nature of body, soul and spirit, he also wears, on attaining Mastership, the triple Tau; which comprises the form of a level, but is also the Hebrew form of the Cross; the three crosses upon the apron thus corresponding with the three crosses of Calvary.

To sum up the import of the teaching of the three degrees, it is clear, therefore, that from grade to grade the candidate is being led from an old to an entirely new quality of life. He begins his Masonic career as the natural man; he ends it by becoming through its discipline, a regenerated perfected man. To attain this transmutation, this metamorphosis of himself, he is taught first to purify and subdue his sensual nature; then to purify and develop his mental nature; and finally, by utter surrender of his old life and losing his soul to save it, he rises from the dead a Master, a just man made perfect, with larger consciousness and faculties, an efficient instrument for use by the Great Architect in His plan of rebuilding the Temple of fallen humanity, and capable of initiating and advancing other men to a participation in the same great work.

This — the evolution of man into superman — was always the purpose of the ancient Mysteries, and the real purpose of modern Masonry is, not the social and charitable purposes to which so much attention is paid, but the expediting of the spiritual evolution of those who aspire to perfect their own nature and transform it into a more god-like quality. And this is a definite science, a royal art, which it is possible for each of us to put into practice; whilst to join the Craft for any other purpose than to study and pursue this science is to misunderstand its meaning. Hence it is that no one should apply to enter Masonry unless from the deepest promptings of his own heart, as it hungers for light upon the problem of its own nature. We are all imperfect beings, conscious of something lacking to us that would make us what, in our best moments, we fain would be. What is that which is lacking to us? “What is that which is lost?” And the answer is “The genuine secrets of a Master Mason”, the true knowledge of ourselves, the conscious realization of our divine potentialities.
The very essence of the Masonic doctrine is that all men in this world are in search of something in their own nature which they have lost, but that with proper instruction and by their own patience and industry they may hope to find. Its philosophy implies that this temporal world is the antipodes of another and more real world from which we originally came and to which we may accelerate our return by such a course of self-knowledge and self-discipline as our teaching inculcates. It implies that this present world is the place where the symbolic stones and timber are being prepared “so far off” from that mystical Jerusalem where one day they will be found put together and, collectively, to constitute that Temple which even now is being built without hands and without the noise or help of metal tools. And this world, therefore, being but a transient temporary one for us, it is necessarily one of shadows, images and merely “substituted secrets,” until such time as being raised not merely symbolically but actually, in character and knowledge and consciousness, to the sublime degree of Master Mason, we fit ourselves to learn something of the “genuine secrets,” something of the living realities, that lurk and live in concealment behind the outward show of things. All human life, having originated in the mystical “East” and journeyed into this world which, with us, is the “West,” must return again to its source. To quote again the verse of the Brother I have already cited:–

“From East to West the soul her journey takes;
At many bitter founts her fever slakes;
Halts at strange taverns by the way to feast,
Resumes her load, and painful progress makes
Back to the East.”

Masonry, by means of a series of dramatic representations, is intended to furnish those who care to discover its purport and to take advantage of the hints it throws out in allegorical form, with an example and with instructions by which our return to the “East” may be accelerated. It refers to no architecture of a mundane kind, but to the architecture of the soul’s life. It is not in itself a religion; but rather a dramatized and intensified form of religious processes inculcated by every religious system in the world. For there is no religion but teaches the lesson of the necessity of bodily purification of our first degree; none but emphasizes that of the second degree, that mental, moral and spiritual developments are essential and will lead to the discovery of a certain secret centre “where truth abides in fullness,” and that that centre is a “point within a circle” of our own nature from which no man or Mason can
ever err, for it is the divine kingdom latent within us all, into which we have as yet failed to enter. And there is none but insists upon the supreme lesson of self-sacrifice and mystical death to the things of this world so graphically portrayed in our third degree; none but indicates that in that hour of greatest darkness the light of the primal divine spark within us is never wholly extinguished, and that by loyalty to that light, by patience and by perseverance, time and circumstances will restore to us the “genuine secrets,” the ultimate truths and realities of our own nature. We are here, Masonry teaches, as it were in captivity, by the waters of Babylon and in a strange land; and our doctrine truly tells us that the richest harmonies of this life are as nothing in comparison with the songs of Zion; and that, even when we are installed into the highest eminences this world or the Craft may offer, it were better that our right hand should forget its cunning and that we should fling the illusory treasures of this transitory world behind our backs, than in all our doings fail to remember the Jerusalem that lies beyond.

Our teaching is purposely veiled in allegory and symbol and its deeper import does not appear upon the surface of the ritual itself. This is partly in correspondence with human life itself and the world we live in, which are themselves but allegories and symbols of another life and the veils of another world; and partly intentional also, so that only those who have reverent and understanding minds may penetrate into the more hidden meaning of the doctrine of the Craft. The deeper secrets in Masonry, like the deeper secrets of life, are heavily veiled; are closely hidden. They exist concealed beneath a great reservation; but whoso knows anything of them knows also that they are “many and valuable”, and that they are disclosed only to those who act upon the hint given in our lectures, “Seek and ye shall find; ask and ye shall have; knock and it shall be opened unto you”. The search may be long and difficult, but great things are not acquired without effort and search; but it may be affirmed that to the candidate who is “properly prepared” (in a much fuller sense than we conventionally attach to that expression) there are doors leading from the Craft that, when knocked, will assuredly open and admit him to places and to knowledge he at present reckons little of. For him, too, who would enter upon the greater initiations, the same rule applies as that which was symbolically represented upon his first entrance into the Order, but this time it will no longer be a symbol, but a realistic fact. He will find, I mean, that a drawn sword is always threatening in front of him, and that a cable-tow is still around his neck. Danger, indeed, awaits the candidate who would rush precipitately and in a state of moral unfitness into the deeper mysteries of his being, which are indeed “serious, solemn and awful”; but, on the other hand, for him who has once entered upon the path of light it is moral suicide to turn
back.

And now, Brethren, to bring to an end this brief and imperfect survey of the deeper meaning and purposes of our Craft, I pray that what is now spoken may help to prove to some of you a further restoration to that light which is, at all times, the predominant wish of our hearts. It rests with ourselves whether Masonry remains for us what upon its outward and superficial side appears to be merely a series of symbolic rites, or whether we allow those symbols to pass into our lives and become realities therein. Whatever formalities we may have gone through in connection with our admission into the Order, we cannot be said to have been “regularly initiated” into Masonry so long as we regard the Craft as merely an incident of social life and treat its ceremonies as but rites of an archaic and perfunctory nature. The Craft, as I have already suggested, was given out to the world, from more secret sources still, as a great experiment and means of grace, and as a great opportunity for those who cared to avail themselves of what is little known and little taught outside certain sanctuaries of concealment. It was intended to furnish forth an epitome or synopsis, in dramatic form, of the spiritual regeneration of man; and to throw out hints and suggestions that might lead those capable of discerning its deeper purpose and symbolism into still deeper initiations than the merely superficial ones enacted in our Lodges. For, as on the external side of the Order we may be called to occupy positions of honour and office in the Provincial Grand Lodge, or may enter other Masonic grades outside the Craft, so also upon its internal side there are eminences to which we may be called that, whilst offering us no social distinction and no visible advancement, are yet really the true prizes, the most valuable attainments, of Masonic desire. To this goal all may attain who truly seek to do so and who prepare the way for themselves by appropriating the truths lying beneath the superficial allegory and the symbolic veils of the Craft teaching. And since there seems to-day a genuine and wide-spread desire on the part of many members of the Order to enter into a fuller understanding of what the Order itself conceals rather than reveals, I feel I should not be discharging my duties as a Master in the Craft did I not take advantage of that position to share with them some measure at least of what I have been able to glean for myself.

But, finally, I must ask you to remember that, in accordance with the general design of our system, every Master of a Lodge is but a symbol and a substitution, and that behind him, and behind all other the grand officers of the Masonic hierarchy, there stands the “Great White Head”, the “Great Initiator” and Grand Master of all true Masons throughout the Universe, whether members of our Craft or not. To whom let us all bow in gratitude for the invaluable gift accorded to us in this our Order; and to whose protection, and to
whose enlightening guidance into its deeper mysteries, I commend you all.
Chapter 3

Masonry as a Philosophy

Signs are not wanting that a higher Masonic consciousness is awakening in the Craft. Members of the Order are gradually, and here and there, becoming alive to the fact that much more than meets the eye and ear lies beneath the surface of Masonic doctrine and symbols. They are begin-ning to think for themselves instead of taking the face-value of things for granted, and, as their thought develops, facts that previously remained unperceived assume prominence and significance. They discern the Masonic system to be something deeper than a code of elementary morality such as all men are expected to observe whether formally Masons of not. They reflect that the phenomenal growth of the Craft is scarcely accountable for upon the supposition that modern speculative Masonry per-petuates nothing more than the private associati-ons that once existed in connection with the operative builders’ trade. They recognize that there can be no peculiar virtue or interest in continuing to imitate the customs of ancient trade-guilds for the mere sake of so doing; or of keeping on foot a costly organization for teaching men the elementary symbolism of a few building tools, supplemented by a considerable amount of social conviviality. Upon a little thought it becomes pretty obvious that our Third Degree and the great central legend that forms the climax of the Craft system cannot have, and can never have had, any direct or practical bearing upon, or connection with, the trade of the operative mason. It may be urged that we have our great charity system and that the social side of our proceedings is a valuable and humanizing asset. Granted, but other people and other societies are philanthropic and social as well as we; and a secret society is not necessary to promote such ends, which are merely supplemental to the original purpose of the Order. The discernment of such facts as these, then, suggests to us that the Craft has not yet entered into the full heritage of understanding its own system and that side-matters connected with Masonry which
we have long emphasized so strongly, valuable in their own way as they are, are not after, all the primary and proper work of the Order. The work of the Order is to initiate into certain secrets and mysteries, and obviously if the Order fails to expound its own secrets and mysteries and so to confer real initiations as distinguished from passing candidates through certain formal ceremonies, it is not fulfilling its original purpose whatever other incidental good it may be doing.

Now as these facts are the basis upon which this lecture proceeds, let me at the outset make my first point by stating that as the progress in the Craft of every Brother admitted into its ranks is by gradual, successive stages, in like manner the under-standing of the Masonic system and doctrine is also a matter of gradual development. Stated in the simplest terms possible, the theory of Masonic progress is that every Member admitted to the Order enters in a state of darkness and ignorance as to what Masonry teaches, and that later on he is supposed to be brought to light and knowledge. Putting it in other terms, he enters the Craft symbolically as a rough ashlar and it is his business to develop both his character and his understanding that ultimately, in virtue of what he has learn and practised, he may be as a finished and perfect cube.

Now the understanding of the Masonic scheme tends to develop upon precisely similar lines. Its meaning is not discernible all at once, and unless our minds are properly prepared and our understandings carefully trained, they are unlikely ever participate in the real secrets and mysteries Masonry at all, however often we may watch the performance of external ceremonial or however proficient we may be in memorizing the rituals and instruction lectures. The first stage, the first conception of what Masonry involves, is concerned merely with the surface-value of the doctrine; with an acquaintance with the literal side of the imparted knowledge which we all obtain upon entering the Craft. Beyond this stage the vast majority of Masons, it is to be feared, never passes. This is the stage of knowledge in which the Craft is regarded as a social, semi-public, semi-secret; community to which it is agreeable and advantages to belong for sociable or even for ulterior purpose in which the goal of the Mason’s ambition is to attain office and high preferment and to wear a breastful of decorations; in which he takes a literal superficial and historic view of the subject-matter of the doctrine; in which ability to perform the ceremonial work with dignity and effectiveness and to know the instruction catechisms by heart, so that not a syllable is wrongly rendered, is deemed the height of Masonic proficiency; and where, after discharging these functions with a certain degree of credit, his idea is often to have the Lodge closed as speedily as may be and get away to the relaxation of the festive board.

Now all these things belong to what may be called the very rough-ashlar
stage of the Masonic conception. I am not, of course, alluding to any individual Mason. I confess frankly to having come within this category myself, and I think we may agree that we have all passed through the phase I have described, for the simple reason that we knew nothing better and had no one able to teach us something better. Let us not complain. If we look back upon the progress of the Craft during the last 150 years we cannot but congratulate ourselves upon the enormous, if gradual, strides made in Masonic progress and decorum even in the rough-ashlar stage of our conception of it. Any-one familiar with the records of old Lodges will have been brought into close touch with times when almost every element of reverence and dignity seems to have been lacking. Lodges were held in the public rooms of taverns. Whatever official furniture decorated these primitive temples, quart-pots and "churchwardens" figured largely among the unauthorized equipment. In one of the great London galleries there hangs a famous picture called "Night" by the great artist and moralist of his age, Hogarth. His purpose was to depict a characteristic night-scene in the streets of London as they appeared in his time. Among the typical specimens of depravity haunting those ill-lit streets, the great artist has held up to the derision of all time the figure of a Freemason staggering home drunk, still wearing his apron and being assisted by the tyler of the Lodge. No true Mason can regard this picture without a burning sense of shame, and without registering a resolution to redeem the Craft from this stigma. We have, I hope, got past such things as these. We have awakened to some sense of dignity and self-reverence. The Craft is well governed by its higher authorities, and individual Lodges take a pride in providing proper temples and in conducting their assemblies with due regard to the solemnity of Masonic doctrine. May the Order never relapse into the primitive and chaotic condition from which it has emerged.

But this improvement in matters of external deportment, great and welcome as it is, is not enough. To prevent the Order settling down into a state of self-satisfaction with its social privileges and the agreeableness of friendly intercourse among its members; to prevent its making its claims to being a system of knowledge and science as perfunctory and little onerous as possible, the improvement I have spoken of must be attended (and I believe is destined to be attended) by an awakening to the deep significance of the Craft’s internal purposes. And since I have referred to what I have termed the "rough — ashlar" conception of that purpose you have the right to ask me now to state that loftier conception which may be regarded, in comparison, as the "perfect cube." The answer to this enquiry I shall not attempt to state in so many words. I invite you to regard this whole lecture as an indication of what that answer must be. To some extent I endeavoured to formulate that
answer upon a previous occasion, but whilst I then entered rather into the de-
tails and minutiae of the Craft system and symbols, I shall treat the subject
now upon broader lines and deal with Masonry in its wider and more philo-
sophic aspect. I said upon that occasion — and I must repeat it now — that in
its broad and more vital doctrine Masonry was essentially a philosophic and
religious system expressed in dramatic ceremonial. It is a system intended to
supply answers to the three great questions that press so inexorably upon the
attention of every thoughtful man and that,, are the subject around which all
religions and all philosophies move: What am I? Whence come I? I Whither
go I? It is a truism to say that in our quieter and more serious moments we all
feel the need of some reliable answer to these questions. Light upon them is
“the predominant wish of our hearts”; and upon such light as we can obtain,
whether from Masonry or elsewhere, depends our philosophy of life and the
rule of conduct by which we regulate our life. In a larger sense, then, than
our conventional limited one, the Masonic candidate is presumed to enter
the Order in search of light upon these problems; light that he is pre-sumed
not to have succeeded in finding elsewhere. If his candidature is actuated by
any motive other than a genuine desire for knowledge upon these problems,
which beyond all others are vital to his peace, and by a sincere wish to render
himself, by the help of that knowledge, serviceable to his fellow creatures,
then his candidature is less than a worthy one. The reason why no man should
be solicited to join the Order is that in regard to these matters of sacred and
momentous import, the first springs of impulse must originate within the pos-
tulant himself; the first place of his preparation must ever be in his own heart,
and it is to the cry and knocking of his inward need, and for no less a mo-
tive, that—in theory, though scarcely in practice—the door to the Mysteries is
opened and the seeker enters in and finds help. At another stage of his symbol-
ical progress the candidate learns from his superior brethren, that they, along
with himself, are in search of something that is lost and which they have hopes
of finding. And it is here that the great motive of this and of all quests, as well
as the clue to the real purpose of Masonry, appears prominently and is stated
in emphatic terms. Masonry is the quest after something that has been lost.
Now what is it that has been lost? Consider the matter thus. Why should we,
or the world at large, require systems of religion and philosophy at all? What
is the motive and reason for the existence of a Masonic Order and of many
other Orders of Initiation, both of the past and the present? Why should they
exist at all? I might reduce the matter to the compass of a small and personal
point by asking why have you come to hear this lecture, and why should I
have been striving for many years to acquire the information that enables me
to give it? — if it be not the fact, — as indeed it is, that every man in his re-
flective moments realizes the sense of some element of his own being having become lost; that he is conscious, if he be honest with himself, of the sense of moral imperfection, of ignorance, of restricted knowledge about himself and his surroundings; that he is aware, in short, of some radical deficiency in his constitution, which, were it but found and made good, would satisfy this craving for information, for completeness and perfection, would “lead him from darkness to light”, and would put him beyond ignorance and beyond the touch of the many ills that flesh is heir to. The point is too obvious to need pressing further, and the answer to it is to be found by a reference to a great doctrine that forms the philo-do- morphic basis of all systems of religion, and all the great systems of the Mysteries and of Initiation of antiquity, viz., that which is popularly known as the Fall of Man. However we may choose to regard this event — and throughout the history of the human race it has been taught in innumerable ways and in all manner of parables, allegories, myths and legends — its sole and single meaning is that humanity as a whole has fallen away from its original parent-source and place; that from being imbedded in the eternal centre of life man has become projected to the circumference; and that in this present world of ours he is undergoing a period of restriction, of ignorance, of discipline and experience, that shall ultimately fit him to return to the centre whence he came and to which he properly belongs. “Paradise Lost” is the real theme of Masonry no less than of Milton, as it is also of all the ancient systems of the Mysteries. The Masonic doctrine focuses and emphasizes the fact and the sense of this loss. Beneath a veil of allegory describing the intention to build a certain temple that could not be finished because of an untimely disaster, Masonry implies that Humanity is the real temple whose building became obstructed, and that we, who are both the craftsmen and the building materials of what was intended to be an unparalleled structure, are, owing to a certain unhappy event, living here in this world in conditions where the genuine and full secrets of our nature are, for the time being, lost to us; where the full powers of the soul of man are curtailed by the limitations of physical life; and where, during our apprenticeship of probation and discipline, we have to put up with the substituted knowledge derivable through our limited and very fallible senses.

But, whilst Masonry emphasizes this great truth, it indicates also — and this is its great virtue and real purpose — the method by which we may regain that which is lost to us. It holds out the great promise that, with divine assistance and by our own industry, the genuine realities of which we at present possess but the imperfect shadows shall be restored to us, and that patience and perseverance will eventually entitle every worthy man to a participation in them. This large subject is mirrored in miniature in the Craft ceremonial.
The East of the Lodge is the symbolic centre; the source of all light; the place of the throne of the Master of all life. The West, the place of the disappearing sun, is this world of imperfection and darkness from which the divine spiritual light is in large measure withdrawn and only shines by reflection. The ceremonies through which the candidate passes are symbolic of the stages of progress that every man — whether a formal member of the Craft or not — may make by way of self-purification and self-building, until he at length lies dead to his present natural self, and is raised out of a state of imperfection and brought once more into perfect union with the Lord of life and glory into whose image he has thus become shaped and conformed.

It is in this large sense, then, that Masonry may become for us — as indeed it was intended to become by those who instituted our present speculative system — a working philosophy for those brought within its influence. It supplies a need to those who are earnestly enquiring into the purpose and destiny of human life. It is a means of initiating into reliable knowledge those who feel that their knowledge of life and their path of life have hitherto been but a series of irregular steps made at haphazard and under hoodwinked conditions as to whither they are going. Not without good reason does our catechism assert that Masonry contains “many and invaluable secrets.” But these of course are not the formal and symbolic signs, tokens and words communicated ceremonially to candidates; they are rather those secrets which we instinctively keep locked up in the recesses and safe repository of our hearts; secrets of the deep and hidden things of the soul, about which we do not often talk, and which, by a natural instinct, we are not in the habit of communicating to any but such of our brethren and fellows as share with us a common and a sympathetic interest in the deeper problems and mysteries of life.

I have said already that Masonry is a modern perpetuation of great systems of initiation that have existed for the spiritual instruction of men in all parts of the world since the beginning of time. The reason for their existence has been the obvious one, resulting from the cardinal truth already alluded to, that man in his present natural state is inherently and radically imperfect; that sooner or later he becomes conscious of a sense of loss and deprivation and feels an imperative need of learning how to repair that loss. The great world-religions have been ordained to teach in their respective manners the same truths as the Mystery systems have taught. Their teaching has always been twofold. There has always existed an external, elementary, popular doctrine which has served for the instruction of the masses who are insufficiently prepared for deeper teaching; and concurrently therewith there has been an interior, advanced doctrine, a more secret knowledge, which has been reserved for riper minds and into which only proficient and properly prepared candidates, who
voluntarily sought to participate in it, were initiated. Whether in ancient India, Egypt, Greece, Italy or Mexico, or among the Druids of Europe, temples of initiation have ever existed for those who felt the inward call to come apart from the multitude and to dedicate themselves to a long discipline of body and mind with a view to acquiring the secret knowledge and developing the spiritual faculties by means of experimental processes of initiation of which our present ceremonies are the faint echo. It is far beyond my present scope to describe any of these great systems or the methods of initiation they employed. But in regard to them I will ask you to accept my statement upon two points: (i) that although these great schools of the Mysteries have long dropped out of the public mind, they, or the doctrine they taught, have never ceased to exist; the enmity of official ecclesiasticism and the tendencies of a materialistic and commercial age have caused them to subside into extreme secrecy and concealment, but their initiates have never been absent from the world; and (2) that it was through the activity and foresight of some of these advanced initiates that our present system of speculative Masonry is due. You must not imply from this that modern Masonry is by any means a full or adequate presentation of these older and larger systems. It is but their pale and elementary shadow. But such as they are, and so far as they do go, our rituals and doctrine are an authentic embodiment of a secret doctrine and a secret process that have always existed for the enlightenment of such aspirants as, putting their trust in God (as our present candidates are made to say), have knocked at the door of certain secret sanctuaries in the confidence that that door would open and that they would find in due course that for which they were seeking. Those who instituted modern speculative Masonry some 250 years ago took certain materials lying ready to hand. They took, that is, the elementary rites and symbols pertaining to medieval operative guilds of stone-masons and transformed them into a system of religio-philosophic doctrine. Thenceforward, from being related to the trade which deals in stones and bricks, the intention of Masonry was to deal solely and simply with the greater science of soul-building; and, save for retaining certain analogies which the art of the practical stone-mason provided, thenceforward it became dedicated to purposes that are wholly spiritual, religious and philosophic.

Perhaps the chief evidence of the transformation thus effected was the incorporation of the central legend and traditional history comprised in our Third Degree. Obviously that legend can have had no relation to, or practical bearing upon, the operative builders’ trade. I will ask you to reflect that no building of stone, no temple or other edifice capable of being built with hands, has remained unfinished through the death of any professional architect such as Hiram Abiff is popularly supposed to have been. The principles
of architecture, the genuine secrets of the building trade, are not and never have been lost; they are thoroughly well known, and the absurdity is manifest of supposing that Masons of any kind are waiting for time or circumstances to restore any lost knowledge as to the manner in which temporal buildings ought to be constructed. We know how to erect buildings to-day quite as well as our Hebrew forefathers did who built the famous temple at Jerusalem, and indeed a well-known architect has stated that most of our London churches are, both for size and ornamentation, far larger and more splendid than that temple ever was. Our duty then is to look behind the literal story; to pierce the veil of allegory contained in the great legend and to grasp the significance of its true purport. That which is lost is to be found, we are told, with the Centre. But if we enquire what a Centre is, the average Mason will give you nothing more than the official, enigmatic and not very luminous answer that it is a point within a circle from which every part of the circumference is equidistant. But what circle? And what circumference? For there are no such things as centres or circles in respect of ordinary buildings or architecture. And here the average Mason is at an utter loss to explain. Press him further, “Why with the Centre?” and again he can only give you the elusive and perplexing answer “Because that is a point from which a Master Mason cannot err”, and you are no wiser.

Brethren, it is just this elusiveness, these intensional enigmas, this purposed puzzle-language, that are intended to put us on the scent of something deeper than the words themselves convey, and if we fail to find, to realize and to act upon, the intension of what is veiled behind the letter of the rituals, we can scarcely claim to understand our own doctrine; we can scarcely claim to have been regularly initiated, passed and raised in the higher sense of those expressions, whatever ceremonies we have formally passed through. “The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life.” Let us enquire what the spirit of this puzzle-language is.

The method of all great religious and initiatory systems has been to teach their doctrine in the form of myth, legend or allegory. As our first tracing-board lecture says, “The philosophers, unwilling to expose their mysteries to vulgar eyes, concealed their tenets and principles of philosophy under hieroglyphical figures”, and our traditional history is one of these hieroglyphical figures. Now the literally-minded never see behind the letter of the allegory. The truly initiated mind discerns the allegory’s spiritual value. In fact, part of the purpose of all initiation was, and still is, to educate the mind in penetrating the outward shell of all phenomena, and the value of initiation depends upon the way in which the inward truths are allowed to influence our thought and lives and to awaken in us still deeper powers of consciousness.
The legend of the Third Degree, then, in which the essence of Masonic doctrine lies, was brought into our system by some advanced minds who derived their knowledge from other and concealed sources. The legend is an adaptation of a very old one and existed in various forms long before its association with modern Masonry. In the guise of a story about the building of a temple by King Solomon at Jerusalem, they were promulgating the truth which I have alluded to before and which is generally known as the Fall of Man. As our legend runs, upon the literal side of it, it was the purpose of a great king to erect a superb structure. He was assisted in that work by another king who supplied the building materials, by a skilful artificer whose business was to put these together according to a pre-ordained plan, and by large companies of craftsmen and labourers. But in the course of the work an evil conspiracy arose, resulting in the destruction of the chief artificer and preventing the completion of the building, which remains unfinished, therefore, to this day.

Now I will ask you to observe that this legend cannot refer to any historical building built in the old metropolis of Palestine. If we refer to the Bible as an authority you will find that that temple was completed; it was afterwards destroyed, rebuilt and destroyed again on more than one occasion. Moreover, the biblical accounts make no reference whatever to the conspiracy, or to the death of Hiram. On the other hand they state expressly that Hiram “made an end of building” the temple; that it was finished and completed in every particular. It is very clear then that we must keep the two subjects entirely separate in our minds; and recognize that the Masonic story deals with something quite distinct from the biblical story. What temple then is referred to? The temple, brethren, that is still incomplete and unfinished is none that can be built with hands. It is that temple of which all material edifices are but the types and symbols; it is the temple of the collective body of humanity itself; of which the great initiate St. Paul said “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?” A perfect humanity was the great Temple which, in the counsels of the Most High, was intended to be reared in the mystical Holy City, of which the local Jerusalem was the type. The three great Master-builders, Solomon and the two Hirams, are a triad corresponding after a manner with the Holy Trinity of the Christian religion; Hiram Abiff being the chief architect, he “by whom all things were made” and “in whom (as St. Paul said, using Masonic language) the whole building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.” The material of this mystical temple was the souls of men, at once the living stones, the fellow crafts-men and collaborators with the divine purpose.

But in the course of the construction of this ideal temple, something hap-
pened that wrecked the scheme and delayed the fulfillment indefinitely. This was the Fall of Man: the conspiracy of the craftsmen. Turn to the book of Genesis, you will find the same subject related in the allegory of Adam and Eve. They were intended, as you know, for perfection and happiness, but their Creator’s project became nullified by their disobedience to certain conditions imposed upon them. I will ask you to observe that their offense was precisely that committed by our Masonic conspirators. They had, been forbidden to eat of the Tree of Knowledge; or, in Masonic language, they were under obligation “not to attempt to extort the secrets of a superior degree” which they had not attained. Now the Hebrew word Hiram means Guru, teacher of “supreme knowledge”, divine light and wisdom, and the liberty that comes therewith. But this knowledge is only for the perfected man. It is that knowledge that Hiram said was “known to but three in the world”, i.e., known only in the counsels of the Divine Trinity, but it is knowledge that with patience and perseverance every Mason, every child of the Creator, “may in due time become entitled to a participation in”. But just as Adam and Eve’s attempt to obtain illicit knowledge caused their expulsion from Eden and defeated the divine purpose until they and their posterity should regain the Paradise they had lost, so also the completion of the great mystical Temple was prevented for the time being by the conspirators’ attempt to extort from Hiram the Master’s secrets, and its construction is delayed until time and circumstances—God’s time, and the circumstances we create for ourselves—restore to us the lost and genuine secrets of our nature and of the divine purpose in us.

The tragedy of Hiram Abiff, then, is not the record of any vulgar, brutal murder of an individual man. It is a parable of cosmic and universal loss; an allegory of the breakdown of a divine scheme. We are dealing with no calamity that occurred during the erection of a building in an eastern city, but with a moral disaster to universal humanity. Hiram is slain; in other words, the faculty of enlightened wisdom has been cut off from us. Owing to that disaster mankind is here to-day in this world of imperfect knowledge, of limited faculties, of chequered happiness, of perpetual toil, of death and frequent bitterness and pain; our life here is (to use a poet’s words):—

“An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
Death in all life and lying in all love;
The meanest having power upon the highest,
And the high purpose broken by the worm.”

The temple of human nature is unfinished and we know not how to complete it. The want of plans and designs to regulate the disorders of individual
and social life indicates to us all that some heavy calamity has befallen us as a race. The absence of a clear and guiding principle in the world’s life reminds us of the utter confusion into which the absence of that Supreme Wisdom, which is personified as Hiram, has thrown us all, and causes every reflective mind to attribute to some fatal catastrophe his mysterious disappearance. We all long for that light and wisdom which have become lost to us. Like the craftsmen in search of the body, we go our different ways in search of what is lost. Many of us make no discovery of importance throughout the length of our days. We seek it in pleasure, in work, in all the varied occupations and diversions of our lives; we seek it in intellectual pursuits, in religion, in Masonry, and those who search farthest and deepest are those who become most conscious of the loss and who are compelled to cry “Machabone! Macbenah! the Master is smitten”, or, as the Christian Scriptures word it, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him”.

Hiram Abiff is slain. The high light and wisdom ordained to guide and enlighten humanity are wanting to us. The full blaze of light and perfect knowledge that were to be ours are vanished from the race, but in the Divine Providence there still remains to us a glimmering light in the East. In a dark world, from which as it were the sun has disappeared, we have still our five senses and our rational faculties to work with, and these provide us with the substituted secrets that must distinguish us before we regain the genuine ones.

Where is Hiram buried? We are taught that the Wisdom of the Most High —personified as King Solomon— ordered him to be interred in a fitting sepulchre outside the Holy City, “in a grave from the centre 3 feet between N. and S., 3 feet between -E. and W., and 5 feet or more perpendicular”. Where, Brethren, do you imagine that grave to be? Can you locate it by following these minute details of its situation? Probably you have never thought of the matter as other than an ordinary burial outside the walls of a geographical Jerusalem. But the grave of Hiram is ourselves. Each of us is the sepulchre in which the smitten Master is interred. If we know it not it is a further sign of our benighted-ness. At the centre of ourselves, deeper than any dissecting-knife can reach or than any physical investigation can fathom, lies buried the “vital and immortal principle”, the “glimmering ray” that affiliates us to the Divine Centre of all life, and that is never wholly extinguished however evil or imperfect our lives may be. We are the grave of the Master. The lost guiding light is buried at the centre of ourselves. High as your hand may reach upwards or downwards from the centre of your own body — i.e., 3 feet between N. and S.- far as it can reach to right or left of the middle of your person — i.e., 3 feet between W. and E. — and 5 feet or more perpendicular — the height of the
human body — these are the indications by which our cryptic ritual describes
the tomb of Hiram Abiff at the centre of ourselves. He is buried “outside the
Holy City”, in the same sense that the posterity of Adam have all been placed
outside the walls of Paradise, for, “nothing unclean can enter into the holy
place” which elsewhere in our Scriptures is called the Kingdom of Heaven.

What then is this “Centre”, by reviving and using which we may hope to
regain the secrets of our lost nature? We may reason from analogies. As the
Divine Life and Will is the centre of the whole universe and controls it; as the
sun is the centre and life-giver of our solar system and controls and feeds with
life the planets circling round it, so at the secret centre of individual human
life exists a vital, immortal principle, the spirit and the spiritual will of man.
This is the faculty, by using which (when we have found it) we can never err.
It is a point within the circle of our own nature and, living as we do in this
physical world, the circle of our existence is bounded by two grand parallel
lines; “one representing Moses; the other King Solo-mon”, that is to say, law
and wisdom; the divine ordinances regulating the universe on the one hand;
the divine “wisdom and mercy that follow us all the days of our life” on the
other. Very truly then the Mason who keeps himself thus circumscribed cannot
err.

Masonry, then, is a system of religious philosophy in that it provides us
with a doctrine of the universe and of our place in it. It indicates whence we
are come and whither we may return. It has two purposes. Its first purpose is
to show that man has fallen away from a high and holy centre to the circum-
ference or externalized condition in which we now live; to indicate that those
who so desire may regain that centre by finding the centre in ourselves, for,
since Deity is as a circle whose centre is everywhere, it follows that a divine
centre, a “vital and immortal principle”, exists within ourselves by developing
which we may hope to regain our lost and primal stature. The second purpose
of the Craft doctrine is to declare the way by which that centre may be found
within ourselves, and this teaching is embodied in the discipline and ordeals
delineated in the three degrees. The Masonic doctrine of the Centre — or, in
other words, the Christian axiom that “the Kingdom of Heaven is within you”
— is nowhere better stated than by the poet Browning

“Truth is within ourselves. It takes no rise
From outward things, whate’er you may believe. There is an inmost
centre in ourselves Where truth abides in fullness; and to know
Rather consists in finding out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape Than by effecting
entrance for a light Supposed to be without.”
Brethren, may we all come to the knowledge how to “open the Lodge upon the centre” of ourselves and so realize in our own conscious experience the finding of the “imprisoned splendour” hidden in the depths of our being, whose rising within our-selves will bring us peace and salvation. How then does the Craft doctrine prescribe for the liberation of this imprisoned centre? Its first injunctions are those of our first degree. There must be purity of thought and purpose. I need scarcely remind you that the word candidate derives from the Latin candidus, white (in the sense of purity), or that our postulants before entering the Lodge leave behind them in the precincts the garments that belong to the fashion of the outer world whose ideals they are desirous of relinquishing, and enter the Lodge clad in white as emblematic of the blamelessness of their thought and the purification of their lives. As this symbolic white clothing is worn during each of the three degrees, it is as though the seeker after the high light of the Centre must always come uttering the triple ascription, “Holy, Holy, Holy,” as the token of the threefold purity of body, soul and spirit, which is essential to the achievement of his quest. He has left all money and metals behind him, for the gross things of this world are superfluous in the world that lies within; whilst if any dross of thought or imperfections of character remain in him, he will find the impossibility of attaining to the conscious-ness of his highest self; he will learn that he must renounce them and begin again, and that his attempt at real initiation must be repeated.

He must be animated by a spirit of universal sympathy. Financial doles and practical relief to the pecuniary poor and distressed are admirable practices as far as they go, but they by no means exhaust the meaning of the term charity as Masonry intends it. The payment of a few guineas to philanthropic institutions is scarcely a fulfillment of St. Paul’s great definition of charity so often read in our Lodges, by exercising which we are wont to say that a Mason “attains the summit of his profession”.

There is a far larger sense of Brotherhood than the limited conventional one obtaining among those who are members of a common association. There is that deep sense in which a man feels himself not only in fraternity with his fellow-men, whether Masonically his brethren or not, but realizes himself brother to all that is, part of the universal life that thrills through all things. A great illuminate, St. Francis of Assisi, expressed what I refer to when he wrote in his famous canticle, of his brothers the sun and the wind; his sisters the moon and the sea; his brethren the animals and the birds; as being all parts of a common life, all constituents in the scheme of the Great Architect for the restoration of the Temple of Creation and its dedication to His service, and as all worthy of a common love upon our part, even as they are the subject of a
common solicitude upon His.

And passing from these primary qualifications we proceed to what is signified by our second degree, wherein is inculcated the analysis and cultivation of the mental and rational faculties; the study of the secrets of the marvelous, complex, psychical nature of man; the relation of these with the still higher and spiritual part of him which, in turn, he may learn to trace “even to the throne of God Himself” with which he is affiliated at the root essence of his being. These studies, brethren, so lightly touched upon in our passing-ceremony, so glibly referred to as we recite our ritual, when undertaken with the seriousness that attached to them in the old mystery-systems are not without just reason described in our own words as “serious, solemn and awful”.

The depths of human nature and self-knowledge, the hidden mysteries of the soul of man are not, as real initiates well know, probed into with impunity except by the “properly prepared”. The man who does so has, as it were, a cable-tow around his neck; because when once stirred by a genuine desire for the higher knowledge that real initiation is intended to confer, he can never turn back on what he learns thereof without committing moral suicide; he can never be again the same man he was before he gained a glimpse of the hidden mysteries of life. And as the Angel stood with a flaming sword at the entrance of Eden to guard the way to the Tree of Life, so will the man whose initiation is not a conventional one find himself threatened at the door of the higher knowledge by opposing invisible forces if he rashly rushes forward in a state of moral unfitness into the deep secrets of the Centre. Better remain ignorant than embark upon this unknown sea unwisely and without being properly prepared and in possession of the proper passports.

And eventually the aspirant, after these pre-liminary disciplines, has to learn the great truth embodied in the third degree; that he who would be raised to perfection and regain what he has long realized has been lost to himself, may do so only by utter self-abnegation, by a dying to all that to the eyes and the reason of the uninitiated outer world is precious and desirable. The third degree, Brethren, is an exposition in dramatic ceremonial of the text “Whoso would save his life must lose it”. Beneath the allegory of the death of the Master — and remember that it is allegory — is expressed the universal truth that mystical death must precede mystical rebirth. “Know ye not that ye must be born again?” “Unless a grain of corn fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; if it die it bringeth forth much fruit”. And it is only thus that all Master-Masons can be raised from a figurative (not a physical) death to a regenerated state and to the full stature of human nature.

The path of true initiation into fullness of life by way of a figurative death to one’s lower self is the path called in the Scriptures the narrow way, of which
it is also said that few there be who find it. It is the narrow path between the
Pillars, for Boaz and Jachin stand impliedly at the entrance of every Masonic
Temple and between them we pass each time we enter the Lodge. Very great
prominence is accorded these pillars in the ritual, but very little explanation
of their import is given, and it is desirable to know something of their great
significance. To deal with them at all fully would require an entire lecture
upon this one subject, and even then there would have to remain unsaid in
regard to these great symbols much that is unsuited to treatment in a general
lecture.

The pillars form, and have always formed, a prominent feature in the tem-

ples of all great systems of religion and initiation, whether Masonic or not.
They have been incorporated into Christian architecture. If you recall the
construction of York Minster or Westminster Abbey, you will recognize the
pillars in the two great towers flanking the main entrance to those cathedrals
at the west end of the structure. Non-Masons, therefore, enter these temples,
as we do, between the pillars in the West; they look through them along the
straight path that leads to the high altar, just as the Mason’s symbolic pas-
sage is also from the West to the throne in the East. That path is, as it were,
the straight path of life, beginning in this outer world and terminating at the
throne, or altar, in the East. Many centuries before our Bible was written or
the temple of Solomon described in the Books of Kings and Chronicles was
thought of, the two pillars were used in the great temples of the Mysteries in
Egypt, and one of the great annual public festivals was that of the setting up
of the pillars. What, then, did they signify? I can deal with the subject but
very superficially here. In one of their aspects they stand for what is known
in Eastern philosophy as the “pairs of opposites”. Everything in nature is dual
and can only be known in contrast with its opposite, whilst the two in com-
bination produce a metaphysical third which is their synthesis and perfect
balance. Thus we have good and evil; light and darkness (and one of the pil-
{}lars was always white and the other black); active and passive; positive and
negative; yes and no; outside and inside; man and woman. Neither of these is
complete without the other; taken together they form stability. Morning and
evening unite to form the complete day. Man is proverbially imper-fect with-
out his “better half”, woman; the two marry to impart strength to each other
and to establish their common house. Physical science shows all matter to be
composed of positive and negative electric forces in perfect balance and that
things would disintegrate and disappear if they did not stand firm in perfect
union. Every drop of healthy blood in our bodies is a combination of red and
white corpuscles, by the due balance of which we are established in strength
and health, whilst lack of balance is attended by disease. The pillars therefore
typify, in one of their aspects, -perfect integrity of body and soul such as are essential to achieving spiritual perfection. In the terms of ancient philosophy all created things are composed of fire and water; fire being their spiritual and water their material element, and so the pillars represented also these universal properties. In one of the Apocryphal Scriptures (2 Esdras, 7; 7-8), the path to true wisdom and life is spoken of as an entrance between a fire on the right hand and a deep water on the left, and so narrow and painful that only one man may go through it at once. This is in allusion to the narrow and painful path of real initiation of which our entrance into the Lodge between the pillars is a symbol.

Now all great symbols are shadowed forth in the person of man himself. The human organism is the true Lodge that must be opened and wherein the great Mysteries are to be found, and our Lodge— rooms are so built and furnished as to typify the human organism. The lower and physical part of us is animal and earthy, and rests, like the base of Jacob’s ladder, upon the earth; whilst our higher portion is spiritual and reaches to the heavens. These two portions of ourselves are in perpetual con-flict, the spiritual and the carnal ever warring against one another; and he alone is the wise man who has learned to effect a perfect balance between them and to establish himself in strength so that his own inward house stands firm against all weakness and temptation. And in still another sense the two pillars may be seen exemplified in the human body. There are our two legs, upon both of which we must stand firm to acquire a perfect physical balance. An having discerned this simple truth, and having seen that the path of true initiation, which is one of spiritual rebirth, is an arduous and painful progress to him who undertakes it, let me ask you to consider in all sacredness another physical phenomenon, the great mystery of which we perhaps think little of by reason of its frequency and of our familiarity with it. I refer to the incident — the great mystery I might say — of child-birth. Brethren, every child born into this world, coming into this life as into a great house of initiation, trial and discipline passes, amid pain and travail, through a strait and narrow way and between the two pillars that support the temple of its mother’s body. And thus in the commonplaces of life, in which for those who have clean hearts there is nothing common or unclear but everything is sacred and symbolic, the act of physical birth is an image and a foreshadowing of that mystical rebirth and of that passing through strait gate and a narrow way in a deeper sense without which it is written that a man shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The regenerated man, the man who not merely, in ceremonial form but in vital experience, has passed through the phases of which the Masonic degrees are the faint symbol, is alone worthy of the title of Master-Mason in
the building of the Temple that is not made with hands but that is being built invisibly out of the souls of just men made perfect. Not only in this world is this temple being built; only the foundations of the intended structure are perceptible here. The Craft contemplates other and loftier planes of life, other storeys of the vast structure than this we live and work in. Just as our Craft organization has its higher assemblies and councils in the form of the Provincial and the Grand Lodges that regulate and minister to the need of the Lodges of common craftsmen, so in the mighty system of the universal structure there are grades of higher life, hierarchies of celestial beings working and ministering in the loftier portions of the building, beyond our present ken. And as here at the head of our limited and temporal brotherhood there rules a Grand Master, so too over the cosmic system there presides the Great Architect and Most Worshipful Grand Master of all, whose officers are holy Angels; and the recognition of this truth may tend to consecrate us in the discharge of the little symbolic part we severally perform in the system which is the image of the great scheme.

The world at large, Brethren, is as it were, but one great Lodge and place of initiation, of which our Masonic Lodges are the little mirrors. Mother-Earth is also the Mother-Lodge of us all. As its vast work goes on, souls are ever descending into it and souls are being called out of it at the knocks of some great unseen Warden of life and death, who calls them here to labour and summons them hence for refreshment. After the Lodge, the festive board; after the labour of this world, the repast and refreshment of the heavenly places. And thus, although our after-proceedings have no formal place in the Masonic system, any more than the after-life is in formal connection with us whilst our sphere of activity is in this present world, still it plays a striking and appropriate part calculated to awaken us to the deep significance of our customary conviviality. Upon such occasions we are wont to drink the toast of “the King and the Craft”, remembering as loyal subjects and loving brethren our earthly sovereign and our Masonic comrades throughout the world. But here again I would ask every Master who gives and every brother who drinks this toast, to lift his thoughts to a greater King and to a larger craft than our limited and symbolic fraternity. I would remind you how in the Christian Mysteries there was another Master whom unconsciously we imitate, who also after supper took the cup and when he had given thanks to the King of kings, pledged himself, as it were, to that larger Craft which is co-extensive, with humanity itself; directing them in this manner to show forth symbolically a certain great mystery until his coming again. But this, Brethren, is none other than what is implied in our own Masonic words when we also are directed to use certain substituted secrets until time and circumstances shall restore to us the genuine
In submitting, then, these thoughts to you, it may be claimed that Masonry offers to those capable of appreciating it a working philosophy and a practical rule of life. It discloses to us the scheme of the universe — a scheme once shattered and arrested, but left in the hands of humanity to restore. It indicates our place, our purpose and our destiny in that universe. It is as a great house of instruction and initiation into the Mysteries of a larger and fuller life than the unenlightened worldling is as yet ripe for appreciating. Let us, therefore, value and endeavour fully to appreciate its mysteries. Let us also be careful not to cheapen the Order by failing to realize its meaning and by admitting to its ranks those who are unready or unfitted to understand its import. I said at the outset of this lecture that some Masons are beginning to awake to a larger consciousness of the true meaning and purport of our Craft. I say now at the end, Brethren! Lift up your hearts; throw wide open the shutters of your minds and imaginations. Learn to see in Masonry something more than a parochial system enjoining elementary morality, performing perfunctory and meaningless rites, and serving as an agreeable accessory to social life. But look to find in it a living philosophy, a vital guide upon those matters which of all others are the most sacred and the most urgent to our ultimate well-being. Realize that its secrets which are “many and invaluable” are not upon the surface; that they are not those of the tongue, but of the heart; and that its mysteries are those eternal ones that treat of the spirit rather than of the body of man. And with this knowledge clothe yourselves and enter the Lodge — not merely the Lodge-room of our symbolic Craft, but the larger Lodge of life, wherein, silently and without the sound of metal tool, is proceeding the perpetual work of rebuilding the unfinished and invisible Temple of which the mystical stones and timber are the souls of men. In that rebuilding, men and women are taking part who, whilst formally not members of our Craft, are still unconsciously Masons in the best of senses. For whosoever is carefully and deliberately “squaring his stone” is fitting himself for his place in the “intended structure” which gradually is being “put together with exact nicety” and which, though erected by ourselves, one day will become manifest to our clearer vision and will appear “more like the work of the Great Architect of the Universe than that of human hands”. Upon us Masons therefore, who have the advantage of a regular and organized system which provides and inculcates for us an outline of the great truths that we have been considering and that always in the world have been regarded as secret, as sacred, and as vital, there rests the responsibility attaching to our privilege, and it must be our aim to endeavour to enter into the full heritage of understanding and practising the system to which we belong.
Chapter 4

Further Notes on Craft Symbolism

“There is no darkness but ignorance.” (Shakespeare)

“Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, and defend us from all perils and dangers of this night.” (Anglican Liturgy)

“Belov’d All-Father, and all you gods that haunt this place, grant me to be beautiful in the inner man, and all I have of outer things to be one with those within!

May I count only the wise man rich, and may my store of gold be such as none but the good can bear. Anything more? That prayer, I think, is enough for me!” (Prayer of Socrates)

In the Lecture on the First Degree tracing board Masonry is spoken of as “an art founded on the principles of Geometry”, and also as being “a science dealing with the cultivation and improvement of the human mind”. Its usages and customs are also there said to have derived “from the ancient Egyptians whose philosophers, unwilling to expose their mysteries to vulgar eyes, concealed their principles and philosophy under signs and symbols”, which are still perpetuated in the Masonic Order.

Something of these signs and symbols, as well as the purpose of the Masonic system as a whole, has already been outlined in previous papers. In the present notes it is proposed to extend the consideration of the subject in greater detail.

The Instruction Lectures associated with each Degree of the Craft purport to expound the doctrine of the system and interpret the symbols and rituals. But these Lectures themselves stand in similar need of interpretation. Indeed, they are contrived with very great cunning and concealment. Their compilers were confronted with the dual task of giving a faithful, if partial, expression of esoteric doctrine and at the same time of so masking it that its full sense
would not be understood without some effort or enlightenment, and should convey little or nothing at all to those unworthy of or unripe for the “gnosis” or wisdom-teaching. They dis-charged that task with signal success and in a way which provokes admiration from those who can appreciate it for their profound knowledge of, and insight into, the science of self-knowledge and regeneration. They were obviously Initiates of an advanced type, well versed in the secret tradition and philosophy of the Mystery systems of the past and acutely perceptive of the deeper and mystical sense of the Holy Scriptures to which they con-stantly make luminous reference.

To deal with these explanatory Lectures in com-plete detail would involve a very long task. We will, however, proceed to speak of some of the more prominent matters with which they deal and so elaborate the subject-matter of our previous papers.

Attention must first be called to the term “Geometry”, the art upon which the entire system is stated to be founded. To the ordinary man Geometry means nothing more than the branch of mathematics associated with the prob-lems of Euclid, a subject obviously having no relation to Masonic ceremonial and ideals. Another explana-tion of the term must therefore be looked for.

Now Geometry was one of the “seven noble arts and sciences” of an- cient philosophy. It means literally the science of earth-measurement. But the “earth” of the ancients did not mean, as it does to us, this physical planet. It meant the primordial substance, or undifferentiated soul-stuff out of which we human beings have been created, the “mother-earth” from which we have all sprung and to which we must all undoubtedly return. Man was made, the Scriptures teach, out of the dust of the ground, and it is that ground, that earth or fundamental substance of his being, which requires to be “measured” in the sense of investigating and understanding its nature and properties. No compe-tent builder erects a structure without first satisfying himself about the nature of the materials with which he proposes to build, and in the speculative or spiritual and “royal” art of Masonry no Mason can properly build the temple of his own soul without first understanding the nature of the raw material he has to work upon.

Geometry, therefore, is synonymous with self -knowledge, the understand-ing of the basic substance of our being, its properties and potentialities. Over the ancient temples of initiation was inscribed the sentence “Know thyself and thou shalt know the universe and God,” a phrase which implies in the first place that the uninitiated man is without knowledge of himself, and in the second place that when he attains that knowledge he will realize himself to be no longer the separate distinctified individual he now supposes himself to be, but to be a microcosm or summary of all that is and to be identified with the
Being of God.

Masonry is the science of the attainment of that supreme knowledge and is, therefore, rightly said to be founded on the principles of Geometry as thus defined.

But do not let it be supposed that the physical matter of which our mortal bodies are composed is the “earth” referred to. That is but corruptible impermanent stuff which merely forms a temporary encasement of the imperishable true “earth” or substance of our souls, and enables them to enter into sense-relations with the physical world. The distinction must be clearly grasped and held in mind, for Masonry has to deal not so much with the transient outward body as with the eternal inward being of man, although the outward body is temporarily involved with the latter. It is the immortal soul of man which is the ruined temple and needs to be rebuilt upon the principles of spiritual science. The mortal body of it, with its unruly wills and affections, stands in the way of that achievement. It is the rubble which needs to be cleared before the new foundations can be set and the new structure reared. Yet even rubble can be made to serve useful purposes and be rearranged and worked into the new erection, and accordingly man’s outer temporal nature can be disciplined and utilized in the reconstruction of himself. But in order to effect this reconstruction he must first have a full understanding of the material he has to work with and to work upon. For this purpose he must be made acquainted with what is called “the form of the Lodge”.

The Form of the Lodge

This is officially described as “an oblong square; in length between East and West, in breadth between North and South, in depth from the surface of the earth to its centre, and even as high as the heavens.”

This is interpretable as alluding to the human individual. Man himself is a Lodge. And just as the Masonic Lodge is “an assemblage of brethren and fellows met to expatiate upon the mysteries of the Craft”, so individual man is a composite being made up of various properties and faculties assembled together in him with a view to their harmonious interaction and working out the purpose of life. It must always be remembered that everything in Masonry is figurative of man and his human constitution and spiritual evolution. Accordingly, the Masonic Lodge is sacramental of the individual Mason as he is when he seeks admission to a Lodge. A man’s first entry into a Lodge is symbolical of his first entry upon the science of knowing himself.

His organism is symbolised by a four-square or four-sided building. This
is in accordance with the very ancient philosophical doctrine that four is the arithmetical symbol of everything which has manifested or physical form. Spirit, which is unmanifest and not physical, is expressed by the number three and the triangle. But Spirit which has so far projected itself as to become objective and wear a material form or body, is denoted by the number four and the quadrangle or square. Hence the Hebrew name of Deity, as known and worshiped in this outer world, was the great unspeakable name of four letters or Tetragrammator whilst the cardinal points of space are also four and every manifested thing is a compound of the four basic metaphysical elements called by the ancients fire, water, air and earth. The four sidedness of the Lodge, therefore, is also a reminder that the human organism is compounded of those four elements in balanced proportions. “Water” represents the psychic nature; “Air,” the mentality, “Fire,” the will and nervous force; whilst “Earth” is the condensation in which the other three become stabilized and encased.

But it is an oblongated (or duplicated) square because man’s organism does not consist of his physical body alone. The physical body has it “double” or ethereal counterpart in the astral body which is an extension of the physical nature and compound of the same four elements in an impalpable and more tenuous form. The oblong spatial form of the Lodge must therefore be considered as referable to the physical and ethereal nature of man in the conjunction in which the, in fact consist in each of us.

The four sides of the Lodge have a further significance. The East of the Lodge represent man’s spirituality, his highest and most spiritual mode of consciousness, which in most men is very little developed, if at all, but is still latent and slumbering and becomes active only in moments of stress or deep emotion. The West (or polar opposite of the East) represents his normal rational understanding, the consciousness he employs in temporal everyday affairs, his material-mindedness or, as we might say, his “common sense”. Midway between these East and West extremes is the South, the halfway house and meeting-place of the spiritual intuition and the rational understanding; the point denoting abstract intellectuality and our intellectual power develop to its highest, just as the sun attains its meridian splendour in the South. The antipodes of this is the North, the sphere of benightedness and ignorance, referable to merely sense-reactions and impressions received by that lowest and least reliable mode of perception, our physical sense-nature.

Thus the four sides of the Lodge point to four different, yet progressive, modes of consciousness available to us. Sense-impression (North), reason (West), intellectual ideation (South), and spiritual intuition (East); making up our four possible ways of knowledge. Of these the ordinary man employs only
the first two or perhaps three, in accordance with his development and education, and his out-look on life and knowledge of truth are corre-spondingly restricted and imperfect. Full and perfect knowledge is possible only when the deep-seeing vision and consciousness of man’s spiritual principle have been awakened and super-added to his other cognitive faculties. This is possible only to the true Master, who has all four methods of knowledge at his disposal in perfect balance and adjusted like the four sides of the Lodge; and hence the place of the Master and Past-Masters being always in the East.

The “depth” of the Lodge (“from the surface of the earth to its centre”) refers to the distance or difference of degree between the superficial consciousness of our earthly mentality and the supreme divine degree of consciousness resident at man’s spiritual centre when he has become able to open his Lodge upon that centre and to function in and with it.

The “height” of the Lodge (“even as high as the heavens”) implies that the range of consciousness possible to us, when we have developed our potentialities to the full, is infinite. Man who has sprung from the earth and developed through the lower kingdoms of nature to his present rational state, has yet to complete his evolution by becoming a god-like being and unifying his consciousness with the Omniscient — to promote which is and always has been the sole aim and purpose of all Initiation.

To scale this “height”, to attain this expansion of consciousness, is achieved “by the use of a ladder of many rounds or staves, but of three principle ones, Faith, Hope and Charity”, of which the greatest and most effectual is the last. That is to say, there are innumerable ways of developing one’s consciousness to higher degrees, and in fact every common-place incident of daily experience may contribute to that end if it be rightly interpreted and its purpose in the general pattern of our life-scheme be discerned; yet even these should be subordinate to the three chief qualifications, namely, Faith in the possibility of attaining the end in view; Hope, or a persistent fervent desire for its fulfillment; and finally an unbounded Love which, seeking God in all men and all things, despite their outward appearances, and thinking no evil, gradually identifies the mind and nature of the aspirant with that ultimate Good upon which his thought, desire and gaze should be persistently directed.

It is important to note here that this enlargement of consciousness is in no way represented as being dependent upon intellectual attainments, learning or book-knowledge. These may be, and indeed are, lesser staves of the ladder of attainment; but they are not numbered among the principal ones. Com-pare St. Paul’s words “Though I have all knowledge and have not love, I am nothing”; and those of a medieval mystic “By love He may be gotten and holden, but by wit and understanding never”.

The Lodge is “supported by three grand pillars, Wisdom, Strength and Beauty”. Again the references are not to the external meeting-place, but to a triality of properties resident in the individual soul, which will become increasingly manifest in the aspirant as he progresses and adapts himself to the Masonic discipline. As is written of the youthful Christian Master that “he increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man”, so will it also become true of the neophyte Mason who aspires to Mastership. He will become conscious of an increase of perceptive faculty and understanding; he will become aware of having tapped a previously unsuspected source of power, giving him enhanced mental strength and self-confidence; there will become observable in him developing graces of character, speech and conduct that were previously foreign to him.

The Floor, or groundwork of the Lodge, a chequer-work of black and white squares, denotes the dual quality of everything connected with terrestrial life and the physical groundwork of human nature — the mortal body and its appetites and affections. “The web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and ill together”, wrote Shakespeare. Everything material is characterized by inextricably interblended good and evil, light and shade, joy and sorrow, positive and negative. What is good for me may be evil for you; pleasure is generated from pain and ultimately degenerates into pain again; what it is right to do at one moment may be wrong the next; I am intellectually exalted to-day and to-morrow correspondingly depressed and benighted: The dualism of these opposites governs us in everything, and experience of it is prescribed for us until such time as, having learned and out-grown its lesson, we are ready for advancement to a condition where we outgrow the sense of this chequer-work existence and those opposites cease to be perceived as opposites, but are realized as a unity or synthesis. To find that unity or synthesis is to know the peace which passes understanding—i.e. which surpasses our present experience, because in it the darkness and the light are both alike, and our present concepts of good and evil, joy and pain, are transcended and found sublimated in a condition combining both. And this lofty condition is represented by the indented or tesselated border skirting the black and white chequer-work, even as the Divine Presence and Providence surrounds and embraces our temporal organisms in which those opposites are inherent.

Why is the chequer floor-work given such prominence in the Lodge-furniture? The answer is to be found in the statement in the Third Degree Ritual: “The square pavement is for the High Priest to walk upon”. Now it is not merely the Jewish High Priest of centuries ago that is here referred to, but the individual member of the Craft. For every Mason is intended to be the High Priest of his own personal temple and to make of it a place where he and
Deity may meet. By the mere fact of being in this dualistic world every living being, whether a Mason or not, walks upon the square pavement of mingled good and evil in every action of his life, so that the floor-cloth is the symbol of an elementary philosophical truth common to us all. But, for us, the words “walk upon” imply much more than that. They mean that he who aspires to be master of his fate and captain of his soul must walk upon these opposites in the sense of transcending and dominating them, of trampling upon his lower sensual nature and keeping it beneath his feet in subjection and control. He must become able to rise above the motley of good and evil, to be superior and indifferent to the ups and downs of fortune, the attractions and fears governing ordinary men and swaying their thoughts and actions this way or that. His object is the development of his innate spiritual potencies, and it is impossible that these should develop so long as he is over-ruled by his material tendencies and the fluctuating emotions of pleasure and pain that they give birth to. It is by rising superior to these and attaining serenity and mental equilibrium under any circumstances in which for the moment he may be placed, that a Mason truly “walks upon” the chequered ground work of existence and the conflicting tendencies of his more material nature.

The Covering of the Lodge is shown in sharp contrast to its black and white flooring and is described as “a celestial canopy of divers colours, even the heavens.”

If the flooring symbolizes man’s earthy sensuous nature, the ceiling typifies his ethereal nature, his “heavens” and the properties resident therein. The one is the reverse and the opposite pole of the other. His material body is visible and densely composed. His ethereal surround, or “aura”, is tenuous and invisible, (save to clairvoyant vision), and like the fragrance thrown off by a flower. Its existence will be doubted by those unprepared to accept what is not physically demonstrable, but the Masonic student, who will be called upon to accept many such truths provisionally until he knows them as certainties, should reflect (i) that he has entered the Craft with the professed object of receiving light upon the nature of his own being, (2) that the Order engages to assist him to that light in regard to matters of which he is admittedly ignorant, and that its teachings and symbols were devised by wise and competent instructors in such matters, and (3) that a humble, docile and receptive mental attitude towards those symbols and their meanings will better conduce to his advancement than a critical or hostile one.

The fact that man throws off, or radiates from himself, an ethereal surround or “covering” is testified to by the aureoles and haloes shown in works of art about the persons of saintly characters. The unsaintly are not so distinctified, not because they are not so surrounded, but because in their case
the “aura” exists as but an irregularly shaped and coloured cloud reflecting their normal undis-ciplined mentality and passional nature, as the rain-clouds reflect the sunlight in different tints. The “aura” of the man who has his mentality clean and his passions and emotions well in hand becomes a correspondingly orderly and shapely encasement of clearly defined form and iridescence, regularly striated like the colours of the spectrum or the rainbow. Biblically, this “aura” is described as a “coat of many colours” and as having characterized Joseph, the greatest of the sons of Jacob, in contrast with that patriarch’s less morally and spiritually developed sons who were not distinctified by any such coat.

In Masonry the equivalent of the aureole is the symbolic clothing worn by Provincial and Grand Lodge Officers. This is of deep blue, heavily fringed with gold, in correspondence with the deep blue centre and luminous circumference of flame. “His ministers are flames of fire”. Provincial and Grand Lodge Officers are drawn from those who are Past Masters in the Craft; that is, from those who theoretically have attained sanctity, regeneration and Mastership of themselves, and have become joined to the Grand Lodge above where they “shine as the stars”.

It follows from all this that the Mason who seriously yields himself to the discipline of the Order is not merely improving his character and chastening his thoughts and desires. He is at the same time unconsciously building up an inner ethereal body which will form his clothing, or covering, when his transitory outer body shall have passed away. “There are celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial and as we have borne the image of the earthly we also shall bear the image of the heavenly.” And the celestial body must be built up out of the sublimated properties of the terrestrial one. This is one of the secrets and mysteries of the process of regeneration and self-transmutation, to promote which the Craft was designed. This is the true temple-building that Masonry is concerned with. The Apron being the Masonic symbol of the bodily organism, changes and increasing elaborateness in it as the Mason advances to higher stages in the Craft symbolize (in theory) the actual development that is gradually taking place in his nature.

Moreover, as in the outer heavens of nature the sun, moon and stars exist and function, so in the personal heavens of man there operate metaphysical forces inherent in himself and described by the same terms. In the make-up of each of us exists a psychic magnetic field of various forces, determining our individual temperaments and tendencies and influencing our future. To those forces have also been given the names of “sun”, “moon” and planets, and the science of their interaction and outworking was the ancient science of astronomy, or, as it is now more often called astrology, which is one of the
liberal arts and sciences recommended to the study of every Mason and the pursuit of which belongs in particular to the Fellow-Craft stage.

The Positions of the Officers of the Lodge

The seven Officers — three principal and three subordinate ones, with an additional minor one serving as a connecting link with the outside world — represent seven aspects or faculties of consciousness psychologically interactive and co-ordinated into a unity so as to constitute a “just and perfect Lodge”. As a man, any one of whose faculties is disordered or uncoordinated, is accounted insane, so a Lodge would be imperfect and incapacitated for effective work if its functional mechanism were incomplete.

Seven is universally the number of completeness. The time-periods of creation were seven. The spectrum of light consists of seven colours; the musical scale of seven notes; our division of time is into weeks of seven days; our physiological changes run in cycles of seven years. Man himself is a seven-fold organism in correspondence with all these and the normal years of his life are seven multiplied by ten.

The “Master”, or Chief Officer, in man is the spiritual principle in him, which is the apex and root of his being and to which all his subsidiary faculties should be subordinate and responsive. When the Master’s gavel knocks, those of the Wardens at once repeat the knocks. When the Divine Principle in man speaks in the depth of his being, the remaining portions of his nature should reverberate in sympathy. Without the presence of this Divine Principle in him man would be less than human. Because of its presence in him he can become more than human. By cultivating his consciousness of it he may become unified with it in proportion as he denies and renounces everything in himself that is less than divine. It is the inextinguishable light of a Master Mason which, being immortal and eternal, continues to shine when everything temporal and mortal has disappeared.

The Senior Warden, whilst the Master’s chief executive officer, is his antithesis and opposite pole. He personifies the soul, the psychic or animistic principle in man, which, if unassociated with and un-illumined by the greater light of the Spirit or Master-principle, has no inherent light of its own at all. At best he in the West can but reflect and transmit that greater light from the East, as the moon receives and reflects sunlight. Wherefore in Masonry his light is spoken of as the moon. In Nature when the moon is not shone upon by the sun it is invisible and virtually non-existent for us; when it is, it is one of the most resplendent of phenomena. Similarly human intelligence is valuable
or negligible according as it is enlightened by the Master-light of the Divine Principle, or merely darkly functioning from its own un-illumined energies. In the former case it is the chief executive faculty or transmitting medium of the Supreme Wisdom; in the latter it can display nothing better than brute-reason.

Midway between the Master-light from the East and the “Moon” in the West is placed the Junior Warden in the South, symbolizing the third greater light, the “Sun”. And, Masonically, the “sun” stands for the illuminated human intelligence and understanding, which results from the material brain-mind being thoroughly permeated and enlightened by the Spiritual Principle; it denotes these two in a state of balance and harmonious interaction, the junior Warden personifying the balance-point or meeting-place of man’s natural reason and his spiritual intuition. Accordingly it is he who, as representing this enlightened mental condition, asserts in the Second Degree (which is the degree of personal development where that condition is theoretically achieved) that he has been enabled in that degree to discover a sacred symbol placed in the centre of the building and alluding to the G.G.O.T.U. What is meant is, of course, that the man who has in reality (and not merely ceremonially) advanced to the second degree of self-development has now discerned that God is not outside him, but within him and overshadowing his own “building” or organism; a discovery which he is thereupon urged to follow up with fervency and zeal so that he may more and more closely unify himself with this Divine Principle. This, however, is a process requiring time, effort and self-struggle. The unification is not achieved suddenly. There are found to be obstacles, “enemies” in the way, obstructing it, due to the aspirant’s own imperfections and limitations. These must first be gradually overcome, and it is the eradication of these which is alluded to in the sign of the degree, indicating that he desires to cleanse his heart and cast away all evil from it, to purify himself for closer alliance with that pure Light. It is only by this “sun-light”, this newly found illumination, that he has become able to see into the depths of his own nature; and this is the “Sun” which, like Joshua, he prays may “stand still” and its light be retained by him until he has achieved the conquest of all these enemies. The problem of the much discredited biblical miracle of the sun standing still in the heavens disappear: when its true meaning is perceived in the light of the interpretation given by the compilers of the Masonic ritual, who well knew that it was not the solar orb that was miraculously stayed in its course in violation of natural law, but that the “sun” in question denotes an enlightened perceptive state experienced by every one who in this “valley of Ajalon” undertakes the task of self-conquest and “fighting the battles of the Lord” against his own lower propensities.

We have now spoken of the Senior and Junior Wardens in their respective
psychological significances and as being described as the “Moon” and “Sun”. In this connection it is well to point out here that the lights of both Moon and Sun become extinguished in the darkness of the Third Degree. In the great work of self-transformation they are lights and helps up to a point. When that point is reached they are of no further avail; the grip of each of them proves a slip and the Master-Light, or Divine Principle, alone takes up and completes the regenerative change: “The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light and thy God thy glory; and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.” (IS. Ix.19-20).

The three lesser Officers and Tyler, who, with the three principal ones, complete the executive septenary, represent the three greater Officers’ energies transmitted into the lower faculties of man’s organism. The Senior Deacon, as the Master’s adjutant and emissary, forms the link between East and West. The Junior Deacon, as the Senior Warden’s adjutant and emissary, forms the link between West and South; whilst the Inner Guard acts under the immediate control of the Junior Warden and in mutually reflex action with the Outer Guard or contact-point with the outer world of sense-impressions.

The whole seven thus typify the mechanism of human consciousness; they represent a series of discrete but co-ordinated parts connecting man’s outer nature with his inmost Divine Principle and providing the necessary channels for reciprocal action between the spiritual and material poles of his organism.

In other words, and to use an alternative symbol of the same fact, man is potentially a seven-branched golden candlestick. Potentially so, because as yet he has not transmuted the base metals of his nature into gold, or lit up the seven candles or parts of his organism with the Promethean fire of the Divine Principle. Meanwhile that symbol of what is possible to him is offered for his reflection and contemplation, and he may profitably study the description of regenerated, perfected man given in Revelation I, v2-20.

To summarize, the seven Officers typify the following sevenfold parts of the human mechanism:

**W.M.** Spirit *(Pneuma).*

**S.W.** Soul *(Psyche).*

**J.W.** Mind *(Nous, Intellect).*

**S.D.** The link between Spirit and Soul.

**J.D.** The link between Soul and Mind.
I.G. The inner sense-nature (astral).

O.G. The outer sense-nature (physical).

**The Greater and Lesser Lights**

The purpose of Initiation may be defined as follows:— it is to stimulate and awaken the Candidate to direct cognition and irrefutable demonstration of facts and truths of his own being about which previously he has been either wholly ignorant or only notionally informed; it is to bring him into direct conscious contact with the Realities underlying the surface-images of things, so that, instead of holding merely beliefs or opinions about himself, the Universe and God, he is directly and convincingly confronted with Truth itself; and finally it is to move him to become the Good and the Truth revealed to him by identifying himself with it. (This is of course a gradual process involving greater or less time and effort in proportion to the capacity and equipment of the candidate himself.)

The restoration to light of the candidate in the First Degree is, therefore, indicative of an important crisis. It symbolizes the first enlargement of perception that, thanks to his own earnest aspirations and the good offices of the guides and instructors to whom he has yielded himself, Initiation brings him. It reveals to him a threefold symbol, referred to as the three great though emblematic lights in Masonry—the Holy Bible, Square and Compasses in a state of conjunction, the two latter resting on the first-named as their ground or base. As this triple symbol is the first object his outward eye gazes upon after enlightenment, so in correspondence what they emblematize is the first truth his inward eye is meant to recognize and contemplate upon.

He is also made aware of three emblematic lesser lights, described as alluding to the “Sun”, “Moon” and “Master of the Lodge”, (the psychological significance of which has already been explained in our interpretation of the Officers of the Lodge).

Now the fact is that the candidate can only see the three greater Lights by the help of the three lesser ones. In other words the lesser triad is the instrument by which he beholds the greater one; it is his own perceptive faculty (subject) looking out upon something larger (object) with which it is not yet identified, just as so small a thing as the eye can behold the expanse of the heavens and the finite mind can contemplate infinitude.

What is implied, then, is that the lesser lights of the candidate’s normal finite intelligence are employed to reveal to him the greater lights or fundamental essences of his as yet undeveloped being. A pygmy rudimentary
consciousness is being made aware of its submerged source and roots, and placed in sharp contrast with the limitless possibilities available to it when those hidden depths have been developed and brought into function. The candidate’s problem and destiny is to lose himself to find himself, to unify his lesser with his greater lights, so that he no longer functions merely with an elementary reflex consciousness but in alliance with the All-Conscious with which he has become identified. In the Royal Arch Degree he will discover that this identification of the lesser and greater lights has theoretically become achieved. The interlaced triangles of lights surrounding the central altar in that Supreme Degree imply the union of perceptive faculty with the object of their con-templation; the blending of the human and the Divine consciousness.

What then do the three Greater Lights emblema-tize, and what does their intimate conjunction connote?

(1) The written Word is the emblem and external expression of the unwritten Eternal Word, the Logos or Substantial Wisdom of Deity out of which every living soul has emanated and which, therefore, is the ground or base of human life. “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God; without Him was not anything made that was made; in Him was life and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not”. In an intelligently con ducted Lodge the Sacred Volume should lie open at the first chapter of the Gospel by St. John, the patron-saint of Masonry, so that it may be these words that shall meet the candidate’s eyes when restored to light and remind him that the basis of his being is the Divine Word resident and shining within his own darkness and ignorance, which realize and comprehend not that fact. He has lost all consciousness of that truth, and this dereliction is the “lost Word” of which every Mason is theoretically in search and which with due instruc tion and his own industry he hopes to find. Finding that, he will find all things, for he will have found God within himself. Let the candidate also reflect that it is the secret motions and promptings of this Word within him that have impelled him to enter the Craft and to seek initiation into light. In the words of a great initiate “thy seeking is the cause of thy finding”; for the finding is but the final coming to self-consciousness of that inward force which first impelled the quest for light. Hence it is that no one can properly enter the Craft, or hope for real initiation, if he joins the Order from any less motive than that of finding God, the “hid treasure”, within himself. His first place of preparation must needs be in the heart, and his paramount desire and heart-hunger must be for that Light which, when attained, is Omniscience coming to consciousness
in him; otherwise all ceremonial initiation will be without avail and he will fail even to understand the external symbols and allegories of it.

(2) The Square, resting upon the Sacred Volume, is the symbol of the human soul as it was generated out of the Divine Word which underlies it. That soul was created “square”, perfect, and like every-thing which proceeded from the Creator’s hand was originally pronounced “very good”, though invested with freedom of choice and capacity for error. The builder’s square, however, used as a Craft symbol, is really an approximation of a triangle with its apex downwards and base upwards, which is a very ancient symbol of the soul and psychic constitution of man and is known as the Water Triangle.

(3) The Compasses interlaced with the square are the symbol of the Spirit of the Soul, its functional energy or Fire. Of itself the soul would be a mere inert passivity, a negative quantity unbalanced by a positive opposite. Its active properties are the product of the union of itself with its underlying and inspiring Divine basis, as modified by the good or evil tendencies of the soul itself. God “breathed into man the breath of life and man became —no longer a soul, which he was previously— but a living (energizing) soul.” This product, or fiery energy, of the soul is the Spirit of man (a good or evil force accordingly as he shapes it) and is symbolized by what has always been known as the Fire Triangle (with apex upward and base downward), which symbol is approximately reproduced in the Com-passes.

To summarize; the three Greater Lights emblem-itize the inextricably interwoven triadic ground-work of man’s being; (i) the Divine Word or Substance as its foundation; (2) a passive soul emanated therefrom; (3) an active spirit or energizing capacity generated in the soul as the result of the interaction of the former two. Man himself therefore (viewed apart from the temporal body now clothing him) is a triadic unit, rooted in and proceeding from the basic Divine Substance.

Observe that in the First Degree the points of the Compasses are hidden by the Square. In the Second Degree, one point is disclosed. In the Third both are exhibited. The implication is that as the Candidate progresses, the inertia and negativity of the soul become increasingly transmuted and superseded by the positive energy and activity of the Spirit. The Fire Triangle gradually assumes preponderance over the Water Triangle, signifying that the Aspirant becomes a more vividly living and spiritually conscious being than he was at first.
Opening and Closing the Lodge

First or Entered Apprentice Degree

If the Lodge with its appointments and officers be a sacramental figure of oneself and of the mechanism of personal consciousness, opening the Lodge in the successive Degrees implies ability to expand, open up and intensify that consciousness in three distinct stages surpassing the normal level applicable to ordinary mundane affairs.

This fact passes unrecognized in Masonic Lodges. The openings and closings are regarded as but so much casual formality devoid of interior purpose or meaning, whereas they are ceremonies of the highest instructiveness and rites with a distinctive purpose which should not be profaned by casual perfunctory performance or without understanding what they imply.

As a flower “opens its Lodge” when it unfolds its petals and displays its centre to the sun which vitalizes it, so the opening of a Masonic Lodge is sacramental of opening out the human mind and heart to God. It is a dramatized form of the psychological processes involved in so doing.

Three degrees or stages of such opening are postulated. First, one appropriate to the apprentice stage of development; a simple Sursum corda or call to “lift up your hearts!” above the every-day level of external things. Second, a more advanced opening, adapted to those who are them-selves more advanced in the science and capable of greater things than apprentices. This opening is proclaimed to be “upon the square”, which the First Degree opening is not. By which is implied that it is one specially involving the use of the psychic and higher intellectual nature (denoted, as previously explained, by the Square or Water Triangle). Third, a still more advanced opening, declared to be “upon the centre”, for those of Master Mason’s rank, and pointing to an opening up of consciousness to the very centre and depths of one’s being.

How far and to what degree any of us is able to open his personal Lodge determines our real position in Masonry and discloses whether we are in very fact Masters, Craftsmen or Apprentices, or only titularly such. Progress in this, as in other things, comes only with intelligent practice and sustained sincere effort. But what is quite over-looked and desirable to emphasize is the power, as an initiatory force, of an assemblage of individuals each sufficiently progressed and competent to “open his Lodge” in the sense described. Such an assembly, gathered in one place and acting with a common definite purpose, creates as it were a vortex in the mental and psychical atmosphere into which a newly initiated candidate is drawn. The tension created by their collective energy of thought and will — progressively intensifying as the Lodge is opened
in each successive degree, and correspondingly relaxing as each Degree is closed — acts and leaves a permanent effect upon the candidate (assuming always that he is equally in earnest and “properly prepared” in an interior sense), inducing a favourable mental and spiritual rapport between him and those with whom he seeks to be elevated into organic spiritual membership; and, further, it both stimulates his perceptivity and causes his mentality to become charged and permeated with the ideas and uplifting influences projected upon him by his initiators.

The fact that a candidate is not admitted within the Lodge-portals without certain assurances, safe-guards and tests, and that even then he is menaced by the sword of the I.G., is an indication that peril to the mental and spiritual organism is recognized as attending the presumptuous engaging in the things with which Initiation deals. As the flaming sword is described as keeping the way to the Tree of Life from those as yet unfitted to approach it, so does the secret law of the Spirit still avenge itself upon those who are unqualified to participate in the knowledge of its mysteries. Hence the command-ment “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain”, that is by invoking Divine Energy for unworthy or vain purposes.

Here, and upon the general subject of the signs, tokens and words employed and communicated in Initiatory Rites, may usefully be quoted the following words by a well-informed Mason, who is of course speaking of them not as the merely perfunctory acts they are in ordinary Lodges, but as they are when intelligently employed by those fully instructed in spiritual science and able to use signs, tokens and words with dynamic power and real efficiency:-

“The symbols of the Mysteries embodied in the sign of the Square and Circle constitute the eternal language of the gods, the same in all worlds, from all eternity. They have had neither beginning of years nor end of days. They are contemporary with time and with eternity. They are the Word of God, the Divine Logos, articulate and expressed in forms of language. Each sign possesses a corres-ponding vocal expression, bodily gesture or mental intention. This fact is of great importance to the student of the Wisdom, for in it rests the main reason of the secrecy and the intense watchfulness and carefulness of the stewards of the Mysteries lest the secret doctrines find expression on the lips or through the action of unfit persons to possess the secrets. For the secret power of the Mysteries is within the signs. Any person attaining to natural and supernatural states by the process of develop-ment, if his heart be untuned and his mind with-drawn from the Divine to the human within him, that power becomes a power of evil instead of a power of good. An unfaithful initiate, in the degree of the Mysteries he has attained, is capable, by virtue of his antecedent preparations and processes, of diverting the power to un-
holy, demoniacal, astral and dangerous uses. The use of the signs, the vocal sounds, physical acts and mental intentions, was absolutely prohibited except under rigorously tested conditions. For instance, the utterance of a symbolical sound, or a physical act, corresponding to a sign belonging to a given degree, in a congregation of an inferior degree, was fatal in its effects. In each degree no initiates who have not attained that degree are admitted to its congregations. Only initiates of that degree, and above it, are capable of sustaining the pressure of dynamic force generated in the spiritual atmosphere and concentrated in that degree. The actual mental ejaculation of a sign, under such circumstances, brought the immediate putting forth of an occult power corresponding to it. In all the congregations of the initiates an Inner Guard was stationed within the sanctuary, chancel or oratory at the door of entrance, with the drawn sword in his hand, to ward off unqualified trespassers and intruders. It was no mere formal or metaphorical performance. It was at the risk of the life of any man attempting to make an entrance if he succeeded in crossing the threshold. Secret signs and passwords and other tests were applied to all who knocked at the door, before admission was granted. The possession of the Mysteries, after initiation, and the use of the signs, either vocally, actionally or ejacularily, with “intention” in their use (not as mere mechanical repetition), were attended by occult powers directed to the subjects of their special intention, whether absent or present, or for purposes beneficial to the cause in contemplation.” (H. E. Sampson’s ProGRESSIVE REDEMPTION, pp. 171-174).

To “open the Lodge” of one’s own being to the higher verities is no simple task for those who have closed and sealed it by their own habitual thought-modes, preconceptions and distrust of whatever is not sensibly demonstrable. Yet all these propensities must be eradicated or shut out and the Lodge closed against them; they have no part or place in the things of the inward man. Effort and practice also are needed to attain stability of mind, control of emotion and thought, and to acquire interior stillness and the harmony of all our parts. As the formal ceremony of Lodge-opening is achieved only by the organized co-operation of its constituent officers, so the due opening of our inner man to God can only be accomplished by the consensus of all our parts and faculties. Absence or failure of any part invalidates the whole. The W.M. alone cannot open the Lodge; he can only invite his brethren to assist him to do so by a concerted process and the unified wills of his subordinates. So too with opening the Lodge of man’s soul. His spiritual will, as master-faculty, summons his other faculties to assist it; “sees that none but Masons are present” by taking care that his thoughts and motives in approaching God are pure; calls all these “brethren” to order to prove their due qualification
for the work in hand; and only then, after seeing that the Lodge is properly formed, does he undertake the responsibility of invoking the descent of the Divine blessing and influx upon the unified and dedicated whole.

Of all which the Psalmist writes: “How good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity... It is like the precious ointment (anointing) which flows down unto the skirts of the clothing,” implying that the Divine influx, when it descends in response to such an invocation, floods and illuminates the entire human organism even to its carnal sense-extremities (which are the “skirts of the clothing” of the soul). Compare also the Christian Master’s words: “When thou prayest, enter into thy secret chamber (the Lodge of the soul) and when thou hast shut thy door (by tying the mind to all outward concerns and thoughts), pray to the Father who seeth in secret, who shall reward thee openly” (by conscious communion).

The foregoing may help both to interpret the meaning and solemn purpose of the Opening in the First Degree, and to indicate the nature of the conditions and spiritual atmosphere that ought to exist when a Lodge is open for business in that Degree. If the Lodge-opening be a real opening in the sense here indicated and not a mere ceremonial form, if the conditions and atmosphere referred to were actually induced at a Masonic meeting, it will be at once apparent that they must needs react powerfully upon a candidate who enters them seeking initiation and spiritual advancement. If he be truly a worthy candidate, properly prepared in his heart and an earnest seeker for the light, the mere fact of his entering such an atmosphere will so impress and awaken his dormant soul-faculties as in itself to constitute an initiation and an indelible memory, whilst the sensitive-plate of his mind thus stimulated will be readily receptive of the ideas projected into it by the assembled brethren who are initiating him and receiving him into spiritual communion with themselves. On the other hand if he be an unworthy or not properly prepared candidate, that atmosphere and those conditions will prove repellent to him and he will himself be the first to wish to withdraw and not to repeat the experience.

The Closing of the First Degree implies the reverse process of the Opening; the relaxing of the inward energies and the return of the mind to its former habitual level. Yet not without gratitude expressed for Divine favours and perceptions received during the period of openness, or without a counsel to keep closed the book of the heart and lay aside the use of its jewels until we are duly called to resume them; since silence and secrecy are essential to the gestation and growth of the inward man. “He who has seen God is dumb”.

Second or Fellow-Craft Degree

The Opening of the Second Degree presupposes an ability to open up the inner nature and consciousness to a much more advanced stage than is possible to the beginner, who in theory is supposed to undergo a long period of discipline and apprenticeship in the elementary work of self-preparation and to be able to satisfy certain tests that he has done so before being qualified for advancement to the Fellow-craft stage of self-building.

Again that opening may be a personal work for the individual Mason or a collective work in an assembly of Fellow-crafts and superior Masons to pass an Apprentice to Fellow-craft rank.

The title admitting the qualified Apprentice to a Fellow-craft Lodge is one of great significance, which ordinarily passes without any observation or understanding of its propriety. It is said to denote “in plenty” and to be illustrated by an “ear of corn near to a fall of water” (which two objects are literally the meaning of the Hebrew word in question). It is desirable to observe that this is meant to be descriptive of the candidate himself, and of his own spiritual condition. It is he who is as an ear of corn planted near and nourished by a fall of water. His own spiritual growth, as achieved in the Apprentice stage, is typified by the ripening corn; the fertilizing cause of its growth being the down-pouring upon his inner nature of the vivifying dew of heaven as the result of his aspiration towards the light.

The work appropriated to the Apprentice Degree is that of gaining purity and control of his grosser nature, its appetites and affections. It is symbolized by working the rough ashlar, as dug from the quarry, into due shape for building purposes. The “quarry” is the undifferentiated raw material or group-soul of humanity from which he has issued into individuated existence in this world, where his function is to convert himself into a true die or square meet for the fabric of the Temple designed by the Great Architect to be built in the Jerusalem above out of perfected human souls.

The apprentice-work, which relates to the subdual of the sense-nature and its propensities, being achieved, the next stage is the development and control of the intellectual nature; the investigation of the “hidden paths of nature (i.e., the human psychological nature) and science” (the gnosis of self-knowledge, which, pushed to its limit, the candidate is told “leads to the throne of God Himself” and reveals the ultimate secrets of his own nature and the basic principles of intellectual as distinct from moral truth). It should be noted that the candidate is told that he is now “permitted to extend his researches” into these hidden paths. There is peril to the mentality of the candidate if this work is undertaken before the purification of the Apprentice stage have been
accomplished. Hence the permission is not accorded until that preliminary task has been done and duly tested.

The work of the Second Degree is accordingly a purely philosophical work, involving deep psychological self-analysis, experience of unusual phenomena, as the psychic faculties of the soul begin to unfold themselves, and the apprehension of abstract Truth (formerly described as mathematics). This work is altogether beyond both the mental horizon and the capacity of the average modern Mason, though in the Mysteries of antiquity the Mathesis (or mental discipline) was an outstanding feature and produced the intellectual giants of Greek philosophy. Hence it is that to-day the Degree is found dull, unpicturesque and unattractive, since psychic experience and intellectual principles cannot be made spectacular and dramatic.

The Ritual runs that our ancient brethren of this Degree met in the porch-way of King Solomon’s Temple. This is a way of saying that natural philosophy is the porchway to the attainment of Divine Wisdom; that the study of man leads to knowledge of God, by revealing to man the ultimate divinity at the base of human nature. This study or self-analysis of human nature Plato called Geometry; earth-measuring; the probing, sounding and determining the limits, proportions and potentialities of our personal organism in its physical and psychical aspects. The ordinary natural consciousness is directed outwards; perceives only outward objects; thinks only of an outward Deity separate and away from us. It can accordingly cognize only shadows, images and illusions. The science of the Mysteries directs that that process must be reversed. It says: “Just as you have symbolically shut and close-tyled the door of your Lodge against all outsiders, so you must shut out all perception of outward images, all desire for external things and material welfare, and turn your consciousness and aspirations wholly inward. For the Vital and Immortal Principle— the Kingdom of Heaven—is within you; it is not to be found outside you. Like the prodigal son in the parable you have wandered away from it into a far country and lost all consciousness of it. You have come down and down, as by a spiral motion or a winding staircase, into this lower world and imperfect form of existence; coiling around you as you came increasingly thickening vestures, culminating in your outermost dense body of flesh; whilst your mentality has woven about you veil after veil of illusory notions concerning your real nature and the nature of true Life. Now the time and the impulse have at last come for you to turn back to that inward world. Therefore reverse your steps. Look no longer outwards, but inwards. Go back up that same winding staircase. It will bring you to that Centre of Life and Sanctum Sanctorum from which you have wandered.”

When the Psalmist writes “Who will go up the hill of the Lord? Even he
that hath clean hands and a pure heart”, the meaning is identical with what is implied in the ascent of the inwardly “winding staircase” of the Second Degree. Pre-liminary purification of the mind is essential to its rising to purer realms of being and loftier conscious states than it has been accustomed to. If “the secrets of nature and the principles of intellectual truth” are to become revealed to its view, as the Degree intends and promises, the mentality must not be fettered by mundane interests or subject to disturbance by carnal passions. If it is to “con-template its own intellectual faculties and trace them from their development” until they are found to “lead to the throne of God Himself” and to be rooted in Deity, it must discard all its former thought-habits, prejudices and preconceptions, and be prepared to receive humbly the illumination that will flood into it from the Light of Divine Wisdom.

For the determined student of the mental discipline implied by the Second Degree there may be recommended two most instructive sources of information and examples of personal experience. One is the Dialogues of Plato and the writings of Plotinus and other Neo-Platonists. The other is the records of the classical Christian contemplatives, such as Eckhart or Ruysbroeck or the “Interior Castle” of St. Theresa. The Phaedrus of Plato, in particular, is an important record by an initiate of the ancient Mysteries of the psychological experiences referred to in the Fellow-Craft Degree.

The subject is too lengthy for further exposition here beyond again indicating that it is in the illumined mental condition attained in this Degree that the discovery is made of the Divine Principle at the centre of our organism; and that the sign of the Degree is equivalent to a prayer that the sunlight of that exalted state may “stand still” and persist in us until we have effected the overthrow of all our “enemies” and eradicated all obstacles to our union with that Principle.

The reference to our ancient brethren receiving their wages at the porch-way of the Temple of Wisdom is an allusion to an experience common to every one in the Fellow-Craft stage of development. He learns that old scores due by him to his fellowmen must be paid off and old wrongs righted, and receives the wages of past sins recorded upon his subconsciousness by that pencil that observes and there records all our thoughts, words and actions. The candidate leading the philosophic life realizes that he is justly entitled to those wages and receives them without scruple or diffidence, knowing himself to be justly entitled to them and only too glad to expiate and purge himself of old offences. For we are all debtors to some one or other for our present position in life, and must repay what we owe to humanity—perhaps with tears or adversity—before we straighten our account with that eternal Justice with which we aspire to become allied.
Third, or Master-Mason’s Degree

Before dealing with the opening and closing of the Third Degree, it should be observed that in the Lodge symbolism the teaching of the First and Second Degrees is carried forward into the Third. The traditional Tracing-Board of the Third Degree exhibits in combination (i) the chequered floor-work, (2) the two pillars at the porchway of the Temple, (3) the winding staircase, and (4) a dormer—window above the porchway. The brief explanation is given that the chequer-work is for the High Priest to walk upon and the dormer-window is that which gave light to it. The entire symbol is but one comprehensive glyph or pictorial diagram of the condition of a candidate aspiring to Master Mason’s rank. As high priest of his own personal temple he must have his bodily nature and its varied desires under foot. He must have developed strength of will and character to “walk upon” this chequer-work and withstand its appeals. He must also be able to ascend the winding staircase of his inner nature, to educate and habituate his mentality to higher conscious states and so establish it there that he will be unaffected by seductive or affrighting perceptions that there may meet him. By the cultivation of this “strength” and the ability to “establish” himself upon the loftier conscious levels he co-ordinates the two pillars at the porchway of his inmost sanctuary—namely, the physical and psychical supports of his organism—and acquires the “stability” involved in regeneration and requisite to him before passing on to “that last and greatest trial” which awaits him. “In strength will I establish My house that it may stand firm.” Man’s perfected organism is what is meant by “My house”. It was the same organism and the same stability that the Christian Master spoke of in saying “Upon this rock will I build my church and the gates of the underworld shall not prevail against it”.

During all the discipline and labour involved in attaining this stability there has shone light on the path from the first moment that his Apprentice’s vision was opened to larger truth; light from the science and philosophy of the Order itself which is proving his “porchway” to the ultimate sanctuary within; light from friendly helpers and instructors; above all, light from the sun in his own “heavens”, streaming through the “dormer-window” of his illumined intelligence and slowly but surely guiding his feet into the way of peace.

But now the last and greatest trial of his fortitude and fidelity, one imposing upon him a still more serious obligation of endurance, awaits him in the total withdrawal of this kindly light. Hitherto, although guided by that light, he has progressed in virtue of his own natural powers and efforts. Now the time has come when those props have to be removed, when all reliance upon
natural abilities, self-will and the normal rational understanding, must be surrendere
red and the aspirant must abandon himself utterly to the transformative
action of his Vital and Immortal Principle alone, passively suffering it to com-
plete the work in entire indepen-dence of his lesser faculties. He must "lose
his life to save it"; he must surrender all that he has hitherto felt to be his life
in order to find life of an altogether higher order.

Hence the Third Degree is that of mystical death, of which bodily death
is taken as figurative, just as bodily birth is taken in the First Degree as fig-
urative of entrance upon the path of regeneration. In all the Mystery-systems
of the past will be found this degree of mystical death as an outstanding and
essential feature prior to the final stage of perfection or regeneration. As an
illustration one has only to refer to a sectional diagram of the Great Pyramid
of Egypt, which was so constructed as to be not merely a temple of initiation,
but to record in per-manent form the principles upon which regeneration is
attainable. Its entrance passage extends for some distance into the building as
a narrow ascending channel through which the postulant who desires to reach
the centre must creep in no small discomfort and restrictedness. This was to
emblemise the dis-cipline and up-hill labour of self-purification requisite in
the Apprentice Degree. At a certain point this restricted passage opens out
into a long and lofty gallery, still upon a steeply rising gradient, up which
the postulant had to pass, but in a condition of ease and liberty. This was to
symbolize the condition of illumination and expanded intellectual liberty as-
sociated with the Fellow-craft Degree. It ended at a place where the candidate
once more had to force his way on hands and knees through the smallest aper-
ture of all, one that led to the central chamber in which stood and still stands
the great sarcophagus in which he was placed and underwent the last supreme
ordeal, and whence he was raised from the dead, initiated and perfected.

The title of admission communicated to the candidate for the Third De-
gree is noteworthy, as also the reason for it. It is a Hebrew name, said to be
that of the first artificer in metals and to mean "in worldly possessions". Now
it will be obvious that the name of the first man who worked at metal-making
in the ordinary sense can be of no possible interest or concern to us to-day, nor
has the information the least bearing upon the subject of human regeneration.
It is obviously a veil of allegory concealing some relevant truth. Such it will
be found to be upon recognizing that Hebrew Biblical names represent not
persons, but personifications of spiritual principles, and that Biblical history
is not ordinary history of temporal events but a record of eternally true spiri-
tual facts. The matter is, therefore, interpretable as follows We know from the
teaching of the Entered Appren-tice Degree what "money and metals" are in
the Masonic sense, and that they represent the attractive power of temporal
possessions, and earthly belongings and affections of whatever description. We know too that from the attraction and seductiveness of these things, and even from the desire for them, it is essential to be absolutely free if one desires to attain that Light and those riches of Wisdom for which the candidate professes to long. Not that it is necessary for him to become literally and physically dispossessed of worldly possessions, but it is essential that he should be so utterly detached from them that he cares not whether he owns any or not and is content, if need be, to be divested of them entirely if they stand in the way of his finding “treasure in heaven”; for so long as he clings to them or they exercise control over him, so long will his initiation into anything better be deferred.

It follows then that it is the personal soul of the candidate himself which is the “artificer in metals” referred to, and which during the whole of its physical existence has been engaged in trafficking with “metals”. Desire for worldly possessions, for sensation and experience in this outward world of good and evil, brought the soul into this world. There it has woven around itself its present body of flesh, every desire and thought being an “artificer” adding something to or modifying its natural encasement. The Greek philosophers used to teach that souls secrete their bodies as a snail secretes his shell, and our own poet Spenser truly wrote

“For of the soul the body form doth take, And soul is form and doth the body make.”

If, then, desire for physical experience and material things brought the soul into material conditions (as is also indicated in the great parable of the Prodigal Son), the relinquishing of that desire is the first necessary step to ensure its return to the condition whence it first emanated. Satiation with and consequent disgust at the “husks” of things instigated the Prodigal Son to aspire to return home. Similar repletion and revolt drives many a man to lose all desire for external things and to seek for peace within himself and there redirect his energies in quest of possessions which are abiding and real. This is the moment of his true “conversion”, and the moment when he is ripe for initiation into the hidden Mysteries of his own being. The First and Second Degrees of Masonry imply that the candidate has undergone lengthy discipline in the renunciation of external things and the cultivation of desire for those that are within. But, notwithstanding that he has passed through all the discipline of those Degrees, he is represented at the end of them as being still not entirely purified and to be still “in worldly possessions” in the sense that a residue of attraction by them and reliance upon himself lingers in his heart; and it is these last subtle close-clinging elements of “base metal” in him that
need to be eradicated if perfection is to be attained. The ingrained defects and tendencies of the soul as the result of all its past habits and experiences are not suddenly eliminated or easily subdued. Self-will and pride are very subtle in their nature and may continue to deceive their victim long after he has purged himself of grosser faults. As Cain was the murderer of Abel, so every taint of base metal in oneself debases the gold of the Vital and Immortal Principle. It must be renounced, died to and transmuted in the crucial process of the Third Degree. Hence it is that the candidate is entrusted with a name that designates himself at this stage and that indicates that he is still “in worldly possessions”; that is, that some residue of the spirit of this world yet lingers in him which it is necessary to eliminate from his nature before he can be raised to the sublime degree of Master.

Examination of the text of the opening and closing of the Lodge in the Third Degree discloses the whole of the philosophy upon which the Masonic system is reared. It indicates that the human soul has originated in the eternal East that “East” being referable to the world of Spirit and not to any geographical direction — and that thence it has directed its course towards the “West” — the material world which is the antipodes of the spiritual and into which the soul has wandered. Its purpose in so journeying from spiritual to physical conditions is declared to be the quest and recovery of something it has lost, but which by its own industry and suitable instruction it hopes to find. From this it follows that the loss itself occurred prior to its descent into this world, otherwise that descent would not have been necessary. What it is that has been lost is not explicitly declared, but is implied and is stated to form “the genuine secrets of a Master Mason”. It is the loss of a word, or rather of The Word, the Divine Logos, or basic root and essence of our own being. In other words the soul of man has ceased to be God-conscious and has degenerated into the limited terrestrial consciousness of the ordinary human being. It is in the condition spoken of in the cosmic parable of Adam when extruded from Eden, an exile from the Divine Presence and condemned to toil and trouble. The quest after this lost Word is declared by the Wardens to have been so far abortive, and to have resulted in the discovery, not of that Reality, but of substitutional images of it. All which implies that, in the strength of merely his natural temporal intelligence, man can find and know nothing more in this world than shadows, images and phenomenal forms of realities which abide eternally and noumenally in the world of Spirit to which his temporal faculties are at present closed. Yet there remains a way of regaining consciousness of that higher world and life. It is by bringing into function a now dormant and submerged faculty resident at the depth and centre of his being. That dormant faculty is the Vital and Immortal Principle which exists as the central point
of the circle of his individuality. As the outward Universe is the externalized projection of an indwelling immanent Deity, so is the outward individual man the externalization and diffusion of an inherent Divine germ, albeit perverted and distorted by personal self-will and desire which have dislocated and shut off his consciousness from his root of being. Recover contact with that central Divine Principle by a voluntary renunciation of the intervening obstructions and inharmonious elements in oneself, and man at once ceases to be merely the rationalized animal he now is and becomes grafted upon a new and Divine life-principle, a sharer of Omniscience and a co-operator with Deity. He recovers the lost and genuine secrets of his own being and has for ever finished with substitutions, shadows and simulacra of Reality. He reaches a point and lives from a centre from which no Master Mason can ever err or will ever again desire to err, for it is the end, object and goal of his existence.

Meanwhile, until actual recovery of that lost secret, man must put up with its substitutions and regard these as sacramental of concealed realities, contact with which will be his great reward if he submits himself to the conditions upon which alone he may discover them. The existence of those realities and the regimen essential to their enjoyment are inculcated by Masonry as they have been by every other initiatory Order of the past, and it is for the fact that this knowledge is and always has been conserved in the world, so as to be ever available for earnest aspirants towards it, that gratitude is expressed to the Grand Master of all for having never left Himself, or the way of return to Him, without witness in this outer world.

As much has been said about the Ceremony of the Third Degree in other papers it is unnecessary here to expound it further. It may be stated, however, that it alone constitutes the Masonic Initiation. The First and Second Degrees are, strictly, but preparatory stages leading up to Initiation; they are not the Initiation itself; they but prescribe the purification of the bodily and mental nature necessary to qualify the candidate for the end which crowns the whole work. To those unacquainted with what is really involved in actual as distinct from merely ceremonial initiation, and who have no notion of what initiation meant in the old schools of Wisdom and still means for those who understand the theory of Regenerative Science, it is well nigh impossible to convey any idea of its process or its results. The modern Mason, however high in titular rank, is as little qualified to understand the subject as the man who has never entered a Lodge. “To become initiated (or perfected)”, says an old authority, Plutarch, “involves dying”; not a physical death, but a moral way of dying in which the soul is loosened from the body and the sensitive life, and becoming temporarily detached therefrom is set free to enter the world of Eternal Light and Immortal Being. This, after most drastic preliminary disciplines,
was achieved in a state of trance and under the supervision of duly qualified Masters and Adepts who introverted the candidate’s liberated soul into its own interior principles until it at last reached the Blazing Star or Glory at its own Centre, in the light of which it simultaneously knew itself and God, and realized their unity and the “points of fellowship” between them. Then it was that, from this at once awful and sublime experience, the initiated soul was brought back to its bodily encasement again and “reunited to the companions of its former toils”, to resume its temporal life, but with conscious realization of Life Eternal super-added to its knowledge and its powers. Then only was it entitled to the name of Master Mason. Then only could it exclaim, in the words of another initiate (Empedocles), “Farewell, all earthly allies; henceforth am I no mortal wight, but an immortal angel, ascending up into Divinity and reflecting upon that likeness of it which I have found in myself”.

The “secrets” of Freemasonry and of initiation are largely connected with this process of introversion of the soul to its own Centre, and beyond this brief reference to the subject it is inexpedient here to say more. But in confirmation of what has been indicated it may be useful to refer to the 23rd Psalm, in which the Hebrew Initiates speak of both the supreme experience of being passed through “the valley of the shadow of death” and the preliminary phases of mental preparation for that ordeal. Stripping that familiar psalm of the gorgeous metaphor given it in the beautiful Biblical translation, its real meaning may be paraphrased and explained for Masonic students as follows:-

“The Vital and Immortal Principle within me is my Initiator; and is all-sufficient to lead me to God.

It has made me lie down (in self-discipline and humiliation) in “green pastures” of meditation and mental sustenance.

It has led me beside “still waters” of contemplation (as distinct from the “rough sea of passion” of my natural self).

It is restoring my soul (reintegrating it out of chaos and disorder).

Even when I come to pass through the valley of deadly gloom (my own interior veils of darkness) I will fear no evil; for It is with me (as a guiding star); Its directions and disciplines will safeguard me.

It provides me with the means of overcoming my inner enemies and weaknesses; It anoints my intelligence with the oil of wisdom; the cup of my mind brims over with new light and consciousness.

The Divine Love and Truth, which I shall find face to face at my centre, will be a conscious presence to me all the days of my temporal life; and there-after I shall dwell in a “house of the Lord” (a glorified spiritual body) for ever.”
The Third Degree is completed in, and can only be more fully expounded by reference to, the Holy Royal Arch Ceremony. A separate further paper will, therefore, be devoted to that Ceremony.

The Masonic Apron

From what has been said in these pages the full significance of the Apron will now be perceived and may be summarized thus:-

1. The Apron is the symbol of the corporeal vesture and condition of the soul (not so much of the temporal physical body, as of its permanent invisible corporeality which will survive the death of the mortal part).

2. The soul fabricates its own body or “apron” by its own desires and thoughts (see Genesis III., 7, “they made themselves aprons”) and as these are pure or impure so will that body be correspondingly transparent and white, or dense and opaque.

3. The investiture of the candidate with the Apron in each Degree by the Senior Warden as the Master’s delegate for that purpose is meant to inculcate this truth; for the Senior Warden represents the soul which, in accordance with its own spirituality, automatically clothes itself with its own self-made vesture in a way that marks its own progress or regress.

4. The unadorned white Apron of the First Degree indicates the purity of soul contemplated as being attained in that Degree.

5. The pale blue rosettes added to the Apron in the Second Degree indicate that progress is being made in the science of regeneration and that the candidate’s spirituality is beginning to develop and bud through. Blue, the colour of the sky, is traditionally associated with devotion to spiritual concerns.

6. In the Third Degree still further progress is emblematized by the increased blue adornments of the Apron, as also by its silver tassels and the silver serpent used to fasten the apron-strings. In the First and Second Degrees no metal has appeared upon the Apron. The candidate has been theoretically divesting himself of all base metals and transmuting them into spiritual riches. With Mastership he has attained an influx of those riches under the emblem of the tassels of silver, a colourless precious metal always associated with the soul, as gold by reason of its supreme value and warm colour is associated with Spirit. The silver serpent is the emblem of Divine Wisdom knitting the soul’s new-made vesture together.

7. The pale blue and silver of the Master Mason’s Apron become intensified in the deep blue and gold ornamentation worn by the Grand Lodge Officers, who in theory have evolved to still deeper spirituality and transmuted
themselves from silver into fine gold. “The king’s daughter (the soul) is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold,” i.e., wrought or fabricated by her own spiritual energies.

A Prayer at Lodge Closing

“O Sovereign and Most Worshipful of all Masters, who, in Thy infinite love and wisdom, hast devised our Order as a means to draw Thy children nearer Thee, and hast so ordained its Officers that they are emblems of Thy sevenfold power;

Be Thou unto us an Outer Guard, and defend us from the perils that beset us when we turn from that which is without to that which is within;

Be Thou unto us an Inner Guard, and preserve our souls that desire to pass within the portal of Thy holy mysteries;

Be unto us the Younger Deacon, and teach our wayward feet the true and certain steps upon the path that leads to Thee: Be Thou also the Elder Deacon, and guide us up the steep and winding stairway to Thy throne;

Be unto us the Lesser Warden, and in the meridian sunlight of our understanding speak to us in sacraments that shall declare the splendours of Thy unmanifested light;

Be Thou also unto us the Greater Warden, and in the awful hour of disappearing light, when vision fails and thought has no more strength, be with us still, revealing to us, as we may bear them, the hidden mysteries of Thy shadow;

And so, through light and darkness, raise us, Great Master, till we are made one with Thee, in the unspeakable glory of Thy presence in the East.

So mote it be.”
Chapter 5

The Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem

Freemasonry, under the English Constitution, reaches its climax and conclusion in the Order of the Holy Royal Arch. There exists a variety of other degrees ramifying from the main stem of the Masonic system which either elaborate side-points of its doctrine or re-express its teachings in alternative symbolism. These, while of greater or less merit and interest, are beyond our present consideration, and, indeed, are superfluities tending rather to diffuse the student’s attention than to deepen his insight into the central purpose of the Craft. The taking of additional higher degrees may be indulged in almost indefinitely, but to what purpose if the initial ones, which contain all that is necessary for the understanding of the subject, remain imperfectly assimilated? It is a fallacy to suppose that the multiplying of degrees will result in the discovery of important arcane secrets which one has failed to find in the rites of the Craft and the Royal Arch. The higher degrees indeed illustrate truths of much interest and often set forth with impressive ceremonial beauty, the appreciation of which will be the greater after and not before the meaning of the preliminary ones has been thoroughly absorbed; whilst the pursuit of “secrets” is certain to prove illusory, for the only secrets worth the name or the finding are those incommunicable ones which discover themselves within the personal consciousness of the seeker who is in earnest to translate ceremonial representation into facts of spiritual experience.

It was accordingly a sound instinct that prompted those who settled the present constitution of the Order to exclude these supplementary refinements and to declare that “Masonry consists of the three Craft Degrees and the Holy Royal Arch and no more”, for within that compass is exhibited, or at least outlined, the entire process of human regeneration; so that after the Royal Arch there really remains nothing more to be said, although what has been said is of course capable of elaboration.
The completeness of regeneration theoretically postulated in those four stages is marked, it should be observed, by the very significant expression used in connection with a Royal Arch Chapter, which is interpreted as meaning “My people having obtained mercy”, which in its further analysis signifies that all the parts and faculties (“people”) of the candidate’s organism have at last, and as the result of his previous discipline and ordeals, become sublimated and integrated in a new quality and higher order of life than that previously enjoyed in virtue of his merely temporal nature. In a word, he has become regenerated. He has achieved the miracle of “squaring the circle” — a metaphorical expression for regeneration, as shall be explained presently.

Although but an expansion and completion of the Third Degree, of which at one time it formed part, there were good reasons for detaching the Royal Arch portion from what now forms the Degree of Master Mason. The two parts in combination made an inconveniently long rite, whilst a change in the symbolic appointments and officers of the temple of initiation was necessary, as the ceremony proceeded, to give appropriate spectacular representation to the further points calling for expression. Despite this re-arrangement the Royal Arch is the natural conclusion and fulfillment of the Third Degree. The latter inculcates the necessity of mystical death and dramatizes the process of such death and revival therefrom into newness of life. The Royal Arch carries the process a stage farther, by showing its fulfilment in the “exaltation” or apotheosis of him who has undergone it. The Master Mason’s Degree might be said to be represented in the terms of Christian theology by the formula “He suffered and was buried and rose again”, whilst the equivalent of the exaltation ceremony is “He ascended into heaven”.

The Royal Arch Degree seeks to express that new and intensified life to which the candidate can be raised and the exalted degree of consciousness that comes with it. From being conscious merely as a natural man and in the natural restricted way common to every one born into this world, he becomes exalted (whilst still in his natural flesh) to consciousness in a supernatural and illimitable way. As has been said in previous papers, the purpose of all initiation is to lift human consciousness from lower to higher levels by quickening the latent spiritual potentialities in man to their full extent through appropriate discipline. No higher level of attainment is possible than that in which the human merges in the Divine consciousness and knows as God knows. And that being the level of which the Order of the Royal Arch treats ceremonially, it follows that Masonry as a sacramental system reaches its climax and conclusion in that Order.

As has also been already shown, to attain that level involves as its essential prerequisite the total abnegation, renunciation and renovation of one’s
original nature, the surrender of one’s natural desires, tendencies and preconceptions, and the abandon-ment and nullifying of one’s natural self-will, by such a habitual discipline and self-denial and gradual but vigorous opposition to all these as will cause them gradually to atrophy and die down. “He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit”. As with a seed of wheat, so with man. If he persists in clinging to the present natural life he knows, if he refuses to recognize that a higher quality of life is here and now possible to him, or is unwilling to make the necessary effort to attain it, he “abideth alone”, gets nowhere, and only frustrates his own spiritual evolution. But if he is willing to “die” in the sense indicated, if he will so re-orientate his will and silence his natural energies and desires as to give the Vital and Immortal Principle within him the chance to assert itself and supersede them, then from the disintegrated material of his old nature that germ of true life will spring into growth in him and bear much fruit, and by the stepping-stones of initiation he will rise from his dead self to higher things than he can otherwise experience.

This necessity of self-dying is not, we repeat, the physical death of the body but a mystical death — in life of everything except the body— is the first and fundamental fact to be grasped before one may hope to realize or even to understand the mystery of the Royal Arch Degree. “Mors janua vitae”; death to self is the portal to true life. There is no other way. It is the unescapable law and condition of the soul’s progress.

But since it is a process involving a “most serious trial of fortitude and fidelity” and a grapple with oneself from which the timorous and self-diffident may well shrink, the Mystery-systems have always exhibited an example for the instruction, encourage-ment and emulation of those prepared to make the attempt and the necessary sacrifice. To hearten them to the task the Initiatory Colleges have held up a prototype in the person of some great soul who has already trodden the same path and emerged triumphant therefrom. It matters nothing whether the prototype be one whose historic actuality and identity can be demonstrated, or whether he can be regarded only as legendary or mythical; the point being not to teach a merely historical fact, but to enforce a spiritual principle. In Egypt the proto-type was Osiris, who was slain by his malignant brother Typhon, but whose mangled limbs were collected in a coffer from which he emerged reinte-grated and divinized. In Greece the prototype was Bacchus, who was torn to pieces by the Titans. Baldur in Scandinavia and Mithra in Graeco-Roman Europe were similar prototypes. In Masonry the prototype is Hiram Abiff, who met his death as the result of a conspiracy by a crowd of workmen of whom there were three principal ruffians. In the Chris-
tian and chief of all systems, since it compre-hends and re-expresses all the others, the greatest of the Exemplars died at the hands of the mob, headed also by three chief ruffians, Judas, Caiaphas and Pilate. If in Masonry the mystical death is dramatized more realistically than the resurrection that follows upon it, that resurrection is nevertheless shown in the “raising” of the candidate to the rank of Master Mason and his “reunion with the com-panions of former toils”, implying the reintegration and resumption of all his old faculties and powers in a sublimated state, just as the limbs of the risen Osiris were said to reunite into a new whole and as the Christian Master withdrew His mutilated body from the tomb and reassumed it, transmuted into one of supernatural substance and splendour.

We have, therefore, now to consider how the Royal Arch Degree exhibits the attainment of a new order of life. But it may be as well to say in advance that for those unhabituated to looking beyond surface-values and ma-terial meanings the exposition about to be given, dealing as it will with the profound spiritual truths and advanced psychological experi-ence allegorized by the external ceremonial, is likely to present some difficulty of comprehen-sion and acceptance. The Royal Arch, however, would not be the Supreme Degree it is did it not move upon a supremely high level of thought and in-struction. It was not compiled to accommodate the elementary intelligence theoretically characterizing the philosophically untrained neophyte. It pre-supposes that its candidate has passed through a long, strenuous period of purification and mental discipline, in the course of which his understanding has become very considerably widened and deepened, whilst his fidelity to the high inward Light which has conducted him safely so far, has induced in him a humility and docility fitting him for what still awaits him — the attainment of that Wisdom which is concealed from this world’s wise and prudent, but is revealed unto babes. It is a rite of initiation dealing less with his gross corpo-real nature and his ordinary temporal mentality (which have been the subject of purification in the earlier degrees) than with the higher reaches and pos-sibilities of his understanding and conscious-ness. As it is, what can be said here can at best be but a partial and incomplete exposition of a theme calling rather for disciplined imagination and reverent reflec-tion than for reasoned argument. Certain things must perforce be omitted from explanation entirely, whilst others are mentioned with diffidence and at the risk of their being mis-understood or rejected by such as do not yet realize that in these matters “the letter killeth, the spirit vivifieth” and that “spiritual truths must be spiritually discerned.”

Before interpreting the Ceremony itself it is desirable first to indicate four noteworthy features connected with this Supreme Order and distincti-fying
it from the three grades leading to it. In speaking even of these incidentals the before-mentioned difficulties of both exposition and apprehension will already make themselves felt.

First, no one can be received into a Chapter without first having attained Master Mason’s rank.

Second, the circular symbol of the Grand Geometrician, which in the Second Degree shone high above in the ceiling of the Temple, and in the Third Degree had moved downwards and burned as a glimmering ray in the East to guide the candidate’s feet into the way of peace, has now descended completely to the chequer-work floor, where it rests as the centre and cubical focus of the entire organism and bears the Sacred and Ineffable Name, as also those of Solomon and the two Hiram.

Third, the constitution of the Assembly is no longer one of seven officers, but of nine, who are grouped in three triads about the Central Sacred Symbol.

Fourth, the Assembly, regarded as a unity, is no longer designated a Lodge, but a Chapter.

The first of these points — that none but a Master Mason can enter the Royal Arch — has already been accounted for. It is not feasible, nor is it within the law governing the process of spiritual evolution, for any who has not experienced the stage of mystical death to have experience of that which lies beyond that death. As an unborn physical infant can know nothing of this world, in which nevertheless it exists, until actually initiated into it by birth, so the embryonic spiritual child cannot be born into conscious function upon the plane of the Spirit until it has become entirely detached from the enfolding carnal matrix and tendencies to which it has been habituated.

The second and third points can be considered together. The re-arrangement of the factors constituting the ceremonial temple are symbolic of a structural re-arrangement which has occurred in the candidate’s own psychical organization. This has undergone a repolarization as the result of the descent into it of that high central Light which at first but shone as it were in his “heavens”, afar off and above him, illumining the dormer-window of his natural intelligence. Consider deeply what this change implies. The Day-star from on high has now visited him; the fontal source of all consciousness has descended into the very chequer-work material of his transient physical organism, not merely permeating it temporarily with light, but taking root and becoming grafted there sub-stantially and permanently. In theological language, God has become man, and man has become divinized, in virtue of this descent and union. In Masonic terms, the Vital and Immortal Principle resident in the candidate has at last superseded his temporal life-principle and established him upon a new centre of incorruptible life. Now, and perhaps only now, becomes
thoroughly appreciable the necessity for the earlier purifications, discipline, self-crucifixion and death of all the lower nature. How could the purity of the Divine Essence tabernacle in the coarse body of the sensualist? How could the Eternal Wisdom unfold its treasures in a mind benighted or caring for nothing but base metals and material pursuits? How could the Universal Will cooperate with and function through the man whose petty personal will blocks its channel, antagonizing it at every turn with his selfish preferences and disordered desires? A Master Mason, then, in the full sense of the term, is no longer an ordinary man, but a divinized man; one in whom the Universal and the personal conscious-ness have come into union. Obviously the quality of life and consciousness of such an one must differ vastly from that of other men. His whole being is differently qualitated and geared upon another centre. That new centre is described as the Grand Geometrician of man’s personal universe, inasmuch as its action upon the organism of whoever surrenders himself to its influence causes a redispersion of functional and conscious faculty. The knowledge of this fact was with the wise ancients the true and original science of Geometry (literally “earth-measuring”; determining the occult potentialities of the human earth or temporal organism under spiritual stresses). “God geometrizes” wrote Plato, with intimate knowledge of the subject. Many of the Euclidean and Pythagorean theorems, now regarded merely as mathematical demonstra-tions, were originally expressions, veiled in mathematical glyphs, of the esoteric science of soul-building or true Masonry. The well-known 47th Proposition of the First Book of Euclid is an example of this and in consequence has come (though few modern Masons could explain why) to be inscribed upon the Past Master’s official jewel. Again, the squaring of the circle — that problem which has baffled so many modern mathematicians — is an occult expression signifying that Deity, symbolized by the all-containing circle, has attained form and manifestation in a “square” or human soul. It expresses the mystery of the Incarnation, accomplished within the personal soul.

Under the stress then of the Geometrizing Principle now found symbolically integrated within the candidate’s temporal organism, a re-distribution of his component powers has become effected. His repolarized condition is symbolized by an equi-lateral triangle with a point at its centre, and such a triangle will be found, worked in gold, upon the sash worn by the Companions of the Order. The significance of this triangle is that the tripartite aspects of him who wears it (that is, the spiritual, psychical and physical parts of him) now stand equalized and equilibrated around their common Life-Principle at the centre, fitted and equipped for Its purpose. Yet each of these three divisions, though in itself unitary, is philosophically triadic in composition when subjected to intellectual analysis. “Every monad is the parent of a triad” is another maxim
of the Ancients, who anticipated the modern Hegelian proposition of metaphysics that thesis, antithesis and synthesis are the essential ingredients of a given truth. Hence it comes about that the three aspects of each of the three sides of our equi-lateral triangle are ceremonially personified by the nine officers of the Chapter-three in the East representing the spiritual side, three in the West figuring the soul or psychical side, and three sub-ordinate links connecting these other two. (These will be further and more conveniently treated of later when the symbolic nature of the officers is dealt with).

The fourth point to be noticed was the change of designation from “Lodge” to “Chapter”. The word “Chapter” derives from Caput, head. The reason for the change of name lies, however, much deeper than in the fact that the Royal Arch stands at the head or summit of the Craft. It has reference in a twofold way to the capitular rank and conscious-ness of the Arch Mason himself. In virtue of his headship or supremacy over his material nature he has passed beyond mere Craftwork and governing the Lodge of his lower nature, which he has now made the docile instrument and servant of his spiritual self. Henceforth his energies are employed primarily upon the spiritual plane. The “head” of the material organism of man is the spirit of man, and this spirit consciously conjoined with the Universal Spirit is Deity’s supreme instrument and vehicle in the temporal world. Such a man’s physical organism and brain have become sublimated and keyed up to a condition and an efficiency immensely in advance of average humanity. Physio-logical processes are involved which cannot be discussed here, beyond saying that in such a man the entire nervous system contributes to charge certain ganglia and light up certain brain-centres in a way of which the ordinary mind knows nothing. The nervous system provides the storage-batteries and conductive medium of the Spirit’s energies just as telegraph wires are the media for transmitting electrical energy. But the true Master Mason, in virtue of his mastership, knows how to control and apply those energies. They culminate and come to self-consciousness in his head, in his intelligence. And in this respect we may refer to a very heavily veiled Scriptural testimony, the import of which goes quite unperceived to the un instructed reader. The Gospels record that the Passion of the Great Exemplar and Master concluded “at the place called Golgotha in the Hebrew tongue; that is, the place of a skull”; that is to say it terminated in the head or seat of intelligence and in a mystery of the spiritual consciousness. The same truth is also testified to, though again under veils of symbolic phrasing, in the reference to the sprig of acacia planted at the head of the grave of the Masonic Grand Master and prototype, Hiram Abiff. The grave is the candidate’s soul; the sprig of acacia typifies the latent akasa (to use an Eastern term) or divine germ planted in that soil and waiting to become quickened into activity in
his intelligence, the “head” of that plane. When that sprig of acacia blooms at the head of his soul’s sepulchre, he will understand at one and the same moment the mystery of Golgotha, the mystery of the death of Hiram, and the meaning of the Royal Arch ceremony of exaltation. It is a mystery of spiritual consciousness, the efflorescence of the mind in God, the opening up of the human intelligence in conscious association with the Universal and Omniscient Mind. It is for this reason that the cranium or skull is given prominence in the Master Mason’s Degree.

With this premised we proceed to considering the Ceremony of Exaltation.

The Ceremony of Exaltation

Again the candidate is in a state of darkness. But the reason of this darkness differs entirely from that which existed at the Entered Apprentice stage. Then he was but an ignorant beginner upon the quest, making his first irregular be-nighted efforts towards the light. Now, he has long passed beyond that stage; he comes with all the qualifications and equipment of a Master Mason. Long ago he found the light he first sought, and for long he has been directing his steps and nourishing his growth by its rays. And more; after all this intimacy with it he has known it recede from him and disappear in the great ordeal of dereliction of the Third Degree, when, in the “dark night of the soul” and utter helplessness of all his powers, he learned how strength could be perfected out of weakness by the potent efficacy of the Vital and Immortal Principle within him, in whose presence the darkness and the light are both alike. His present initial deprivation of light is the darkness of the Third Degree carried over into this further experience. It betokens rather a momentary failure to adjust his perception to the new quality of life he is now entering upon, just as a new-born child is unable at first to co-ordinate its sight to objects before it. For a while, but only for a brief while, the candidate feels himself in darkness; but he is really blinded rather by excess of light than by lack of it.

In this condition he undertakes the opening out of a certain place which he proceeds to enter and explore, keeping touch meanwhile with his companions by a cord or life-line. The symbolism of all this is singularly rich in allusion to certain interior processes of introspection well defined in the experience of the contemplative mystics and well attested in their records. The place entered emblematizes once again the material and psychical organism, a dense compact of material particles coating the more tenuous interior spirit of man as a shell surrounds the contents of an egg. “Roll away the stone”, it will be recalled, was the first injunction of the Master at the raising of Lazarus.
This obstruction removed, the psychical organism becomes detached from the physical and the mind is free to become introverted and work exploratively upon its own ground, to search the contents of its own unplumbed depths, to probe deeper and deeper into itself, eradicating defects and removing rubble, pushing in and in by the energy of a persistent will, yet retaining contact the while with the outer physical nature by a subtle filament or life-line which prevents their entire separation. The position is the same as when the body sleeps whilst the mind is dreaming and vividly active, save that in dreams the will is not functioning as a consciously directive instrument as is hypothetically the case with one who, having attained Mastership, has all his faculties under volition and control. Yet all this interior work, so rapidly summarized and symbolically enacted in the Ceremony, is not the work of a day nor the casual task of a weakling. The ancients referred to it as the twelve labours of Hercules, whilst its arduousness is further graphically described by the initiate poet Virgil in the sixth Aeneid and by more recent illuminates. Nor, even when its nature is fully apprehended, is it a work to be lightly undertaken. Throughout the Ceremony the utmost humility is enjoined upon the candidate as the essential qualification for entering upon this process of self-exploration. He is bidden to draw nigh to the Centre, but to halt and make obeisance at three several stages, at each of which he is told he is approaching more nearly to that central Essence, that holy ground of his being upon which only the humble can walk, that “earth” which only the meek shall inherit.

It is in this state that the introverted mind, groping for its own foundation and centre, reaches at length the bedrock of its being. As the symbolic ceremony exhibits the grasping of an emblem embodying the Word of Life, so literally and in fact the questing mind, in coming upon the Vital and Immortal Principle animating it, “lays hold on Eternal Life”. It discovers the Lost Word, the divine root of its being, from which it has hitherto been so long dissociated. It fails to realize the fact at first, for “the Light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not”. Presently that darkness will disappear; when “the day (the new consciousness) dawns and the shadows (the old mentality) flee away”.

Therefore it is that this work of the introverted mind and the discovery it makes, are exhibited as taking place darkly and amid subterranean gloom. There remains, therefore, one concluding psychological process — to extrovert that knowledge and bring it forward into formalized brain-consciousness, so that what the spirit and the soul already know interiorly the outer mind may also know exteriorly. Subjective awareness does not become knowledge until it has been cerebrated and passed through the alembic of the brain and the logical understanding. When it has so passed through and become forma-
lized, a reciprocal and reflex action between the inner and outer natures is set up resulting in the illumina-tion of the whole. This extroversion of subjective perceptions is symbolically achieved by the return of the candidate from the subterranean depths to the surface and there rejoining his former companion-sojourners and effecting a unification of all his component parts.

It is then that the Mystery is consummated. The Great Light breaks. The Vital and Immortal Principle comes to self-consciousness in him. The Glory of the Lord is revealed to and in him, and all his flesh sees it.

So far as it is possible for symbolic ceremonial to portray it this consummation is represented by the restoration to light and the revelation that then meets the candidate’s gaze. His condition differs now from any that has preceded it. It is not merely one of illumination by the Supernal Light. It is one of identification with It. He and It have become one, as a white-hot iron is indistinguishable from the furnace-flame engulfing it. At the outset of his Masonic quest the predominant wish of his heart was Light. The impulse was not his own; it was that of the Light Itself — the primal Light of light, the Divine Substantial Word-seeking self-development in him. Consciousness is that Light become self-perceptive by polarization within an efficient physiological organism. Man provides the only organism adapted to the attainment of that self-perception; but only when that organism is purified and prepared sufficiently for the achievement. In the Royal Arch that achievement is hypothetically effected.

The condition attained by the illumined candidate is the equivalent of what in Christian theology is known as Beatific Vision and in the East as Samadhi. It is also spoken of as universal or cosmic consciousness, since the percipient, transcending all sense of personal individualization, time and space, is co-conscious with all that is. He has entered the bliss and peace surpassing that temporal understanding which is limited to perceiving the discords, antinomies and contrasts characterizing finite existence; he has risen to that exalted state where all these find their resolution in the blissful concord of the Eternal. He is in conscious sympathy and identity of feeling with all that lives and feels, in virtue of that universal charity and limitless love which is the corollary of perceiving the unity of all in the Being of Deity, and which at the outset of his progress he was told was the summit of the Mason’s profession. He sees too that there is a universe within as well as without him; that he himself microcosmically sums up and contains all that manifested to his temporal intelligence as the vast spacial universe around him. He is himself conscious of being the measure of the universe; he realizes that the earth, the heavens, and all their contents, are externalizations, projected images, of corresponding realities present within himself. As the perfected head of creation, he beholds
how he sums up in himself all the lower forms of life through which his organism has passed to attain to that perfection. The four symbolic standards exhibiting the lion, ox, man and eagle are a very ancient glyph, declaring among other things the story of the soul’s evolution and its progress from the passional wild-beast stage to one which, while still sensuous and animal, is docile and disciplined for service, and thence to the stage of human rationality, which at length culminates in upward-soaring spirituality. Similarly the displayed banners of the twelve Israelitish tribes are again but figures of their prototypes, the twelve zodiacal sections of those heavens which could not exist or be discernible to the outward eye were they not also the phenomenalized aspect of a reality cognizable by the inward eye; whilst, gathered beneath these emblems, are those who represent the tribes of no terrestrial nation, but are the “tribes of God”, the heavenly hierarchies that constitute an archetypal canopy or holy royal arch above the visible creation and that mediate to it the effluences of that all-embracing triune Spirit of Power, Wisdom and Love in which the entire composite structure lives, moves and has its being.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, Let there be light, and there was light.” With these words begins the Sacred Script which is the sacramental token of that Living Word by whom all things were made, and are still in the making, and whose life is the light of men. The candidate who recovers that lost Word, in the sense of regaining vital organic integration into it, and who, therefore, is one with its Life and its Light, is able to verify this old creation-story in its personal application to himself. He stands in the presence of his own “earth” — the stone vault or dense matrix out of which his finer being has emerged- and of his own “heavens” or ethereal body of substantialized radiance which (as the iridescent sash of the Order is meant to denote) now covers him with light as with a garment. He is able to discern that it was himself who at first was “without form and void” and who in virtue of that Fiat Lux! has at last become transformed from chaos and unconsciousness into a form so perfect and lucid as to become a co-conscious vehicle of Divine Wisdom itself.

With this symbolic attainment of Beatific Vision at the restoration to light, the effective part of the Royal Arch Ceremony as an initiatory rite concludes. What follows upon it is anti-climax and allegorical exposition of a similar nature to the traditional history in the Master Mason’s Degree. This takes the form of a mythos or dramatic narrative by the three sojourners, describing their release from captivity in Babylon, their return to Jerusalem under an impulse to assist in rebuilding the destroyed national temple, their work among its ruins and the discovery of an ancient and apparently important archive. The
perspicacious mind will not fail to perceive in this historical or quasi-historical narrative an allegory of the spiritual process which has been going on within the candidate himself. It is he, as it is every human soul, that has been in Babylonian bondage, in captivity to the Babel-confusion of mundane existence, the tyranny of material interests, and the chaos of his own disordered nature. It is he who, in revolt from these, has in reflective moments “sat down and wept by the waters of Babylon” — the transient flux of temporal things— and “re-membered Zion”, in a yearning for inward freedom and permanent peace of heart. It is he who finds the temple of his old natural self worthless and in ruins, and realizes that upon its site he must rebuild another and worthier one. From within himself comes the urge of the inward Lord (Kurios) which (under the mask of Cyrus the king) bids him forthwith depart from his captivity and go up to his true native-land and re-erect the Lord’s house. It is himself who discovers among the rubble of his old self the plans and the material for the new structure. And ultimately when that new structure is completed and, when from natural man he has become reorganized into spiritual man, it is he who is able to perceive the wonders of his own constitu-tion, to behold his own “earth” and his own “heavens” now fused into a unity to which both his material and his spiritual nature were necessary contributors.

The constitution of the Chapter as first revealed to the candidate is, therefore, a symbol of his perfected organism. He sees that it is polarized East and West; the East occupied by the three Principals, signifying his spiritual pole; the West, occupied by the three Sojourners, his psychic and materialized pole; each triad being the reflex of the other, yet each triad being an organic unity in itself. St. John testifies to this (and the ceremonial rite is made conformable to the teaching of that great Initiate) when he writes: “There are three that bear record in heaven, and these three are one.” And there are three that bear witness in earth, and these three agree in one. The meaning of this metaphysical assertion is that, just as a ray of white light splits up (as in the rainbow) into three primary colours which still remain organically united, so both the self-knowing Spirit in man and his psychical nature, although monadic essentially, are prismatically dissociable into a trinity. The Spirit in man in its triple aspects is, therefore, appropriately typified by the three Principals. They represent the three high attributes of the Spirit — Holiness, Royal Supremacy, Functional Power — referred to in the title of the Order: Holy-Royal-Arch. The middle and neutral term of these three must be considered as differentiating itself into a passive and an active, or a negative and a positive aspect; although all three act conjointly and as one (as is in fact the case with the three Principals of a Chapter). These three aspects of monadic Spirit are personified as Haggai (passive), Joshua (active),
with Zerubabel as the middle term from which the other two issue and into which they merge. For the central Majesty is in one of its aspects silent and withdrawn and in the other functionally active and compulsive.

So too, with the triad of Sojourners at the other pole. They represent the unitary human Ego or personality also in its threefold aspects. They are the incarnated antitype or physicalized reflex of man’s archetypal unincarnated and overshadowing Spirit. Hence they are designated Sojourners, as being but transient consociated pilgrims or way-farers upon a plane of impermanence, in contrast with the enduring life of the deathless spirit whose projection upon this lower world they are. Psycho-logically, human personality is distributed into a passive negative subconsciousness and an active positive intelligence, linked together by a central co-ordinating principle, the combined three constituting man’s unitary individuality. My ego with its central and directive power of will is my principal sojourner; my subconsciousness with its passive intuitional capacity, and my practical intelligence with its active and connecting powers of thought and understanding, are my assistant sojourners. Let me see to it that, like their symbolic representatives, they are kept clothed in white and so able to reflect and react to their correspondences in the eastern or spiritual pole of my being.

The nexus or connecting medium between man’s spiritual and bodily poles is represented by a third triad impersonated by the two Scribes and the Janitor. The more important of these scribes is attached to the East pole and is as it were its emissary towards the West; the other is associated with the Western pole and his activities are directed East-wards; whilst the Door-keeper is the point of contact with the world without. In one of their many significances they typify the middle term between Spirit and Matter—the astral medium or psychic bridge, in virtue of which contact between them is possible.

Heavily veiled beneath the sacramentalism of a council of the Jewish Sanhedrim, the Royal Arch Ceremony therefore exhibits in a most graphic manner the psychologic rationale of the final stage of regeneration. To the literalist, unacquainted with the fact that, in both Sacred Writ and the teaching of the Mysteries, surface appearances are always intended to be transposed into spiritual values and that quasi-historic characters are meant to be impersonations of philosophic facts or principles, some difficulty may be felt on being asked to translate the quasi-historicity of the ceremonial text into the spiritualized interpretation here offered. The education and enlightenment of the understanding is, however, one of the deliberate intentions of Initiatory Rites, and until the mind is able to rise above merely material facts and habituate itself to functioning in the truer realm of ideas which materialize into facts and make facts possible, there is small chance of its profiting from Rites like those
of Masonry, which are of wholly negligible value but for the spiritual force and vitalizing energy of their inherent ideas. It may, therefore, be both helpful and a corroboration of what has been said if we scrutinize the Hebrew names of a Chapter’s officers; what they yield upon analysis will demonstrate that those officers impersonate ideas rather than represent persons.

1. “Zerubabel, prince of the people.” The name literally means ‘a sprouting forth from Babel’, or from among the people. “Babel” and “people” are two forms of expressing the same idea and the English word is almost identical with the Hebrew one. Society as a whole, the multitude, “the people” (‘bebeloí’ as it is in Greek), at all times of the world’s history constitutes a Babel of confused aims and interests. But there are always individuals intellectually or spiritually in advance of the crowd and whose ideas, teachings or example shoot ahead of it, and to such leaders the name Zerubabel would apply. But this illustration does not express the deeper sense in which the word must be construed, which is one of personal application. The individual is himself a mob, a chaos, a multitude of confused desires, thoughts, passions, until these are brought into discipline. But, present even amidst these and sprouting up from among them, the ordinary man is conscious of a higher and spiritual element in him, which he may cultivate or disregard, but which in his best moments flames up above his lower disordered nature, convinces him of the errors of his ways, and entices him to live from that higher level. That loftier element is expressed by the word “Zerubabel”; it is the apex and focus point of his spirituality as distinguished from his ordinary carnal intelligence; the summit of all his faculties, the “prince” of his “people”. Those same faculties or “people” are referred to in the word meaning “My people having obtained mercy” (or become regenerate), and in the text “The people that sat in darkness have seen a great light”.

2. “Haggai the Prophet.” As has been shown before, the spiritual principle differentiates into a passive and an active aspect. “Haggai” represents the passive aspect and signifies at once the blissful and self-contemplative nature of the spirit. It is called “the prophet” because of the power of insight and omniscience characterizing that which transcends the sense of time and abides eternally, and because it projects into the lower intelligence intuitions, foreglimpses and intimations of a prophetic nature. From the same word is derived the Greek word “hagios,” holy.
3. “Joshua, the son of Josedek, the high priest,” personifies the active executive aspect of spirit. Literally Joshua means the “divine saviour”, and Josedek “divine righteousness”, whilst the “high priest” connotes a mediatorial factor between man and Deity. The title in its entirety therefore intimates that the human spirit or divine principle in man functions intermediately between Deity and man’s lower nature to promote the latter’s salvation and perfection. We have previously shown how the Master Mason must be his own high priest and “walk upon” the chequered floor-work of his elementary nature by learning to trample upon it. Thus the Three Principals form a unity figuring man’s spiritual pole in its triple aspects; they represent the summit of his being as it lives on the plane of the Spirit — holy, royal, supreme — blissful because in a state of holiness or wholeness; royal because a son of the King of all; powerful because of its power to subdue, transmute and redeem all that is below its own purity and perfection.

4 & 5. Ezra and Nehemiah. In the great Mystery system of Egypt, which long anteceded the Hebrew system, the regenerate candidate, who had achieved the highest possible measure of self-transmutation of his lower nature, was accorded the title of Osiris. It was the equivalent of attaining Christhood. The nature of the perfectioning process and the rituals in connection therewith are, thanks to certain modern scholars, available to us and are recommended to the student who desires to know how arduous and real that process was and the extremely high degree of regeneration aimed at. In Hebrew the title Osiris became changed into Azarias (and sometimes Zeruiah) and still further corrupted into Esdras and Ezra, the name of the senior Scribe of the Royal Arch. To understand the significance of the two Scribes Ezra and Nehemiah it is necessary to recall that, in the Biblical account of the return from Babylonian captivity, these two were leading men. Transposing this historicized narrative into its spiritual implication, Ezra and Nehemiah personify two distinct stages of the mystical progress made by the candidate who essays to renounce the Babel of his lower nature and, by reorganizing himself, regain his native spiritual home and condition. “Nehemiah” (whose place in the Chapter is in the South West) is a figure of a certain measure of that reorganization and return. Like his Biblical proto-type, he symbolizes the candidate engaged in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, and occupied in the great work of self-reconstruction, from which he will not be beguiled into coming down by the appeals and blandishments of the outer world. “Ezra” (whose position is in the
North East) indicates a much more advanced measure of progress from
West to East. The discerning student who will peruse the Biblical books
of Nehemiah and Ezra (including the Apocryphal books of Esdras) in
this light, and with this key to their true purport, will not fail to profit by
the instruction they will yield. Hence too they are called “scribes”; both
of them are recorders of, and testifiers to, distinct but representative ex-
periences encountered in the inner man at different stages of the “great
work” of self-integration and journeying from a Babylon condition to
the spiritual Jerusalem.

Here we bring to an end our examination of the true meaning and purpose
of the Royal Arch Ceremony. Dealing as it does with a supreme human expe-
rience which none can fully appreciate without undergoing it, it is the greatest
and most momentous rite in Masonry, and no one who studies it comprehendingly and in its sacramental signifi-
cance will withhold admiration either for the profound knowledge and insight of the now unidentifiable mystic and
initiate who conceived it or for the skill with which he compiled it and cast
his knowledge into dramatic expression. The pity of it is that those who prac-
tise the rite make no effort to penetrate its meaning and are content with the
unenlightened perfunctory performance of a ritual which even exoterically is
singularly striking, beautiful and suggestive. The least reflection upon it must
suggest that Masonry is here dealing with the building-work of no outward
structure, but with the re-erection of the fallen, disordered temple of the hu-
man soul; and that even assuming that it but memorialized some long past
historic events, those events can have no vital bearing upon the life, char-
acter or conduct of anyone to-day and would not justify the existence of an
elaborate secret Order to perpetuate them. But if those events and this rite be
symbolic of something deeper and something personal; if they sacramentalize
truths perpetually valid and capable of present realization in those who cer-
emonially re-enact them, then they call for fuller and more serious attention
than is usually accorded. Moreover, if the Royal Arch be the symbolic repre-
sentation of a supreme experience attained and attainable only in sanctity and
by the regenerate, it follows that the Craft Degrees leading up to and qualify-
ing for it will take on a much deeper sense than they commonly receive and
must be regarded as solemn instructions in the requisite preparation for that re-
generate condition. The Craft work is unfinished without the attainment forth
shadowed in the Royal Arch. That attainment in turn is impossible without the
discipline of the preliminary labours, the purification of mind and desire, and
that crucifixion unto death of the self-will which constitute the tests of merit
qualifying for entrance to that Jerusalem which has no geographical site and
which is called the “City of Peace” because it implies conscious rest of the
soul in God. For many, the suggestion that the attainment of such a condition is possible or thinkable whilst we are still here in the flesh may be surprising or even incredible. But such doubt is unwarranted, and the Masonic doctrine negates it. As has been already shown to the contrary, that doctrine postulates not the absence but the possession of the material organism as a necessary factor in advancing the evolution of the human spirit; that organism is the vessel in which our base metal has to be transmuted into gold; it is the fulcrum furnishing the resistance requisite for the spirit’s energizing into unfoldment and self-consciousness. Physical death is therefore not an advancement of, but an interference with, the work of regeneration. “The night cometh when no man can work,” and when the soul merely passes from labour to refreshment until recalled to labour once more at the task of self-conquest. It is but figurative of that necessary dying to self which implies the voluntary decreasing assertiveness of our temporal nature to permit of a corresponding ascendancy of the spiritual.

But if in the hands of its present exponents Masonry is now rather a dead letter than a living effectual Initiatory Rite capable of quickening the spirituality of its candidates, it still remains for the earnest and perspicuous aspirant to the deeper verities an instructive economy of the science of self-gnosis and regeneration. For such these papers are written, that they may both learn something of the original design of the Order and educate their imagination in the principles of that science. And to such, in conclusion, may be commended that Temple-hymn of the Hebrew Initiates, which of all the Psalms of David refers with most pointed reference to the subject-matter of the supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem and the personal attainment of the blessed and perfected condition which that title implies:–

I was glad when they said unto me, let us go up into the house of the Lord;

Our feet shall stand within thy gates, 0 Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together; Thither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord. . . .

For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! they shall prosper that love it.

Peace is within her walls and plenteousness within her palaces.

For my brethren and companions’ sake I will say,

Peace be within thee. (Psalm CXXIL)
In those few lines is sketched all that is implied in the symbolic spectacle that greets the eyes of the Royal Arch Mason at the supreme moment of his restoration to light. Exalted into and become identified with the supreme bliss, peace and self-consciousness of the All-Pervasive and Omniscient Spirit, he sees how he has “gone up” out of the Babylon of his old complex and disordered nature and upon its ruins has built for himself an ethereal body of glory, a “house of the Lord”. He sees how this ecstatic condition and this new-made celestial body are the sublimated products of his former self and its temporal organism. He sees how each separate part and faculty of that old nature, or as it were each of the zodiacal divisions of his own microcosm, has contributed its purified essence to form a new organism, “a new heaven and a new earth”; and how these essences, like twelve diversified tribes, have assembled convergently and finally coalesced and become fused into a unity or new whole, “a city that is compact together”. And it is this “city”, this blessed condition, which mystically is called “Jerusalem”, within whose walls is the peace which passeth understanding and whose palaces reveal to the enfranchised soul the unfailing plenteousness and fecundity of the indissoluble trinity of Wisdom and Love and Power from which man and the universe have issued and into which they are destined to return.

The antithesis of this “heavenly-city” is the confused Babylon city of this world, of which it is written to all captives therein, “Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues!” (Rev. xviii. 4). And, in a word, the Royal Arch Ceremony sacramentally portrays the last phase of the mystical journey of the exiled soul from Babylon to Jerusalem as it escapes from its captivity to this lower world and, passing the veils “of matter and form, breaks through the bondage of corruption into the world of the formless Spirit and realizes the glorious liberty of the children of God.”
Chapter 6

The Relation of Masonry to the Ancient Mysteries

Every Mason is naturally desirous to know something of the origin and history of the Craft. The available literature on the subject is diffuse and unsatisfying. It offers a mass of disconnected details of archology and comparative religion without unifying them into any helpful light and deals rather with matters of minor and temporal history than with what alone is of real moment, the spiritual lineage of the Craft. In this paper, therefore, it is proposed to trace a rough outline — and, in the space available, only a very rough one is possible — of a movement which is as old as humanity itself and the purpose and doctrine of which are still faithfully, if very rudimentarily, preserved in the Masonic system. But such a sketch, by providing a general outline for the enquirer to contemplate and the details of which he, may fill in for himself by subsequent study of his own, may perhaps prove more serviceable than a mass of fragmentary facts over which one may pore indefinitely and with much interest, yet without perceiving their inter-relation or co-ordinating them into one comprehensive impressive scheme.

No really serviceable work upon Masonry exists that treats of its history and purpose in the only way that matters vitally. The student is apt to waste much time to little profit by turning for information to publications the titles of which seem to promise full enlightenment, but that leave him unsatisfied and unconvinced. Desultory collections of information upon points of symbolism, archaeology and anthropology, the tracing of connections between modern Masonry and mediaeval building-guilds and other communities may be all very interesting, but these are but as the dry bones of a subject of which one desires to know the living spirit. They fail to answer the main questions one asks from the heart and is anxious to have answered; such as, What was the
nature of the Ancient Mysteries of which modern Masonry purports to be the perpetuation? To what end and purpose did they exist? What need is there to perpetuate them to-day? For what purpose was Initiation instituted? Did it at any time serve any real purpose or can it now? Was it ever more than it is to-day, a mere perfunctory ceremonial leading to nothing of essential value and emphasizing only a few moral principles and elementary truths which we know already? It is to answering such questions as these that the present paper is directed.

Now one of the first things to strike any student of Masonic literature and comparative religion is the remarkable presence of common factors, common beliefs, doctrines, practices and symbols, in the religions of all races alike, whether ancient or modern, eastern or western, civilized or barbarian, Christian or pagan. However separated from others by time or distance, however intellectualized or primitive, however elaborated or simple their religion or morals, and however wide their differences in important respects, each people is found to have employed and still to be employing certain ideas, symbols and practices in common with every other; perhaps with or without some slight modification of form. Masonic treatises abound with demonstrations of this uniformity in the use of various symbols prominent in every Lodge. Authors delight in supplying evidence of the close correspondences in various unrelated systems and in demonstrating how ancient and universal such and such ideas, symbols and practices have been. But they do not go so far as to explain the reason for this antiquity and universality, and it is this point which it will be well to clear up at the outset, since it furnishes the clue to the entire problem of the genesis, the history, and the reason for the existence of Masonry.

If research and reflection be pushed far enough it becomes clear that the universality and uniformity referred to are due to the fact that at one time, long back in the world’s past, there existed or was implanted in the minds of the whole human family- which was doubtless much smaller and more concentrated than now-a Proto-Evangelium or Root-Doctrine in regard to the nature and destiny of the soul of man and its relation to the Deity. We of to-day pride ourselves upon being wiser and more advanced than primitive humanity. We assume that our ancestors lived in moral benightedness out of which we have since gradually emerged into comparative light. All the evidence, however, negatives these suppositions. It indicates that primitive man, however childish and intellectually undeveloped according to modern standards, was spiritually conscious and psychically perceptive to a degree undreamed of by the modern mind, and that it is ourselves who, for all our cleverness and intellectual development in temporal matters, are nevertheless plunged in dark-
ness and ignorance about our own nature, the invisible world around us, and the eternal spiritual verities. In all Scriptures and cosmologies the tradition is universal of a “Golden Age”, an age of comparative innocence, wisdom and spirituality, in which racial unity and individual happiness and enlightenment prevailed; in which there was that open vision for want of which a people perisheth, but in virtue of which men were once in conscious conversation with the unseen world and were shepherded, taught and guided by the “gods” or discarnate superintendents of the infant race, who imparted to them the sure and indefeasible principles upon which their spiritual welfare and evolution depended.

The tradition is also universal of the collective soul of the human race having sustained a “fall”, a moral declension from its true path of life and evolution, which has severed it almost entirely from its creative source, and which, as the ages advanced, has involved its sinking more and more deeply into physical conditions, its splitting up from a unity employing a single language into a diversity of conflicting races of different speeches and degrees of moral advancement, accompanied by a progressive densification of the material body and a corresponding darkening of the mind and atrophy of the spiritual consciousness. To some who read this the statement will probably be rejected as fabulous and incredible. The supposition of a “fall of man” is nowadays an unpopular doctrine, rejected by many who contend that everything points rather to a rise of man, yet who fail to reflect that logically a rise necessarily involves an antecedent fall from which a rise becomes possible. This point, however, we cannot stop to discuss and must be content merely with indicating what in both the Scriptures of all races and the Wisdom-tradition of the sages of antiquity is unanimously recorded to be the fact.

From that “fall”, which was not due to the transgression of an individual, but to some weakness or defect in the collective or group-soul of the Adamic race, and which was not the matter of a moment but a process covering vast time-cycles, it was necessary and within the Divine counsels and providence that humanity should be redeemed and restored to its pristine state; that it should be brought back once more into vital association with the Divine Principle from which by its secession it became increasingly detached, as its materialistic tendencies overpowered and quenched its native spirituality. This restoration in turn required vast time-cycles for its achievement. And it required something further. It required the application of an orderly and scientific method to effect the restoration of each fallen soul-fragment and bring it back to its primitive pure and perfect condition. I emphasize that the method was necessarily to be not a haphazard, but a scientific one. Anyone may fall from a housetop and break his bones; skilled surgery and intelligent effort by
some friendly hand are required to heal the patient and get him back to the place he fell from. So with humanity. It fell — out of Eden, as our Scriptures describe the lapse from super-physical to physical conditions — why and how, again we must not stay to enquire. It fell, through inherent weakness and lack of wisdom. Unable to effect its own recovery it required skilled scientific assistance from other sources to bring about its restoration. Whence could come that skill and scientific knowledge if not from the Divine and now invisible world, from those “gods” and angelic guardians of the erring race of whom all the ancient traditions and sacred writings tell? Would not that regenerative method be properly described if it were called, as in Masonry it is called, a “heavenly science”, and welcomed in the words that Masons in fact use, “Hail, Royal Art!”?

Thus, then, was the origin and birth of Religion. And Religion is a word implying a “binding back” (re-ligare). As with the setting and bandaging a broken limb, so the collective soul of humanity, fractured and comminuted by its fall into countless individuations and their subsequent respective progenies, each separately damaged and imperfect, needed to be restored to the condition from which it had become dislocated and once more built up into a perfect harmonious whole.

To the spiritual guardians of primitive man, then, one must attribute the communication of that universal science of rebuilding the fallen temple of humanity, of which science we now surprisingly find traces in every race and religion of the world. To this source we must credit the distribution, in every land and among every people, of the same or equivalent symbols, practices and doctrines, modified only locally and in accordance with the intelligence of particular peoples, yet all manifesting a common root and purpose.

This was the one Holy Catholic (or universal) Religion “throughout all the world”; at once a theoretic doctrine and a practical science intended to reunite man to his Maker. That religion could only be one, as it could not be otherwise than catholic and for all men equally and alike; though, owing to the perverse distortive tendencies of humanity itself, it was susceptible of becoming (as has so happened) debased and sectarianized into as many forms as there are peoples. Moreover, its main principles could never be susceptible of alteration, though they might be (as they have been) exoterically understood by some and esoterically by others, and their full import would not all at once be apparent, but develop with increasing fidelity to and understanding of them. It provided the unalterable “landmarks” of knowledge concerning human nature, human potentialities and human destiny. It laid down the ancient and established “usages and customs” to be followed at all times by everyone content to accept its discipline and which none might deviate from or add in-
novations to, save at his own peril. It was the “Sacred Law” for the guidance of the fallen soul, a law valid from the dawn of time till its sunset, and of which it is written “As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end”. It was the science of life — of temporal limited life lived with the intention of its conversion and sublimation into eternal universal life; and, therefore, it called for a scientific or philosophic method of living, every moment and action of which should be directed to that great goal;— a method very different from the modern method, which is entirely utilitarian in its outlook and totally unscientific in its conduct.

This Proto-Religion is related to have originated in the East, from which proverbially all light comes, and, as humanity itself became diffused and distributed over the globe, to have gradually spread towards the West, in a perpetual watchfulness of humanity’s spiritual interests and an unfailing purpose to retrieve “that which was lost”— the fallen human soul. We have already said that in early times the humanity then under its influence was far less materialized and far more spiritually sensitive and perceptive than it subsequently became or is now; and accordingly it follows that with the increasing age and density of the race the influence of the Proto-Religion itself became correspondingly diminished, though its principles remained as valid and effective as before; for the self-willed vagaries and speculative conceptions of man cannot alter the principles of static Truth and Wisdom. To follow in any detail the course of its history is not now necessary and would require a long treatise. And to do so would also be like following the course of a river backwards from its broad mouth to a point where it becomes an insignificant and scarcely traceable channel. For the race itself has wandered backwards, farther and farther from the original Wisdom-teaching, so that the once broad and bright flood of light upon cosmic principles and the evolution of the human soul has now become contracted into minute points. But that light, like that of a Master Mason, has never been wholly extinguished, however dark the age, and, by the tradition, this of ours is spiritually the darkest of the dark ages. “God has never left Himself without a witness among the children of men”, and among the witnesses to the Ancient Wisdom and Mysteries is the system of Masonry; a faint and feeble flicker, perhaps, but nevertheless a true light and in the true line of succession of the primitive doctrine, and one still able to guide our feet into the way of peace and perfection.

The earliest teaching of the Mysteries traceable within historic time was in the Orient and in the language known as Sanscrit — a name itself significant and appropriate, for it means Holy Writ or “Sanctum Scriptum”; and for very great lights upon the ancient Secret Doctrine one must still refer to the religious and philosophical scriptures of India, which was in its spiritual and
temporal prime when modern Europe was frozen beneath an ice-cap.

But races, like men, have their infancy, manhood and old age; they are but units, upon a larger scale than the individual, for furthering the general life-purpose. When a given race has served or failed in that purpose, the stewardship of the Mysteries passes on to other and more effectual hands. The next great torch-bearer of the Light of the world was Egypt, which, after many centuries of spiritual supremacy, in turn became the and desert it now is both spiritually and materially, leaving nevertheless a mass of structural and written relics still testifying to its possession of the Doctrine in the days of its glory. From Egypt, as civilizations developed in adjoining countries, a great irradiation of them took place by the diffusion of its knowledge and the institution of minor centres for the imparting of the Divine Science in Chaldea, Persia, Greece and Asia Minor. “Out of Egypt have I called My son” is, in one of its many senses, a biblical allusion to this passing on of the catholic Mysteries from Egypt to new and virgin regions, for their enlightenment.

Of these various translations those that concern us chiefly are two; the one to Greece, the other to Palestine. We know from the Bible that Moses was an initiate of the Egyptian mysteries and became learned in all its wisdom, while Philo tells us that Moses there became “skilled in music, geometry, arithmetic, hieroglyphics and the whole circle of arts and sciences”. In other words he became in a real sense a Master Mason and, as such, qualified himself for his subsequent great task of leadership of the Hebrew people and the formulating of their religious system and rule of life as laid down in the Pentateuch. The Mosaic system continued, as we know, along the channel indicated in the books of the Old Testament, and then, after many centuries and vicissitudes, effloresced in the greatest of all expressions of the Mysteries, as disclosed in the Gospels of the New Testament (or New Witness), involving the supersession of all previous systems under the Supreme Grand Mastership of Him who is called the Light of the World and its Saviour.

Concurrently with the existence of the Hebrew Mysteries under the Mosiac dispensation, the great Greek school of the Mysteries was developing, which, originating in the Orphic religion, culminated and came to a focus at Delphi and generated the philosophic wisdom and the aesthetic glories associated with Athens and the Periclean age. Greece was the spiritual descendant and infant prodigy of both India and Egypt, though developing along quite different lines. We know that Pythagoras, like Moses, after absorbing all his native teachers could impart, journeyed to Egypt to take his final initiation prior to returning and founding the great school at Crotona associated with his name. We know, too, from the Timaeus of Plato how aspirants for mystical wisdom visited Egypt for initiation and were told by the priests of Sais that “you
Greeks are but children” in the Secret Doctrine, but were admitted to information enabling them to promote their own spiritual advancement. We know from the correspondence, recorded by Iamblichus, between Anebo and Porphyry, the fraternal relations existing between the various schools or lodges of instruction in different lands; how their members visited, greeted and assisted one another in the secret science, the more advanced being obliged, as every initiate still is when called upon, to “afford assistance and instruction to his brethren in the inferior degrees”. And we know that at the Nativity — or shall we say the installation in this world — of the Great Master, there came to Him from afar Magi or initiate-visitors who knew of His impending advent and had seen His star in the East and desired to acknowledge and pay Him reverence. In all these world moving incidents in times when initiation was a real event and not a mere ceremonial form as now, it is of interest to notice the practice upon a grand scale of the same customs and courtesies as are still observed, though alas unintelligently, by the Craft of to-day.

We must now speak more fully of the Mysteries and the “Royal Art” as pursued by the Greek school. With the Greeks it took the form of a quest of philosophy; i.e., for wisdom, for the Sophia, just as in the Hebrew and Christian schools it took the form of a quest for the Lost Word. The end was of course the same in both cases, but the approach to it was by different means and, as we shall see, the two methods coalesced into one at a later date. The Greek approach was primarily an intellectual one and by what Spinoza has termed Amor intellectualis Dei. The Christian approach was primarily through the affections and the adoration of the heart. Both strained after “that which was lost”, but one sought after the lost ideal by intellectual and the other by devotional energy. Humanity is but slowly educated; “line upon line; precept upon precept; here a little and there a little”, one faculty after another being developed and trained unto the refashioning of the perfect organism. And if philosophic Wisdom and the sense of Beauty stood forth — as they did stand forth—most prominently as the main pillars of the Greek system, the Greeks had yet to learn of a third and middle pillar that synthesized and comprised them both — that of the Strength of the supreme virtue of Love, when towards the object of all desire it pours from a pure and perfect heart.

The Greek’s quest of wisdom was something much more than a mere desire for larger information and maturer judgment about one’s place in the universe. Merely to know certain facts about the hidden side of life profits nothing unless the knowledge is allowed to influence and adapt our method of living to the truths disclosed. Then the knowledge becomes transmuted into wisdom; one becomes the truth one sees; and a man’s life becomes truth
made substantial and dynamic. But to bring this about one must first be informed about or initiated into certain elements of the truth and be persuaded that it is truth before setting about to become it. The Greek method, therefore, began by initiating the mind into certain truths about the soul’s own nature, history, destiny and potentialities, and then left the individual to follow up the information by a course of conduct in which the teaching imparted would become converted into assured conviction and living power, whilst his increasing progress in the science would itself result in awakening him to still deeper truths.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that no one can learn spiritual science, whether as taught by Masonry or any other system inculcating it, without submitting himself to its processes and living them out in practical experience. In this supreme study, knowing depends entirely upon doing; comprehension is conditional upon and the corollary of action. “He that will do the will shall know of the doctrine”.

Hence it is that in Masonry an installed Master is still called a “Master of Arts and Sciences”, for he is supposed to have mastered the art of living in accordance with the theoretic gnosis or science imparted to him in the course of his progress. Real Masonic knowledge will never be achieved merely by oral explanation, hearing lectures and studying books. These may be useful in giving a preliminary start to earnest seekers needing but a little guidance to set them on that path of personal practice and experience where they will soon develop an auto-matic understanding of the doctrine for themselves; for those with but a casual dilletante interest the doctrine will continue veiled and secret. For example, it is one thing to hear explained what is meant by being divested of money and metals in the philosophic sense; it is quite another to have become insusceptible to all attraction by material interests and sense-allurements and to be consciously possessed of the wisdom accruing from that experience. It may interest to be told why, at a certain stage of progress, the candidate is likened to an ear of corn by a fall of water; but the explanation will be forgotten to-morrow, unless as the result of his own effort the hearer has become personally aware of an inward substantial growth ripening to harvest within him from the ground of his own being and fertilized by supersensual nourishment falling like the gentle rain from heaven upon his ardent and aspiring soul. Again, it may seem instructive to know that the great ritual of the Third Degree signifies a death unto sin and self and a new birth unto righteousness, but how will the information profit those who nevertheless mean to go on living the old manner of life, which at every moment negates all that that ritual implies?

The Ancient Mysteries, then, involved much more than a merely notional
philosophy. They required also a philosophic method of living — or rather of dying. For as Socrates said (in Plato’s Phado, from which much Masonic teaching is directly drawn and which every Masonic student should study deeply) “the whole study of the philosopher (or wisdom-seeker) is nothing else than to die and be dead”; an assertion repeated by Plutarch, “to be initiated is to die”; and by the Christian apostle, “I die daily”. Their method was divided into two parts, the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries. The Lesser were those in which the more elementary instruction was imparted, so that candidates might forthwith set about to purify and adapt their lives to the truths disclosed. The Greater Mysteries related to the developments of consciousness within the soul itself, as the result of fidelity to the prescribed rule of life. To draw a faint analogy, the Lesser Mysteries bore the same relation to the Greater as the present Craft Degrees do to the Holy Royal Arch.

To deal adequately with the Mystery-systems would involve a lengthy study in itself. We will refer to but one of the most famous of them, the Eleusinian, which existed in Greece and for several centuries was the focus-point of religion and philosophy for the then civilized portion of Europe “Eleusis” means light, and initiation into the Mysteries of Eleusis, therefore, meant a quest of the aspirant for light, in precisely the same, but a far more real, sense as the modern Mason declares light to be the predominant wish of his heart. It meant, as it ought to mean to-day but does not, not merely light in the sense of being given some secret information not obtainable elsewhere or about any matter of worldly interest, but the opening up of the candidate’s whole intellectual and spiritual nature in the super-sensual light of the Divine world and raising him to God-consciousness. The ordinary and uninitiated man knows nothing of that super-sensual light by his merely natural reason; he is conscious only of the outer world and things perceptible by his natural faculties. In the words of St. Paul “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”. Initiation, therefore, meant a process whereby natural man became transformed into spiritual or ultra-natural man, and to effect this it was necessary to change his consciousness, to gear it to a new and higher principle, and so, as it were, make of him a new man in the sense of attaining a new method of life and a new outlook upon the universe. “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds,” says the Apostle, referring to this process. As has previously—been shown in these papers, the transference of the symbol of the Divine Presence from the ceiling to the floor of the Masonic Lodge is to indicate how the Vital and Immortal Principle in man can be brought down from his remoter psychological region into his physical organism and function there through his body and brain, thus as it
were dislocating and superseding his natural mentality and regenerating him. This truth is still further reproduced in Masonry by the name “Lewis”, traditionally associated with the Craft. “Lewis” is a modern corruption of Eleusis and of other Greek and Latin names associated with Light. In our instruction Lectures it is said to designate “the son of a Mason” This, however, has no reference to human parentage and sonship. It refers to the mystical birth of the Divine Light in oneself; as a familiar Scriptural text has it, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given”. It is the Divine Principle, the Divine Wisdom, brought to birth and function within the organism of the natural man, who virtually becomes its parent. It is further described in our Lectures as something “which when properly dovetailed into a stone forms a clamp, enabling Masons to lift great weights with little inconvenience whilst fixing them on their proper bases”. All which is a concealed way of expressing the fact that, when the Divine Light is brought forward from man’s submerged depths and firmly grafted or dovetailed into his natural organism, he then becomes able easily to grapple with difficulties, problems and “weights” of all kinds which to the unregenerate are insuperable, and to perceive all things sub specie oeterinitatis and in their true relations, as is not possible to other men who behold them only sub specie temporis and are consequently unable to judge their real values and “fix them on their proper bases.”

In the time that the Mysteries flourished, every educated man entered them in the same way that men enter a University in modern times. They were the recognized source of instruction in the only things that really matter, those affecting the culture of the human soul and its education in the science of itself and its divine nature. Candidates were graded according to their moral efficiency and their intellectual or spiritual stature. For years they underwent disciplinary intellectual exercises and bodily asceticism, punctuated at intervals by appropriate tests and ordeals to determine their fitness to proceed to the more serious, solemn and awful processes of actual initiation, administered only to the duly qualified, and which were of a secret and closely guarded character. Their education, differing greatly from the scholastic methods of a utilitarian age like our own, was directed solely to the cultivation of the “four cardinal virtues” and the “seven liberal arts and sciences” as qualifications prerequisite to participation in the higher order of life to which initiation would eventually admit the worthy and properly prepared candidate. The construction put upon these virtues and sciences was a much more advanced one than the modern mind considers adequate. Virtues with them were more than abstractions and ethical sentiments; as the word itself implies they involved positive valours and virility of soul. Temperance involved complete control of the passional nature under every circum-stance; Fortitude, the courage that
no adversity will dismay or deflect from the goal in view; Prudence, the deep insight that begets the prophetic or forward-seeing faculty of seer-ship (providentia); Justice, unswerving righteousness of thought and action. The “arts and sciences” were called “liberal” because they tended to liberate the soul from defects and illusions normally enslaving it, thus totally differing from science in the modern sense, the tendency of which is, as we know, materialistic and soul-benumbing. Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric with the Ancients were disciplines of the moral nature, by which the irrational tendencies of a human being were purged away and he was trained to become a living witness of the universal Logos and a living mouth-piece of the Divine Word. Geometry and Arithmetic were sciences of trans-cendent space and numeration (seeing that, as in the words of our own Scriptures, God has “made everything by measure, number and weight”), the comprehension of which provides the key, not only to the problems of one’s being, but to those physical ones which are found so baffling by the inductive methods of to-day. Astronomy for them required no telescopes; it dealt not with the stars of the sky, but was the science of metaphysics and the understanding of the distribution of the forces latent in, and determining the destiny of, individuals, nations and the race. Finally Music (or Harmony) was for them not of the vocal or instrumental kind; it meant the living practice of philosophy, the adjustment of human life into harmony with God, until the personal soul became unified with Him and consciously heard, because it now participated in, the music of the spheres. As Milton puts it:–

“How lovely is Divine Philosophy,
Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
But musical as is Apollo’s lute
And a perpetual feast of nectar’d sweets
Where no crude surfeit reigns.”

Every possible device was employed and practised to train the mind to acquire dominion over the passions and to loosen and detach it from the impres-sions and attractions of the senses, to destroy the illusions and false imaginations under which it labours when using no higher light than its own, and to qualify it for a higher method of cognition and for the reception of supersensuous truth and the light of the Divine world. The idealism of Greek architecture and sculpture was entirely due to the same motive and with a

1The four cardinal virtues are referred to in both Plato’s Phaedo and the Book of Wisdom, ch. viii, 5-7, indicating com-munity of teaching between the Greek and Hebrew schools.
view to elevating the imagination beyond the visible level and fitting the mind for the apprehension of ultra-physical form and beauty. Even athletic exercises were made to subserve the same purpose; wrestling and racing were not vulgar sports; they were regarded sacramentally, as the type of combats the soul must engage in against the competition of the fleshly desires; and the victor’s crown of laurel or olive was the emblem of wisdom and illumination resulting to him in whom the spirit conquers the flesh. Thus every intellectual and physical interest was made subservient to the one idea of separating the soul from material bondage and was purposely of a purifying or “cathartic” nature that should cleanse the thoughts and desires of the aspirant and make him white within and without, even as the modern candidate for the Craft is clothed in white. This inward purity of heart and mind, coupled with the possession of the four cardinal virtues, was and still is an absolute essential to the ordeals of actual initiation, which otherwise rendered the candidate liable to insanity and obsessions of which the modern mind in its ignorance of what initiation involves can form no opinion. Those who became proficient and properly prepared in this curriculum of the Lesser Mysteries were eventually admitted to initiation in the Greater Mysteries. Those who failed to qualify were restrained from advancement. As now, the numbers of really earnest and qualified aspirants were only a percentage of the total of those who entered the Mysteries, for in the spiritual life, as in the world of nature, the biological phenomenon prevails that the available raw material greatly exceeds the perfected product. Every year far more seeds are borne, far more eggs are laid or spawned, than reach maturity, although every seed and egg is potentially capable of growth and fruition. Plato, speaking of the Mysteries in his own day, quotes a still older authority that “the thyrsus-bearers (or candidates for initiation) are numerous, but the Bacchuses (or perfected initiates) are few”. The same truth is restated in the words in the Gospels, “Many are called, but few are chosen.”

One qualification above all was essential to the aspirant, as it is still today,—humility. The wisdom into which the Mysteries and initiation admit a man is foolishness to the world; it is a reversal and revolution of all orthodox and academic standards. To attain it a man must be prepared for that complete and voluntary self-denial which may involve his finding negated everything he has previously held to be true, or which those among whom he ordinarily mingles believe to be true. He must be content to “become a fool for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” and to suffer adversity, ridicule and obloquy for it.

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2The thyrsus (or Caduceus) was an elaborate wand borne by the candidate, to the symbolism of which deep meaning attached. Its present form is the wand carried by the deacon accompanying the candidate.
if needs be. This was one of the prime reasons for secrecy and one — though not the only one — of the origins of the Masonic injunction as to secrecy. The world’s wisdom and that to which initiation admits are so antipodal in their nature that any intrusion of the latter will infallibly provoke resent-ment from the former. Hence it is written “Cast not your pearls before swine, neither give that which is holy unto dogs—lest they turn and rend you”. Silence and secrecy are, therefore, desirable if only in self-defence, though there are other reasons; but humility is indispensable. In the public processions of the Lesser Mysteries — for the public were permitted at certain festivals to participate to a small extent in some of the more exoteric knowledge — the sacred emblems and eucharistic vessels used in the rites were carried with great reverence upon the back of an ass. With the same intention, it is said that one of the great Greek philosophers always had an ass by his side in his lecture-room when instructing his students. The explanation is given in the words of one of the old authorities upon initiation as follows: “There is no creature so able to receive divinity as an ass, into whom if ye be not turned, ye shall in no wise be able to carry the divine mysteries”. In the light of this, one will at once discern the symbolical significance of the Christian Master riding into Jerusalem upon an ass.

Another and a greatly educative means employed in the Mysteries was that of instructing, enlarging and purifying the imagination by means of myths, expressing either in doctrinal form or by spectacular representation, truths of the Divine world and of the soul’s history. The modern mind in its passion for actual concrete facts is little sympathetic to a method of teaching which dispenses with demon-strable facts and prefers to enunciate the eternal principles underlying such facts and of which those facts are but the manifested resultant consequence. Facts — of history or science — tend, however, to con-gest the mind and paralyse the imagination, as Darwin lamented in his own case. Principles stimulate and illumine the imagination, and enable the mind to interpret facts and adjust them to their proper relation. The Greek mythol-o-gists were adepts at expressing cosmic and philosophic truths in the guise of fables which at once expressed theosophic teaching to the discerning and veiled it from the careless and ignorant. Myth-making was a science, not an indulgence in irresponsible fiction, and by exhibiting some of these myths in dramatic form candidates were instructed in various fundamental verities of life.

One of the chief and best known of the numerous myths was that of Demeter and her daughter Persephone, annually performed with great ceremony and elaboration at the Eleusinia, and of which it may be useful to speak briefly. It told how the maiden Persephone strayed away from Arcadia (heaven) and
her mother Demeter, to pluck flowers in the meads of Enna, and how the soil there opened and caused her to fall through into the lower dark world of Hades ruled over by Pluto. The despair of her mother at the loss reached Zeus, the chief of the Gods, with the result that he relieved the position by ordaining that, if the girl had not eaten of the fruit of Hades, she should forthwith be restored to her mother for ever, but that if she had so eaten she must abide a third of each year with Pluto and return to Demeter for the other two thirds. It proved that Persephone had unfortunately eaten a pomegranate in the lower world, so that her restoration to her mother could not be permanent, but only periodic.

This myth, and the importance once attached to it, will be appreciated only upon understanding its interpretation. It is the story of the soul and is of the same nature as the Mosaic myth of Adam and Eve and the apple, and as the cosmic parable of the Prodigal Son, neither of these being meant to be regarded as historically true, but as a fiction spiritually true of cosmic facts. Persephone is the human soul, generated out of that primordial incorruptible mother-earth which the Greeks personified as Demeter, just as the Mosaic narrative speaks of God forming man out of the dust of the ground. Her straying from her Arcadian home and heavenly mother in quest of flowers (or fresh experiences on her own account) in the fields of Enna, corresponds with the same promptings of desire that led to Adam’s disobedience in Eden and his fall thence to this outer world. All unruly desires end in dissatisfaction and bitterness, and “Enna” (signifying darkness and bitterness) is the same word as still meets us in Gehenna. One may, however, profit by one’s mistakes. It is they which breed wisdom, and it is the riches of wisdom and experience that are signified by Pluto, the god of riches, into whose kingdom Persephone falls. She might have returned thence to her mother for ever, Zeus decreed, had she not still further injured herself by eating of the fruit of the lower world, but having done so her restoration can only be partial and temporary. This alludes to the soul’s still further self-soilure and degradation by lusting after the inferior pleasures of this lower plane, which, as the pomegranate symbolizes, is many-seeded with illusions and vanities. Until these false tendencies are eradicated, until the desires of the heart are utterly weaned from external delights, there can be no permanent restoration of the soul to its source, but merely the periodic respite and refreshment that death brings when it withdraws the soul from Pluto’s realm to the heaven-world, to be followed again and again by periodic descents into material limitations and re-ascents into discarnate conditions, until it becomes finally purged and perfected.

By this great myth, therefore, instruction was imparted as to the history
of the soul, its destiny and prospects, and the doctrine of reincarnation\(^3\) was emphasized.

Now Masonry follows this traditional method of instruction by myths. Its canon of teaching in the Craft degrees contains two myths. One is that of the building of King Solomon’s Temple. The other is that of the death and burial of Hiram Abiff narrated in the traditional history. The Royal Arch contains a third myth in the story of the return from captivity after the destruction of the first temple, the commencement to build the second, and the discovery then made. This third myth has already been expounded in our paper on the Royal Arch degree, so that we need now speak only of the Craft Myths.

To the literal-minded the building of Solomon’s temple at Jerusalem (which is of course largely but not entirely based upon the Hebrew Scriptures) appears to be the history of an actual stone and mortar structure erected by three Asiatic notables, one of whom conceived the idea, another supplying the building material, whilst the third was the practical architect and chief of works. The two former are said to have been kings of adjacent small nations; the third was not a royalty, but apparently a person of no social dignity and a “widow’s son”.

As has previously been said in these papers, these details of an enterprise undertaken more than two thousand years ago can have no possible value to anyone to-day and if they related merely to historic fact modem Masonry might as well close its doors and cease to exist for any benefit that fact could impart to serious or reflective minds. But if the narrative were never intended as a record of temporal historic fact, but be a myth enshrining philosophic truths concerning eternal principles, then it must be interpreted with spiritual discernment and its analysis will reveal matters of real importance.

The story of the building of the temple, then, is a philosophical instruction, garbed in quasi-historical form, concerning the structure of the human soul. That temple is not one of common brick and stone, but of the “unhewn stone” or incorruptible raw material of which the Creator fashioned the human organism. The Jerusalem in which it was built was not the geographical one in Palestine, but the eternal “city of peace” in the heavens; not, as St. Paul says, “the Jerusalem which now is, but the Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all”, like the Greek Demeter. Its builders were not three human personages resident in the Levant, but the Divine energy considered in its three constituent principles spoken of in our Instruction Lectures as Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, which as “pillars of His work” run through and form the

\(^3\)As this doctrine is not popularly inculcated in the West as it is in the East, and will be novel and probably unacceptable to some readers, its acceptance is not pressed here. We are merely recording what the secret doctrine teaches.
metaphysical warp and basis of all created things. These three metaphysical principles may be defined in modern terms as Life-Essence (or the substantial spirit of Wisdom); incorruptible Matter, serving as the mould, matrix or vehicle of that Life-Essence, to give it fixity, form and objectiveness (Strength); and lastly the fabricative intellectual principle or Logos binding these two together and constituting the whole an intelligent and functionally effective instrument (Beauty). Of these three principles, or upon these three pillars, was the human soul originally and divinely built in the heaven-world, and our Lectures, therefore, rightly say that those three pillars “also allude to Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and Hiram Abiff,” because those names personify the indissociable triadic constituents of the Divine Unity. (They are also shown inscribed upon the central symbolic altar in the Royal Arch Degree as further evidence of this divine construction of the human soul). The temple of the soul has, however, now been destroyed and thrown down from its primitive eminence and grandeur. Humanity, instead of being a collective united organic whole, has become shattered into innumerable fragmentary separated parts, not one stone standing upon another of its ruined building. It has lost consciousness of the genuine secrets of its own origin and nature and has now to be content with the spurious substituted knowledge it picks up from sense-impressions in this outer world. Like Persephone it has eaten the pomegranates of Pluto’s dark realm in preference to the ambrosia of Arcady, and until that poison is eliminated from its system it cannot permanently retain its unfallen state, but at best must endure a rhythm of deaths and rebirths and of intermittent periods of labour in this world and refreshment beyond it. But it may become cleansed; the temple can be rebuilt, and each Mason’s soul that is wrought into a true die or square by his work upon himself here, becomes one more new stone of the restored temple in the heavens.

A further word is necessary as to the concealed significance of Solomon and the two Hirams. Solomon personifies the primordial Life-Essence or substantialized Divine Wisdom which is the basis of our being. It is defined in the Book of Wisdom (chap. vii., 25-27), as “a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty; the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God and the image of His goodness”. It is described as a “king” because it must needs transcend and over-rule whatever is inferior to itself, and as “king of Israel” because “Israel” itself means “co-operating or ruling with God” as distinct from being associated with beings or affairs of a sub-divine order. To conjoin this transcendental Life-Essence to a vehicle which should give it fixity and form required the assistance of another dominant or “kingly” principle, personified as Hiram, King of Tyre, who supplied the “building material”. Now inasmuch as we are dealing with purely meta-
physical ideas, it will be obvious that the Tyre in question has no relation to
the Levantine sea-port of that name. The name Tyre in Hebrew means “rock”
and the strength, compactness and durability which we associate with rock,
whilst the same word recurs in Greek as Turos and in Latin as Terra, earth,
and as Durus, implying form, hardness, consistency and durability. “King of
Tyre”, therefore, is interpretable as the cosmic principle which gives solid-
ity and form to the spiritual fluidic and formless Life-Essence, and which is
comparable to a cup intended to hold liquid. Solomon and Hiram of Tyre
therefore contribute their respective properties of Life-Essence and durable
form and “building material” as the groundwork of the soul, which then is
made functionally effective by the addition of the third principle described as
Hiram Abiff, the widow’s son, and personifying the active intellectual prin-
ciple or Logos. In a word, Hiram Abiff is the Christ- principle immanent in
every soul; crucified, dead and buried in all who are not alive to its presence,
but resident in all as a saving force — “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” Con-
sistently with Christ-like humility, Hiram Abiff (literally, “the teacher from
the Father”) is not described as a “king” as are Solomon and Hiram of Tyre,
but as one “of no reputation”, a “widow’s son”; a beautiful touch of Gnostic
symbolism referable to the derelict or widowed nature of the Divine Mother-
hood or Sophia owing to the errancy and defection from wisdom of her frail
children. Such of those children as have rejoined, or are striving to rejoin,
their mother are alone worthy to be called the “widow’s sons,” and it is to the
cry to those who have rejoined her from those still labouring at that task in
the flesh, and perhaps wiping from their brow the bloody sweat of their Geth-
semane anguish in the struggle, that the traditional petition applies, “Come to
my help, ye sons of the Widow, for I am the Widow’s son!”

The temple of the human soul, primordially constituted of the three prin-
ciples just spoken of in due balance and proportion and divinely pro-nounced
to be “very good,” has deflected from that state. Its fall has been effected by
the dispro-portioned, unbalanced and, therefore, disorderly abuse of its in-
herent powers. Just as a man in a temper becomes temporarily unbalanced
and liable to do what he would not in serene moments, so the soul has dis-
organized its own nature utterly. Of the three pillars that should support it,
Wisdom (Gnosis) has fallen and become replaced by a flexible and shifting
prop of speculative opinion: Strength (divine dynamic energy) has become
exchanged for the frailty of the perishing flesh: Beauty, the god-like radiant
form that should adorn and liken man to his Divine Creator, has become su-
perseded by every ugliness of imperfection. Man is now a ruined temple, over
which is written “Ichabod! Ichabod! the glory is departed!” Severed from
conscious intercourse with his Vital and Immortal Principle, he is a prisoner
in captivity to himself and his lower temporal nature. It remains for him to retrace his steps and rebuild his temple; to continue no longer a bondsman to his self-made illusions and the attractions of “worldly posses-sions”, but become a free man and mason, engaged in shaping himself into a living and precious stone for the cosmic temple of a regenerate Humanity unto which, when completed and dedicated, Deity will again enter and abide.

To be “installed in the chair of King Solomon”, therefore, means in its true sense the re-attainment of a Wisdom we have lost and the revival in ourselves of the Divine Life-Essence which is the basis of our being. With the reattainment of that Wisdom all that is comprised in the terms Strength and Beauty will be reattained also, for the three pillars stand in eternal association and balance. Not to reattain it, not to revive the Divine Life-Essence, during our sojourn in this world, is to miss the opportunity which life in physical conditions pro-vides, since the after-death state is one not of labour at this work, but of refreshment and rest, where no real progress is possible. Initiation, therefore, was instituted to impart the science of its reattainment and so lift the individual soul to a new life-basis from which it could proceed to work out its own salvation and develop its inherent powers along the true line of its destiny and evol-u-tion. But, as the Ancient Mysteries taught, the soul that never even begins this work in this world will not be able to begin it hereafter, but will remain suspended in the more tenuous planes of this planet until such time as it is once again indrawn into the vortex of generation by the ever-turning wheel of life. To quote Plato again, “those who instituted the Mysteries for us taught us that whosoever descended into Hades (the after-death state) uninitiated and without being a partaker in the Mysteries, will be plunged into mire and darkness, but whoever arrived there purified and initiated will dwell with the Gods”. This teaching is reproduced in Masonry in the reference to the Master-Mason being “admitted to the assembly of the just made perfect”: the implication being that those who have not reached that proficiency and are neither “just” (i.e., rectified) nor perfected, will abide upon a lower level of post-mortem existence. For the levels of superphysical life are numerous — “in my Father’s house are many mansions”, or, literally, resting places-and they and their occupants are graduated in hierarchical order according to their degree of fitness and spiritual eminence. The disordered modern world, with its perverse democratic ideals of equality and uniformity, has lost all sense of the hierarchic principle, which since it obtains in the higher world ought to be reflected in this.

“Order is Heaven’s first law and, that confessed, Some are, and must be, greater than the rest.”
But Masonry preserves the witness to this gradua-tion, and to the existence of separate tiers of life in the heaven-places, in the symbolic distribution of its more advanced members. Above the Craft Lodges there presides the Provincial Grand Lodge; beyond that rules the Grand Lodge of the nation. Theoretically higher than any of these is the Royal Arch Chapter, with the Provincial and Grand Chapters towering beyond that. In the symbolic clothing worn by the members of each of these ranks the observant student will perceive the intention to give appropriate expression to the truth thereby signified. The Masonic apron has been explained in an earlier paper as a figure of the soul’s corporeality — the body (not to be confused with the gross physical body) which it wears and will display when it passes from this life. Its pure white is fringed in the case of junior brethren with a pale shade of that blue which, even in physical nature, is the colour of the heavens. With seniors in the Provincial and Grand Lodges this has intensified to the deepest degree of that hue in correspondence with their theoretical spiritual development, whilst the gold lace adornments of the clothing emblematize what is referred to in the Psalmist’s words, “The King’s daughter (the soul) is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold”: for as the Life-Essence or Wisdom becomes increasingly “wrought” or substantialized in us, it becomes the objectified corporeality of the soul. In the Royal Arch the Craft devotional blue is inter-shot with red, the colour of fire or spiritual ardour, the blend resulting in that purple which both in earth and heaven is the prerogative of royalty. Thus, by their clothing in the various grades, the members of Masonry emblematize on earth the angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven. Some of them are clothed with light as with a garment; others are ministers of flaming fire.

In a short paper such as this our reference to the Ancient Mysteries is necessarily brief and has been restricted to the Greek Eleusinian system. Many others of course existed and an extensive, though scattered, literature is available for those who would pursue the subject further in the direction of the Egyptian, Samothracian, Chaldean, Mithraic, Gnostic and other systems. In their respective days and localities they formed the authoritative centres of religion and philosophy, using those terms as but phases of an indivisible subject which nowadays has become split up into many brands of theology and speculative philosophy having little and often no possible connection with each other. What the old writers made public about the Mysteries of course discreetly avoids descriptions of the deeper truths they imparted or of the actual processes of initiation. These must always remain a subject of secrecy, but by the perspicacious reader enough can be found in their purposely obscure and metaphorical accounts to indicate what occurred, and with what effect upon the candidate. Initiation, we have already said, is something which but few
are fit to receive, even after long and rigorous preparation, and fewer still are competent to impart. It was an experience of which a writer has said in regard to the candidate, Vel invent sanctum, vel facit — it either finds him holy or makes him so. Virgil’s account in the sixth £neid of the initiation of Nneas into Elysium (or the supernatural light), or that of Lucius (again a name signifying enlightenment) in the “Golden Ass” of Apuleius, when he was permitted to “see the sun at midnight”, are instructive instances. So also the exclamation of Clement of Alexandria, who had been received into the Gnostic school: “O truly sacred Mysteries! O pure Light! I am led by the light of the torch to the view of heaven and of God. I become holy by initiation. The Lord Himself is the hierophant who, leading the candidate for initiation to the Light, seals him and presents him to the Father to be preserved for ever. These are the orgies of my Mysteries. If thou wilt, come and be thou also initiated, and thou shalt join in the dance with the angels around the uncreated, imperishable and only true God, the Word of God joining in the strain!”

The Mysteries came to an end as public institutions in the sixth century, when from political considerations they and the teaching of the secret doctrine and philosophy became prohibited by the Roman Government, under Justinian, who aimed at inaugurating an official uniform state-religion throughout its Empire. Subsequently, as the Roman Empire declined and broke up, the Roman Catholic Church emerged from it, which, as we know, has resolutely disown any authority in religion and philosophy as a rival to her own and at the same time claimed supremacy and an over-riding jurisdiction in temporal matters also. For the Freemason the result of that Church’s conduct is instructive. For when an authority upon matters wholly spiritual and belonging to a kingdom which is not of this world, lays claim to temporal power and secular possessions, as the Roman Church has done and still does, it at once vitiates and neutralizes its own spiritual qualifications. It becomes infected with the virus of “worldly possessions”. It loads itself with the “money and metals” from which it is essential to keep divested. The result has been that what might have been, and was designed to be, the greatest spiritually educative force in the world’s history, has become a materialized institution, exercising an intellectual tyranny which has estranged the minds of millions from religion altogether. As Lot’s wife is metaphorically said to have crystallized into a pillar of salt through turning back in desire to what she ought to have renounced altogether, so in trying to serve Mammon and God at the same time the Roman Church has failed in both and, as the result of the false steps and abuses of centuries. the world is to-day a chaos of disunited sects and popular religious teaching is as materialistic as Masonry. It is a pity, for in its original design and practice Christianity was intended to serve as a
system of initiation upon a catholic or universal scale, and to take over, super-
sede and amplify all that previously was taught, in a less efficacious way and
to a more restricted public, in the Ancient Mysteries. It is not possible here to
enter upon the extremely interesting questions involved in the transition from
pre-Christian to Christian religion, or to explain why and how the Christian
Mysteries are the efflorescence of the earlier ones and transcend them. In their
central teachings, as in the philosophic method of life they demand, the two
methods are identical. The differences between them are only such as are due
to amplification and formal expression. Christianity came not to destroy, but
to fulfill and expand. That fulfillment and expansion were consequent upon
an event of cosmic importance which we speak of as The Incarnation. By
that event something had happened affecting the very fabric of our planet and
every item of the human family. What that something was and the nature of
the change it wrought is too great and deep a theme to develop now, but, to
illustrate it by Masonic symbolism, it was an event which is the equivalent of,
and is represented by, the transference of the Sacred Symbol of the Grand Ge-
ometrician of the Universe from the ceiling of the Lodge, where it is located
in the elementary grades of the Craft, to the floor, where it is found in the
Royal Arch Degree surrounded with flaming lights and every circumstance of
reverence and sanctity. How many Masons are there in the Order to-day who
recognize that, in this piece of symbolism, Masonry is giving affirmation and
ocular testimony to precisely the same fact as the churchman affirms when he
recites in his Creed the words “He came down from heaven, and was incarnate
and was made man?”

By a tacit and quite unwarranted convention the members of the Craft
avoid mention in their Lodges of the Christian Master and confine their scrip-
tural readings and references almost exclusively to the Old Testament, the
motive being no doubt due to a desire to observe the injunction as to refraining
from religious discussion and to prevent offence on the part of brethren
who may not be of the Christian faith. The motive is an entirely misguided
one and is negated by the fact that the “greater light” upon which every mem-
ber is obligated, and to which his earnest attention is recommended from the
moment of his admission to the Order, is not only the Old Testament, but the
volume of the Sacred Law in its entirety. The New Testament is as essential
to his instruction as the Old, not merely because of its moral teaching, but
in virtue of its constituting the record of the Mysteries in their supreme form
and historic culmination. The Gospels themselves, like the Masonic degrees,
are a record of preparation and illumination, leading up to the ordeal of death,
followed by a raising from the dead and the attainment of Mastership, and
they exhibit the process of initiation carried to the highest conceivable degree
of attainment. The New Testament is full of passages in Masonic terminology and there is not a little irony in the failure by modern Masons to recognize its supreme importance and relevancy to their Lodge proceedings and in the fact that in so doing they may be likening themselves to those builders of whom it is written that they rejected the chief Corner Stone. They would learn further that the Grand Master and Exemplar of Masonry, Hiram Abiff, is but a figure of the Great Master and Exemplar and Saviour of the world, the Divine Architect by whom all things were made, without whom is nothing that hath been made, and whose life is the light of men. If, in the words of the Masonic hymn

“Hiram the architect
Did all the Craft direct
How they should build,.”

it is equally true that the protagonist of the Christian Scriptures also taught universal humanity “how they should build” and reconstruct their own fallen nature, and that the method of such building is one which involves the cross as its working tool and one which culminates in a death and a raising from the dead. And, of those who attain their initiation and mastership by that method, is it not further written there that they become of the household of God and built into a spiritual temple not made with hands, but eternal and in the heavens and of which “Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple builded for an habitation of God?”

Neither the Ancient Mysteries nor Modern Masonry, their descendant, therefore, can be rightly viewed without reference to their relation to the Christian evangell into which the pre-Christian schools became assumed. The line of succession and evolution from the former to the latter is direct and organic. Allowing for differences of time, place and form of expression, both taught exactly the same truths and inculcated the necessity for regeneration. In such a matter there cannot be a diversity of doctrine. The truth concerning it must be static and uniform at all periods of the world’s history. Hence we find St. Augustine affirming that there has never existed but one religion in the world since the beginning of time (meaning by religion the science of reuniting the dislocated soul to its source), and that that religion began to be called Christian in apostolic times. And hence too it is that both the Roman Church and Masonry, although so widely divergent in outlook and method, have this feature in common, that each declares and insists that no alteration or innovation in its central doctrine is permissible and that it is unlawful to remove or
deviate from its ancient landmarks. Each is right in its insistence, for in the
system of each is enshrined the age-old doctrine of regeneration and diviniza-
tion of the human soul, obscured in the one case by theological and other
accretions foreign to the main purpose of religion, and unperceived in the
other because its symbolism remains uninterpreted. To clear vision, Christian
and Masonic doctrine are identical in intention though different in method.
The one says “Via Crucis”; the other “Via Lucis”; yet the two ways are but
one way. The former teaches through the ear; the latter through the eye and
by identifying the aspirant with the doctrine by passing him personally and
dramatically through symbolic rites which he is expected to translate from
ceremonial form into subjective experience. As Patristic literature shows, the
primitive method of the Christian Church was not that which now obtains,
under which the religious offices and teaching are administered to the whole
public alike and in a way implying a common level of doctrine for all and uni-
form power of comprehension by every member of the congrega-tion. It was,
on the other hand, a graduated method of instruction and identical with the
Masonic system of degrees conferred by reason of advancing merit and abil-
ity. To cite one of the most instructive of early Christian treatises (Dionysius:
On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy), with which every Masonic student should
familiarize himself, it will be found that admission to the early Church was
by three ceremonial degrees exactly corresponding in intention with those of
Masonry. “The most holy initiation of the Mystic Rites has as its first Godly
purpose the holy cleansing of the initiated; and as second, the enlightening
instruction of the purified; and finally and as the completion of the former, the
perfecting of those instructed in the science of their appropriate instructions.
The order of the Ministers in the first class cleanses the initiated through the
Mystic Rites; in the second, conducts the purified to light; and, in the last and
highest, makes perfect those who have participated in the Divine Light by
the scientific contemplations of the illuminations contemplated.” This brief
passage alone suffices to show that originally membership of the Christian
Church involved a sequence of three initiatory rites identical in intention with
those of the Craft to-day. The names given to those who had qualified in those
Rites were respectively Catechumens, Leiturgoi, and Priests or Presbyters;
which in turn are identifiable with our Entered Apprentices, Fellow Crafts
and Master Masons. Their first degree was that of a rebirth and purification
of the heart; their second related to the illumination of the intelligence; and
their third to a total death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness, in
which the candidate died with Christ on the cross, as with us he is made to
imitate the death of Hiram, and was raised to that higher order of life which
is Mastership.
When Christianity became a state-religion and the Church a world-power, the materialization of its doctrine proceeded apace and has only increased with the centuries. Instead of becoming the unifying force its leaders meant it to be, its association with “worldly possessions” has resulted in making it a disintegrative one. Abuses led to schisms and sectarianism, and whilst the parent-body, in the form of the Greek and Roman Churches, still possesses and jealously conserves all the original credentials, traditions and symbols in their superb liturgies and rites, more importance is attached to the outer husk of its heritage than to its kernel and spirit, whilst the Protestant communities and so-called “free” churches have unhappily become self-severed altogether from the original tradition and their imagined liberty and independence are in fact but a captivity to ideas of their own, having no relation to the primitive gnosis and no understanding of those Mysteries which must always lie deeper than the exoteric popular religion of a given period. Regeneration as a science has long been, and still is, entirely outside the purview of orthodox religion. The Christian Master’s affirmation “Ye must be born again” is regarded as but a pious counsel towards an indefinite improvement of conduct and character, not as a reference to a drastic scientific revolution and reformation of the individual in the way contemplated by the rites of initiation prescribed in the Mysteries. Popular religion may indeed produce “good” men, as the world’s standard of goodness goes. It does not and cannot produce divinized men endued with the qualities of Master-ship, for it is ignorant of the traditional wisdom and methods by which that end is to be attained.

That wisdom and those traditional methods of the Mysteries have, however, never been without living witness in the world, despite the jealousy and inhibitions of official orthodoxy. Since the suppression of the Mysteries in the sixth century, their tradition and teaching have been continued in secret and under various concealments, and to that continuation our present Masonic system is due. As previously intimated in these papers, it was compiled and projected between two and three centuries ago as an elementary expression of the ancient doctrine and initiatory method, by a group of minds which were far more deeply instructed in the old tradition and secret science than are those who avail themselves of their work to-day, or even than the text of the Masonic rites indicates. If they remained obscure and anonymous, so that the modern student’s research is unable to identify them, it is only what is to be expected, for the true initiate is one who never proclaims himself as such and is content ever to remain impersonal and out of sight and notoriety, planting his seed for the welfare of his fellow men indifferently and leaving others to water it and God to give it increase. But, within the limits they allowed themselves, they achieved their work well and truly and, as has been sought
to demonstrate in these pages, made it a rescript, faithful at least in outline
and main principles, of the ancient teaching and perfecting rites of the philo-
sophic Mysteries. It has been well said by a writer of authority on the subject
that they put forward the system of speculative Masonry as “an experiment
upon the mind of the age”, and with a view to exhibiting to at least a small
section of a public living in a time of gross darkness and materialism an evi-
dence of the doctrine of regeneration which might serve as a light to such as
could profit therefrom. If this theory be true, their intention may at first sight
appear to have become falsified by subsequent developments, in the course
of which there has sprung up an organiza-tion of world-wide dimensions and
vast membership, animated undoubtedly in the main with worthy ideals and
accomplishing a certain measure of benevolent work, but nevertheless failing
entirely in perceiving its true and original purpose as an Order for promoting
the science of human regenera-tion, and unconscious that by this default its
achieve-ments in other directions are of small or no account. But a broader
and wiser view of the situation would be one that, whilst recognizing a great
diffusion of energy to little present purpose, sees also that, in the long run and
in the amplitude of time, that energy is not wasted but conserved, and that,
besides benefiting individuals here and there who are capable of truly prof-
iting from the Order, it preserves the witness and keeps burning the light of
the perpetual Mysteries in a dark age. Like the light of a Master Mason which
never becomes wholly extinguished, so in the world’s darkest days the light
of the Mysteries never goes out entirely, and God and the way to Him are not
left without witness. If, in comparison with other witnesses, Masonry is but
a glimmering ray rather than a powerful beam of light, it is none the less a
true ray; a kindly light lit from the world’s central altar-flame, and sufficing to
lead at least some of us on amid the encircling gloom, until the night is gone.
Light is granted in propor-tion to the desire of our hearts, but for the majority
of Masons their Order sheds no light at all, because light is not their desire,
nor is initiation in its true sense understood or wished for. They move among
the symbols, simulacra and substituted secrets of the Mysteries without com-
prehending them, without wishing to translate them into reality. The Craft is
made to subserve social and philanthropic ends foreign to its purpose and even
to gratify the desire for outward personal distinction; but as an in-strument of
regeneration it remains wholly ineffective.

Is this nescience, this imperviousness and failure to comprehend, how-
ever, to no purpose? Perhaps not. Each of us lives in the presence of natural
mysteries he fails to discern or understand, and even when the desire for wis-
dom is at last awakened, the education of the understanding is a long process.
Nature in all her kingdoms builds slowly, perfecting her aims through end-
less repetitions and apparently wanton waste of material. And in the things of the Kingdom which transcends Nature, the same method prevails. Souls are drawn but slowly to the Light, and their perfecting and transmutation into that Light is often very gradual. For long before it is able to distinguish shadow from substance, Humanity must try its prentice-hand upon illusory toys and substitutions for the genuine secrets of Reality. For long before it is worthy of actual initiation upon the path that leads to God it must be permitted to indulge in preliminary unintelligent rehearsals of the processes therein involved. The approaches to the ancient temples of the Mysteries were lined with statues of the Gods, having no value of themselves, but intended to habituate the minds of neophytes to the spiritual concepts and divine attributes to which those statues were meant to give objective form and semblance. But within the temple itself all graven images, all formal figures, symbols and ceremonial types, ceased; for the mind had then finally to learn to dispense with their help, and, in the strength of its own purity and understanding alone, to rise into unclouded perception of their formless prototypes and “see the Nameless of the hundred names”.

“Get knowledge, get wisdom; but with all thy gettings, get understanding,” exclaims the old Teacher, in a counsel that may well be commended to the Masonic Fraternity to-day, which so little understands its own system. But understanding depends upon the gift of the Supernal Light, which gift in turn depends upon the ardour of our desire for it. If Wisdom to-day is widowed, all Masons are actually or potentially the widow’s sons, and she will be justified of her children who seek her out and who labour for her as for hid treasure. It remains with the Craft itself whether it shall enter upon its own heritage as a lineal successor of the Ancient Mysteries and Wisdom-teaching, or whether, by failing so to do, it will undergo the inevitable fate of everything that is but a form from which its native spirit has departed.
Part III

Masonic Initiation
Walter Leslie Wilmshurst
Past Asst. Grand Director of Ceremonies, UGLE.

MASONIC INITIATION

To all Builders in the Spirit.

London — 1929
William Rider & Son, 8, Paternoster Row &
Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 3, Amen Corner
WISDOM alone is the right coin with which to deal, and with it everything of real worth is bought and sold. And for it, Temperance and justice, Fortitude and Prudence, are a kind of preliminary purification.

And those who instituted the Mysteries for us appear to have been by no means contemptible persons, and to have intimated in a veiled manner that whoever descends into Hades uninitiated, and without being a partaker in the Mysteries, shall lie in the mire; but that whoever arrived there purified and initiated, shall dwell with the Gods. Yet, as said those who preside over the Mysteries:—

'Many are the candidates seeking Initiation,
But few are the perfected Initiates.'

But these few are, in my judgment, true wisdomlovers; and that I may be of their number I shall leave nothing unattempted, but shall exert myself in all possible ways.

(SOCRATES in PLATO’S Phaedo.)

First Edition printed 1929
Chapter 1

Introduction

The Position and Possibilities of the Masonic Order

This book is meant to be a sequel to, and an amplification of, my previous volume, *The Meaning of Masonry*, first published in 1922—a collection of papers issued diffidently and tentatively on the chance that they might interest some few members of the Craft in the deeper and philosophic aspect of Freemasonry. It at once met, however, with a surprisingly warm welcome from all parts of the world, and already has had to be thrice reprinted. Any personal pleasure at its reception is eclipsed by a greater gratification and thankfulness at the now demonstrated fact that the present large and rapid increase in the number of the Fraternity is being accompanied by a correspondingly wide desire to realise the significance and purpose of the Masonic system to a much fuller degree than till now has been the case. The Masonic Craft seems to be gradually regenerating itself, and, as I previously indicated, such a regeneration must needs make not only for the moral benefit and enlightenment of individuals and Lodges, but ultimately must react favourably upon the framework in which they exist — the whole body of society.

In these circumstances it becomes possible to speak more fully, perhaps also more feelingly, upon a subject which, as a large volume of public and private testimony has revealed to me, is engaging the earnest interest of large numbers of Brethren of the Craft. So I offer them these further papers, [presenting the same subject-matter as before, but induction different form and expounding more fully matters previously treated but superficially and cursorily.

By “the Masonic Initiation” I mean, of course, not merely the act and rite
of reception into the Order, but Speculative Freemasonry — within the limits of the Craft and Arch Degrees — regarded as a system, a specialised method of intellectual guidance and spiritual instruction; a method which to its willing and attentive devotees offers at once an interpretation of life, a rule of living, and a means of grace, introduction, and even intromission, to life and light of a supra-natural order. Masonry being essentially and expressly a quest after supranatural Light, the present papers are schematically arranged in correspondence with the stages of that quest; they deal first with the transition from darkness to light; next with the pathway itself and the light to be found thereon; and, lastly, with light in its fulness of attainment as the result of faithfully pursuing that path to the end. — In a final paper I have re-surveyed the Order's past and indicated its present tendencies and future possibilities.

In their zeal to appreciate and make the best of their connection with the Order, some members, one finds, experience difficulty in defining and "placing" Freemasonry. Is it Religion, Philosophy, a system of morals, or what? In view of the deepening interest in the subject, it may be well at the outset to clear up this point. Masonry is not a Religion, though it contains marked religious elements and many religious references. A Brother may legitimately say, if he wishes, — and many do say — "Masonry is my religion," but he is not justified in classifying and holding it out to other people as a Religion. Reference to the Constitutions makes it quite clear that the system is one meant to exist outside and independently of Religion; that all the Order requires of its members is a belief in Deity and personal conformation to the Moral Law, every Brother being free to follow whatsoever form of religion and mode of worship he pleases.

Neither is Masonry a Philosophy; albeit behind it lies a large philosophical background not appearing in its surface-rituals and doctrine, but left for discovery to the research and effort of the Brethren. That philosophical background is a Gnosis or Wisdom-teaching as old as the world, one which has been shared alike by the Vedists of the East, the Egyptian, Chaldean and Orphic Initiation systems, the Pythagorean and Platonist schools, and all the Mystery Temples of both the past and the present, Christian or otherwise. The present renaissance in the Masonic Order is calculated to cause a marked, if gradual, revival of interest in that philosophy, with the probable eventual result that there will come about a general restoration of the Mysteries, inhibited during the last sixteen centuries. But of this more will be said in the final section of this book.

The official description of Masonry is that it is a "System of Morality." This is true, but in two senses, one only of which is usually thought of. The term is usually interpreted as meaning a "system of morals." But men need
not enter a secret order to learn morals and study ethics; nor is an elaborate
duction ceremonial organisation needed to teach them. Elementary morals can
be, and are, learned in the outside world; and must be learned there if one is
to be merely a decent member of society. The possession of “strict morals,”
as every Mason knows,
is a preliminary qualification for entering the Order; a man does not enter
it to acquire them after he has entered. It is true he finds the Order insistent
on obedience to the Moral Law and emphasising closer cultivation of certain
ethical virtues, as is essential to those who propose to enter upon a course
of spiritual science; and this is the primary, more obvious sense in which the
term “system of morality” is used.

But the word “morality,” in its original, and also in its Masonic,
connotation, has a further meaning; one carrying the same sense as it
does when we speak of a “morality-play.” A “morality” is a literary or
dramatic way of expressing spiritual truth, putting it forward allegori-
cally and in accordance with certain well-settled principles and methods
(mores); it is the equivalent of a usage or “use,” as ecclesiastics speak
of “the Sarum use” or liturgy.

In the same sense Plutarch’s Moralia is largely a series of disquisi-
tions upon the mores of the ancient religious Mystery-schools.

A “system of morality,” therefore, means secondarily “a systematised and
dramatised method of moral discipline and philosophic instruction, based on
ancient usage and long established practice.” The method in question is that
of Initiation; the usage and practice is that of allegory and symbol, which it is
the Freemason’s duty, if he wishes to understand his system, to labour to in-
terpret and put to personal application. If he fails to do so, he still remains and
the system deliberately intends that he should in the dark about the Order’s
real meaning and secrets, although formally a member of it. The Order, the
morality-system, merely guarantees its own possession of Truth; it does not
undertake to impart it save to those who labour for it. For Truth and its real
arcana can never be communicated directly, or save through allegory and sym-
bol, myth and sacrament. The onus of translating these must ever rest with the
recipient as part of his lifework; until he makes the truth his own he can never
know it to be truth; he must do the will before he can know the doctrine. “I
know not how it is” (said St. Bernard of Clairvaux of allegory and symbol)
“but the more that spiritual realities are clothed with obscuring veils, the more
they delight and attract; and nothing so much heightens longing for them as
such tender refusal.”

Masonry, then,—as a “system of morality” as thus defined—is neither a
Religion nor a Philosophy, but at once a Science and an Art, a Theory and a
Practice; and this was ever the way in which the Schools of the Ancient Wisdom and Mysteries proceeded. They first exhibited to the intending disciple a picture of the Life-process; they taught him the story of the soul’s genesis and descent into this world; they showed him its present imperfect, restricted state and its unfortunate position; they indicated that there was a scientific method by which it might be perfected and regain its original condition. This was the Science-half of their systems, the programme or theory placed in duction advance before disciples, that they might have a thorough intellectual grasp of the purpose of the Mysteries and what admission to them involved. Then followed the other half; the practical work to be done by the disciple upon himself, in purifying himself; controlling his sense-nature; correcting natural undisciplined tendencies; mastering his thought, his mental processes and will, by a rigorous rule of life and art of living. When he showed proficiency in both the theory and the practice, and could withstand certain tests, then but not before he was allowed the privilege of Initiation—a secret process, conferred by already initiated Masters or experts, the details of which were never disclosed outside the process itself.

Such, in a few words, was the age-old science of the Mysteries, whether in Egypt, Greece or elsewhere, and it is that science which, in very compressed, diluted form, is perpetuated and reproduced in modern Masonry. To emphasising and demonstrating this fact, both the present and my former volume are devoted; their purpose being coupled with a hope that, when the true intention of the Order is perceived, the Craft may begin to fulfil its original design and become an instrument of real initiating efficiency instead of, as hitherto, a merely social and charitable institution. Indeed the place and office of Masonry cannot be adequately appreciated without acquaintance with the Mysteries Masonry of antiquity, for, as a poet (Patmore) wrote who knew and the latter perfectly,

Save by the Old Road none attain the new,
And from the Ancient Hills alone we catch the view!

Masonry having the above purpose, whilst not a religion, is consistent with and adaptable to any and every religion. But it is capable of going further. For an Order of Initiation (like the monastic Orders within the older Churches) is intended to provide a higher standard of instruction, a larger communication of truth and wisdom, than the elementary ones offered by public popular religion; and at the same time it requires more rigorous personal discipline and imposes much more exacting claims upon the mind and will of its adherents. The popular religious
teaching of any people, Christian or not, is as it were for the masses as yet incapable of stronger food and unadapted to rigorous discipline; it is accommodated to the simple understanding of the man in the street, jog-trotting along the road of life. Initiation is meant for the expert, the determined spiritual athlete, ready to face the deeper mysteries of being, and resolute to attain, as soon as may be, the heights to which he knows his own spirit, when awakened, can take him.

Is not the present declension of interest in popular religion and public worship due—far from entirely, yet largely—not to irreligiousness, but to the fact that conventional religious presentation does not satisfy the rational and spiritual needs of a public forced and disciplined by the exigencies of modern existence to insist upon a clear understanding and a firm intellectual foothold in respect of any form of venture it is called upon to undertake? Is not the turnover of so many essentially religiously-minded and earnestly questing people from the Churches to variants of religious expression, including Masonry, due largely to that reason and to the fact that the Churches, whilst inculcating faith, offering hope, proclaiming love, fail entirely in providing what the Mysteries of the past always did—such a clear philosophical explanation of life and the Universe as provided—not proof, which in regard to ultimate verities it is impossible to offer—but an intellectual motive for turning from things of sense to things of spirit?

Nothing is further from my wish or intention in these pages than to extol Masonry at the expense of any existing Religion or Church, or to suggest competition between institutions which are not and can never be competitors, but complementaries. I am merely asserting the simple obvious facts that popular favour has turned, and will more and more turn, to that market which best supplies its needs, and that for many nowadays the Churches fail to supply those needs, or form at best an inferior or inadequate source of supply. The growing human intelligence has outgrown—not religious truth but presentations of it that sufficed in less exacting social conditions than obtain to-day, and it is calling for more sustaining nutriment.

It may be useful to recall how the position was viewed not long ago by an advanced mind racially detached from the religion and ways of the Western world. A Hindu religious Master, an Initiate, who attended the World’s Congress of Religions at Chicago as the representative of the Vedantists, made an observational tour of America and Europe with a view to sympathetically understanding and appraising their religious organisations and methods. His conclusions may be summarised thus:

"The Western ideal is to be doing (to be active); the Eastern, to be suffering (to be passive). The perfect life would be a wonderful harmony
of the two. Western religious organisations (Churches and sects) involve grave disadvantages; for they are always breeding new evils, which are not known to the East with its absence of organisation. The perfect condition would come from a true blending of these opposite methods. For the Western soul, it is well for a man to be born in a Church, but terrible for him to die in one; for in religion there must be growth. A young man is to be censured who fails to attend and learn from the Church of his nation; the elderly man is equally to be censured if he does attend;— he ought to have outgrown what that Church offers and to have attained a higher order of religious life and understanding.”

The same conclusion was expressed by an eminent and ardent religionist of our own country: “The work of the Church in the world is not to teach the mysteries of life, so much as to persuade the soul to that arduous degree of purity at which Deity Himself becomes her teacher. The work of the Church ends when the knowledge of God begins.” In other words Initiation science (in a real and not merely a ceremonial sense) is needed and commences to be applicable only when elementary spiritual duction tuition has been assimilated and richer nourishment is called for. The same writer, though a zealous member of the Roman Church, affirms frankly and truly that in any age of the world, the real Initiate of the Mysteries, whatever his race or national religion, must needs always stand higher in spiritual wisdom and stature than the non-initiate of the Christian or any other faith.

Such testimonies as these point to what many others will feel to be a necessity—the need of some complementary, supplementary aid to popular Religion; some Higher Grade School, in the greater seclusion and privacy of which can be both studied and practised lessons in the secrets and mysteries of our being which cannot be exhibited coram populo. Such an aid is provided by a Secret Order, an Initiation system, and is at hand in Freemasonry. It remains to be seen whether the Masonic Craft, in both its own and the larger ulterior interest of society, will avail itself of the opportunity in its hands. There being a tendency in that direction in the Craft to-day, the pages of this and of my former book are offered to encouraging that tendency to a fruition that could not make otherwise than for the general good.

But let those of us who are desirous to farther that tendency, and to see provided an advanced system of spiritual instruction, never entertain a notion of competing with any other community, or permit ourselves a single thought of disparagement or contempt towards either those who learn or those who teach in other places. Life involves growth. The hyacinth-bulb in the pot before me will not remain a bulb, whose life and stature are to be restricted to the level of the pot it has been placed in. It will shoot up a foot higher and there
burst in flower and fragrance, albeit that its roots remain in the soil. Similarly
each human life is as a bulb providentially planted in some pot, in some Reli-
gion, some Church. If it truly fulfils the law and central instincts of its nature
it will outgrow that pot, rise high above the pot’s surface-level, and ultimately
blossom in a consciousness transcending anything it knew whilst in the bulb
stage. That consciousness will be one not of the beginner, the student, the
neophyte in the Mysteries; it will be that of the full Initiate.

But that perfected life will still be rooted in the soil, and, far from de-
spising it, will be for ever grateful for the pot in which its growth became
possible. Masonry will, therefore, never disparage simpler or less advanced
forms of intellectual or spiritual instruction. The Mason, above all men and in
a much fuller, deeper sense, will respond to the old ordinance “Honour thy fa-
ther and mother.” In whatever form, under whichever of the many names the
God-idea presents itself to himself or his fellow-men, he will honour the Uni-
versal Father; and in whatsoever soil of Mother-Earth, or whichever section
of Mother-Church, he or they have received their infant nurture, he will hon-
our that Mother, even as he is bound also to honour his own Mother Lodge;
seeing in each of these the temporal reflection of still another Mother, the
supernal parent described as “the Mother of us all.”

Upon one other point I must add a word. A duction writer wishing to
help on the understanding of Masonry, as fully as may be, in the interests of
Brethren who, as events have shown, are waiting in numbers to receive and
ready to turn to account such help as may be given, is put to real anxiety to
find a way of so writing that he simultaneously discharges the combined duty
of extending that help and of observing his own obligations as to silence.

In my former volume I explained that, in respect of necessary safeguards,
all due secrecy should be observed; and the assurance is now repeated in re-
spect of the present one. No non-Mason need look to find in these pages any
of the distinctive secrets of the Craft; no Mason, I believe, will trace in them
any disloyal word or motive, or recognise in them anything but earnest anx-
iousness to promote the Craft’s interests to the uttermost. Moreover the things
I permit myself to say are, I conceive, exempt from silence as regards the
Craft, for they are things which justly and lawfully belong to it and properly
concern it; and since its members, near and far, in full measure and in many
ways have proved themselves worthy of such confidence as I can show them,
I feel myself justified in addressing them more intimately than before. As re-
gards those outside the Craft, into whose hands a published book cannot be
prevented form falling, what I have written consists

of things already spoken about at large in other forms of expression in
these days of keen search for guidance upon the dark path of human life;
and let me here say that as warm, and almost as many, appreciations of my former volume have reached me from non-Masons as from within the Craft, and that it has attracted to the Order much sympathy and good-will that did not previously exist.

Doubtless there are eyes of such strictness that they regard any public mention of the Masonic subject as an impropriety. Even these I would not willingly offend; yet to allow a possible technicality to prevent the giving, to those seeking it, the only gift I can make to the Craft in return for what it has given to myself, seems to me less meritorious Masonic conduct than would be the negative virtue of keeping rigid silence when so much can usefully be said.

So I take comfort from that ancient word of wisdom which proclaims that “He that observes the wind shall not sow, and he that observes the clouds will not reap!” And though, whilst writing these pages, a morning desire to sow my seed has often been followed by an evening prompting to withhold my hand, yet the former has prevailed with me. And if of that seed, some falls upon Masonic and some chances upon other ground, who shall know whether shall prosper this or that?; but I pray that both shall be alike good. For, continues the same old Sage, “truly Light is sweet, and a precious thing it is for the eyes to behold the Sun”; and to-day there are drawn blinds everywhere waiting to be lifted, to let in a Sunlight that belongs to no close community, but to all men alike.

So having, I hope, brought myself to order in this respect, and marking with thankful eyes the sunrise of a new order of intelligence breaking over the Brotherhood, let me now proceed, in the one Name that is thought of under many names, to declare the Lodge open, for the purpose of considering Craft-Masonry in all its degrees.
Chapter 2

From Darkness to Light

No more needed and useful work is to be done in the Masonic Order to-day than the education of its members in the true purpose of rites of initiation, that they may the better appreciate the reason, the importance, and the seriousness, of the work the Order was designed to achieve.

Hitherto that educative work has been grievously neglected, with prejudicial results to the Craft through the admission of candidates little adapted to appreciate its purpose. Some members have no wish to be masonically educated. They are content to be Masons in name only, and are satisfied that the monotonous, mechanical repetition of unexplained ceremonies and side-lectures fulfils every requisite, and conveys all that is to be known. Yet in every Lodge are to be found brethren who are asking for something more than this, who know that the Craft was designed for wider and better ends; who, as earnest seekers after Wisdom and Light, entered the Order in the hope of finding them, but who too often are repelled by what they do find there, or lose interest on their needs being left unprovided for. It is in the special interest of this worthier type of Mason that this address is given.

We greatly need competent, trained exponents of the meaning and symbolism of the Craft; not merely teachers of the letter of its rituals and lectures. The duty and responsibility of providing this wider instruction surely lies upon those holding the rank of Installed Master. Is not their place in that East from which real Light should continually be coming, and whence they are supposed to employ and instruct in Masonic science those who sit in less or greater degrees of darkness in other symbolic quarters of the Lodge? Are they not the figurative representatives of royal Solomon, and symbolic mouth-pieces of a more than human Wisdom? Over each of them has there not been raised a most solemn petition that they may be endued with wisdom to comprehend, judgment to define, and ability to enforce obedience to the holy law
declaring the conditions upon which real Initiation depends, so that they may effectively enlighten the minds of their Brethren? How many Installed Masters are conscious in their hearts of possessing, or of even striving to acquire, that wisdom, that understanding of our science, that power of raising others from darkness to Light in any real and vital sense?

Now you have called me to the presidency of this large Association of Installed Masters, whose function is to farther the best interests of the Craft in this district. In accepting that position of honour, can I better use it than by inviting you, my Worshipful Colleagues, to consider with me some lines upon which true Masonic instruction should be directed, so that we may combine in raising the general level of Masonic science in our respective Lodges, and at least try to justify more fully our pretension to be Masters of it?

My purpose now, therefore, is, firstly, to give some idea of what real Initiation involves, and to show how great a difference exists between it and mere formal passage through the ceremonies of the Craft. Secondly, it is to explain what Initiation meant and still means in the more secret and advanced systems out of which modern Masonry has sprung as a comparatively new branch from a very ancient tree. And lastly, it is to indicate how, and with what greater efficacy, our Lodge-work might be conducted if we better realised the true nature and purpose of the Order.

I.- Initiation Real and Ceremonial

It may be a surprise to some members of our Craft to be told that our ceremonial rites, as at present performed, do not constitute or confer real Initiation at all, in the original sense of admitting a man to the solemn mysteries of the human soul, and to practical experience in divine science. The words “Initiation” and “Mysteries” have become so popularised and debased that they are nowadays used in relation to familiarising anyone with the methods of, say, the Stock Exchange, or any other pursuit with which he is unacquainted.

We profess to confer Initiation, but few Masons know what real Initiation involves; very few, one fears, would have the wish, the courage, or the willingness to make the necessary sacrifices to attain it if they did. Nevertheless our Craft Degrees give us a rough outline and fragmentary sketch of what the real process entails, and they leave it with ourselves either to amplify that sketch by our own efforts and to make its implications such a reality that our whole life becomes transformed in consequence, or to treat it as so much ceremonial through which we are only to pass formally, leaving our old imperfect nature not a whit changed by the process.
Now if Masonry, with its solemn prayers, assurances and pledges, means anything, its true purpose is to promote the spiritual life and development of its members to a degree far in advance of what it accomplishes at present. Otherwise it remains but a social formality, while its obligations and religious references are apt to lapse into profanity or even blasphemy. To prevent this there is needed a dear grasp of the fundamental purpose of an initiatory system and the reason for its existence, after which one can proceed more advantageously to understanding its degrees and symbols in detail. For without such knowledge and understanding there can be no real power, no spiritual driving-force, behind our rites; and without that power ceremonies are but perfunctory, inefficacious formalities. Ceremonies were instituted originally to give an external form to an internal act; but where the internal power to perform such acts does not exist, a ceremony will avail nothing and achieve nothing. You can go on making nominal Masons by the thousand, but you will only be creating a large organisation of men who remain as unenlightened in the Mysteries as they always were. You cannot make a single real Initiate, save, as our teaching indicates, by the help of God and the earnest intelligent co-operation of those qualified to assist to the Light a fellow-being who, from his heart and not merely from his lips, desires that Light, humbly confessing himself spiritually poor, worthless, immersed in darkness, and unable to find that Light elsewhere or by his own efforts. For real Initiation means an expansion of consciousness from the human to the divine level.

Every system of real Initiation, whether of the past or present, is divided into three clear-cut stages; since before anyone can pass from his natural darkness to the Light supernal and discover the Blazing Star or Glory at his own centre, there are three distinct tasks to be achieved. They are as follows:

first, the turning away from the attractions of the outer world, involving detachment from the allurements of all that is meant by “money and metals,” and the purification and subdual of the bodily and sensual tendencies. Not everyone is able or ripe for doing this; the natural life maintains a powerful hold over us, and our ingrained habits are not readily changed. Yet as long as any of these sensible attractions magnetise and chain us to physical enjoyment, so long are we “in worldly possessions” and precluded from attaining real Initiation into what is super-physical. This work of detachment and self-purification is our Entered Apprentice work, and to it, as you know, is theoretically allotted the long period of seven years.

The reason for the seven years apprenticeship is based on the septenary principle operating in Nature. In the course of each seven years the material particles of the human body become entirely changed and reconstituted. By a course of pure living, diet, and thought for that period, therefore, the physical
organism is clarified, sublimated and made a more efficient vehicle for the transmission of the central inner Light. This is the true reason for asceticism; the gradual substitution of refined physical tissues for grosser, impure ones.

Second, the analysis, discipline and obtaining control of one’s inner world,—of the mind, of one’s thoughts, one’s intellectual and psychic faculties. This extremely difficult task is that of the Fellowcraft stage, to which is allotted a further five years, which with the previous seven make twelve. Because of this, the candidate who had duly completed this period was said, in the ancient systems, to be mystically “twelve years old,” —a point to which we will refer again presently.

Third, the “last and greatest trial,” lay in the breaking and surrender of the personal will, the dying down of all sense of personality and self-hood, so that the petty personal will may become merged in the divine Universal Will and the illusion of separate independent existence give way to conscious realisation of unity with the one Life that permeates the Universe. For so only can one be raised from conditions of unreality, strife and figurative death to a knowledge of ultimate Reality, Peace and Life Immortal. To attain this is to attain Mastership, involving complete domination of the lower nature and the development in oneself of a higher order of life and faculty. And he who thus attained was said to be of the mystical age of thirty years, of which also I will say more presently.

Now it is these three stages, these three labours or processes, that are epitomised dramatically in our three Degrees. Every Mason in taking those Degrees identifies himself ceremonially with what they signify; he also solemnly obligates himself to put their significance into actual practice in his subsequent life. But it is obvious that those labours are highly arduous tasks demanding the whole time, the persistent thought, and the concentrated energies, of any one who submits himself to them. They are not achieved by merely passing through a sequence of ceremonies in three successive months, at the end of which the candidate, far from being an Initiate, usually remains the same bewildered, benighted man he was before, knowing only that he has been hurried through three formal rites entitling him at last to the august title of Master Mason.

Hence we are justified in asserting that Masonry, as now unintelligently practised, does not and cannot confer real Initiation; it merely discharges certain ceremonial formalities. Nevertheless in those formalities the earnest Mason, the diligent pursuer of the path of Light, is given a clear chart of the process of spiritual self-development which he can follow up by his own subsequent exertions; and further, he is directed to a most valuable key for unlocking central truth and discovering the hidden secrets and mysteries of his
own being,—the key of intense aspiration to find the Light of the centre.

“Does that key hang or lie?” asks one of our lectures. For most Masons it lies. It lies rusting and unused, because they either do not desire or do not know how to use it, or have no one competent to show them how to do so. For some few it hangs you are taught where—and, though it is of no manner of metal, those who have found and use it, pursuing their quest with fervency and zeal, if perhaps at first with shambling feet and uncertain steps, may assuredly hope to gain admission into the Lodge of their own soul, and, when the last hoodwink falls that now blinds their vision, to find themselves there face to face with the Master of that Lodge, and in possession of every point of fellowship with Him.

A poet well schooled in the process of real Initiation has thus written of it

“Pierce thy heart to find the key.
With thee take
Only what none else would take
Lose, that the lost thou mayst receive;
Die, for none other way cant live.
When earth and heaven lay down their veil
And that apocalypse turns thee pale,
When thy seeing blindeth thee
To what thy fellow-mortals see,
When their sight to thee is sightless,
Seek no more. . . .
Francis Thompson’s “Mistress of Vision.”

For it is then, and only then, that true Initiation is achieved, that the lost Word is found at the deep centre of one’s own heart, and the genuine but withheld secrets of our immortal being are restored to us in exchange for the natural knowledge and faculties which, in this world of time and change, have been given us by Providence as their temporary and mortal substitutions.

2.- The Purpose of the Mysteries

We shall understand little of the purpose of Masonry unless we know that of the older systems out of which it issued. That purpose was to promote and expedite the spiritual evolution of those who desired the regeneration of their nature and were prepared to submit to the necessary discipline. Thus the work of the Ancient Mysteries was something vastly more serious and momentous
than merely passing candidates through a series of formal rites as we do to-day. Their great buildings, which still survive, were assuredly not erected at such immense labour and skill merely to provide convenient meeting-places, like our modern Lodge premises, at which to administer a formal rite at the end of a day devoted to business and secular pursuits. The mass of Initiation literature and hieroglyphs available to us reveals how drastic and searching was the work to which candidates were subjected under the expert guidance of Masters who had previously undergone the same discipline and become competent to advance their juniors. With them the work was a difficult but exact science, claiming one’s whole time and energies; it was the highest, greatest and holiest of all forms of science—the science of the human soul and the art of its conversion from a natural to a regenerate supernatural state. Reminiscences of the dignity of this work still survive in our references to Masonry as the “noble science” and “royal art,” terms meaningless to-day, although each newly made Mason is charged to make daily progress in Masonic science and every one installed into the chair of a Lodge is termed a Master of Arts and Sciences.

But this secret immemorial science could be imparted only to those morally fit and spiritually ripe for it, as not all men yet are. It was meant only for those bent on passing from the moral and intellectual darkness in which normal humanity is plunged, to that Light which dwells in their darkness, though that darkness comprehendeth it not until it is opened up at their centre. It was solely for those who sought the way, the truth and the supernatural life, and were ready to divest themselves of the “money and metals” of temporal interests and concentrate their energies upon the evolution of the higher principles of their nature, which is possible only by the abnegation and surrender of their lower tendencies.

Evolution, nowadays recognised as a universal process in Nature, is sometimes supposed to be a modern discovery. But the ancient Wisdom-teaching knew and acted upon it ages before modern scientists discovered it in our own day. It recognised that in all the Universe there is but one Life broken up and differentiated into innumerable forms, and evolving through those forms from less to greater degrees of perfection. In Masonic metaphor it saw Nature to be the vast general quarry and forest out of which individual lives have been hewn like so much stones and timber, which when duly perfected are destined to be fitted together and built into a new and higher synthesis, a majestic Temple worthy of the Divine indwelling, and of which Solomon’s temple was a type. All life has issued out of the “East,” i.e., from the Great World of Infinite Spirit, and has journeyed to the “West” or the Little World of finite form and embodiment, whence, when duly perfected by experience in those restricted
conditions, it is ordained to return to the “East.” Hence when our Entered Apprentice is asked in the lecture, whence he comes and whither he goes, he replies that he is on his way back from the temporal West to the eternal East. The answer corresponds with a fuller one to be found in the surviving records of the early British Initiates, the Welsh bards, where to the same question the following reply is made:

“I came from the Great World, having my beginning in Spirit. I am now in the Little World (of form and body) where I have traversed the circle of strife and evolution, and now, at its termination, I am man. In my beginning I had but a bare capacity for life; but I came through every form capable of a body and life to the state of man, where my condition was severe and grievous during the age of ages. I came through every form capable of life, in water, in earth, in air. And there happened to me every severity, every hardship, every evil, every suffering. But purity and perfection cannot be obtained without seeing and knowing everything, and this is not possible without suffering everything. And there can be no full and perfect Love that does not provide for its creatures the conditions needful to lead to the experience that results in perfection. Every one shall attain to the circle of perfection at last.”

(From “Barddas”; the ancient initiate tradition of Welsh Druidic.)

Life, then, was seen as broken up and distributed into innumerable individualised lives or souls and as passing from one bodily form to another in a perpetual progression. (In Masonic metaphor those individualised souls are called “stones,” for stone or rock is an emblem of what is most enduring, and the stones are rough ashlars or perfect cubes accordingly as they exist in the rough or have been squared, worked upon, and polished). The bodily form with which the soul becomes invested upon entering this world (symbolised by the Mason being invested with the apron) was seen to be transient, variable, perishable, of small moment compared with the life or soul animating it. Yet it was of the greatest importance in another way, since it provided a fulcrum point or point of resistance for the soul’s education and development. It was, as we still term it, the “tomb of transformation”; the grave into which the soul descended for the purpose of working out its own salvation, for transforming and improving itself, and ascending out of it the stronger and wiser for the experience. Thus life was seen as one continuous stream, temporarily checked by the particular form that clothed it, but flowing on from form to form to ever new and higher conditions; slumbering in the mineral, dreaming
in the plant, waking in the animal, and reaching moral self-consciousness in
man.

But does the ascending process end there? Is man as he is now, the goal,
the last word, of evolution? Surely, no. As a Persian Initiate once wrote:

I died as a mineral and became a plant.
I died as a plant and rose to animal.
I died as an animal and became man.
Why should I fear? When did I ever grow less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as, man, to soar
With angels blest. But even from angelhood I must pass on.
I shall become what no mind e’er conceived!

Now in order that evolution from lower to higher degrees of life may take
place, some force must previously have been involved in living organisms that
makes their evolution possible. You cannot have evolution without involution.
A seed would never grow unless it held within it the force which expands it
into a plant with a glory of leaf, flower and fruit. An acorn contains in itself
the possibility of the oak. A bird’s egg conceals within its fluids the miracle
of the feathered bird and the skylark’s song. Place any of these in appropriate
conditions and the latent life-force will evolve naturally to its preordained
limit. The growth may even be artificially accelerated by methods of intensive
culture.

What now of man? Man also contains within him a life-force, a “vital and
immortal principle” as Masonry calls it, which has not yet expanded to full
development in him, and indeed in many men is scarcely active at all. Man,
too, has that in him enabling him to evolve from the stage of the mortal animal
to a being immortal, superhuman, godlike. Man is evolving towards a far-off
divine event in common with all Nature. But how slowly! and how greatly
he thwarts and retards his own development by indulging his gross mortal
body and its sensual tendencies, instead of repressing them and cultivating his
latent higher principles! Human nature, it is commonly said, continues always
the same; its weaknesses and vices are those of thousands of years ago, and
looking back over the centuries there is little perceptible improvement in the
mass despite our boasted progress and civilisation.

Can this long slow process of human evolution be expedited? Is there a
method of intensive culture that can be applied to man; one that will more
quickly lift him clean above his present level and transform the sensual, be-
nighted, human animal into an illuminated godlike being?

To this the answer of the Ancient Mysteries was “Yes, there is. Human
evolution can be accelerated; if not at present in the mass of humanity, yet in
suitable individuals. Human nature is perfectible by an intensive process of purification and initiation. There is a royal science of spiritual advancement, and an art of living, by which the latent, undeveloped divine Life-principle in man can be liberated from the veils of darkness in him now obscuring it and brought forward into full play. If suitable candidates will but make the requisite sacrifices and submit to the necessary discipline, they can be brought in their present lifetime from darkness to Light; they can be raised to a higher degree of humanity than is otherwise possible to them, and from that position they in turn will be able to raise others to the same degree and so gradually increase the spiritual stature and powers of the whole race.”

The work of the Ancient Mysteries was, therefore, a “perfecting” work, or a work of initiation introducing men to a new order of life, since it was designed to make imperfect beings whole and perfect by completing their evolutionary possibilities. The Greek word for this (teleios) has the twofold meaning, “to make perfect” and “to initiate.” It occurs constantly in the Scriptures, the greatest text-book of Initiation-science that exists. They speak of “the just made perfect”; “be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect”; “we speak wisdom (initiation science) to such as are perfect (or initiated).” And this perfecting work was for all men alike, of whatever race, language or religion, as Masonry is to-day. For all are brethren, and upon an equal footing in respect of this work, though not all men are necessarily ready to undertake it at the same moment; all their religions are but so many radii of one circle, designed to lead them from the circumference and surface of life to the one Light at its centre.

The qualifications of a candidate for the Mysteries were precisely those provided for Masonic candidates to-day. The one dominant wish of his heart in asking for admission had to be a yearning desire to pass from his natural blindness to the innermost Light, and to have his old imperfect nature revolutionised and transformed. Let me quote one of the oldest prayers in the world, still used in the East by those seeking real Initiation. In its original Sanskrit it consists of but six words, which may be Englished thus:

From the unreal, lead me to the Real!
From darkness, lead me to Light!
From the mortal, bring me to Immortality

It expresses the desire that should be not only upon the lips but burning in the heart of every candidate the world over, under whatever system of Initiation he may come. Without that desire as the deepest urge of his heart no real Initiation is possible, nor is any candidate properly prepared to ask for it. No one can expect to come to the revelation of the supernatural Light or
to be raised to the sublime degree of a Master-soul, who is content with his present life as it is, who regards himself as not in darkness but as already enlightened, or supposes his present mortal existence to constitute real life. Only by perceiving the unreality and impermanency of the present world and its interests can one really begin to detach himself from it and divest himself, in thought and desire, of its “money and metals.” So long as one carries these with him or remains in any sense “in worldly possessions,” so long he darkens his own light and automatically defers his own initiation into it. They mean not merely one’s cash and temporal belongings. They include all that clogs and clings to us from our immersion in the outer world; our intellectual possessions, our stores of notions, beliefs and preconceptions about truth, and the mental habits and self-will we have acquired, even with the best motives, in our state of darkness. All these constitute our “worldly possessions,” and they are not our real wealth but our limitations. It is a paradox, but a true one, that we can only gain by giving them up. Their attraction must cease if that high Light we profess to seek is ever to be found, and the aspirant for it must stand at the door of the Mysteries in the deepest sense a poor candidate in a state of darkness, content to be as a child and surrender himself to an entirely new order and rule of life. Few are prepared for this task of self-divestment of all that, as experienced men of the world, they have clung to and built into their mental fabric. How many of those who ceremonially profess to do so would be ready or content to do it really? On being told of this pre-requisite to Initiation they would go away sorrowful, for they have great possessions, and are not yet prepared to give them up for something intangible.

In a like sense the candidate had to be a free man; free in a moral rather than in a civil sense; voluntarily offering himself for the work and free from all attachments hindering its achievement; and so becoming also free to the goodly fellowship of all other initiates the world over and free from any less-worthy intercourse. He had to be of full age; that is, in full bodily and mental maturity so as to be fit for the disciplines awaiting him, and spiritually mature (as not every one is) for undertaking the final stages of his evolution. Sound judgment, a sound mind in a sound body, was also essential in view of the demands made on the mental and psychic faculties, involving the risk of insanity to the mentally unstable. Strict morals (or chastity) were imperative, since the task of self-transformation involves physiological changes in the bodily organism necessitating the utmost personal purity and continence.

And he had to be of good report. This does not mean of good reputation. It means that on being tested by the initiating authorities he must be found spiritually responsive to the ideals aimed at and “ring true,” giving back a good sound or report like a coin that is tapped to determine its genuineness.
In the wonderful Egyptian rituals in the Book of the Dead, one of the titles always found accorded to the Initiate was “true of voice.” This is the same thing as our reference to possessing the “tongue of good report.” It does not mean that he was incapable of falsity and hypocrisy, which goes without saying, but that his very voice revealed his inherent spirituality and his own speech reflected and was coloured by the divine Word behind it. The vocal and heart nervous centres “the guttural” and “the pectoral,” as we say, are intimately related physiologically. Purity or impurity of heart modifies the tonal quality and moral power of one’s speech. The voice of the real Initiate or saint is always marked by a charm, a music, an impressiveness, and a sincerity absent in other men; for he is “true of voice”; he possesses the “tongue of good report.”

The rule of the Ancient Mysteries was, and still is in other systems, that twelve years of preparation should elapse before the last great spiritual experience was permitted that brought the candidate to the Light at his centre and qualified him for Mastership, though less sufficed in appropriate cases. As the result of his purification and labours he had become an illuminate and he was mystically said to be twelve years old. From a rough ashlar he had become a polished perfect cube, a stone meet for building into the “holy city” which we are told lieth foursquare and has twelve gates that are always open. For all the parts of his organism were now equalised and balanced, and all his gates (or channels of intercourse with the divine world), no longer shut and clogged by the darkness of his former impurities, lay open for the passage through them of the true Light. In Masonry, this condition is called the “hour of high twelve”; and he who has attained it will be, like Hiram Abiff’, in constant communion with, and adoration of, the Most High.

Similarly, when the candidate had advanced still further to the sublime degree and powers of Mastership he was said to be thirty years old. You will find these mystical ages referred to in the third Gospel, where we are told (Luke ii, 42) of the Great Exemplar being twelve years old and so illuminated that His wisdom confounded the academic but unenlightened teachers of the Temple; and again (Luke iii, 23) that He “began to be about thirty years old,” at which period began his work as a Master, which continued for another three years and manifested such works and teaching as are possible only to a Master. Thirty-three years was, in the Mysteries, the mystical duration of life of every initiate who attained Mastership.

That period has no relation to bodily age; it is based on considerations we need not now enter into but referring to the completion of human evolution, when it can be said of the soul’s travail “It is finished.” “He hath wrought the purpose through of That which made him man.” It is for this reason that the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Masonry extends to 33 Degrees, in
perpetuation of the original secret tradition.

Of the detailed methods employed in assisting properly qualified candidates to the Light of the centre, whether in the ancient systems or at the present day, and of the wonderful change wrought by them in the candidate himself, nothing can be said publicly; these are matters belonging to silence. The secrets and mysteries of real Initiation can never be fully communicated except in the course of the process itself. They are not disclosed in Masonry at all. Our teaching refers to them as being “serious, solemn and awful,” but leaves them at that and provides various substituted ones which have no value save for ceremonial use, and as indications that more genuine ones exist which qualified Brethren will come to know when time and circumstances warrant. To all others they will remain sealed. That time and those circumstances depend upon our own desire and efforts. It is an ancient maxim of the science that “when the disciple is ready, the Master will be found waiting” to help on his advancement, and in accordance with this our teaching expressly declares that the purpose of the Mason is to seek a Master and from him to gain instruction. The earnest Masonic disciple whose heart and thought are steadfastly set towards the Light may assuredly count upon finding himself led sooner or later to a real Initiate capable of helping him to it and of revealing so much of the real secrets as he is qualified to know.

Real Initiates exist at all times, in this country and elsewhere, for the science is not restricted to any nation or creed but is universally diffused over the earth’s surface. They are, of course, not numerous and they are to be met with only by those competent to recognise them. They live a hidden life; in the world but not of it. They never seek publicity or honours; they never even disclose the fact that they are Initiates. This is the true Masonic secrecy and humility; the greatest among men are content to be as those that are least. The world little suspects what it owes to its hidden Initiates.

It would be interesting to say something of them, but time permits of my speaking only of a single case, and I will illustrate the universality of the science by referring (though reticently) to one who is not of our country, colour, or creed.

There lives in a distant part of our Empire a man who is in the fullest sense a Master Mason. Years ago he embarked upon the great quest of Light, and after the necessary self-preparation under another Master he attained that great spiritual experience which changed his whole nature and raised him finally and permanently from darkness to Light. You may like to know how the daily life of such a man is spent, for it conforms literally with the rule of our symbolic working tool, the 24-inch gauge, in its application to the 24 hours of the day. For at least two hours each day he withdraws entirely from all external
affairs, tyling his door as it were against their intrusion, and opens the Lodge of his soul to its central depths, passing into blissful, ecstatic communion with the Most High. It is his “hour of high twelve.” For another two hours a day he sleeps; that brief period, with a minimum of simple food, sufficing to rest and recuperate his bodily energies, since his real rest and sustenance are drawn from the supernatural peace and bread of life that come to him from his Centre. The remaining twenty hours of the day are devoted to unflagging labour in the interests of his countrymen and in the spiritual advancement of those brought under his guidance. You may suppose that, he is recluse living an unpractical life in a cell or a forest. On the contrary, he is a prominent man who has been knighted for his public service, a King’s Counsel, Attorney-General for a large province, a cultured scholar in English and other languages, and the writer of some important books. I have asked British Government officials who have worked with him for years whether they have found anything distinctive in him; but they had detected nothing and were utterly blind to the extraordinary spiritual power and saintliness behind his formal exterior. He is one of those who has found, and lives from, the divine centre of his being—that point from Darkness which a Master Mason cannot err—and accordingly to possesses wisdom and powers beyond the imagination of the uninitiated world.

3.- The Ideal Lodge

And now, Brethren, from what has been said of the ancient and royal science you may see how faithfully our Craft perpetuates the world-old system of elevating men to a higher order of life than they normally experience, and at the same time you may judge how far it falls short in understanding that science and carrying its intentions into practice.

Are we always going to be content with making merely formal Masons and maintaining a merely social and philanthropic society? If so, we shall remain no different men from the popular world who are not Masons. Or are we wishful that the Craft should fulfil its purpose of being a system of real initiating efficiency by awaking the undeveloped spiritual potentialities of its members and raising them to a sublimer level of life? If so, we must educate ourselves more deeply in its meaning.

Let me indicate how things would go if our work were conducted upon more intelligent lines. It is too much to expect any marked or sudden change to take place in old methods or habits, and resistance to any improvement may always be expected from some who are satisfied with things as they are. Nor
can improvement be forced upon anyone; to be advantageous it must come spontaneously. But many Brethren and many Lodges sincerely desire it, and so let me offer you a picture of what an ideal Lodge would be; you may then consider how far it may be practicable to attempt to conform to that ideal.

In the first place, Lodge meetings would be primarily devoted to what we are taught is their chief purpose, namely, to expatiating on the Mysteries of the Craft and educating Brethren in the understanding of them. This is now never done; largely because we are without competent instructors. We suppose that our side-lectures are sufficient instruction. This is not the case. There are additional large fields of knowledge that Masons must explore if they wish to learn this science, while our official lectures are themselves packed with purposely obscured truths that are left to our own efforts and -perspicuity to discover, but the purport of which at present remains entirely concealed.

The duly opened Lodge would be a sanctuary of silence and contemplation, broken only by ceremonial utterances or such words of competent and luminous instruction as the Master or Past Masters are moved to extend. And the higher the degree in which it is opened, the deeper and more solemn would be the sense of excluding all temporal thoughts and interests and of approaching more nearly that veiled central Light whose opening into activity in our hearts we profess to be our predominant wish.

In such circumstances each Lodge meeting would become an occasion of profound spiritual experience. No member would wish to disturb the harmony of such a Lodge by talk or alien thought. No member would willingly be absent. If he were, save from necessity, it would indicate that, though entitled to wear the apron in a literal sense, he was temporarily not properly clothed in his mind and intention to be qualified to enter the Lodge. Every one would regret when such a meeting closed and it became necessary to be recalled from such peace and refreshment to the jars and labours of the outer world.

The admission of a new candidate would be a comparatively infrequent event. For no one would be received to membership save after the fullest tests of his genuine desire for Masonic knowledge and of his adaptability to it. The conferment of the different degrees would be at much longer intervals than is now authorised, so as to ensure their being assimilated and understood, as is impossible at present. And upon the notable occasion of a degree being conferred, those present would be not merely passive spectators of the rite. They would have been educated to become active though silent helpers in it by adding the force of their united thought and desire to the spoken word, and so creating such a tense and highly charged atmosphere that an abiding permanent uplift in the candidate’s consciousness might be hoped for. For the efficacy of rites like ours does not depend solely on the Master who performs
them. He is the mouthpiece for the time being of all those present, but it is the whole assembly that should really be acting; forming, as it were, a battery of spiritual energy, and drawing the new Brother into vital fraternity with itself. Great power resides in strong collective thought and intention, and when these are focussed and concentrated upon a candidate properly prepared in heart and mind for our ministrations, we might hope to induce in him something like real initiation; but otherwise he will be listening to but a formal recital of words.

It follows that we should never hear such things as the usual talk about “making one’s Lodge a success,” or as personal praise to anyone for having performed his work creditably. Whether our work is really done well, in the sense of being spiritually effective, God alone knoweth, to whom all gratitude should be rendered for any good achieved; while the only worthy success for a Lodge is its capacity for vitally affecting the lives of those who enter it and transforming their mental and moral outlook.

The Lodge-room should be holy ground; a Temple consecrated to Masonic work and used for it exclusively. For it is a symbol of the temple of the human individual, and we who are taught the necessity of every intending initiate’s excluding money and metals from his thought, and who have before us the significant example of a Master who vigorously scourged all money-changers out of the Temple, should surely conform to those lessons by keeping our symbolic temple sanctified and entirely free from secular use. There is a practical advantage in so doing, for premises continually devoted to a single purpose become, as it were, charged and saturated with the thought and ideals thrown off by those who habitually so use it. A permanent spiritual atmosphere is created, the influence of which appreciably affects those who enter it, and the possibility of the efficacious initiation of candidates is thereby greatly increased; whereas that atmosphere becomes defiled, and any spiritual influence stored in it neutralised, by promiscuous use.

Visiting other Lodges would no longer be for social reasons, but, as in ancient times, solely with a desire to enlarge one’s Masonic knowledge and experience, to share their spiritual privileges, or even to bring spiritual reinforcement to Lodges needing such help. No practice is more beneficial than intercourse between those of different Lodges engaged in a common work, and no right is more firmly established than that of any seeker of the Light to claim and be given hospitality and assistance conducing to that end. But our modern practice of mass-visiting is calculated to disturb the true work we ought to be doing, and is somewhat of an abuse and travesty of a privilege dating from antiquity, when occasional representatives of one school of the Mysteries journeyed, often long distances, to another in a different land to
enlarge their own knowledge or impart it to those they visited.

Promotion to office in the Craft would not be by rotation or from seniority of membership or social standing in the outside world. It would depend entirely upon spiritual proficiency: upon ability to impart real illumination to candidates and advance the true work of the Craft. The little jealousies and heart-burnings that now occur at the annual promotions would be impossible; such things belong to the base metals in our nature, which ought long ago to have been got rid of in any one really qualified for office. Did we better realise the serious nature of Initiation work, we should often shrink in humility from accepting positions we are now eager to seize. Remember that in leaving the outer world and passing the portal of the Lodge into the world within, all values change; all questions, and even all sense, of personality should cease. You become engaged not in a personal task but in a common fraternal work before God, in whose sight all are equal and who will act through such instruments as seem good to Him. Therefore “let him that is greatest among you be as he that is least”; it may well be that the apparently least among us is often likely to be the more efficient workman.

These, I know, are lofty ideals, largely impracticable at the moment, and I have no wish to alienate any Brother’s interest in the Craft by imposing a standard beyond his present capacity and desire. Yet Brethren to whom the ideal appeals, and to whom it is both desirable and practicable, might unite in meeting with the intention of conforming to it, and here and there even a small new Lodge might be formed for that special purpose, leaving other Lodges to work on their accustomed lines.

Is Masonry, throughout, anything but a lofty ideal, which so far we have made little serious attempt to realise? The main difficulty before us is that the true work of the Craft contemplates a much greater detachment from the things and the ways of the outer world than we are at present willing, or perhaps able, to allow. So we compromise with ourselves, and seek to combine the outer secular life with the inner ideals of the Craft. The two conflict, and no man can efficiently serve two masters. We must choose whom we will serve.

Still the ideal is before us, a glimmering light in a dark, distracted and dying world, and it rests with ourselves whether it remains a glimmer or whether we strive to fan it into a blaze of fact. For those who desire merely a social and sociable organisation, garnished with a little picturesque ceremonial and providing opportunity for a little amusement and personal distinction, Masonry will never be more than the formality it long has been and still is for many, and they themselves will remain in darkness as to its meaning, its purpose, and its great possibilities.
But for those who are not content with vanities and unrealities, who —
desire not a formal husk but the living spirit, and are bent on plumbing its
wellguarded secrets and mysteries to their depth and living out its implications
to the full, Masonry may well come —as for some it has come to be the chief
blessing and experience of their lives; it may yield them even the last secret of
life itself. It may fulfil for them the ancient prayer of the Eastern Initiates we
just now spoke of, by leading them from the unreal to the supreme Reality,
from darkness to Light ineffable, from the things of time and mortality to
things immortal. They may find it a ladder of truth and world-escape set up
for them in the wilderness around them, and their Lodge a place of unfolding
vision where, with the Hebrew patriarch, they will exclaim: “This is none
other than a house of God and a gate of heaven!”
Chapter 3

Liht on the Way

“They went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber,
and out of the middle into the third.”

i Kings vi, 8.

“Does the road wind up-hill all the way?”
Yes, to the very end.

“Will the day’s journey take the whole long day?”
From morn to night, my friend!

“But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin?
May not the darkness hide it from my face?”
You cannot miss that Inn.

Christina Rossetti.

In the previous paper we have spoken of the transition from darkness to light made by those who seek to effect the reconstitution of their natural being and to develop it, by the science and methods of Initiation, to a higher and ultra-natural level.

It has been made clear that that transition must necessarily be gradual, and that, though ceremonially dramatised in three Degrees which can be taken in successive months, to realise the implications of those Degrees in actual life-experience may be a life-time’s work; perhaps more than a * life-time’s. The Apprentice who has entered himself to the business of rebuilding his own soul
has much to learn and to do before he becomes even a competent Craftsman in it; the Craftsman, in turn, has much to do and far to journey before he can hope for complete Mastership. The work of self-transmutation is a strenuous one, not suddenly or hurriedly to be performed, and one needing hours of refreshment and passivity as well as hours of active labour, to each of which he will find himself duly summoned at the proper time. There is much to be learned in regard to the secrets of his own nature and the principles of intellectual science, which only gradually, and as the result of patience and experience, can become revealed to his view. There is a superstructure to be raised, perfect in all its parts; a work involving much more than is at first supposed. There are tests and ordeals of a searching character to be undergone on the way.

A measure of Light, a first glimpse of the distant Promised Land, may come to the eager sight of the properly prepared candidate from the first moment of his entrance upon the work, but he must not suppose that he has yet fully captured it and made it permanently his own. It is something, however, to have felt that a veil has been suddenly withdrawn from his previously darkened sight and that he has become able to distinguish between his former benightedness and the goal lying before him.

We will entitle this present section, therefore, “Light on the Way,” and make it treat of a variety of matters calling for the aspirant’s attention as he pursues the way that intervenes between his first glimpse of the Light and its ultimate realisation; and in a subsequent section we shall speak of Light in its fullness of attainment. We will supplement our previous explanation of Masonic doctrine by dealing with further symbols and passages in the rituals, with which every Mason is familiar formally and by the outward ear, but the significance of which too often passes unexplained and unobserved.

The expositions in this Section are offered not Light only for the private reflection of — members of the on Craft, but with the suggestion that they may serve the as material for collective meditation by Brethren in open Lodge or at Lodges of Instruction. For those upon the path to real Initiation, meditation is essential. For meditation opens a window in the mind through which Light streams into the understanding from the higher, spiritual principle in ourselves; which window is symbolised by the dormer-window in the emblematic Temple of Solomon, through which came light to those ascending the stairway that wound inwardly to the middle chamber leading to the central sanctuary where alone Light in its fulness was to be found.

The practice of meditation, moreover, whether personal or collective, conduces to that quietness and control of the normally restless, wandering mind, which are indispensable for the apprehension of deep Truth. Ancient Lodges,
we are told, were wont to meet on the highest hills and in the lowest valleys; and in an old Instruction-lecture it is explained that those expressions are meant to be figurative and relate less to actual places than to the spiritual and mental condition of those assembled. To meet in the valley, implied being in a state of sheltered passiveness and tranquillity, when the minds of the Brethren surrendered themselves to quiet collective thought on the subject of their work; and thus, being “led beside still waters,” they became, like the limpid unruflled surface of a lake, a clear undistorting mirror for the reflection and apprehension of such rays of light and truth as might reach them from above. To meet on the high hills, on the other hand, implied the more active work of the Lodge and the performance of it upon the superphysical planes—the “hills” of the spirit; for the real work of Initiation is only there accomplished, and is no longer a ceremonial formality.

There are times for work and times for repose in the Craftsman’s tasks—times of labour and refreshment and to perform that task efficiently both must be utilised. Modern Lodges, in the general imperfect conception of Masonry, follow merely the rush and hustle methods of the outside world, which, of course, inside the Lodge have no place and ought no longer to be emulated. They are busy enough on the active side, but they provide no opportunity for cultivating the equally necessary passive aspect of the work. It would be found eminently advantageous, therefore, if Lodges which desire to realise true Masonry adopted the practice of collectively contemplating points of symbolism and teaching; devoting certain meetings to this special purpose, and then, without more discussion than is necessary and helpful, quietly and earnestly concentrating attention upon the significance of some symbol or point of doctrine brought before them.

For those seriously engaged in the ascent of the winding staircase, —the following expositions may perhaps serve as helpful rays of light from the dormerwindow. They are necessarily brief and merely elementary introductions to phases of the science which, as the aspirant proceeds, he will find inexhaustible and claiming not cursory notice but his constant deep attention. May they, however, be as a lamp to his feet and a light upon the spiral path to ledge his own middle chamber, and help to guide him to that final central sanctuary where the Light itself shines in fulness and waits to be found.

1.- The Knowledge of Yourself

It has already been shown that the structure and appointments of the Lodge are symbolic; that the Lodge is a representation both of the Universe and of
man himself as a Microcosm or the Universe in miniature; that it is an image of his own complex constitution, his heavens and his earth (his spirituality and materiality) and all that therein is.

By contemplating that image, therefore, the Mason learns to visualise himself; he is given a first lesson in that self-knowledge in the full attainment of which is promised the understanding of all things. “Know thyself,” we have said, was written over the portals of the ancient temples of Initiation, self-knowledge being the aim of their intention and the goal of their purpose. Masonry perpetuates this maxim by recommending self-knowledge as “the most interesting of all human studies.” It is the tersest, wisest of instructions, yet little heeded nowadays, and it is incapable of fulfilment unless undertaken in accordance with the ancient science and with a concentration of one’s whole energies upon the task.

It involves the deepest introspection into oneself and perfect discrimination between what is real and permanent, and what is unreal and evanescent in ourselves. As aspirants to the Mysteries could not learn the secrets of the Temple without entering it, learning its lessons, undergoing its disciplines, and receiving its graduated initiations, so no one can attain self-knowledge save by entering into himself, distinguishing the false from the true, the unreal from the real, the base metal from the fine gold, sublimating the former into the latter, and ignoring what is negligible or superfluous. The very word Initiation primarily derives from the Latin in ire, to go within; and thence, after learning the lessons of self-analysis, to make a new beginning (initium) by reconstructing one’s knowledge of life and manner of living. The 43rd Psalm restates the same instruction: Introibo ad altare Dei, “I will go in to the divine altar.” Similarly, the Masonic Initiation contemplates a going within oneself, until one reaches the altar or centre, the Divine Principle or ultimate hidden basis of our being.

To know the anatomy and physiology of the mortal body is not self-knowledge. The physical fabric of man is a perishing self, mere dust and shadow, projected from vitalising forces within it, and without permanence or reality.

To understand the nature and mechanism of the mind, emotions and desires, is useful and necessary, but is not self-knowledge, for they, too, are transient and, therefore, unreal aspects of the deeper real self. The personality we present to the world is not our real self. It is but a mask, a distorting veil, behind which the true self abides hiddenly and often unknown to our unreal surface self, unless and until it be brought forward into consciousness, displacing and overriding the notions and tendencies of the natural, but benighted, superficial self. Until then its “light shineth in darkness and the
darkness comprehendeth it not.” To bring it forward out of its veils of darkness, to “comprehend” and establish it permanently in our awareness is, and has ever been, the purpose of all Initiation. But this cannot be achieved until the outer bodily and mental vestures have been purified and a voluntary dying or effacement of everything in us alien to, or conflicting with, the real self has been suffered; all which is implied by the teaching of our three Degrees respectively.

True self-knowledge is unobstructed conscious union of the human spirit with God and the realisation of their identity. In that identic union the unreal, superficial selves have become obliterated. The sense of personality is lost, merged in the Impersonal and Universal. The little Ego is assumed into the great All, and knows as It knows. Man realises his own inherent ultimate Divinity, and thenceforth lives and acts no longer as a separate individual, with an independent will, but in integration with the Divine Life and Will, whose instrument he becomes, whose purposes he thenceforth serves. This is “the great day of atonement,” when the limited personal consciousness becomes identified or made at one with one’s own divine, omniscient, vital and immortal Principle, which each must realise as the high priest of his personal temple and after many washings and purifyings against the contrary tendencies of his former unregenerate nature. This was the secret supreme attainment hinted at in the cryptic maxim “Know thyself!” Each of us may judge for himself whether he has yet reached it.

To find our own Centre, our real self, involves, therefore, a turning inwards of our previously externalised faculties of sense and thought, and an introspective penetration of the outlying circumferential elements of our nature until the Centre is found. This task is figured by our ceremonial perambulations and by the path of the winding staircase leading from the ante-rooms and forecourts of our nature to the Centre, up which the aspirant must ascend, asking, seeking, knocking, all the way; being subjected from time to time to tests of his progress and receiving, without scruple or diffidence, such wages of good fortune or adversity as unseen Providences may know to be his due.

The inmost sanctuary he will find closely guarded. Nothing unclean can enter or approach that holy place. Hence in the biblical description of the symbolic Temple one finds that, in the forecourt, stood the great laver of water for the cleansing of pollutions, and the altar of fire for the sacrificial burning up of one’s impurities. The sword of the G., directed to those unqualified to enter the Lodge, is the Masonic way of inculcating that peril exists to those who are not properly prepared to approach the Centre or who would rush in where angels fear to tread; it corresponds with the sword of the Cherubim in Genesis, which turned every way to keep the way to the Tree of Life from the
approaches of the unfit.

Mental as well as physical purity is indispensable to real Initiation, but is far more difficult of the two to acquire. Modern psychology discloses not only how fractional a part of our entire mentality functions above the threshold of our normal awareness, but also what knots and twists, what mental lumber, what latent horrors and accumulations of inner foulness, lie stored in the subconsciousness of even those living ordinarily clean lives. They are the deposits of the mind’s past activities; forgotten often by the conscious mind itself, yet automatically registered upon our impalpable mind-stuff by the recording pencil (mentioned among the Third Degree working-tools) which at every moment of our lives posts up entries of our thoughts, words, and actions. For at the centre of ourselves is the all-observant-Eye; so that we ourselves constitute our own Judgment Book, wherein each of us unwittingly inscribes his own history and formulates his own destiny, and its pages we have each to read ourselves.

With these mental deposits and consolidations those skilled in Initiation science are well familiar. The modern psychologist calls them “complexes.” In the old treatises on the subject they are termed foul ethers, congelations of impure mental matter. They are the “base metals” of Masonry. Each of us has been an artificer of those metals and worked them into all manners of grotesque designs in his mental nature, and hence the conferment upon the candidate, at a certain stage, of a name attributed to the first of such artificers and signifying him to be still incompletely purged of worldly possessions of this kind. These “base metals” require to be discharged from the system by a long process of corrective purifying thought and aspiration and to be transmuted into gold, or pure mind-stuff, before real Initiation is possible. No inward fog must intervene between the outer and innermost organs of consciousness when the time comes for these to be unified. The Light of Truth cannot penetrate a mind crammed with pernicious thought and with opinions to which it clings tenaciously. It must empty itself of all pre-acquired knowledge and prejudices, and then rise on the wings of its own genius into the realm of independent Thought and there learn Truth at first hand by directly beholding it.

The incident of attaining Light and self-knowledge is dramatically emphasised in Masonic ceremonial. It is represented by that important moment in the ritual of the Third Degree when darkness suddenly gives way to bewildering light, in which light the candidate gazes back for the first time upon the remains of his own past and beholds the emblems of his own mortality. He has now (at least in ceremony) surmounted the great transitional crisis involved in becoming raised from a natural to a higher order of humanity. He
perceives his temporal organism to have been the “tomb of transformation,” in which the great change has been wrought. He has risen from that tomb, and for him the old grave of the natural body has lost its sting, and that spiritual unconsciousness, which is termed “death,” has been swallowed up in the victory won at last by his higher eternal principle over his lower temporal one. The mystical sprig of acacia has bloomed at the head of his grave, by the efflorescence of the Vital and Immortal Principle in his purified mind and neural system.

Thus is portrayed for us, in Masonic ceremony, the moment of attainment of knowledge of one’s true self. The incident, let it be emphasised, does not involve the physical death of the body and its faculties, for to “the companions of his former toils” the purified mind will thereafter be reunited. But thenceforth they will be his docile, plastic, obedient servants, and no longer his master. He will continue to live in the world for the remainder of his appointed span, no longer for his own sake, but for the uplifting and advancement of his fellowmen to his own high degree. His expansion of consciousness and wisdom will become part of his equipment for practical work in the world. His own spiritual evolution is complete, so far as the educative experience of this world can take it; he lives now to help on that of humanity.

A great and good Brother, reviewing his long connection with Masonic sanctuaries more than a century ago, wrote thus about Initiation:

“The only initiation which I preach and seek with all the ardour of my soul is that by which we may enter into the heart of God and make God’s heart enter into us, there to form an indissoluble marriage which will make us the friend, brother and spouse of our Divine Redeemer.” This attainment is the self-knowledge pointed to by the Craft teaching, and to which that teaching seeks to guide the reflections of every.”

Louis Claude de Saint Martin

Masonic Initiation has no other end than this conscious union between the individual soul and the Universal Divine Spirit.

\[1\text{Theosophic Correspondence, with Baron Kirchberger; a work of great value and disclosing the nature of Masonic work in French Lodges prior to the Revolution of 1789.}\]
This union is symbolised by the familiar conjunction of the square and the compasses. The square is the emblem of the soul; the compasses of the Spirit which indwells in that soul. At first the Mason sees the points of the compasses concealed behind the square, and, as he progresses, their points emerge from that concealment until both become superimposed upon the square. Thus is indicated the progressive subordination of the soul and the corresponding coming forward of the ultimate Spirit into personal consciousness, so that the Mason can “work with both those points,” thus becoming an efficient builder in the spirit and rendering the circle of his own being complete by attaining conscious alliance with his ultimate and only true self.

2.- The G

Centrally, in the ceiling of each Lodge, is exhibited this striking symbol. It is the emblem of the Divine Presence in the Lodge; it is also the emblem of that Presence at the spiritual centre of the individual Mason. Its correspondence in the Christian Church is the perpetual light burning before the high altar. In the First and Second Craft Degrees the symbol is visible in the heavens of Lodge. In the Third Degree it has become invisible, but its presence is still manifested, being reflected in the small light in the East which, in correspondence with the Divine Presence is as every Mason knows inextinguishable even in one’s darkest moments. In the Royal Arch Degree it again becomes visible, but in another form and in another position-on the floor of the Temple and at its centre, and in the form of a cubical altar, a white stone, bearing the Sacred Name. In the course of the Degrees, therefore, it has come down from heaven to earth; Spirit has descended to the plane of purified Matter; the Divine and the human have been brought together and made one. God has become Man; Man has been unified with God, and has found the Divine Name written upon the altar of his own heart.

In the significance of this symbol and its transpositions during the four Degrees may, therefore, be discerned the whole purpose and end of Initiation, the union of the personal soul with its Divine Principle. Masonry has no other objective than this; all other matters of interest connected with it are but details subsidiary to this supreme achievement.

When the Lodge is opened, the mind and heart of every Brother composing it should be deemed as also being opened to the “G” and all that it implies, to the intent that those implications may eventually become realised facts of experience. When the Lodge is closed, the memory of the “G” symbol and its implications should be the chief one to be retained and pondered over in the
Further, great significance lies in the centrality of the “G.” The Lodge is grouped around it, not assembled immediately below it. It is as though this Blazing Star or Glory in the centre burned with too fierce a light for anything less pure and bright than itself to withstand the descent of its direct rays; and, accordingly, the floor of the Lodge is left open and unoccupied; and only at its extremities do the assembled Brethren sit, removed from its direct rays. Directly beneath it lies the chequer-work floor; the symbol of the manifested creation, where the one White Light from above becomes differentiated into perpetual duality and opposites of light and darkness, good and evil, positive and negative, male and female, as evidenced by the black and white squares, yet the whole held together in a unity as is denoted by the symbolic skirt-work around the same.

The “G” therefore denotes the Universal Spirit of God, permeating and unifying all things. It is a substitute for the Hebrew letter Yod, the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and out of which all the other letters of that alphabet are constructed in correspondence with the truth that all created things are modifications of the one primal Spirit. In the Instruction-lecture of a Degree outside our present constitutions, the “G” is explained as having a three-fold reference; (i) the Glory of God, or glory in the centre; (2) Grandeur, or the greatness of perfection to which man may become raised by initiation into union with God at his centre; (3) Gom-El, a Hebrew word of praise for the Divine power and goodness in designing that perfection and that union between the Creator and the creature. There is also a Hebrew tradition that Gom-El was the word uttered by Adam on first beholding the beauty of Eve and perceiving the ultimate destiny of humanity.

The “G” had its equivalent in the Egyptian Mysteries in the solar symbol of Ra, the spiritual Sun. In the great temple of the Greek Mysteries at Delphi, where the Eleusinian initiations took place for seventeen centuries, it was represented by the fifth letters of the Greek alphabet, the E (or Eta); five being a numerical symbol of man in the Pythagorean system, as evidenced by his five senses, the five-fold extension of his hands and feet, and in accordance with considerations of a more abstruse nature. Hence the five-pointed star (or pentagram) is also a symbol of man, and expresses a variety of truths concerning him. In the rituals in the Book of the Dead the candidate is described as a “keeper of five”; Operative fellow-craft Masons worked in batches of five, and a Speculative fellow-craft Lodge to-day consists of five brethren; all these allusions having a deeper significance than can be explained here, but bearing upon the present state of human evolutional development.

Plutarch records that the “E” was regarded as a symbol of the greatest im-
portance and instructiveness and was exhibited in three forms (corresponding with our three Degrees), first in wood, afterwards in bronze, and finally in gold. The progression signified a corresponding advance of the candidate’s moral and spiritual nature under the discipline of Initiation. He is likened at first to soft, perishable wood; hardening into the durability of bronze; which impure, alloyed metal finally becomes sublimated into gold—the symbol of the attainment of purity, wisdom and perfection to which Initiation leads.

Beyond this, however, the central symbol had another deep meaning. The great Initiation-temples of antiquity, as also certain Christian Churches of historic interest (such as those of Iona and Glastonbury, from which Britain became Christianised), were erected at certain focal points of the earth’s surface known to the Initiates of the time as being magnetic centres or nodal points of spiritual force peculiarly favourable for the influx into this world of currents of Divine Power and for their irradiation thence to surrounding regions. Each such place was called an Omphalos, a navel, or mystical centre; and the Temple at Delphi is related to have been built where it was under divine guidance and for that purpose; and we know that it became the centre of light and religion to the then civilised Western world for seventeen centuries.

This historical fact and this occult principle are now reproduced in Masonry. Every Lodge, every place of Initiation, is in theory—though not nowadays in practice—held at a centre or physical focus point selected as being favourable both to the initiation of those who enter it and to the spiritual advancement of the uninitiated popular world resident in its vicinity. “A city set on a hill cannot be hid.”, A Temple or Lodge of Brethren intelligently performing its work is not only engaged in a work of spiritual building as regards its own members; it is, though perhaps unconsciously, at the same time, generating and throwing off vibrations of spiritual energy to all around it; its occult influence extends, and its radiations are of efficacy, to a greater range than one dreams of.

If, then, the Lodge be a spiritual focus-point, the centre of the Lodge, where the “G” is exhibited, is its most vital and sacred point; the point at which Divine Energy may be thought of as concentrated and specially powerful. And the reason will become clear for placing the candidate at that point at a certain moment in the Ceremony.

Why is he then placed in the centre? Previously he has been placed, not there, but in certain more removed places in the Lodge; in the N.E. or the S.E. corners where the intensity of the central Light is theoretically less powerful, where it is tempered and adjusted to his as yet unperfected organism, and where charges and instruction appropriate to his then state of advancement are imparted to him. But when directed to be placed in the Lodge-centre, he is
called upon to stand, as it were, in direct alignment with the descending ray of the Supernal Light and to bear the stress of its full current. The intensity of that current can only be borne and withstood by one who is perfect in all his parts and in whom the sensual, emotional, and mental natures have been purified, rectified and brought into harmony and to an alignment corresponding with the physical and moral erectness of a just and upright man; an unpurified man would run the peril of having his organism injured or shattered by a current of that fiery Power, by which every soul must sooner or later be tested, but which consumes everything not assimilable with itself. The three Hebrew “children” (i.e., initiates) who withstood unscathed the fiery furnace into which they were plunged, typify the truth here — testified to.

When, therefore, a candidate is placed in the centre of the Lodge, beneath the “G” symbol, let those assembled around him try to realise the intention of what is thereby implied. Let them reflect that at that important moment, more perhaps than at any other in the ceremonies, it is possible for the celestial Light to descend upon the duly prepared candidate, to flood his heart and expand his mind, and so to open his understanding to the instruction then communicated to him that he may realise the spirit as well as hear the letter of it, whilst standing in that sacred position. And let them at that moment silently and earnestly invoke the Light of the centre, that it may then consciously arise in both him and them, so that what is done ceremonially may become for them both, a great fact of spiritual experience.

The point is emphasised here with earnestness, because the Masonic procedure of placing the candidate in the centre of the Lodge at an important stage of his progress not only perpetuates a traditional and purposeful ancient practice, but also accords with what occurs in Initiations of a much more advanced and real character than it is possible to speak of here, as those who become duly qualified will one day come to find. By understanding and being faithful in the small things of even an elementary and ceremonial system, one becomes educated for and prepared to be entrusted with greater ones when the time for acquiring them arrives.

3.- The Ladder

A most important part of the curriculum of the Ancient Mysteries was instruction in Cosmology, the science of the Universe. The intention of that instruction was to disclose to candidates the physical and meta-physical constitution of the world and the place and destiny of man in it. They were shown how the complex human organism reproduces the great World and summarises it
in small, so that man may see himself to be a microcosm or miniature copy of it. They were enlightened not only upon the external visible aspect, but also upon the physically unseen and impalpable aspect, both of the Universe and themselves. They learned truths concerning the material and the ultra-material sides of the world and were taught that corresponding features were present in themselves. They learned of the continual flux of matter, of the transiency of bodily forms, and of the abiding permanence of the one Life or Spirit which has descended and embodied itself in matter, and has there distributed and clothed itself in an endless but progressive variety of forms from the mineral up to the human, with the purpose of generating eventually a finished perfected product as the result of the mighty process. There was demonstrated to them the dual cosmic method of Involution and Evolution, by which the universally diffused Life-force involves and circumscribes itself within material limitations and physical conditions, and thence evolves and arises out of them, enriched by the experience. They were taught of the different levels and graduations of the Universe—some of them material and some ethereal,—the planes and sub-planes of it, upon which the great scheme is being carried out; which levels and planes, all progressively linked together, constitute as it were one vast ladder of many rounds, staves, or rungs; a ladder which Tennyson once well described as

The world’s great altar-stairs
Which slope through darkness up to God.

Candidates in the old systems were instructed in these matters before being admitted to Initiation. The knowledge served to explain to them their own nature and constitution and their place in the World system. It demonstrated to them their own evolutionary possibilities and made clear to them why Initiation-science had been instituted, and how Initiation itself was an intensive means of accelerating the spiritual evolution of individuals who were ripe for it, and capable of intelligently co-operating with and expediting the cosmic process. With this knowledge they were then free either to proceed to actual Initiation and undertake its obligations, sacrifices and discipline, or to stand down and go no farther if they found themselves unwilling, or without the courage, to undertake the arduous task involved. Freedom of the personal will in this momentous choice was always essential to admission to Initiation, and the same absence of constraint still attaches to admission to modern Masonry.

The modern Mason, however, is left entirely without any cosmologic instruction and to such hazy notions on the subject as he may happen to hold. It becomes difficult, therefore, in regard to this and many other matters of
Masonic moment, to speak of the *disciplina arcani* to those who may be either not interested in it or who would treat the information with incredulity as something about which nothing certain is known or perhaps knowable. Scepticism, freedom and independence of thought about matters of a more or less occult nature have their undoubted place and value in the outer ways of the world. But they are foreign to and inconsistent with the mental attitude appropriate to those who, on entering a hall of Initiation, are supposed to tyle the door to the outside world and its conceptions, and, divesting — themselves of all ideas there preacquired, to offer themselves as humble teachable pupils of a new and authoritative order of knowledge. Where every one claims to be already possessed of a sufficiently satisfactory explanation of the Universe and his place in it, or is content to get along without one, and in either case prefers his private judgment to any other that may be offered him, the soil for making Initiates in any real sense is distinctly unfavourable. For such, however, these pages are not written. They are offered only to the minority of Brethren eager to learn what Masonry has to teach them upon matters in which they earnestly seek knowledge and guidance.

Masonry, then, in exhibiting to them a simple ladder offers them a symbol the significance of which is calculated to open widely the eyes of their imagination. It is true that in the Instruction lecture the ladder is expressly referred to that of Jacob in the familiar biblical episode, and that that ladder is then given a moral significance and made to suggest the way by which man may ascend from earth to heaven by climbing its symbolic rungs, and especially by utilising its three chief ones representing the virtues Faith, Hope and Charity. This moral interpretation is warranted and salutary. But it is far from exhaustive, and conceals rather than reveals what “Jacob’s ladder” was really intended to convey to the perspicuous when the compilers of our system gave it the prominence they did. We may be assured they had a much deeper purpose than merely reminding us of the Pauline triad of theological virtues.

The ladder, then, covertly emphasises the old cosmological teaching before referred to. It is a symbol of the Universe and of its succession of step-like planes reaching from the heights to the depths. It is written elsewhere that the Father’s House has many mansions; many levels and resting places for His creatures in their different conditions and degrees of progress. It is these levels, these planes and sub-planes, that are denoted by the rungs and staves of the ladder. And of these there are, for us in our present state of evolutionary unfoldment, three principal ones: the physical plane, the plane of desire and emotion, and the mental plane or that of the abstract intelligence which links up to the still higher plane of the spirit. These three levels of the world are reproduced in man. The first corresponds with his material
physique, his sense-body; the second with his desire and emotional nature, which is a mixed element resulting from the interaction of his physical senses and his ultra-physical mind; the third with his mentality, which is still farther removed from his physical nature and forms the link between the latter and his spiritual being.

The ladder, and its three principal staves, may be seen everywhere in Nature. It appears in the septenary scale of musical sound with its three dominants; in the prismatic scale of light with its three primary colours; in our seven day scale of weekly time, in the septenary physiological changes of our bodily organism, and the similar periodicities known to physics and indeed to every branch of science. The perfect Lodge has seven members, including three principal Officers. The advancement of the Third Degree candidate to the East is by seven steps, the first three of which, it will be remembered, are given special significance.

Thus the Universe and man himself are constructed ladder-wise, in an orderly organised sequence of steps. The one universal substance composing the differentiated parts of the Universe “descends” from a state of the utmost ethereality by successive steps of increasing densification until gross materialisation is reached; and thence “ascends” through a similarly ordered gradation of planes to its original place, but enriched by the experience gained by its activities during the process.

It was this cosmic process which was the subject of the dream or vision of Jacob and which accounts for “Jacob’s ladder” being given prominence in our symbolism. What was “dreamed” or beheld by him with supersensuous vision, is equally perceptible to-day by any one whose inner eyes have been opened. Every real Initiate is one who has attained an expansion of consciousness and faculty enabling him to behold the ethereal worlds revealed to the Hebrew patriarch, as easily as the uninitiated man beholds the phenomenal world with his outer eyes. The Initiate is able to “see the angels of God ascending and descending”; that is, he can directly behold the great stairway of the Universe and watch the intricate but orderly mechanism of involution, differentiation, evolution, and re-synthesis, constituting the Life-process. He can witness the descent of human essences or souls through planes of increasing density and decreasing vibratory rate, gathering around them as they come veils of matter from each, until finally this lowest level of complete materialisation is reached, where the great struggle for supremacy between the inner and the outer man, between the spirit and the flesh, between the real self and the unreal selves and veils built round it, has to be fought out on the chequer-work floor of our present existence, among the black and white opposites of good and evil, light and darkness, prosperity and adversity. And he can watch the
upward return of those who conquer — in the strife and, attaining their re-
generation and casting off or transmuting the “worldly possessions” acquired
during their descent, ascend to their Source, pure and unpolluted from the
stains of this imperfect world. But to no man comes such vision as this unless
he too be a Jacob who flees from the clash and hurly of secular activities into
the solitude of his own soul, and in that barren wilderness interrogates himself
and struggles agonisingly to penetrate the mystery of his existence, to read
its purpose, and tear out the last secret of his own being. So, perchance, he
may fall asleep, his head at last quietly pillowed upon that hard stone, against
which hitherto he has been blindly dashing it. And then by the surrender of his
own will and mental activities, and in the silence and quietude of the senses,
his own inmost great Light may break, and from that new found centre he will
see and know and find the answer to all his needs. For, in the words of an an-
cient record of Initiation, “the sleep of the body becomes the awaking of the
soul, and the closing of the eyes true vision, and silence becomes impregnated
with God. This happened to me when I received the supreme authentic Word.
I became God-inspired. I arrived at Truth. Wherefore I give from my soul and

Jacob’s vision and ladder, therefore, exemplify the attainment of Initia-
tion, the expansion of consciousness that comes when the Light of the centre
is found, and the cosmic vision that then becomes possible. The same truth is
taught in a little treatise, of great instructiveness to every Mason, written by
the initiate philosopher Porphyry in the third century and entitled On the Cave
of the Nymphs. It is an exposition of a passage in Homer’s Odyssey, which he
shows likewise to be a veiled story of the soul’s wanderings, of its crossing
the rough seas of life and enduring the tempests and trials of this world, and
finally perfecting itself and escaping into the haven of peace. The passage de-
scribes a certain dark cave, above which grew an olive-tree, and into which
certain nymphs entered at one end and became busy in weaving purple gar-
ments for themselves; and it was not possible to leave the cave save by a gate
at the other end and after having ceased to be satisfied with the pleasure of
inhabiting that agreeable but benighted place and sought a way of escape.
Porphyry thus explains the allegory: The dark cave is that of the body into
which the soul (a “nymph” or spiritual being) enters and weaves around itself
a garment of flesh and blood, and indulges in sense-gratification alien to its
real nature. The nymph-soul has descended through the planes of the Cosmos
until it has entered this cave by the “gate of man” (i.e., by evolving to human
status), and it can only leave it by passing out through the opposite gate, the
“gate of the gods” (i.e., by becoming perfected and divinised). This it cannot
do save with the help of oil from the olive planted at the top of the cavern;
the oil of Wisdom which shall initiate the soul and guide it to the way out to the higher worlds and the regions of the blessed.

Porphyry’s exposition continues thus:

“In this cave, therefore, says Homer, all external worldly possessions must be deposited. Here, naked and as a suppliant, afflicted, in body, casting aside everything superfluous, and renouncing all sensual energies, one must sit at the foot of the olive and consult with Minerva (Wisdom) by what means we may effectually destroy that hostile rout of passions which lurk insidiously in the secret recesses of the soul... It will not be a simple task to become liberated from this sensible life; but he who dares to do this must transmute himself, so that being at length divested of the torn garments, by which his true self is concealed, he may recover the ruined empire of his soul.”

The Mason who reads this parable will not fail to see in it the allusion to the preparation of candidates for initiation, or to recognise that the cave and the olive-tree growing above it correspond precisely with the grave of Hiram Abiff and the sprig of acacia planted at its head. Both of these allude, of course, to the human body in which the true spiritual self of man lies buried and imprisoned, and from the bondage of which it can only be freed by cultivating and lighting the oil of wisdom (or, alternatively, of causing the sprig of acacia to blossom) which will enlarge his consciousness and reveal to him his path, through the Universe.

We have each descended into this world by the steps of Jacob’s ladder; we have each to ascend from it by the same steps. In some Masonic diagrams and tracing boards, upon the ladder is exhibited a small cross in a tilted, unstable position as if ascending it. That cross represents all who are engaged in mounting the ladder to the heights, and who

Rise by stepping-stones.
From their dead selves to higher things.

Each carries his cross, his own cruciform body, as he ascends; the material vesture whose tendencies are ever at cross-purposes with the desire of his spirit and militate against the ascent. Thus weighted, each must climb, and climb alone; yet reaching out—as the secret tradition teaches and the arms of the tilted cross signify—one hand to invisible helpers above, and the other to assist the ascent of feebleer brethren below. For as the sides acid separate rungs of the ladder constitute a unity, so all life and all lives are fundamentally one, and none lives to himself alone.
Indeed Life, and the ladder it climbs, are one and indissociable. The summit of both reaches to and disappears out of ken into the heavens; the base of both rests upon the earth; but these two terminals that of spirit and that of matter—are but opposite poles of a single reality which cannot be known as a unity or otherwise than in its differentiated aspects of many planes, many mansions, many rounds or staves, except by him who has unified them in himself and become able to ascend and descend upon the ladder at will. But this is the privilege only of the Initiate skilled in that science of life which teaches how to mount the Scala Perfectionis, as a famous classical work of the 1st century terms the ladder of initiation, known to Masons under the glyph of “Jacob’s Ladder.”

4.- The Superstructure

The novitiate Mason is taught to regard his normal, natural personality as but a foundation-stone upon which he is recommended to erect a superstructure, perfect in all its parts and honourable to the builder.

To how many does this instruction mean anything more than a general pious counsel to become merely a man of strong moral character and virtue? It is something, of course, to fulfil that elementary standard, which needs, however, no membership of a Secret Order for its accomplishment; but the recommendation implies a very different meaning from that, as a little reflection will show. It is not a recommendation merely to improve the condition of the already existing foundation-stone (the personality), but to erect upon that foundation something which previously did not exist, something which will transcend and outrange it, although built upon it. For the reader who is unversed in the deeper side of Masonic significance, and is unaware of the hidden nature of it as thoroughly known to the original exponents of the science, the subject may prove difficult. It must therefore be explained at the outset that the superstructure to be erected is the organisation of an ethereal or spiritual body in which the skilled Mason can function in independence of his physical body and natural personality.

The theory of Masonry presupposes that man is a fallen creature; that his natural personality is a transient and unreal expression of his true self as conceived in the Divine Mind; and that, under appropriate tuition and self-discipline, he may become rebuilt and reorganised into the original condition from which he has fallen. The present natural personality, however, is the basis or foundation-stone out of which that reorganisation can proceed, and within it already exists, though in a condition of chaos and disorder, all the material
Building a superstructure upon one's present self involves much more than merely improving one's moral character. It is not a novice's task, although the advice to perform it is rightly given in the Apprentice-stage. It is a work of occult science, only to be undertaken by those educated and skilled in that science. It is the science to which the Christian Master referred in the words: "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest, after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that behold begin to mock, saying, "This man began to build but was not able to finish!" Accordingly the Mason desirous of building a tower or superstructure should "sit down first and count the cost" by acquiring a thorough understanding of what is involved; and before he is able even to begin the erection of such a building, he will find a good deal of rough labourer's work has first to be done upon himself in clearing the ground for the intended structure.

There is an old Masonic Degree, not comprised in our present Constitutions, devoted specially too this subject. It is called the Degree of Grand Architect, and throws great light on the intention of those who, well understanding the secret science, made reference in our Ritual to the building of a superstructure.

In that Degree the reference is to "building structures in the air," and it is taught that this is the: work only of grand architects, "being too great for inferior craftsmen, who only know by admiring them at a distance when done."

"Structures in the air!" All structures, save subterranean ones, rise into the air, —the average reader will say; yet not buildings of brick or stone are here meant. Again, building castles in the air is a familiar term for indulgence in day-dreaming and fanciful speculation; but, whilst all thought energy is constructive and creates objective form upon the plane of mind, we may be assured that the sages who perpetuated Masonic science were innocent of recommending the practice of anything so futile and unpractical. The airy structure to which they allude is the formation of a super-physical ethereal body, a "body of mist" as Hesiod and other Greek classics describe it, in which the adept Mason may consciously function in the finer planes of life and apart from his gross physical organism, and in which he will continue to live when the latter has become permanently discarded. It is spoken of by Origen, the Christian Father of the second century, as follows: "Another body, a spiritual and ethereal one, is promised us; a body not subject to physical touch, nor seen by physical eyes, nor burdened with weight, and which shall be metamorphosed according to the different regions in which it shall be. In
that spiritual body the whole of it will be an eye, the whole of it an ear, the whole serve as hands, the whole as feet”; implying that all the now distributed faculties will be unified in that body into one, as was the case with man before the fall and descent into matter and multiplicity.

Let us justify these observations by some pertinent references to the subject in the great text-book of Initiation-Science, the Volume of the Sacred Law; though they might be abundantly supplemented from other sources. Like the famous Orphic Hymns of the Pythagorean and Eleusinian Schools of the Mysteries, the Psalms of our Bible are an anthology of hymns of the Hebrew Initiates and are full of Masonic allusion and instructiveness. In the 48th Psalm, the disciple of spiritual science is directed to take a walk round the symbolic City of Jerusalem; he was told to mark well its bulwarks, to observe its palaces, and particularly to pay attention to the great tower of the Temple, which, like a modern cathedral spire, rose into the air above all other buildings, so that he might not only himself appreciate the symbolism of what he saw, but might be in a position to interpret its significance to “them that come after”; that is, to junior students of the science.

He thus received a striking object-lesson in the analogy of material buildings to spiritual ones. In the massive defensive walls of the city he was to recognise the strength, permanence and resisting power of the spiritual organism or “holy city” which he must build for himself in exchange for, but upon the foundation of, the frail perishable temporal body. In the palaces of the mighty, with their gorgeous interiors and stores of costly furnishings and precious objects of art, he was to perceive that his own interior must become correspondingly beautified and enriched with spiritual treasures. But in the great heaven-pointing tower, to which his attention was specially directed, he was to see the symbol of a structure as far transcending his present temporal organism as the Temple-spire outranged the adjacent buildings at its feet. From this he was to deduce the necessity of building and projecting upwards from his lower organisation, a “tower,” a superior spiritual body, rising into and capable of functioning in the “air” or more tenuous and ethereal worlds than this physical one. This is the “structure in the air” which only “Grand Architects” are competent to raise; this is the “superstructure” which our Entered Apprentices are enjoined to aspire to building.

Let us turn next to the further pertinent information on the subject given by the Apostle-Initiate to his Corinthian pupils. He instructs them on this subject of superstructures. How is it possible to rear them? “How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?” (He is not speaking of the physically defunct, but of that condition of atrophied spiritual consciousness characterising the normal animal man, which is always described as a state
of “death” in the biblical and other writings on the subject). He proceeds to explain that the physical body itself cannot be raised, since corruption cannot inherit incorruption, but that nevertheless there can be a “resurrection from the dead” through a sublimation of its vital essences, which can be reorganised and reconstituted into a new body of subtle matter on a supra-physical level. First comes the natural body we all wear to—begin with; but out of it can be evolved a psychical body. The former is an entirely earthy vesture exhibiting an illusory unreal self to the world; the latter is the body of our true spiritual self (or “lord from heaven”) which hitherto has remained masked and buried within that temporal vesture; “sown” in it as a seed, but capable of bursting its sheath and being raised from its former impotence to “power” (activity and conscious function). He properly speaks of it as one of the secrets and mysteries of Initiation, and his familiar words may thus be paraphrased: “I am expounding to you a mystery, one of the arcana of Initiation. We are not designed to remain always asleep in this drugged, deadened state of consciousness in which we are plunged, where we suffer the illusion that we are really alive, but are not. In the course of our evolution the due time comes for each of us to awake out of that sleep, and to become changed, transmuted; for our consciousness to be transposed to a higher level. We have borne the earthly human image; we have now to exchange it for an ethereal one of finer texture and purer quality. The change, the transposition of consciousness from the old to the new centre, comes suddenly (though it may take long to prepare and purify ourselves for its coming). When it occurs it comes with an inwardly heard crash, like a trumpet-blast, as the nervous system and brain-structures react to the stress upon them involved in the transition.”

(It must be explained that the “trumpet” and “last trumpet” are technical terms among Initiates for the spiral, trumpet-shaped, whorls or vortices occurring in subtle matter under stresses, audible to those in whom the change occurs. The reference to the “sound of the last trumpet” stands for a physiological experience as the last fine physical strands of the old nature are, as it were, snapped and the nervous system re-electrified. In the East this experience is called the “end of the world,” since for the Initiate it means the termination of his old worldly consciousness and its replacement by one of a much more vivid and intense quality.)

The Apostle further explains that for this newly evolved Ego or conscious centre there is an appropriate body, for there are celestial as well as terrestrial bodies. There cannot be consciousness apart from a formal vehicle for it, and as the old earthly body has served (and will so continue to serve) for ordinary mundane purposes, so will the newly—evolved consciousness possess its own separate appropriate psychic or spiritual body for function upon
supraphysical levels. The Initiate of this high degree, therefore, will possess a twofold organisation; his ordinary physical one (the “companion of his former toils”) and his supra-physical one, and will be able to utilise and function in each. He will have built The his “tower”; his “superstructure in the air.”

The superstructure must be perfect in all its structure parts and so be honourable to the builder. What are its parts?

Man, even in his natural, unregenerate, imperfectly evolved state, is a highly composite creature. Blended with his purely physical frame are three other supra-physical, but quasi-physical, bodies; his etheric body (the “double” or wraith), his emotional or desire body, and his mental organisation or body; whilst over and beyond these, and not necessarily, in functional alignment with them, exists his ultimate spiritual self which distinguishes him from the sub-human creatures. These are his “parts,” and they are but too often extremely ill-organised, uncoordinated and unbalanced. If they be imperfectly organised in the lower natural man, how can they be expected to be able to contribute requisite sublimations of themselves for the up-building of a body upon a higher level? All bodily and mental disease and infirmity originates in disorder in these inner bodies, which disorder thereupon becomes reflected forwards and manifested in the physical husk. Unless the inner natures be disciplined and organised before the gross mortal vesture is shed at physical death, how can one enter the ethereal kingdoms otherwise than “maimed,” without a “wedding-garment,” and in a distorted shape, not perfect in all its parts, and anything but honourable to the builder?

But, as we have long since seen, the first duty of every spiritual Craftsman is the purification and discipline of these bodies, and the elimination from himself of all base metals therein of which he has himself been an artificer. Only in proportion to the achievement of this arduous task can he hope to bring these “parts” into order, into subjection to his will, and into co-ordinated function and alignment, and so in the fullest sense stand erect, a just and upright man and Mason. He need not trouble to know how his superstructure will develop or to what extent or measure of perfection he may have built it. For it will become automatically built in his heights proportionately as he schools himself in his depths and tests his work by the continual application to it of the cross (which is the square, level and plumb-rule in combination). When the time comes for his consciousness to be raised to that superior level and he hears the call “Friend, come up higher!” he will find the superstructure he has been building in the darkness below, perfect in all its parts and honourable to himself. He will have climbed a section of the life-ladder; he will himself have built, dedicated and consecrated King Solomon’s Temple; and, through the result of his own labour upon himself, that resplendent body will appear
to him more like the work of the Great Architect of the Universe than that of human hands.

There are, however, farther sections of the infinite ladder to be climbed, even when this high level has been won. From thence there remains still further building to be done, a body to be fabricated manifesting still loftier wisdom, strength and beauty. For was not the first symbolic Temple to be destroyed and become replaced by a second, of which it is written that “the glory of the former house is not to be compared with that of the latter?”

But this still loftier work need not now be treated of. Let it suffice if what has already been said assists any reader to the building of his first superstructural Temple.

5.- The Cable-Tow

These expositions are being offered in their present order with a purpose. That purpose is to outline, as nearly and systematically as may be, the due sequence and progressive stages of the work of spiritual Craftsmanship or self-building. We have traced that work from its inception in the heart’s desire to pass from darkness to light and attain a higher order of life and mode of being, through its stages of the outer and inward purification essential to that attainment, and through the crisis of a deeper gloom, a voluntary abnegation of and dying to all the attributes that go to constitute the natural personality, until the aspirant who endures all these to the end is finally rewarded by receiving his “crown of life,” as the biblical metaphor very fittingly terms that exalted order of conscious being which marks the fulfilment of human spiritual evolution. And we have shown how, in winning that high degree of consciousness, he has simultaneously built for himself out of the sublimations of his original nature a new superstructural body appropriate to it and in which it can function. In the abounding wealth of the symbols and veiled verbal references in our rituals and instruction lectures to the details of this truly scientific work, there remain, however, many others needing explanation, some of which can now be considered more advantageously than at our earlier stage and with better chance of being understood.

One of these is the cable-tow. In my previous book it was explained that its use in the E.A. Degree taught the beginner the useful lesson that he who has once felt within him the impulses of the central Light and been moved to seek it should never recede from his quest and, indeed, cannot do so without doing violence to the highest within him, a violence equivalent to moral suicide. At the same time, he is also enjoined not to be unduly precipitate, not ignorantly
and rashly to rush forward in an unprepared inward state to grasp the secrets of his own being, in which case peril of another kind threatens him; but to proceed humbly, meekly, cautiously and under instructed guidance. The ancient maxim “Know thyself,” was coupled with another, Ne quid nimis, “Nothing in excess”; for the science can only be learned and applied gradually. It will unfold itself more and more as it is diligently studied and pursued.

The foregoing explanation of the cable-tow is but a very partial one, and inculcates a salutary, but purely moral, piece of advice. The deeper significance is a psycho-physiological one, and has to do with the mysteries of the human organism. It should not be overlooked that the cable-tow is given prominence not only in the First Degree. It is again mentioned in the obligation in the Third Degree, whilst it appears under another guise in that working-tool of the Master-Mason which acts upon a centre-pin. And finally it reappears in the Royal Arch Degree as a cord or life-line. It is requisite to understand what is involved in something to which such recurring prominence is given.

Let us first recall what has been already stated about the human organism being a composite structure of several natures or bodies (physical, etheric, emotional, and mental), fixated in a unity or synthesis; each of such bodies being constituted of gross or subtle matter, of differing density and vibratory rate, and the whole co-ordinated by the central divine Principle (which may or may not yet have come forward into the formal conscious mind, although there are few in whose awareness it is not lurkingly present and more or less active as “conscience.”)

Thus the human constitution may be likened to a number of glass tumblers placed one within the other and with, say, a night-light (representing the central Principle) inserted in the inmost one. The glass of the tumblers may be imagined as of progressive thickness and coarseness, from within outwards, and some of them as coloured, dirty, or not closely fitting in with the others. The coarser, dirtier, and more opaque the glasses, the less able will be the central light to shine through them; a single glass may be so opaque as to prevent the passage of the light through all the rest. Here, then, is an object lesson in the need for the inward purification of our various constituent sheaths, and for becoming “perfect in all our parts.” As William Blake said very truly: “If the gates of human perception were thoroughly cleansed, we should perceive everything as it is-infinite; but man has closed himself up till he sees all things only through the narrow chinks of his own cavern.”

Another illustration. Human compositeness may be compared with the concentric skins or sheaths of a vegetable bulb (an onion, or hyacinth). Here the sheaths are all equally pure and co-ordinated; and because the bulb is per-
fect in all its parts or sheaths, and, when planted, fulfils the whole law of its nature, its life-force bursts its natural bonds, throws up a self-built superstructure into the air, and there effloresces into the bloom which is its “crown of life” or fulness of development. Man should do this, and, as we have shown, this is what the Mason is taught to do. But man having (what the bulb has not), freedom of will to fulfil or to violate the law of his nature, has chosen the latter course, and consequently by indulgence in perverse desire and wrongly directed thought, has fouled and disorganised his sheaths. Hence his spiritual darkness and his liability to all forms of disease. The central Principle cannot shine through his opacity, lighting up his mind and governing his desires and actions. It remains imprisoned within him. He sees, thinks and knows only from his self-darkened outer sheaths, and is misguided and illuded accordingly.

For a final example, let us turn to — the instructive familiar episode in the Gospels of the storm overtaking a boat containing a number of men, of whom the Chief was “asleep in the hinder part of the boat.” The boat typifies the human organism; its occupants, its various parts and faculties, including the as yet unawakened Master-Principle resident in its depths or “hinder part.” An emotional upheaval occurs; the rough waves of passion threaten to wreck the whole party. A brain-storm arises; intemperate gusts of fright, wrong headiness, and mental un-control, make the position still worse. The extremity is sufficiently acute to awaken the Master-Principle into activity whose beneficent power is able instantly to still those unruly winds, and waves, which suddenly are reduced to a great peace.

Every Master-Mason, who is a real and not merely a titular one, is able to perform this “miracle” in himself; perhaps in others also. There is nothing super-natural about it to him. It is possible to him because he “has the Mason Word and second sight”; he both understands the composite structure of the human organism, can visually discern the disordered part or parts, and can apply healing, harmonising, vibratory power from his own corresponding part to the seat of mischief, saying to this disordered mental part or that unruly emotional sheath, “Peace, be still!” Every Master-Mason is therefore also a Master-Physician, able to benefit patients in a medical sense, and also to visualise the inner condition of those who look to him for instruction and initiation in a Masonic sense, to advise upon their interior needs and moral ailments, and help them to purify and align their disordered natures. But this is not possible save to one who himself has become pure and rectified in all his parts; the physician must first heal himself before he can communicate either physical or moral health to others.

This promise about the compositeness of the human structure and the ex-
istence in us of a series of independent, yet co-ordinated “parts” or sheaths, has been necessary before we can speak directly of the cable-tow. What is it that connects these parts? And are these parts dissociable from one another?

We know that they are normally in close association and to this association applies the enjoinder that what God hath joined, man shall not put asunder. What the age-long process of evolution has built up with infinite patience and care is not to be tampered with for improper purposes, or even by well meaning but, as yet, unenlightened experiment in the supposed interests of science; a point upon which the old Masters and teachers of our science are specially insistent, for reasons which now need not be entered upon.

Nevertheless, a measure of dissociation does occur naturally in even the most healthy and well organised people (and of cases of abnormal psychic looseness of constitution we need not speak). It occurs in sleep, when the consciousness may be vividly active, whether in an orderly or disorderly manner; people “travel” in their sleep. It occurs at times of illness or violent shock. It may be induced by alcohol or drugs; the “anesthetic revelation” is a well recognised phenomenon. Under any of these conditions there may be a complete ec-stasis, or conscious standing out or away of the Ego from the physical body. Apparitions and even action at a distance are well accredited facts. Such phenomena are explicable only upon the suppositions of the existence of a subler vehicle than — the gross body, of the fact that consciousness becomes temporarily transferred from the latter to the former, and that the two are capable of conjoint function in complete independence of the physical brain and body.

What preserves the connection between the two “parts” thus disjoined, and makes possible their subsequent re-coalescence, is the “cable-tow.” It is a connective thread of matter of extreme tenuousness and elasticity issuing from the physical abdominal region and maintaining the same kind of connection with the extended subtle body as the string with which a boy flies a kite. As the boy can pull in the kite by the string, so does the extruded subtle body become drawn back to its physical base. Were the kite-string severed during the kite’s flight, the kite would collapse or be blown away. Similarly, were the human “cable-tow” permanently severed, death would ensue and each of the severed parts go to its own place.

Biblically this human “cable-tow” is called the “silver cord” in the well known passage, “or ever the silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken; then shall the body return to the earth and the spirit to God who gave it.” “Silver” is the technical esoteric term for psychical substance, as gold is for spiritual, and iron or brass for physical. Its physiological correspondence is the umbilical cord connecting the child with its mother. Its analogue in eccle-
siastical vestments is the girdle worn by the high-priests of the Hebrew and by the priests and monastics of the Christian Church.

Everyone unconsciously possesses the cable-tow, and it comes into use during sleep, when a less or greater measure of involuntary dissociation of our parts occurs. A Master, however, is one who has outgrown the incapacities to which the undeveloped average man is subject. Unlike the latter, he is in full knowledge and control of all his parts; whether his physical body be awake or wrapped in sleep, he maintains unbroken consciousness. He is able at will to shut off consciousness of temporal affairs and apply it to supra-physical ones. He can thus function at a distance from his physical body, whether upon the mundane or upon, higher planes of the cosmic ladder. His cable-tow, of infinite expansiveness, unwinds from his centre-pin and, stretching like the kite-string, enables him to travel where he will in his subtle body and to rejoin and reanimate his physical one at will. Hence it is that the Master-Mason is pledged to answer and obey all signs and summonses from any Master-Mason’s lodge if within the reach of his cable-tow; and such assemblies, it should be remembered, are contemplated therefore as taking place not at any physical location, but upon an ethereal plane. For corroboration of what is possible in this respect to a Master, one should reflect upon the instances of bi-location, passing through closed walls, and manifesting at a distance, recorded of the Great Exemplar in the Gospels. These are representative of what is feasible to anyone attaining Mastership.

The cable-tow, therefore, is given prominence to the reflective Craftsman as a help towards understanding his own constitution, and to foreshadow to him work that lies before him when is he fitted to undertake it;—work which now may seem to him impossible and incredible. For as the skirret (which is the cable-tow in another form) is intended for the skilful architect to draw forth a line to mark out the ground for the intended structure, so the competent builder of the spiritual body will unwind his own “silver cord” when he learns how to function consciously on the ascending ladder of supraphysical planes, and to perceive the nature of the superstructure he himself is intended to construct.

Further importance attaches to the significance of the cable-tow from the fact testified to at the admission to our Order of every new candidate for ceremonial initiation. For all real Initiation involves the use of the actual “silver cord” or life-line; since such Initiation always occurs when the physical body is in a state of trance or sleep, and when the temporarily liberated consciousness has been transferred to a higher level. Thence it subsequently is brought back to the physical organism, the cerebral and nerve centres of which become illumined, revitalised and raised to a higher pitch of faculty than was previ-
ously possible. The perspicacious Royal Arch Mason will not fail to perceive how this truth is dramatically exemplified in that Degree.

This subject might be considerably extended, for whilst in a ceremonial system like the Masonic, only one initiation is portrayed (or, rather where initiation only occurs once), yet in the actual experience of soul-architecture Initiation succeeds Initiation upon increasingly higher levels of the ladder as the individual becomes correspondingly ripe for them, able to bear their strain and to assimilate their revelations. What the Craft teaching and symbols inculcate is a principle common to every degree of real Initiation that one may prove worthy to attain. For each upward step the candidate for the heights must be prepared as he is in the E.A. Degree; at each there will be the same peril in turning back, and at each the same menace directed against rashly rushing forward.

6.- The Apron

So much was said in my former volume, *The Meaning of Masonry*, in explanation of the Masonic Apron, that it seems needless to speak at length of it again. Yet, to maintain continuity of thought, it seems desirable once more to refer to its symbolism at this point, since we have been closely considering the manner in which consciousness becomes expanded and enveloped in bodies or vehicles appropriate to that expansion; and we have been dealing with the *arcanum* or “mystery” propounded by St. Paul as to how the “dead” (the as yet uninitiated and spiritually unquickened), are raised up to a new order of life and the new kind of embodiment they take on, or automatically fabricate, in the process.

Consciousness cannot exist without body. “To every seed (or conscious unit) its own body,” says the Apostle-Initiate; or, as we Masons may paraphrase it, to every Degree of life is allotted the appropriate Apron, proclaiming the wearer’s spiritual rank. As no one can enter the Lodge unclothed with the Apron, so no one can enter any of the unseen worlds without wearing a body appropriate. There are bodies terrestrial, adapted the to use on the lower planes of life; and bodies Apron celestial or ethereal, adapted to functioning on higher ones. Man is a composite of many bodies, one within the other; though ordinarily he is unaware of it and has not yet organised them and come to know them separately, as the Initiate is expected to do.

The physical body is but one, and the grossest, of the terrestrial bodies; it is but a plaster of organised chemical particles, within and around which his subtler bodies exist, and for which it forms a nexus or fixation-point. When
totally discarded at death it disintegrates; when partially abandoned in sleep or anesthesia its energies persist passively, and connection with it is kept by the cable-tow or “silver cord.” In each case the Ego, whether aware of it or not, stands minus its physical sheath and enclosed in its remaining ones. And a similar divesting of each successive body may take place until only the ultimate Ego remains.

That Ego, the ultimate Divine Principle in man, is represented by the triangular flap of the Masonic Apron. The triangle (or pyramid form) is the geometrical symbol for Spirit or Fire, and the ultimate Spirit of man may be likened to a pointed flame or tongue of fire. (The word “pyramid” derives from the Greek word pur, fire).

The body or form (or rather the succession of bodies or forms), which that Ego assumes on descending into manifestation through the ladder like planes of the Universe, aggregating to itself and organising around itself material from each, is represented by the lower quadrangular part of the Apron. The quadrangle, square, or superfice, is the geometrical symbol for Body, Form, Physicalisation. The quadrangle is further appropriate because (i) all Body is constituted of four elements, earth, water, air, fire; (2) because the human organism is fourfold, a complex of four distinct departments, physical, etheric, emotional and mental, and (3) because in man the three sub-human kingdoms (mineral, vegetable and animal), are unified into the human synthesis.

The candidate’s first investiture with the Apron is symbolic therefore of his Ego’s entrance into this world, and becoming clothed with form or body. He is meant to realise himself as a sevenfold being, perfectly constituted originally in the Divine Mirid; his triangle of Spirit combining with the quadrangle of materialised form to make up the perfect number seven. He is meant to realise that he has descended to a condition of embodiment and limitation of consciousness for the purpose of acquiring experience in those conditions, and of performing certain work upon himself which shall raise him to full realisation of his own ultimate nature and of the Divine purpose in him, and that though his present state or form is one of restrictedness and humiliation, it will never disgrace him if he never disgrace it.

In the First Degree, the triangular flap of the Apron is kept erect. In the Second it is lowered. Thereby is denoted the physiological truth that the Ego or human Spirit on entering this world at birth does not immediately attain full embodiment, but at first is, as it were, an overhovering presence, organically connected with the body, but only The gradually taking possession of it. We recognise this Apron truth in practical life. Moral and legal responsibility is never attributed to a child under seven years of age, for the moral sense has not yet developed. Important physiological changes connected with puberty
occur at the age of fourteen. Civic responsibility is denied until twenty-one is reached. The basic reason for all this is the occult truth that the Ego does not attain its maximum of incarnation until twenty-one. Accordingly it is not until age is reached that a man is presumed competent to enter the Craft and undertake the science of himself.

As the Ego immerses itself in its body and works upon it, it creates changes in it, whether for good or evil. It either organises or disorganises its vehicles according to its will and desires. It becomes an artificer in metals, whether base or precious; it either stores itself with ornaments and jewels and the invaluable furniture of self-knowledge, or with useless trumperies and grotesque contrivances of which sooner or later it must get rid. Assuming its activities to have been wisely directed, they are evidenced in the Apron by the blue rosettes imposed upon it in the Second Degree; if they are persisted in and the Spirit more and more subjugates and controls the Form, that increasing domination and the further progress made in the science are testified to by the additional elaborations found in the Apron in the Third Degree. Still more advanced progress is evidenced by further changes and beautification of the Apron in the Royal Arch Degrees, and in the Grand Lodges of provinces, and of the nation.

The Tau displayed upon the Apron worn by those of Master rank is a form of the Cross, and also of the Hammer of Thor, of Scandinavian religion. It is displayed triply, to signify that the wearer has brought his three lower natures (physical, emotional, and mental) under complete control; that he has crucified them and keeps them repressed by the hammer of a strong will.

The further important point should be noticed that the Apron covers the creative, generative organ of the body; and it is especially to these that the significance of the Tau attaches. Spiritual self building and the erection of the “superstructure” are dependent upon the supply of creative energy available from the generative nervous centre, the “power-house” of the human organism. Thence that energy passes upwards through other ganglionic “transformers” and, reaching the brain, becomes finally sublimated and transformed to consciousness. Conservation of that energy is therefore indispensable both for generating consciousness and providing the material for the finer vehicle or “superstructure” in which that consciousness may function; the life-energy is always creative, either in the direction of physical propagation or in that of super-physical up-building; hence the importance attached in religious spheres to celibacy.

It should also be noted that in the three Craft Degrees, the investiture with the Apron is made in the West; and not by the Master, but by his principal officer who is deputed to bestow it. The meaning behind this important detail
is that while the human Ego is resident in this temporal world ("the West"), Nature, as the chief officer and deputy of Providence, supplies it with bodies of her own material and temporal substance. But in all cases beyond those three, the investiture takes place in the "East" the realm of spirit, and from the hands of the Master himself. For the progressed soul receives a clothing beyond Nature’s power to supply; and, without intermediate hands, “God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him,” and to every such soul its own body, according to its measure of progress and consciousness.

7.- The Wind

The Instruction Lectures of the First Degree (unfortunately not used in some Lodges), contain a curious reference to the blowing of the wind, which must puzzle a good many minds. What has the wind to do with Masonic work, and why should it be particularly favourable to that work when blowing from East to West or vice versa?

Again we must look below the letter of the reference. The subject has not been introduced without purpose and instructiveness, to discern which will once more reveal the wisdom of the compilers and the crypticism with which they purposely shielded it when preparing our system for more or less promiscuous use.

The wind referred to is not the atmospheric breeze. It is that Wind (Pneuma) which “bloweth where it listeth”; the Wind of the Spirit; the currents of Divine Energy.

The “East” and the “West” are not our ordinary geographical directions of space. In Initiate and Biblical language, as in the quarters of the Lodge, the East is the realm of Spirit and Light; the West that of Matter and Darkness, the place of the disappearing sun. Man partakes of both; he is polarised east-west, as Spirit-Matter in one.

When, mystically, the wind blows east-west, a current of Divine Energy has set in towards the west, stimulating, vitalising and enlightening it. When it blows west-east, man has himself directed a current of aspiration from his own spirit eastwards to God.

The wind is therefore said to be specially favourable to Masonic work when blowing from either of those points of the mystical compass. When the Mason sends up his aspirations to the heights, as he should perpetually be doing, he is as a dynamo generating and transmitting an electric current upwards; that is, eastwards. When the Divine Fire descends upon himself, a similar current has set in westwards. It is written elsewhere and in the same
sense, “As the lightning shineth from the east unto the west, so is the coming of the Son of Man” into the personal consciousness.

Prayer, upward aspiration in the above sense, is a practical scientific necessity for the work of the spiritual Craftsman. He himself is but as the leaden weight swinging at the lower end of the string of the plumb-rule. The string itself is as the connecting wire between that weight and the top of the plumbrule, a wire through which a current may pass up or down. Until that instrument is held erect, and the leaden weight brought to stillness and steadiness, it is ineffective for any form of work. So long as man is spiritually unaligned and out of plumb with his The spiritual pole, directness of current between them Wind is impossible. When that current is established the lead of darkness and ignorance may become transmuted into the gold of conscious light and wisdom by the alchemy of the Spirit.

Real Initiates have always known there to be both special times and seasons, and special localities favourable to inducing the flow of currents of Divine Energy; but of these the modem Mason has not yet come to learn, though there are references to them in his system. The two solstices and equinoxes are such times, and others are known in the greater Churches whose calendar of feasts and fasts have been based upon this principle. The Festivals of the two Masonic patron-saints, St. John Baptist at midsummer, and St. John the Divine at mid-winter, have special bearing upon favourable times for spiritual Craftsmanship, but the former is now ignored, and the latter profaned. The matter may be left to the’ reflection of Brethren. When the Craft comes better to realise its purpose and science, these times and seasons will be taken advantage of for the furtherance of both individual and collective Masonic work.

The teaching in the Instruction Lecture upon the wind is supplemented by a reference to the escape of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage under their Master Moses, who caused a mighty east wind to blow, dividing the waters of the Red Sea to permit of their safe passage, which waters then rolled back and overwhelmed Pharaoh and his pursuing army. Again, the bearing of this episode is lost upon the average Brother, who for want of a key fails to see its relevance to any form of Masonry. And, indeed, it carries us into much deeper water than the average mind bathes in, although to those versed in Initiation science, the striking biblical incident masks and prefigures an equally momentous one in the individual life of everyone who seeks to fulfil his own spiritual evolution.

The allusion is to the important crisis which occurs when the personal soul of the aspirant ardently aspires for complete liberation from the tyranny of the flesh. It is then possible, in proper cases, —and this was part of the office of
the old Mysteries— for one who is a real Master so to act upon and separate his disciple’s interior organic structures as to effect a permanent liberation of the latter’s consciousness from sensual bondage. The “waters” that are then “divided” are what have previously been explained as those of the fluidic subtle body of desire and emotion, which normally constitute an untraversable barrier between the highest and the lowest elements in our nature. “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?” exclaimed one who afterwards attained delivery. For the “body of death” is made up of all those lower natures in us which inhibit consciousness in the spirit; and, as we have elsewhere stated, it is dissociable by a competent adept Master, who holds the keys of life and death (i.e., consciousness and unconsciousness in the spirit). The higher nature of the disciple is then liberated from the bondage of the lower; his waters are divided; he passes through them into permanent safety from the Pharaoh-like tyranny of his material vesture; the still pursuing tendencies Seeking of which are checked, overwhelmed and shut off a when the temporarily held up waters are permitted Master to roll back to their former channel, to the extreme joy of the now liberated disciple.

This is an incident of real Initiation, and it is achievable only under the guidance of the equivalent of a Moses, a real Master. To those unversed in the deeper aspects of Initiation science, what cannot here be more than briefly explained may appear incredible, as would much more that lies concealed beneath the symbols and the text of the Masonic system. But those responsible for compiling or inspiring that system were clearly deeply versed in much that they permitted themselves to do no more than hint at, and it remains for reflective Masons to penetrate their disguises by their own research, intuition and perspicacity.

8.- Seeking a Master

The junior Brother learns that, as a Mason, his duty is to seek a Master and from him gain instruction, and usually supposes that by making acquaintance with the W.M. of his Lodge, and learning by rote the rituals and lectures, he is fulfilling that duty. If he desires nothing more than ceremonial Masonry, he is doubtless doing all that need be expected of him. But if he be in earnest quest of that to which ceremonial Masonry is but an entrance-portal, he may be interested in the following considerations.

It is axiomatic in the traditional secret wisdom that real Initiation is not to be looked for save at the hands of one who has himself experienced it. And it is equally axiomatic that “when the disciple is ready, the Master will be found
waiting.” The modern Masonic student will be well advised to accept both these axioms as being as valid to-day as they have ever been in the past.

A Master is not easily found. But neither is he often properly sought. “Ask, seek, knock,” are simple words to say with the tongue. Their putting into effective operation is a task involving persistent and concentrated will. Under no circumstances does a Master ever proclaim himself as such; he must be sought, must be clearly recognised and wholeheartedly accepted as one; and you may have grave doubts of his status and your own judgment about him before according him that confidence. You might live in close contact with a Master for years without suspecting the fact. Recognition being due to spiritual rapport, to vibratory harmony and to intuitional certainty; until you possess these a Master’s physical personality will convey no more to you than any other man’s. But of one thing be assured; the Master will know you through and through long before you recognise him, or perhaps even realise that you are seeking him.

Exoterically, in the Operative Mason’s trade, the youth proposing to enter a Building Guild had first to find a Master Mason who would accept him as his apprentice and to whom he became bound for seven years, the Master making himself responsible for his maintenance and training. In spiritual Craftsmanship precisely the same method applies. The Master has first to be sought and found, and, if the disciple be accepted, he must be served and implicitly obeyed for a similar probationary period, the Master assuming a real (not a nominal) spiritual sponsorship for the pupil. The association not being for any temporal advantage but for purely self-less spiritual advancement, the intimacy is of the closest, as the responsibility is of the gravest, character. For the apprentice is to become spiritually integrated with the Master. To use the beautiful touching simile of the greatest of Masters, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, so is the pupil to become gathered and built into the very being of his teacher. The real Initiation (or rather sequence of Initiations) the pupil hopes in due course to attain cannot be achieved until this intimate relationship exists.

In the days of the Ancient Mysteries, Masters were to be found resident in the seclusion of the Temples, for Initiation science was then an organised institution, publicly recognised. In the Orient, no such formal organisation has obtained, but the practice, both in the past and to-day, is for the aspirant to seek and find his appropriate Master, the onus of searching being upon the former, and serving as a test of his earnestness and perspicuity. The Master is there termed a Guru (defined as “one who removes the veil of darkness from the spiritual eyes of the pupil”), and the accepted pupil a Chela or spiritual child, in the same sense that St. John addresses his pupils as “little children.” The
The ancient Sanskrit word Guru passed from India to Asia Minor and Greece, and reappears in the latter part of the name of such ancient Initiates as Protagoras, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras. The last-mentioned of these literally means the Pitta (or Pater) Guru, the Master or Father-Teacher, as in fact he was in his day; and the continuity of both the science and of the title Guru is further evidenced by the fact that that title is preserved both in Hebrew and in Masonry in the name of Hiram Abiff (spelt also in the Scriptures as Huram and Churam Abiff). Hiram Abiff has precisely the same meaning as Pythagoras, the Father-Teacher, or alternatively the Teacher from the Father. The Egyptian form of the name Hiram is Hermes, the teacher of the secret or “hermetic” science and wisdom, and the student is strongly urged to study those two important ancient treatises of Initiation-science, the Divine Pymander of Hermes and “The Shepherd of Hermas.”

A Master, while rejoiced to find a suitable pupil, does not accept him without subjecting him to severe preliminary tests. He “knows what is in man.” No hypocrisy deceives him. He discerns the thoughts and desires of the heart of the intending candidate, and sees whether the latter is properly prepared there, and really anxious and ready for the work involved. Of this, an example came to my knowledge, which it may be useful to record, and to remember in connection with the acceptance of Masonic candidates. It was as follows: –

A young man in India sought out a venerable Master there and asked to be accepted as a pupil and trained for initiation; he professed to want to find the Light, to know God at first hand. The old sage, after a searching glance into the aspirant’s inward condition, discerned that the latter, while not insincere, was still a long way from readiness, and far from being sufficiently detached in desire for worldly possessions and sensual enjoyments; and, explaining this, he firmly but kindly sent him away to exhaust or merge himself of these attractions, but with the suggestion that he might present himself again in two years’ time. After two years, the young man returned, found the old Master bathing in the river at the foot of his garden, and from the river-bank renewed his application. Again the old man read his visitor’s heart to its depths and perceived how divided it still was between the claims of the outer and the inner life; but, calling him down into the river, he laid his hand upon the young one’s head and gently pressed and held it below the surface of the water. Presently the young man forced it above the surface. “Why

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2“Shepherd” is the ancient and biblical word signifying “Initiator” or “Hierophant.” Hence “the Good Shepherd,” “the Great Shepherd of the sheep,” “The Lord is my Shepherd.” The “Shepherds watching their flocks” at the time of the Nativity were not rustics or farmers, but spiritual adepts in charge of groups of initiate pupils.
did you do that?” he was asked. “I was obliged to do so to find breath.”

Then came the Master’s answer: “When you want God and the inward light as badly as you just now wanted breath, you may come back to me and you shall have your desire. But for the present you want other things as much, and you can’t have both.” Like the other young man in the Gospels, the applicant went away sorrowful; but he had found his eventual Master and gained from him the instruction suitable to him at the moment.

How, where, is one to seek one’s Master, if he be so secluded, so hard to find? He may be sought both without and within oneself. He should first be sought in every event of the daily life, in the person of everyone you meet. Finding him depends on the intensity of your search. “Seek and ye shall find” is not a vain promise. Look not to meet immediately with some learned or impressive personality capable of giving you all truth in tabloid form in a few hours. Final truth cannot be communicated at all from one person to another orally; it exists already within yourself and needs only to be dug out and liberated. Socrates—himself a Master, though the son of a poor midwife used to joke that he had inherited something of his mother’s profession in that his task was to help others to bring truth to birth out of themselves; and in the same sense the mediaeval teachers speak of using “the obstetric hand” in eliciting truth from their pupils rather than of instilling it into them. For the pupil has first to learn to clear away his own falsities and unrealities, so that what is already central in himself may no longer be obscured, but shine out, in its own self-conscious Light.

When the time is ripe and the pupil in a deep sense ready, he may come to meet a Master literally and in personal wise. But a Master, being one who has evolved in his spirit, is no longer to be thought of as a separate independent person, although displaying a separate personality and presence to the world. He is integrated with others of the same rank; he is part of a group, all the members of which are conscious on the plane of Spirit. And Spirit is universal, not fettered by place, time, or space. What the group perceives, each of its parts sees, and vice versa. Remember the All-seeing Eye, the universal Watchman, that perceives you and knows the quality of your spirit, though you yourself know nothing of it.

Until, then, a Master is met with personally, the search should persist in confidence that he will be found. Responses, justifying your confidence and demonstrating that the Eye is watching you, will come in unsuspected ways to the earnest seeker; perhaps from a chance passage in an apparently quite irrelevant book you may be led to pick up; perhaps from a casual meeting with a stranger, an offhand remark, the conversation of a friend who speaks more
wisely and pointedly to you than he himself realises. Through such and other ways may the veiled Master look or speak to you, and proportionately to the ardour of your search will you find evidences of his presence and watchfulness. A saintly woman, a great British poetess, so keenly sought a Master in the details of daily life that she would pick up torn scraps of paper in the street on the chance that they might reveal his name or yield some evidence of him. Another seeker travelled across the world in blind faith that somewhere the unknown Master would be found. One day in the street of a foreign city the recognition came suddenly; before a stranger in the crowd the seeker stopped, saying “Master, teach me!” —and the search was ended.

“The Master” to be sought, then, is a comprehensive term-abstract and mystical if you will, but standing for a reality embracing many personal Masters integrated in it. In seeking a personal Master, one seeks also the group of which he is a member; in seeking the impersonal Master one may be brought into personal contact with one of that group. Life in the realm of Spirit is a unity, not a diversity, and for Masonic seekers the wide world over, of whatever nation or creed, there is but one Grand Master and Hierophant, but He can manifest and deputise through divers channels. As in the Craft Lodge there is but one Master, yet many of equal rank capable of representing him and doing his work, so has the world’s Grand Master in the heights His associates and deputies here in its dark depths.

So far we have spoken only of seeking exteriorly, for an outward personal Master. But the search can and should also be made interiorly, within oneself; for what is sought subjectively and spiritually can then more readily come to be realised and found objectively. The great Indian manual of Initiation (the Bhagavad-Gita) therefore teaches:

There lives a Master in the hearts of men  
Who makes their deeds, by subtle-pulling strings.  
Dance to what time He will. With all thy soul  
Trust Him, and take Him for thy succour.  
So shalt thou gain,  
By grace of Him, the uttermost repose,  
The Eternal Peace.

Seek therefore to realise the Master in the heart. Conceive him imaginatively. Build up in your constant thought a mental image of him, invested with the nature and qualities of that master-soul to whom you look to raise you from your present deadness, to remove the stone from your sepulchre, and
to utter to your inmost self that vibrant word of liberating power, “Lazarus, come forth!” For until you have in yourself something in common with him, points of fellowship with him—be it but a bare desire for resemblance—how shall you expect to be raised into fulness of identic relationship with him, to be “gathered as a chicken under his wing?”

Our Science in its universality limits our conception of the Master to no one exemplar. Take, it says, the nearest and most familiar to you, the one under whose aegis you were racially born and who therefore may serve you best; for each is able to bring you to the centre, though each may have his separate method. To the Jewish Brother it says, take the Father of the faithful, and realise what being gathered to his bosom means. To the Christian Brother, it points to Him upon whose breast lay the beloved disciple, and urges him to reflect upon what that implies. To the Hindu Brother it points to Krishna, who came and rode in the same chariot with Arjuna, and bids him look to a similar intimate union. To the Buddhist it points to the Maitreya of universal compassion, and bids him reflect upon him till he become drawn beneath his bo-tree; and to the Moslem it points to his Prophet, and the significance of being clothed with the latter’s mantle.

Let the earnest Craftsman, then, seek a Master where and how he will. He cannot-experto crede fail to find. Failure to find will be due to his having failed, rightly, and from his heart, to seek.

9.- Wages

Initiates of the secret science in the past (“our ancient Brethren”) are said to have been paid wages. The wages, we are told, were paid in the porchway of the Temple; and, much or little, they were accepted without demur, because of the recipients’ complete confidence in their employers and the recognition that only so much would be received as their work was actually worth. The Masonic tradition asserts that the wages were not paid in cash—cash was of no use to those who had already learned to do without money and metals—but in corn, wine, and oil. (Note the threefold form of the wages).

Wages of the same kind are still paid to real Craftsmen in the same place, and in the same mode. The porchway of the Temple figures the outer natural life which forms a portal to an inner supernatural life at the central sanctuary which we have not yet consciously reached, but to which we labour to ascend by an in-winding stairway, gradually rebuilding body and mind on the way with a view to acquiring a new reconstituted organism appropriate and adapted to that sublime degree of life.
Such a new body and mind require sustenance to build them, and the food we consume becomes built into our organism. What we eat, we become. Corn goes to body-building, the fashioning of substantiality and structural form. Wine goes to the vitalising and stimulating of the mind, strengthening the intellect, deepening the inner vision. Oil is a lubricant for the system, enabling its parts to run smoothly and without friction.

In their higher symbolism Corn (or Bread) and Wine relate to those of the Altar, and were Eucharistic elements in the Mysteries long before the Christian Master in a certain “upper room” (or higher level of application) took over and gave a new application to the wheat of Ceres and the wine of Bacchus-Dionysos; while Oil, the crushed out and refined product of the olive, refers to that Wisdom which is the ultimate essence of experience and knowledge, and which has been associated, in the different Mystery teachings, with Minerva, with Solomon, and with the Mount of Olives.

The spiritual Craftsman not only earns his own wages proportionately to his work; his own labours automatically supply them. God, as his employer, has already lodged them within him in advance; he has only to appropriate them as he becomes justly entitled to them by his own labours, as the sons of Jacob found their money restored to them in their corn-sacks.

The Mason ‘is himself likened to an ear of corn, nourished by a fall of the Water of Life. In virtue of the animal element in his nature he is himself “the ox that treadeth out the corn,” separating his own golden grain from the stalk that bore it. He is himself the “threshing floor of Araunah,” winnowing his own chaff from his own wheat. He treads his own wine-press alone; in singleness of effort and in the solitude of his own thought distilling his own vintage, until the cup of his mind runs over with the wine of a new order of intelligence. He is his own oil-press, and out of his own experience and self realisation extracts wisdom—that oil which anoints him with a joy and an ability above his fellows, and that runs down to the “skirts of his clothing,” manifesting itself in his personality and in all his activities.

Corn, wine, and oil, are therefore laid upon the altar at the consecration of every Masonic Lodge; they are the emblems of a Craftsman’s wages. Upon the collar of Grand Lodge Officers are displayed ears of wheat and sprays of olive, the symbolic indication that those who arrive at the summit of their profession possess that which they exhibit, and are able to minister bread and wine and oil to those below them in the Order.

There are less agreeable forms of wages, however, but such as also are to be received without scruple or mistrust, for they are both disciplinary and signs of progress. A man cannot set up to re-form his old nature and readjust his interior constitution without feeling it, or without unsettling the fabric
of his emotional and mental sheaths. Accordingly, it is a common experience with those who take themselves seriously in hand in the task of self re-building that unexpected obstacles suddenly arise; the wages that come to them are those of adversity in temporal affairs, sickness, the turning away of former friends, and the like. There is good reason for this. Within ourselves are sown the seeds of all our past activities and emotional tendencies, good or evil. Within ourselves are stored all our old mind-forms and fabrications of base metal. To try to disturb the former or to divest ourselves of the latter, promotes immediate reaction from them.

He who deliberately invokes the Light upon himself, as the earnest Masonic aspirant does, ipso facto utters, with corresponding intensity, a challenge to his own bad past, his own unreal self. And if his invocation be effective, the Light streaming into him from his own dormer-window, whilst giving him illumination, will also play upon and stimulate in him all that is undesirable, as sunlight stirs to activity the unpleasant insects dwelling in darkness beneath a stone that is suddenly removed from an old position. Light impartially affects both the good and evil in oneself, as the sunshine causes a rose to bloom, and a lump of carrion by its side to putrefy. It induces new growth in a spiritual sense, but it also, and at the same time, accelerates the germination of seeds implanted in us, which, but for it, would continue to lie dormant and unmatured until a more favourable time. Under the discipline of Initiation the seeds or compressed results of one’s own past, the potential reactions from one’s own former actions and inaction, all that goes to make up a man’s fate and that, if unchecked, will shape his future destiny, are brought to a sudden head and crisis; the normal slower development they would have undergone, if not so interfered with, becomes interrupted, expedited. It is often as though vials of undeserved wrath break upon the devoted head of him who at last has struck the road to salvation, and is resolved at all costs to follow it. And yet these are the wages he receives for his laudable enterprise! Lacking self-knowledge as yet, ignorant of what is latent in him, not realising that the path of Initiation is one of intensive culture and accelerated evolution, he may become dismayed from further pursuing his quest, unless he be made aware that these wages are actually due to him, that they represent his past earnings, that he is justly entitled to them, and that the sooner the debit and credit sides of his own self-written judgment-ledger are balanced, the freer will he be to proceed with his newly undertaken building-work.

“The wages of sin are death” —death in the sense of being spiritually unconscious, however vigorously alive in other ways. “Sin” in all or any of its forms is, in its final analysis, disharmony induced by the assertion of the unreal personal self in unalignment with the impersonal Universal Self, the
Holy Spirit. But the Path of Initiation involves the obliteration of all sense of the personal self. The just and perfect man and Mason is therefore one who is utterly selfless; being selfless he is sinless; and being sinless he stands in, consciously shares, and becomes the instrument of, the divine Kingdom, Power and Glory.

10.- The Law of the Mount

In Masonry, as in the Scriptures and every other ancient expression of mystical teaching, there is frequent allusion to mountains and hills, and to the work of Lodges and Chapters being, conducted upon them.

Let it be understood at once that in no case is the allusion to any physical mountain or geographical position, but to the spiritual elevation of the work undertaken by some particular group or school of Initiates. Spiritual science has nothing to do with material things or places, save in so far as the latter serve as a foundation-stone or point of departure for achieving spiritual results.

From immemorial time the Vedists of India have spoken of their sacred Mount Meru, which, later in history, becomes reproduced among the Hebrews as Mount Moriah. The Greeks had their Mounts Olympus and Parnassus, on the summits of which dwelt the Gods. The Israelites obtained their law from Divine hands on Mount Sinai; the Christians theirs from the Mount of Olives. The woodwork for Solomon’s Temple came from the Mountains of Lebanon. The Gospels tell of the “exceeding high mountain” of Temptation and of the Mount of Transfiguration. Prometheus was immolated upon a mountain of the Caucasus (or Ko-Kajon, i.e., “ethereal space”), and Christ upon the Hill Calvary. Mediaeval Christian mystical tradition tells of the hidden sanctuary of the mysteries and the holy Grail built upon Mont Salvatch (the mount of safety or salvation) in the Pyrenees (which is another form of “Parnassus.”)

None of these mountains are situated in this world, in time or place. The names are mystical names associated with super-physical heights to which man in his spiritual consciousness may ascend. Mountains bearing those names, or some of them, do exist on the map, but their names and the ideas they connote existed long before they were given a local association for symbolic purposes. There is scarcely a country without its sacred mountain that reminds its inhabitants of the heavenly heights and to which sacred traditions are not attached. The snow-clad Himalayas have always typified the eternal heavens to the East; Fujiyama is the sacred mountain of Japan, as Snowdon is of Britain; and if such places have been, as indeed they have, the scenes of religious prac-
tices, their sanctity derives less from what has occurred there than from the ideas that resulted in those practices. The names of these sacred mountains are drawn almost always from ideas representative of the religion of the district, and constitute a sort of spiritual geography which nations of great spiritual genius, such as the Indians, the Greeks, and the Hebrews, have been faithful in preserving. Subsequently the materialising tendencies of the human mind literalise and localise what originally existed as a purely spiritual idea.

When Initiates of the past are said to have held Lodges and performed their work upon this or that hill or mountain, the meaning is that they were engaged in work of a high spiritual order and efficacy-work entirely beyond the conception of the average modern and merely ceremonial Mason. The actual place at which they met for such work may or may not have been upon a physical eminence. Often it was not, as abundant evidence might be brought to show. The entirely super-physical nature of their work may be deduced from an old Scottish Degree of advanced Masonry, which speaks, with a dry humour that to the inexpert eye will seem grotesque and irreverent, of their Lodge having originally been held upon a hill in the North of Scotland, a place “where a cock never crowed, a lion never roared, and a woman never tattled.” Now in traditional esoteric terminology, as also in the Bible, the “North” signifies that which is spiritual and ever unmanifested, as the other three cardinal points of space indicate varying degrees of spiritual manifestation. The allusion to cock-crow is to the guilty conscience of Peter, which could only exist in the world of time and in one who is spiritually imperfect. The allusion to the lion is to the Evil One “going about as a roaring lion” in the lower world, but unable to enter the Paradisal world; whilst the third reference is to the contemplative silence of the soul (the “woman”) upon that high plane of life of which the Psalmist says that “there is neither speech nor language but their voices are heard among them.” In the Odyssey, Homer testifies to the same truth when Ulysses is told in regard to certain mysteries, “Be silent; repress your intellect, and do not speak; such is the method of the Gods upon Olympus.”

It must be left to the reader’s own research and reflection to deduce the nature of the spiritual work undertaken by real Initiates; he will discover that it is work that is not performed in the physical body or with that body’s faculties, but upon the ethereal planes and with a higher order of faculty than the average man of to-day has learned to cultivate. For a striking instance of the kind of work implied, reference can be made to the narrative contained in the 19th and 24th chapters of Exodus, describing a Lodge of the elders or Adept-Initiates of Israel upon “Mount Sinai”; though for the instructed reader many other passages of like information are to be found in both sections of the Sacred
To pass to a less abstruse and more elementary point, those who seek to become real Initiates and aspire to the work upon the mountain-tops that is feasible only to such, must first conform themselves to the Law of the Mount. That law may be so called because it involves a loftier teaching and a totally different order of conduct from those to which the uninitiated popular world conforms. We have a reference to this in the direction that a Mason’s conduct ought to be such as will “distinguish and set him above the ranks of other men,” and not merely leave him at their level. Hence the instruction given by the Great Master to his initiate disciples, which is called the “Sermon on the Mount,” and is popularly supposed to have been delivered upon a hillside. There exist, however, many great pieces of Initiation-teaching going by that name, notably the great and eloquent discourses known as *The Divine Poemander of Hermes*; and all of them are called “sermons on the mount,” not because of having necessarily been delivered upon any actual mountain, but because they relate to spiritualities and to the loftier plane of thought and action upon which every Initiate must live. The “Mount” is that of Initiation, where alone, in the silence of the senses, the spirit of man can learn the things of the spirit.

That the standard of thought and conduct for Initiates is always beyond the capacity of the popular world is evidenced by the fact that society, however advanced in civilisation, find itself quite unable to act up to it. Even the Churches find the Sermon on the Mount impracticable doctrine for general social observance. It is regarded as a counsel of perfection, and eminent clerics are found declaring that it was never meant to apply to the unforeseen, complex social conditions of to-day, and declare that, whilst sound as a theoretic ideal, it must be compromised with in practice. From their low level of outlook they are right. The popular world is truly quite unable to act up to the terms of the Law of the Mount. But it is overlooked that that high doctrine was not meant for the popular world nor addressed to it. It was delivered to, and intended for, those few who have outgrown and renounced the ideals of the outer world and who seek initiation into a new and higher order of life which contradicts the wisdom of that world at every point.

But the real Initiate must observe it at all cost and conflict to himself, and is told that unless his righteousness exceeds that of popular orthodoxy and convention, he cannot hope to realise the goal at which he aims. The whole life of the real Initiate, and of those aiming to become such, will be at cross purposes with the standards and methods of the rest of the world, which will be as it were in conspiracy against him for not conforming to its ways; and, as with Hiram Abiff, at every attempt to leave the gates of his temple and come
Lighth on the Way

263

into contact with the outer world, he will find himself opposed by persecuting “ruffians,” by objections to his refusal to fall in with popular conventions, and by demands to know the secrets of his superiority to them. Hence one of the reasons for the silence and obscurity of real Initiates, as also for Masonic secrecy, is self-protection, which the Christian Master gave as a justification for not casting pearls before those incapable of appreciating them lest they turn and rend you.

The way of the natural uninitiated man is that of self-assertion and material acquisitiveness; he is bent upon securing all he can get from this world; and wisdom, knowledge, and power, are what seem to be such in his own eyes. He is not wrong or blameworthy; he is simply fulfilling the law of his present nature, which is the only law he as yet knows; he is merely ignorant and self-blinded to any higher nature and law. The initiated man is one to whom a higher nature and law have become revealed, and who, conscious of their compulsion upon himself, has abjured all the ideals of his less advanced fellows. He lives upon the Mount and fulfils the law of the Mount; and therefore to him come wisdom, grace and power transcending anything his uninitiated fellowmen can as yet conceive. Initiates were termed by the Great Master the “salt of the earth,” for, without their leavening presence in it, the world would descend to greater corruption than it at present suffers. “Ten just men (i.e., Initiates) shall save the city,” as was said of those “cities of the plain” which are a figure of civilisation at large.

It is not, however, for his personal aggrandisement or salvation that a man seeks, or should seek, Initiation into the higher order of life, or should aspire for the wisdom and power that therewith come. To do so from this motive would be merely to imitate the ways of the outer world, apart from the fact that it would neutralise the whole purpose of Initiation. His real purpose is to help on the world’s advancement, to become one of its saviours, at the sacrifice of himself. For the real Initiate is self-less; he has abandoned all personal claims and the “rights” to which lesser men claim to be entitled; and, having crucified his own personality, is able to look upon human life impersonally and to offer himself as an instrument for its redemption. When wisdom and power come to him, they are not for his own use but for the help of the whole race; he is a Master among men, because he is a universal servant; he is the most effective spokesman in the world, because of his utter silence.

Masonic secrecy and silence are inculcated for this very reason; for all spiritual power is generated in silence. In silence the aspirant must concentrate his own energies and climb from his own earth into his own heavens, —rendering to the Caesar of the outer world the things that are his, but in other respects fulfilling the law of the Mount in a way that will “distinguish
and set him above the ranks of other men” who are not yet ready or prepared to follow him. If the Masonic Brotherhood has not yet risen to full appreciation of the meaning of its own system, it nevertheless stands provided with all the information needful to lead it to Initiation in the high sense indicated throughout these pages, to which each of its members may aspire if he follow the Ancient Sage in Tennyson’s poem and

Leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness,
A cloud between the Nameless and thyself;
And lay thine uphill shoulder to the wheel
And climb the Mount of Blessing; whence, if thou
Look higher, then perchance thou mays’t-beyond
A hundred ever —rising mountain— lines,
And past the range of Night and Shadow-see
The high-heaven dawn of more than mortal day
Strike on the Mount of Vision!

11.- From Labour to Refresment

The Masonic reader who recognises that every reference in Speculative Masonry is figurative and carries a symbolic significance behind the literal sense of the words, will at once dismiss from his mind any suggestion that the formula of adjourning the Lodge from labour to refreshment, and of recalling it from refreshment to labour, relates to the customary practice of passing from the formal work of the Lodge to the informalities of the dining-table.

The familiar formula of dismissing the Lodge after seeing that every Brother has received his due, no doubt came over into the present system from Operative usage when Guild-masons periodically received their material wages. But it has now become the *Ite, Missa est!* of spiritual Masonry, and carries a sacramental meaning. We have to consider what labour, refreshment, and dues, are in their higher and concealed sense.

First as to Labour. The allusion is less to the temporary ceremonial work of the Lodge than to the work the earnest Light-seeker is continually to be engaged upon in his task of self-perfecting. Let it be realised that this is labour indeed, to be undertaken with earnestness and vigour, “*Hic labor; hoc opus est,*” wrote Virgil of it. “The Gods sell their arts only to those who sweat for them” runs another ancient adage of the science. Purification of the bodily senses and reformation of personal defects are but part, the simpler and grosser part, of the work; the redirection of one’s mind and will to the ideal
involved, the requisite research and study conducing to that end, and the neces-
sary control and concentration of thought and desire upon the end in view, are not child’s-play nor matters of casual, superficial interest.

Intellectual and spiritual labour necessitate rest and refreshment, equally with physical, that the harvest of that labour may be assimilated. Wise activity (Boaz) must be balanced with an equally wise passivity (Jachin) if one is to become established in immortal strength and to stand firm, spiritually consolidated and perfect in all one’s parts. Nor is it a work to be hurried; those build most surely who build slowly. Festina lente! —hasten slowly, is an old maxim of the work addressed to those who would “lay great bases for eternity.” “Ne quid nimis!” is another; “let nothing be done in excess.”

Now it is not easy to combine work of this nature with that which the exigencies of one’s normal duties and responsibilities entail. But to those who are in earnest, the co-adaptation and harmonising of all one’s duties will form part of the work itself; one’s present position and avocation will be discerned to be precisely those suited to making advancement, and to provide opportunities for doing so. Doubtless difficulty and opposition will be encountered in abundance; but these again are parts of the process and tests of fidelity. No growth is possible without resistance to draw out latent power. The aspirant must steadily and conscientiously persevere along the path to what he seeks, just as each candidate engages himself to do so in respect of its ceremonial portrayal; and every Brother may be assured of receiving his exact dues for the labour he expends.

“There is a time to work and a time to sleep.” Respite from labour is as contributive an element to progress as labour itself, for the mind must digest, and the whole nature assimilate, what it absorbs. More may be learned from the Teacher in the heart than from what is gathered by the head, when that Teacher —the principle at the Centreis once awakened. Meditation and reflection are of greater instructiveness than book-reading and information acquired from without oneself.

Thinks’t thou among the mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
That we must still be seeking?

For the care and. nourishment of the outer body, Nature provides a passive, sympathetic system, which arranges digestion, distributes energy, builds up the body, and discharges its functions for us without interference with our formal consciousness. In like manner, in our higher being resides a corresponding principle which winnows out thought, clarifies and arranges ideas,
and settles problems and difficulties for us, in entire independence of our formal awareness. It is this higher principle that must be found, trusted and relied upon to participate in the work of interior up-building. The old writers call it the Archaeus, or the hidden Mercury, which ingarners and utilises the fruit of our conscious efforts, building them up into a “super-structure” or suble-body. As ages have gone to the organisation of the physical body, so also long periods are requisite for that of the super-physical structure, the building of which is true Masonry; but the process can be expedited by those who possess the science of it, as Masons are presumed to do. The process itself is the real Masonic “labour”; and, as we have shown, it has its active and its passive aspects.

This is a difficult subject to treat of briefly. Its nature is merely indicated here, and its fuller study must be left to individual research and, where possible, to personal tuition; for this work is precisely that about which a Master-Mason is presumed to be able to give private instruction to Brethren in the inferior degrees.

Let the reader reflect that Masonic “labour” involves the making of his being whole and perfect; that it is intended to “render the circle of it complete.” His complete being is likened, in geometrical terms, to a circle —the symbol of wholeness, entirety, self-containedness. But let him remember that as he knows himself at present, he is not a circle, but a square, which is but the fourth part of a circle. Where are the other three —fourths of himself?— for until he knows these as well as the fourth part which he does know, he can never make the circle of his being complete, nor truly know himself.

This is the point at which Masonry becomes mystical Geometry the important science of which Plato affirmed that no one should enter the Academy where true philosophy and ontology were to be learned, until he already was well versed in that science. For in former times these deeper problems of being were the subject of geometrical expression, and echoes of the science remain to us in our references to squares, triangles and circles, and particularly in the 47th problem of the first book of Euclid, which is now the distinctive emblem of those who have won to Mastership. How many of those who now wear that emblem, one wonders, have any conception of its significance? It is a mathematical symbol representing, for those who can read it, the highest measure of human attainment in the science of reconstructing the human soul into the Divine image from which it has fallen away. No wonder the great Initiate who composed this symbol was raised to an ecstasy of joy on realising in his own being all that it implies, depicts, and demonstrates, and that upon that fortunate occasion he “sacrificed a hecatomb of oxen”—an expression the meaning of which, like the symbol itself, must be left to the reader’s reflection, for these
matters cannot be summarily or superficially explained. Pythagoras himself is said to have refused to explain them to his own pupils until they had undergone five years’ silence and meditation upon them. Those five years represent the period that is still theoretically allotted to the work of the Fellow-Craft Degree, in regard to which the modern Mason is instructed to devote himself to reflecting upon the secrets of nature (i.e., his own nature) and the principles of intellectual truth, until they gradually disclose themselves to his view and reveal his own affiliation to the Deity. In declining to explain these geometrical truths to students until they had familiarised themselves with them for five years, the meaning of the great teacher of Crotona was that, by that time, the earnest disciple would have discerned their import, and gone far to realise it, for himself.

Labour, understood in the sense here defined, and Refreshment after it, constitute a rhythm of activity and passivity; a rhythm similar to that which we daily experience in respect of waking and sleeping, working and resting. To speak of Refreshment, however, in the deeper sense implied in Masonry is even more difficult than to speak of the philosophic Labour; for it involves a subject to which few devote deep thought—the subjective side of the soul’s life as distinct from the objective side which, for most men, is the only one at present known to them. In that deeper sense, Refreshment implies what Spenser speaks of in the lines:

Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, death after life, doth greatly please.

To the wise, the’ study of the subjective half of life is as important as that of the objective half, and without it he cannot make the circle of his self-knowledge complete. Even the observant Masonic student is made aware by the formula used at Lodge closing, that by some great Warden of life and death each soul is called into this objective world to labour upon itself, and is in due course summoned from it to rest from its labours and enter into subjective celestial refreshment, until once again it is recalled to labour. For each the “day,” the opportunity for’ work at self-perfecting, is duly given; for each the “night” cometh when no man can work at that task; which morning and evening constitute but one creative day of the soul’s life, each portion of that day being a necessary complement to the other. Perfect man has to unify these,opposites in himself; so that for him, as for his Maker, the darkness and the light become both alike.

The world-old secret teaching upon this subject, common to the whole of the East, to Egypt, the Pythagoreans and Platonists, and every College of the Mysteries, is to be found summed up as clearly and tersely as one could wish
in the *Phaedo* of Plato, to which the Masonic seeker is referred as one of the most instructive of treatises upon the deeper side of the science. It testifies to the great rhythm of life and death above spoken of, and demonstrates how that the soul in the course of its career weaves and wears out many bodies and is continually migrating between objective and subjective conditions, passing from labour to refreshment and back again many times in its great task of self-fulfilment. And if Plato was, as was once truly said of him, but Moses speaking Attic Greek, we shall not be surprised at finding the same initiate-teaching disclosed in the words of Moses himself. Does not the familiar Psalm of Moses declare that man is continually “brought to destruction,” that subsequently a voice goes forth saying “Come again, ye children of men!” and that the subjective spiritual world is his refuge from one objective manifestation to another? What else than a paraphrase of this great word of comfort is the Masonic pronouncement that, in the course of its task of self-perfecting, the soul is periodically summoned to alternating periods of labour and refreshment? It must labour, and it must rest from its labours; its works will follow it, and in the subjective world every Brother’s soul will receive its due for its work in the objective one, until such time as its work is completed and it is “made a pillar in the House of God and no more goes out” as a journeyman-builder into this sublunary workshop. “Did I not agree with thee for a penny?” said the Great Master parabolically. Now the round disc of the coin was meant to be an emblem of that completeness, wholeness, and self-containedness which is denoted by the Circle, and which every Mason is enjoined to effect in himself. When the Mason has made the circle of his own being complete, he will not only have earned his penny and received his dues; the circle of his then glorious being will be as the sun shining in his strength, and he will be able to say with the Initiates of Egypt, as they contemplated the sun ascending from the desert into the heavens: “I am Ra in his rising!”

12.- The Grand Lodge Above

Express reference is made in the Order rituals to the existence of a Grand Lodge Above, having its Grand Master and Officers. Doubtless the allusion is often regarded as but a pious sentiment expressing the belief that, after their death, worthy Masons combine to constitute such a Lodge or assembly in the heavens.

With such a belief no one would wish to interfere, but there are good grounds for suggesting that the reference was intended to carry a quite different meaning. It is meant to testify to the fact, which forms part of the long
stream of esoteric tradition throughout the ages, that a supernal Masonic Assembly not only exists, but that it preceded, in point of time and constitution, the Masonic Order on earth. Had it not so existed and preceded the terrestrial Order, that Order itself would not have existed; for the hypothesis is that the latter is the shadow and projection upon the physical world of a corresponding hierarchical Order in the superphysical. In other words, the Masonic Order on earth is the reflex and effect, not the, generating cause, of the Grand Lodge Above. The latter is not necessarily recruited from the former, since death of the body does not constitute per se a title to admission to the Grand Lodge Above, which, according to the tradition, possesses its own qualifications and passports for admission; but neither, according to the same tradition, does life in the earthly body preclude the duly qualified Mason from reception into, and conscious co-operation with, the Supernal Lodge, while he is still in the flesh.

A certain resemblance will be noticed between this doctrine and the corresponding theological one of the complementary relations between the Church Militant on earth and the Church Triumphant in the heavens, the doctrine of the Communion possible between all Saints upon whichever side of the veil. Neither in the case of the Church nor of Masonry does the claim imply, what is obviously not the fact, that every member of either community has actual knowledge or first-hand experience of the truth of this doctrine. But it does imply that there have been, and still are, members possessing it.

Farther on in these pages more will be said of the Grand Lodge Above, and in a way which perhaps will suggest to the reflective reader a fuller idea than one can convey upon such a subject than by expository methods. It is a theme deserving of larger consideration than the Craft accords it, and one about which no little literary evidence is available for those with sufficient interest to look for it. One such important piece of evidence shall be mentioned here.

It consists of a remarkable series of communications of the highest spiritual value and instructiveness to every Brother seeking to realise the spiritual essence of the Masonic system, issued by a saintly man and advanced initiate, Karl von Eckartshausen, to a group of pupils in the secret science in Germany, at roughly about the same period as that in which the English Masonic Order was becoming established. The synchronism is not without significance and, in conjunction with other evidences (which exigencies of space prevent being now adduced) of spiritual activity at work at that time behind the events of public history, points to efforts to put forward a great movement for human enlightenment; a movement conceived from behind the veil by the Grand Lodge Above, and projected into the world through some of its members in
The communications or letters deal with the subject of the need for human regeneration and the rationale of Initiation. In the first of them, the author asserts that “the great and true work of building the Temple consists solely in destroying this miserable Adamic hut and in erecting in its place a divine temple; this means, in other words, to develop in us the interior sensorium or the organ to receive God. After this process, the metaphysical and incorruptible principle rules over the terrestrial, and man begins to live, not any longer in the principle of self-love, but in the spirit and in the truth, of which he is the Temple. The most exalted aim of religion is the intimate union of man with God; this union is possible here below, but it can only take place by the opening of our inner sensorium, which enables our hearts to become receptive of God. Therein are those great mysteries of which human philosophy does not dream, the key to which is not to be found in scholastic science.” He then proceeds to state that “a more advanced school has always existed to which the deposition of all spiritual science has been confided, which has continued from the first day of creation to the present time. Its members are scattered all over the world, but they have always been united by one spirit and one truth. They have had but one science, a single source of truth, one Lord, one Doctor, one Master, in whom resides substantially the whole Divine plenitude, who also alone initiates them into the high mysteries of Nature and the Spiritual World.”

In the second letter it is explained (I compress the substance) that:

“This community possesses a school in which all who thirst for knowledge are instructed by the Spirit of Wisdom itself, and all the mysteries of God and of Nature are preserved therein for the children of light. It is thence that all truths penetrate into the world. It is the most hidden of communities; it possesses members gathered from many Orders. From all time there has been an exterior school based on this interior one, of which it is but the outer expression. The community has been engaged from the earliest ages in building the grand Temple for the regeneration of humanity, by which the kingdom of God will become manifest. It consists in the communion of those who have most capacity for light. It has three Degrees, and these are conferred on suitable candidates still in the flesh. The first is inspirationally imparted. The second opens up the human rational intellectuality and understanding, and ensures interior illumination. The third and highest is the entire opening of the inner sensorium, by which the inner man attains objective vision of real and metaphysical verities.”

The instruction goes on to explain that this Society does not resemble
temporal organisations that meet at certain times and elect their own officers. It knows none of these formalities, but proceeds in other ways. The Divine Power is always present. The Master of it himself does not invariably know all the members, but the moment a member's presence or services are needed he can be found. If a member is called to office, he presents himself among the others without presumption, and is received by them without jealousy. If it be necessary that members should meet, they find and recognise each other with perfect certainty. No disguise, hypocrisy, or dissimulation, can hide their true characteristics. No one member can choose another; unanimous choice is required. All men are called to join this hidden community; the called may be chosen, if they become ripe for entrance. Any one can look for entrance; any man who is within can teach another to seek it, but only he who is ripe can arrive inside. Worldly intelligence seeks this Sanctuary in vain; all is undecipherable to the unprepared; he can see nothing, read nothing, in its interior. He who is ripe is joined to the chain, perhaps often where he thought least likely, and at a point of which he knew nothing himself. Seeking to become ripe should be the effort of him who loves wisdom. But there are methods by which ripeness is attained, for in this holy communion is the primitive storehouse of the most ancient and original science of the human race, with the primitive mysteries also of all science. It is the unique and illuminated Community which possesses the key to all mystery, which knows the centre and source of nature and creation. It unites superior power to its own, and includes members from more than one world. It is the Society whose members form a theocratic republic, which one day will be the Regent Mother of the whole world. Upon this description of the Grand Lodge Above,

By one who, even in the days of his flesh, claims to have been a member of it, it is not proposed here to descant. That it may provoke surprise and doubt as to its veraciousness in those to whom such ideas may now come for the first time, is probable. This must be hazarded in giving voice to those ideas here, and the subject left to such responsiveness as may come from the heart of the individual reader; for obviously no proof can either here be offered or given to even the most sympathetic querist upon a matter which in its nature is incapable of verification otherwise than by direct personal experience.

But with an earnest counsel to accept its accuracy and to seek confirmation of it in the only way in which such confirmation is possible, it must be left to the deep and protracted reflection of those to whom the idea of the existence of a Grand Lodge in the heavens, watching over the Masonic Israel on earth and superintending its development, is at least a matter of probability and a subject for faith. They will at least perceive in the description of it given above, that the Masonic Order faithfully reproduces, in point of form and hier-
archical progression, its alleged supernal prototype; and if they recognise that invisible things are in some measure knowable by perceiving things that are made, the contemplation of their own three-graded Order, with its ascending sequence of Grand Lodges of districts, provinces, and finally of the nation, will perhaps help them on to the conception of an unseen Grander Lodge beyond all these,—one to membership of which any duly qualified Brother may hope to be called to take progressive Initiations no longer ceremonial and symbolic, but as facts of spiritual experience—at the hands of the Universal Master and Initiator, whose officers are still Brethren of our own, though risen to the stature of holy angels.
Chapter 4

Fullness of Light

1.- Observations and Examples

“The light of the body is the eye. When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light. Take heed, therefore, that the light in thee be not darkness.”


“We have shown that Initiation, in its real and not merely ceremonal sense, effects in him who undergoes it a permanent enlargement of consciousness to a level and of a quality never previously known to him. The expansion may be small or great; indeed the Science contemplates successive degrees of Initiation and ever widening expansions to which no limit can be set.

The reader will ask himself, “What are the nature and characteristics of this new order of consciousness when attained? How will it differ from my present normal consciousness?” To answering this question the present paper
is devoted, and it shall be dealt with first in some general observations, and subsequently in a more illustrative manner.

Even normally, and without deliberately sought Initiation, human consciousness becomes enlarged as the result merely of progressive life-experience. For what is life itself but a slow, gradual Initiation process, with the world as a Temple in which it is conferred? The consciousness and resultant sagacity of experienced age exceed those of raw youth, even if the change be of an intellectual rather than of a spiritual kind, and involve merely increased savoir faire and mundane wiliness rather than growth in unworldly wisdom. Still, enlargement has occurred, and it adumbrates what is possible with the spiritual consciousness when it becomes awakened.

Nature, indeed, exhibits nothing but consciousness in process of expansion through her fourfold series of kingdoms from the mineral upwards. The outward forms of life, even of the mineral, are but the objective bodies of a subjective life-activity resident in that body. The Earth-planet itself, as also each of the stellar bodies, is, the Ancients rightly taught, not dead matter, but a Zoon, a living Animal, conscious as a whole, conscious (though differing) in each of its parts however materialised or tenuous, and girdled round with a Zodiac of other mutually interacting “living creatures,” the separate consciousnesses of all the parts of the complex mechanism blending in the synthetic Omniscience, God.

Life is fundamentally one, a unity, though distributed into many separated lives and divided into separate self-contained kingdoms, as compartments of a ship are divided by decks and bulkheads. It is “an ever-rolling stream,” a stream that pours through those kingdoms in a continuous flow which is never more than momentarily checked by the forms (or bodies) it flows through, which are as it were but little eddies and vortices in the stream; and these forms, from the lowest to the most highly evolved, are devised and adjusted to raising consciousness to progressively higher levels. Nature, in a word, is a system of restricted consciousness in perishable bodies, leading up to unrestricted consciousness in an ultra-natural immortal body.

Each successive kingdom of Nature assumes into itself the sublimated characteristics of the one below it, but becomes endued with an additional principle and takes on a new and appropriate bodily form. Thus, as the scale is ascended, the sensitive, the emotional, the intellectual, and the spiritual principles are successively added and built into the evolving structure. When the Life-essence specialised in the mineral passes on into the vegetable kingdom, it, as it were, takes a degree of Initiation; a fresh start is made, a new form or body is given to it as “a mark of its progress.” It takes similar and higher grades of initiation, and acquires appropriate new bodies, as it passes
on to the animal and thence to the human kingdoms.

It is not here implied that mineral forms directly evolve into vegetable, thence to animal and so on, at some point which the biologist has sought for but failed to trace. This is not the case. The kingdoms of Nature are closed compartments without intercommunicating doors on the phenomenal plane, and do not there change into one another. The transition takes place on a super-physical noumenal plane, beyond the range of now current science.

Man, as at his present evolitional stage, is, in his lower nature, but a summary and synthesis of the three sub-human kingdoms; his embryo recapitulates, and his physique incorporates, the kingdoms he has traversed in the long ascent; but superimposed and dovetailed into it is now an additional, a spiritual divine principle, distinguishing and setting him above the lower kingdoms. To them he stands as a god; a high initiate, conscious in a way inconceivable to them. Similarly a plant is a god, an initiate, relatively to the soil it grows in; and an animal a god to the plant.

Yet in virtue of the new spiritual principle grafted upon his highly evolved bodily structure, man is capable of rising to still loftier conscious levels; he awaits still further initiation. Before him lies the prospect of outgrowing the kingdom of merely animal man and of entering the higher one of spiritual Man. Four kingdoms-mineral, vegetable, animal human—he has known and built into his organism. He has now to rise to a fifth kingdom, that of Spirit, of which already he is a member potentially, but without having yet developed and realised his potencies.

The secret Science therefore shows him a five-pointed Star as an emblem of himself and invests him with the five-pointed Apron as a symbol in which he may visualise himself, read his own past, and deduce his present possibilities.

The important fact must be emphasised that, on each transition from a lower to a higher kingdom, on each initiation into a new order of life, a death to, a complete break-away from and abandonment of, the old form and method of life, is involved. Natural man must, therefore, die to himself, must abnegate and put off his old nature, before he can hope to pass into the fifth kingdom as spiritual Man. This death, we have shown, is signified by the Masonic Third Degree, which ceremonially dramatises what the individual must pass through before attaining an order of life and consciousness he has never before experienced or been able to experience. The death in question is not a physical death; the physical organism is still retained by its former wearer. He has merely effaced and died to his old self and its natural tendencies, and suffered them to become superseded by a new self, functioning not from his former constricted mind, but from a new centre of illimitable conscious capacity; a capacity not displaced by the resumed use of his physical body for the residue
of its natural duration, but one that enables him thenceforward to use that body as a much more effective instrument for furthering the cosmic purpose.

How is that newly-won consciousness to be described? It is, of course, indescribable. As sight is indescribable to the man born blind, as consciousness in this world would be unexplainable to the unborn babe, so that of the Initiate is incapable of description to those as yet unborn in the kingdom of Spirit. To be known it must be experienced. It belongs to the Greater Mysteries which always remain ineffable and incommunicable, whatever instruction may be imparted about the Lesser ones. Yet something may be said about it to help the imagination.

In my former volume it was explained that the moment of restoration to light in the Third Degree, and also the corresponding moment in the Royal Arch Degree, are both of them attempts—the former a simple, the latter a more elaborate one—to dramatise the enlarged conscious state into which the candidate passes in actual Initiation. A very fine and wonderful literary description of expanded consciousness effected by Initiation is to be found in the eleventh section of the great Indian manual of initiation-science, the Bhagavad Gita (most accessible to English readers in Sir Edwin Arnold’s fine poetic translation, The Song Celestial). Dante’s vision in the Paradiso is an example, as also that recorded in the biblical book of Revelation by the seer who was “in the spirit in the Lord’s day.” Keats imagined it accurately when, in Hyperion, he wrote of it:

Knowledge enormous makes a god of me.
Names, deeds, grey legends, dire events, rebellions,
Majesties, sovran voices, agonies,
Creations and destroyings,—all, at once,
Pour into the wide hollows of my brain
And deify me; as if some blithe wine,
A bright elixir peerless, I had drunk
And so become immortal.

A large collection of evidence and records of personal experiences has been brought together in recent years testifying to the fact of such conscious expansions. One such compilation is that entitled Cosmic Consciousness, by Dr. R. M. Bucke, a member of the Craft in America and an exponent of the mystical nature of Masonry. The subject has even been investigated experimentally by the late eminent psychologist Professor William James and others, and although such artificially induced heightenings of consciousness are strongly to be dissuaded from as perilous to those who undertake them-and
Professor James confessed that to himself it brought with it a painful reaction and penalty—he has left an able, vivid description of what is known as “the Anaesthetic Revelation" which may be quoted; it could not better have expressed the truth had it been written by one who had attained Initiation legitimately and in the natural development of the life of sanctity and contemplation, instead of by one who was merely intoxicating himself with nitrous oxide gas. He writes:

“In this intense metaphysical illumination, Truth lies open to the view in depth beneath depth of almost blinding evidence.

The mind sees all the logical relations of being with an apparent subtlety and instantaneity to which its normal consciousness offers no parallel. The centre and periphery of things seem to come together. The Ego and its objects, the meum and the tuum, are one. Its first result was to make peal through me with unutterable power the conviction that the deepest convictions of my intellect hitherto were wrong. Whatever idea or representation occurred to the mind was seized by the same logical forceps and served to illustrate the same truth; and that truth was that every opposition, among whatsoever things, vanishes in a higher unity in which it is based; that all contradictions, so called, are but differences; that all differences are of degree; that all degrees are of a common kind; that unbroken continuity is the essence of being; and that we are literally in the midst of an Infinite. It is impossible to convey an idea of the torrential character of the identification of opposites as it streams through the mind in this experience.”

_The Will to Believe_, by W. James, p. 294.

With this statement let us compare one by a real Initiate describing the opening up of the Light at his centre:

“My whole spirit seemed to break through the gates of hell and be taken up into the arms and heart of God. I can compare it to nothing but the resurrection at the last day. For then, with all reverence I say it, with the eyes of my spirit I saw God. I saw both what God is, and how God is what He is. The gate of the Divine Mystery was sometimes so opened in me that in one quarter of an hour I saw and knew more than if I had been many years at a university. I saw and knew the Being of all Beings; the Byss and the Abyss; the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit. I saw the descent and original of this world also, and of all its creatures. I saw in their order and outcome the Divine World, the Angelical World, Paradise, and then this fallen dark world of our own. I saw the beginning of the good and of the evil, the true origin
and existence of each of them. For twelve years this went on in me.
Sometimes the truth would hit me like a sudden smiting storm of rain,
and then there would be the clear sunshine after the rain.”

The writer of this statement was the poor, uneducated cobbler, Jacob Boehme,
who lived near Dresden, and died, aged 49, in 1624, and who has been described
by a disciple and competent judge — Louis Claude de Saint Martin (“Le Philosophe Inconnu”); himself a Freemason and advanced illuminate — as “the greatest light that has come into the world since Him who was Himself the Light of the world.” The fuller record of his illuminations and profound metaphysical insight can be found in his series of lengthy but difficult and obscure works, from the study of which Sir Isaac Newton, a deep student of them, drew the information from which he became able to formulate the principles of gravitation and planetary motion, and other laws now known to regulate physical phenomena.

Instances might be multiplied indefinitely of cases in which the inner being of persons ripening for Initiation expands towards all sides from an infinitely deep central point in themselves, so that they acquire a totally different outlook upon life, a larger deeper envisaging of the world, than others. Three outstanding features characterise such cases. First, the fact that objects, whether those of nature or one’s fellow beings, cease to be seen singly, as separate objects and beings, but as partial expressions of a single, sublying, inexpressible unity. Second, the fact that for such percipients all ordinary values become changed; what the average man supposes important shrinks to worthlessness, and what he thinks negligible assumes prime importance. Third, the fact that the five senses, distributed in the ordinary man as distinct, unrelated channels of perception, remain no longer separate and diffused, but become unified and co-functional in one comprehensive faculty, so that to see is also to hear; to touch, even with blindfold eyes, is to visualise. As a Brother in the Craft, known to me, writes of his own experience of this enrichment of consciousness: “You know everything and understand the stars and the hills and the old songs. They are all within you, and you are all light. But the light is music, and the music is violet wine in a great cup of gold, and the wine in the golden cup is the scent of a June night.”

The brilliant young German, Novalis, an advanced illuminate, though he died at 29 over a century ago, tells of his Master, Werner (a professor of mineralogy at Freyburg), as one who “was aware of the inter-relation of all things, of conjunctions, coincidences. He saw nothing singly. The perceptions of his senses thronged together; he heard, saw, felt, simultaneously. Sometimes the stars became man to him, men as stars; stones as animals, clouds as plants. He sported with forces and phenomena. He knew where and how to find and
bring to light this or that. What came to him more than this he does not tell us. But he tells us that we ourselves, led on by him and by our own desire, may discover what happened to him.”

“Led on by our own desire.” In desire lies the secret of it all! All Initiation presupposes, concentration and intensity of desire for it, and is impossible without that indispensable prerequisite. Desire turned outward, squandered upon exterior attractions, wastes the soul’s forces, distributes its energies through the five channels of sense. Turned inward, focussed upon interior possibilities, desire ingathers those forces, unifies those senses, and is the heat which, gathering in intensity, finds its ultimate fruition in a burst of conscious flame. “If thine eye be single thy whole body is full of light.”

Here is an example. In a small lone isle of the Hebrides lived a young fisherman-crofter, one of the few natives of a place necessarily poor and with such scanty social and educational advantages that a mind of any power and depth is thrown back upon itself; a place where almost the only book is that of Nature, the only place of worship the Temple of earth and sky and sea. Such conditions, however, uninviting to most people, are particularly favourable to selfrealisation and initiation; since they ensure that poverty, that simplicity and unsophistication of the mind which are so difficult to acquire in crowded places and amid the tyrannies, artificialities and strife of current so-called civilisation. So they were to the man in question. With something of the old primitive passion of Demeter-worship, he loved the island and the sea, his soul straining continually to know directly and at first hand the Living Beauty which he knew resided beneath its manifested veil. One golden day, in a moment of concentrated adoring contemplation, he threw himself on the ground, kissing the hot, sweet heather, plunging his hands and arms in it, sobbing the while with a vague strange yearning, and lying there nerveless, with closed eyes. His posture at that moment resembled, unwittingly yet surely, that of one who with blinded eyes and with his hands upon the Sacred Law declares that the supreme Light is the paramount desire of his heart and asks to be accorded it. And then came the moment when his longing was satisfied, when the veil was torn from his eyes and he received his initiation into light.

Suddenly—for, whatever its nature to the cold-blooded inquisition of the scientist, thus he translated the psychopathic experience he then underwent—two little hands rose up through the spires of heather and anointed his forehead and eyes with something soft and fragrant.

Thereafter he was the same, yet not the same, man; the place he lived in was the old familiar place, yet had become new, glorified. The Eternal Beauty had entered into him, and nothing that others saw as ugly or dreary was otherwise than perpetually invested with it. Waste, desolate spots became to
him passing fair, radiant with lovely light. When, later, he went away to great towns and passed among their squ2dor and sordid hideousness, amid slims, factory smoke and grime, he saw all that others see, yet only as vanishing shadows, beneath which everything and everyone was lovely, beautiful with strange glory, and the faces of men and women sweet and pure, and their souls white.

Such was this man’s involuntary Initiation unsought, or rather not knowingly sought, yet bringing him the fruits of the travail of his soul and leaving him permanently enlightened and transformed. (The incident is referred to in the works of the late Fiona Ma) He came to be known among those with whom he dwelt as “the Anointed Man.” In their Greek original the words “Christ” and “Christian” bore just that significance—an anointed, “baptised,” for initiated man. Actual Initiation, then, regarded, as it may be, as “baptism,” is of two classes, a lesser and a greater. The lesser (scripturally described as the, “baptism of water”), is one affecting the lower nature, the mind, the intelligence, the psychic nature and sensibilities. The mentality becomes expanded and illuminated; there is a quickening and hyperaesthesia of the senses, a growth of psychic faculty and perception; for the soul (or psyche) is now beginning to exercise its hitherto dormant atrophied powers.

The greater form of Initiation, the “baptism of fire,” is the awakening of the Spirit, the innermost essence, the “Vital and Immortal Principle” centrally resident in the soul, as the soul is resident in the sense-body. Numbers of people attain the lesser baptism in the ordinary development of life and often without awareness of the fact. The greater baptism is of rarer occurrence, and to experience it is a crisis that cannot be mistaken, or pass unnoticed or forgotten.

To attain either form, Initiation of a formal character is not an indispensable requirement, for the growth of the soul, and Divine dealings with the soul, are not dependent upon human formalities. But formal Initiation has always been, and is to-day, an opportunity and means of grace for attaining interior advancement which otherwise might not be secured and, for this reason, the Masonic Initiation, though only a ceremonial one at present, assumes so great an importance and is capable of being put to uses so much higher and farther-reaching than the Craft has hitherto dreamed of.

Life itself, we repeat, serves for thousands as an initiating-process, without any supplementary formality. Numbers of people attain in less or greater measure the lesser baptism of water in the expanded consciousness associated with the poetic, artistic, musical or mystical types; —our Wordsworths, Shelleys, Tennysons and the like are natural initiates in whose lives formal initiation has played no part, and numberless unknown people exist about us
who, in silence and obscurity, have developed their deeper nature and could assert of themselves:—

We have built a house that is not for Time’s o’er-throwing,
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for ever.

Many there are who are conscious of the “mystic tie” that binds not merely all men into brotherhood, but all the elements of the Universe into unity; who have lost the sense of separateness and divided interests that characterises the average sensual man whose consciousness and desires extend no farther than his own carnal affections; who still incarcerated in the mortal body can evade its prison-walls and laugh at its iron window-bars, escaping into the world of soul, exploring its wonders, mingling in conscious communion with other similarly liberated souls,

and there
Spend in pure converse their eternal day
Think each in each, immediately wise,
Learn all they lacked before; hear, know, and say
What this tumultuous body now denies;
And feel, who— have laid their groping hands away;
And see, no longer blinded by their eyes.

Rupert Brook.

But those who know the “baptism of fire,” the Initiation of, and into, central Spirit, are few. To help to a conception of such cases one may refer to recorded instances where, so fully has the Blazing Star at the human centre opened itself, so habitually has its fire been brought forward into the purified carnal body and its formal mind, that that Light has become palpably visible, and not merely as a flesh-transmuting grace, beautifying and glorifying the personality, but as a radiant aura issuing from the face and person and throwing off actual quasiphysical light. The traditional portrayal of saints and angels, surrounded by aureoles, haloes and garments of flame, testifies to this advanced condition. Of such Initiates as Columba and Ruysbroeck it is credibly recorded that their persons were seen bathed in self-radiated luminosity that lit up their chambers or the space around them for a wide radius. If the Central Light can so be objectified, it may be left to the imagination to surmise the intensity and range of the subjective consciousness experienced by those in whom it so burns. Such cases of “fulness of light” exemplify what is typified by the completed Temple of Solomon, into which descended the Divine Presence, flooding the whole house with its glory (2 Chron. vii, 1 -3).
And now, leaving these general considerations, let us pass on to an imagina-tive illustration of the way in which Light in its fulness may be known and—God willing and helping—induced, by methods of actual, as distinct from ceremonial, Initiation.

2.- Apocalypsis

An Allegory of Initiation

“At the time of the end shall be vision.”

Dan. viii, 17.

“O truly sacred Mysteries! O pure Light! I am led by the light of the torch to the view of heaven and of God. I am made whole by Initiation. The Lord Himself is the hierophant who, leading the candidate for initiation to the Light, sends him and presents him to the Father to be preserved for ever. These are the orgies of my Mysteries. If thou wilt, come and be thou also initiated, and thou shalt join in the dance with the angels around the uncreated, imperishable, only true God, the Word of God joining in the strain!”

Clemens Alexandrinus.

“APOCALYPsis” is a Greek word meaning an unclothing, a tearing away of the veils obstructing our perception of Absolute Truth. Hence our biblical word “Revelation” or “Apocalypse.” The Initiate-Apostle Paul speaks of attaining the lofty condition of beholding the Divine Glory with unveiled face, reflecting it as a mirror, and becoming transformed into it in ever increasing measure (2 Cor. iii, 18).

Whoever would thus behold and reflect naked, unveiled, living Truth, must himself stand forth in his own naked spirit, stripped of all obscuring veils of sense, emotion, desire, thought. He must be, as the biblical Apocalyptist puts it, “in the spirit” in the Lord’s day,”day” implying consciousness in the spirit (the “lord”) as “night” implies the inevitable benightedness of any lower form of conscious faculty (the “servant”).

In the Ancient Mysteries this power of spiritual perception was called Epopteia, and the seers possessing it were termed Epopts. This fulness of light, this direct confrontation of the naked human spirit with the unveiled universal Holy Spirit, was attained only by high Initiates; it was the ultimate ripened fruit of Initiation. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”
What now follows is a descriptive example of the path leading to that attainment, for I desire to convey to my Brethren, however feebly, an idea of what real, as distinct from merely ceremonial, Initiation involves and leads to, and in no other way can I do it.

Greatly daring, therefore, I am venturing to follow — at whatever distance — the example of the Initiate poet, Virgil, in the sixth Aeneid, where, in veiled terms, is portrayed the quest of the human soul for its “Father” or Divine Paternal Principle, as that quest is there shown pursued from this dark earthly cave into the bright Elysian Fields of the Universal Spirit; and also the similar, though differently expressed, examples of Initiation and Epopteia provided for us in the biblical book of Revelation, and by Wolfram von Eschenbach and Richard Wagner in Parsifal.

Although written in the first person, I beg that my description will be construed impersonally as regards the writer. But it is also hoped that the reader will earnestly look forward to some such experience becoming one day true of himself; not necessarily in precisely this form, but in its essential characteristics; for the Spirit bloweth where and how it listeth, and those who are taught of it may receive their lesson in differing ways, yet with uniformity of result.

How far that which follows is allegory, how far it is the work of a constructive imagination building upon pre-acquired knowledge, how far it voices personal intuition and spiritual experience, need not be indicated; it contains elements of each. All that matters is that it should faithfully illustrate truth; and those who have followed me so far and found any echoes of verity in earlier pages, will not regard me as wishing at this final stage to speak to them otherwise than with the tongue of good report and golden truth, and in terms and tones of uttermost sincerity. Whether what now is written voices truth, let him that hath understanding and inward hearing, hear and judge.

I.

Being of an inquiring disposition, hearing that in the Brotherhood called Masonic there were to be known certain valuable arcana and secrets of life not learnable elsewhere, and imagining it to be desirable from other motives which, whilst not mercenary, were perhaps of little better character, I followed a fashion of the time and the example of some friends, and associated myself with a community from which I looked to become possessed of some special but undefined wisdom within a brief space of time.

Looking back now across the years, my conduct at that time strikes me as not a little unworthy. I was looking for something for nothing. I was expecting
to acquire valuable knowledge without paying or working for it; to get without giving. Nor had I considered to what use I should put the acquisition when I had secured it. But I was young, inexperienced, unreflecting, and knew no better.

My presumption soon received its appropriate penalty, for on being formally and with a most cordial welcome received into the community and solemnly undertaking to conform to its regulations, I was promptly cornered and humiliated. Instead of being given what my rashness had expected, I was asked what I was prepared to give for the benefit of any of the brotherhood who might need it. I felt trapped, but it would have been impolite to say so. It was as obvious to them as it was painfully conscious to myself that my financial and intellectual poverty was such that I had nothing whatever to give. I was impelled, however, to mutter the perhaps scarcely sincere reply that had I been a person of any means I would have gladly contributed accordingly; an answer which, to my surprise, satisfied them, and they generously proceeded to tell me that, though I could offer them nothing, they would proceed to give me something, but upon the understanding that if I ever met anyone as poor as myself I must remember the present occasion, be as good as my word, and treat him liberally. The incident impressed me, and is of importance in view of later developments; for I am now trying to fulfil that old promise.

In my novel, flurried position, I had but a hazy notion of what then occurred or of what they gave me. I remember some talk about a stone, a foundation-stone, and of identifying myself with that stone and putting it to some good use or other. I did not recall any stone changing hands or passing into my possession; but then, if I were already identified with it, it would not change hands; I already possessed it and was merely made aware of something of which I was previously unconscious.

Be that as it may, on returning home I found myself in possession of a small stone which I valued as a memorial of the occasion and as a token that I was now a member of the community of which I had heard so much and had been so eager to join. My fellow-members also, I found, each possessed a similar stone and were all very proud of it. It served as a passport or means of introduction when they travelled for pleasure or business. Some of them wore it openly as a pendant to their watch-chains or had it set in a ring with a square and compasses engraved upon it, or mounted as an ornament for their wives. Personally I preferred not to advertise the possession of my own stone and kept it in my pocket.

For years I carried it about with me and went my usual way in the world and attended to ordinary business. I continued to attend meetings of the community and to enjoy the company and conviviality I there met. So seductive
were these that for long I did not realise that I was learning nothing of any vital use, and that the wisdom I had hoped to learn never reached me. Moreover, I did all that seemed required of me in the way of learning the work of the Society and discharging any task that was given me, yet in no way was I any different or better a man for belonging to it than I might have remained had I never entered it. No knowledge of any value, no secrets or mysteries of any moment, ever reached me, or seemed to be possessed by my fellows. Perhaps after all there were none to impart, or if there were, they did not matter.

The position, after reflection, began to feel a little Apocalypsis absurd. I thought of ways of relieving myself of it, by resignation or discontinuing my interest in the Craft, especially as no one I consulted was able to throw me any light upon the reason of its existence. Once, whilst so brooding, I took the little stone from my pocket and slowly turned it over and over, my memory wandering back to the moment when I had received it. I said to myself “I have been expecting bread, and been given a stone—this stone.” Somehow it seemed to have increased somewhat in size, to have become unaccountably heavier. And then, as I scrutinised it, I detected for the first time some minute markings upon it, too small to decipher without the aid of a magnifying glass. Applying such a glass I found inscribed upon the stone the minute words “Free and Accepted Masonry”; then the Latin words “Descendit e coelo,” —it comes from heaven; and finally, in Greek lettering, the words “Know thyself!” (The quoted words are inscribed on the Foundation stone of Freemasons’ Hall, — London, laid on May-day, 1775.)

I pondered much upon these words and tried to realise their significance, though to little purpose. I made it in my way to see some of my Brethren and sought permission to examine their stones. To my surprise in each case I found the same inscription, though they themselves had not discerned it. It was often very faint and in some cases nearly worn away, but there on every stone it was. I pointed it out to some of them. They were momentarily interested, but then fell to talking of other things and thought no more about it. One or two seniors, of high rank and many decorations, grew almost angry at the suggestion that their stone exhibited anything with which they were not already fully conversant; so with them I did not press the matter. No one that I interrogated could give me any helpful explanation.

I was referred to libraries and given the loan of historical and archeological books. I visited the headquarters of the community and there interviewed antiquaries and other learned and dignified people, but though for some years I strove diligently to trace the meaning, nothing of real value was forthcoming.

Meanwhile my stone grew gradually larger, heavier; and, as it did so, its inscription became correspondingly more visible and as if demanding more
and more insistently to be read and understood. In a twofold sense it weighed upon me; its physical weight was becoming a burden, its unsolved problem an oppression to my mind. How could I get rid of it? I happen to have a good friend or brother to whom, in emergencies, I have learned to repair for guidance. I don’t know who he is, but he is extremely reliable, and though not very communicative and apt to be slow, even sullen, in his replies, and then to answer me in riddles and indirect ways, he has never once misled me. Like my puzzling stone, he too, seems somehow to be identified with myself. A medical man or psychologist would say, of course, that he was my own subliminal or supraliminal consciousness. It matters not which. I only know that he is intimately associated with me, that he has an extraordinary intuitive knowledge of myself and my personal problems, and can settle for me matters Apocalypsis which my brain and reason do not and cannot. I have come to call him, as I find Oriental psychologists do, the Teacher or Master in the heart.

To him I referred the matter and sought his guidance. For a long time there was no answer. I tried again and again, and eventually, as my anxiety increased, his aloofness and silence diminished somewhat. But, as usual, his responses were disconnected and enigmatic; mere hints rather than explanations; as though he wished the onus of finding what I sought to know to remain with myself and that I must worry out my own solution with a minimum of help. Piecing together his fragmentary replies, they may be translated and condensed thus:

“You cannot cast away your stone. It is yourself. You cannot evade it and its responsibilities by resigning or remaining absent from the Brotherhood in which you first acquired the stone. Once a Mason, always a Mason: in this world and in worlds to come. You stand solemnly and eternally covenanted, not only to yourself and your Brotherhood, but to the Eternal Sacred Law, to proceed with your Masonic work to the end. That Law does not permit you to stultify an obligation deliberately made upon It, even if made ignorantly. Ignorantia Legis neminem excusat. There may be that in you which was not ignorant, and that guided you to undertake that obligation. Descendit e coelo. Know thyself!”

Brooding upon this I realised in my conscience the force and truth of the advice, and that the stone and myself were now more closely identified than ever. It was the inseparable symbol of myself. It was my “stone of destiny,” like the Kaabah or —sacred Cubical Stone of the Moslems at Mecca; like the Lia Fail in Westminster Abbey upon which Jacob is said to have slept and kings are crowned; both of them stones, moreover, about which the legend runs that they “descended from heaven.” Curious that that legend should
now coincide with the inscription on my own stone! Yet what have Jacob and coronations to do with me, or I with them? “Know thyself!” Yes, indeed; for assuredly there may be un plumbed depths and unreached heights of me that my conscious mind does not yet know. But how to reach and investigate them? How is it possible to know more of myself than I do already?—that was my problem.

Thus, baffled, I put the matter by for a while, or rather tried to, but it would not permit itself long to be ignored. The stone continued so to grow in bulk and weight as to become well nigh as unportable as its meaning grew increasingly intractable.

Ultimately, one day, in despair, I carried it out into a lonely moorland wilderness with the intention of finally grappling with its mystery and unravelling it once and for all, or of leaving it there—if I could. As I went I remembered Bunyan’s Pilgrim, carrying on his back the intolerable pack which fell away of itself when he reached the top of a certain hill. I half hoped similar relief might befall myself, but did not expect it. I had again earnestly appealed to my inward monitory friend for further succour; but this time he had not answered at all.

Weary in body, distraught in mind, I bore my burden, now grown to a weight I could barely carry and finally pitched it down among the ling and Apocalypsis bracken of the heath, and in the evening dusk flung myself down to rest, and upon the stone—my stone of destiny—pillowed my head, and from exhaustion fell asleep.

II.

I slept, but my heart waked.

Though asleep I did not wholly lose consciousness, but retained a pleasing feel of knowing I was asleep, that my fatigued body and brain were at rest, and myself, my released and quickened intellect, was free to act in independence of them. Oh, the rest and blissfulness of that conscious sleep!—paradoxical as it may sound.

Though I knew my tired head and harried brain rested upon the hard stone, that hardness presently seemed to be dissolving and the pillow to become one of the softest down, swathed in fine linen, most white, most cool, lavenderscented. Yes, and more; it became vibrant; intensely, healingly vibrant. Sweet scents exhaled from it; but also sound;—oh!—gorgeous strains matching the delicate fragrance, welling sweetly, softly, from afar; the twaira perfectly concordant; unisoned rather; odour melodious, incense musical!

Presently, in this intensifying joy, my eyes opened. It was no longer dusk.
Soft golden light was everywhere, through which pulsed now and again, like summer lightning, throbs of rosy and other coloured rays of more than rainbow purity, whilst the ground about me, upon which I lay, was no longer the rough moorland, but fleecy down of most restful violet hue, as though one had passed through the dark-blue vault of the night-sky and lay upon the sun-lit upper side of it.

I raised myself and looked round. Standing near me I saw one whom, instantly and instinctively, I recognised as my hitherto unseen friend and brother, the concealed interior monitor, to whom I had previously addressed my appeals for counsel. What a mighty, glorious being he was as he stood there, a dazzle of flame-like hair circling his fine head, his feet also winged with wreathing harmless fire; his person white-robed with a garment that seemed, not put on, but to grow from and be an integral part of him, and about his neck and loins the shimmering blue and gold clothing of —to my amazement—a Grand Lodge Officer. In one hand he bore a tall crystal wand like a deacon’s, and his other arm held a golden thyrsos or caduceus.

We both smiled a recognition when our eyes met. I discerned that he was waiting there till I was sufficiently rested.

“Where are we?” I asked.

“In the Aula Latomorum!”

“Freemasons’ Hall!”—my thought translated his words, and then as swiftly ran on by habit; “Great Queen Street, London, W.C.2. But surely not there!” And I saw that his mind read mine though I spoke not.

“No, not there. That is far below you now; far removed, yet not so much by distance as by difference of conscious state.”

“Then where am I?”

“In the candidate’s preparing-room of the Aula Latomorum; the Supreme Universal Lodge of all Builders in the Spirit; what you have heard of as The-Grand Lodge Above.”

I began to protest that I was unfitted for, and had no title to admission to, such a place, but he checked me, saying:—

”You have sought, asked, knocked, though you did not know it. That forms your title to admission. Your search for wisdom, your continued askings for light, did not pass unobserved by the Eye that watches here, that never slumbers nor sleeps. Your blind strivings after truth were heard as knocks upon our door, and for you that door will now open. You are being awaited within. Come, we will enter the Lodge!”

And he placed a gentle but powerfull arm around me.
I still hesitated, but the bracing vitality of his presence and touch counteracted my weakness and gave me tenseness and courage. Nevertheless, as we began to move away, I turned and looked back upon my sleeping body in the gloom at my feet, with its head couched upon the rude dark stone,—the poor, poor rags of myself. From it, linking me with it, I saw issuing a slender silvery streak, a phosphorescent filament faintly visible against its violet background.

“That,” said my guide, “is your cable-tow, by which you shall be restored later on to the blessing of your material comforts:—if, indeed, comforts they be to you,” he added with a laugh. “They are a blessing, nevertheless, for without them you could never have reached or entered here. Now come!”

“What is that glorious music?” I asked, as we passed up a great stairway, the steps of which his fire-winged feet scarcely touched. For its tones grew louder, richer, as we ascended, and its waves rolled out upon me like ocean billows.

“Pending your arrival, the Grand Organist is playing selections from the Music of the Spheres for the healing of your bruised spirit. The fragrant music your stone pillow echoed back to you just now was its overtones. This Lodge, the heavens, yes, and the earth beneath, are all built and held together by that music, though few of you in the world below have ears to hear it.”

So we passed on.

III.

We reached the first landing of the vast Hall. It was quadrangular, and flanked at each side by a corridor by which one could perambulate the building. My guide conducted me along the four sides.

“This,” he told me, “is the floor upon which labour all Architects in the Spirit under the guidance of the Universal Great Architect. There are two higher floors; one for the Geometrician who issue the designs for the Architects to fabricate into shape; upon the other labour those still greater souls who are in the secret counsels of the Most High and dwell within His shadow.”

We reached the portal of a central hall, the Lodgeroom of the great Apprentice Architects.—Without it stood a great being bearing a sword that flashed every way, but observing my clothing and condition, he let it fall and asked in whose name I sought admission. And with a ringing voice, like a silver trumpet, my guide replied for me

“In the name of the Son of the Carpenter, the Apocalypsis Grand Carpenter of the Universe of worlds and men, by whom all things are made!”

And, as the great gates opened, from within, upon rolling waves of sound, welled forth the antiphon “Hallowed be that name to everlasting. His kingdom
come, without as here within!”

So we entered.

I may not tell all that I saw or that occurred in that wondrous place, that
great assembly. But this I will tell, that at one place I found myself before two
interlaced triangles of lighted candles, three of which were lesser and three
were greater lights, and at their centre, making seven, stood still another light,
the greatest of them all and of brilliance so intolerable that I was constrained
to fall upon my knees before the candlesticks and shield my eyes from their
light with both my hands. Thus kneeling, self-blinded, words were spoken to
me that can never be repeated but that seemed to proceed from the central
great candle. And presently I was asked if, voluntarily and of my own free
will, I would enter into a great and solemn covenant with the Voice speaking
from it, which covenant would not be formulated for me but, as a test of my
sincerity and desire, must come as the spontaneous prompting of my own
heart. And then, in my ignorance, simplicity and blindness, but under my
compelling joy at the wonders that even so far I had witnessed, I behaved as
a child who has been shown some new thing that delights it and forthwith
must needs run away to tell the tidings to its friends. And I exclaimed that
thenceforward never’ would I conceal from anyone in the world the

Fulness unimaginable splendours that lay so near it yet of passed unper-
ceived, but that on the contrary I Light would reveal them to all men and as far
as possible make everyone know about them, and that of the light and bliss in
which I stood bathed I would carry back so much into the dark world that no
one should fail to see it, and that if needs be I would be content to be ground
to dust and cast far and wide in sparklets of powdered light, if by so doing
that light might be more widely diffused.

Whilst I still spoke my hands were drawn from my eyes by another hand,
which then took one of mine, and the Voice said:– “Rise, brother with the
child’s heart; of such is this kingdom. Be thou my candlebearer, and let there
be Light!”

I was raised from my knees, but, rising, my mind seemed to rise in corre-
spondence, to widen out enormously in its perceptions and conceptions as the
result of something that thrilled into me from the touch of that hand. All I had
before seen and understood seemed but as darkness to what I now saw, and
I, who in my impulsive ignorance had said I would become the light of the
world, now beheld the great central candle-light of the seven to be no longer
a candle, but to be He who Himself bears that name.

“Domine, non sum dignus!” Again I would have fallen to my knees, but
the Great Benignity, the Hierophant who walked among the candlesticks, re-
strained me and, for my support, drew a garment as it were of pure white
lamb-skin from the substance of His own person, in which garment and flesh were one, and girded it about my loins as an apron, saying:

“This is My Body, given for you, that your body Apocalypsis may be given for Me.” And again waves of coloured sound poured over me from choired voices singing “Ecce Agnus Dei, qui tollit peccata mundi!”

And a great strength passed into me, so that all weakness fled and I stood erect before Him, an accepted Apprentice Mason of the Grand Lodge Above.

Then gathering into His hand the three lesser lights, they blended there into one another and became one light, one candle, which He placed in my hand, bidding me light my way with it until such time as I came to the measure of perfect man and the high stature of a Master Mason, and thereafter to go forth with it to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death.

When, amid swelling music, my guide led me forth from that great hall, its vast assembly rose to salute their new brother, passing before them, bearing his lighted candle. And thereafter I was free to enter their abodes and workshops where I was shown the work and the methods of those who are indeed the constructive builders and carpenters of everything in the world of manifested form, from the fabrication of a solar system to that of the bodily organisms of all that inhabits it, from the building of a planet to the manufacture of the simplest mechanism of human invention; for what is such an “invention” but a discovery, a finding out, and “coming upon” by the human mind of something of which the pattern already exists upon an, at present, concealed ultra-human level? Here were visible and exposed the secrets and mysteries in regard to all created forms and physical phenomena. Here the forces constituting natural law were controlled and regulated; here continents, oceans and waterways were planned and human racial distribution pre-arranged. In this department worked those who devised the constitution of states, kingdoms and polities for the lower world; in that, those who compiled tables and codes of law for social use and government, plans of ethical systems, religious, ceremonial and sacramental forms for human use and educating human understanding in celestial truths. And among these latter were to be seen the originals of the great systems of ritual and symbolism devised to train the human eye and imagination to the perception of spiritual principles to which otherwise they would remain blind-such as those of the Hebrew and the older Christian Churches, the ancient schools of the Mysteries, and also modern Freemasonry, the source of which, so nebulous and uncertain to terrestrial research, here becomes crystal-clear. For all such institutions exist in the outer world, not from chance compilation or unaided human ingenuity, but because they are “patterns of heavenly things,” physicalised reflections of pre-existing fabrications by Architects and Workmen labouring Upon a loftier and
more enlightened plane of being than that of the flesh, a plane from which they become inspirationally transmitted to the minds of those below or to which some such minds are able consciously to mount and receive direct instruction; as did the Hebrew Initiate, Moses, when enjoined to frame the religio-political system of his people and in doing so to “see that he did all things in accordance with the pattern shown him in the Apocalypse Mount.”

For in this celestial “Mount” are made all the patterns or models of whatever is good, useful and worthy in the terrestrial “valley” below, where nothing is really made, but merely copied and reproduced. From here the prophet, the poet, the artist, the musical genius, the inventor, wittingly or unwittingly draw all the conceptions that become the heritage of man and help on his racial career, but that at the same time convey to him an illusory sense of self-generated progress and a belief in his own cleverness.

Thus was I made free of the great brotherhood of the Supernal Architects, working without haste, without rest, in the world of Light. Yet my thought reverted to the builders in the dark world below, where, if they can build nothing other than their own good or evil destiny,

All are architects of Fate
Working in the walls of Time,—
Broken stairways—where the feet
Stumble, as they seek to climb.

But my flame-shod guide beckoned me, and, remembering that before I could carry light into that tenebrous realm I must go on to the measure of perfect man, I followed him.

IV.

He led me forth and up a great winding stairway to the next landing of the vast Hall, to the Lodge of the Geometricians, and twice was I conducted around its galleries as though the better to adjust myself to that loftier plane of being. Presently, after due preparation and carrying my candle as passport, I was granted admission to its central chamber. And there the Hierophant, whom previously I had met as the Great Architect, now manifested to me in a different and higher guise, as the Grand Geometer.

Now He stood in the midst of a triangle of three great lights, and presently these, too, He gathered into His hand where they blended into one which He placed in my other hand, so that now I stood bearing a pair of candles, one a lesser light that shone but as the moon, and one a greater that blazed as the
sun shining in his strength. And I was made to know that I should need both these lights upon the path that still lay before me.

And when the greater light was placed in my hand my previous illumination seemed but as moonlight in comparison with that which now came to me, and what had up to that moment seemed to me vacuous space I now perceived to be thronged with an innumerable concourse of great beings greeting me into their company, each holding a hand high aloft and chanting over me in chorus:—“Sun, stand thou still in his heights; and moon, stand thou still in his valleys, until all his enemies be overcome in the great day of his perfecting!”

And the Great Initiator placed his hand within his own bosom and drew forth a chalice of red wine and, holding it forth to me, said. —”This is My life-blood, given for you that yours may be made Mine. Take, drink!”

And I drank, and gave thanks, and was dismissed to pursue my way.

Hitherto I had perceived as it were with but outward sensible eyes, and had gazed upon but the outward forms and surfaces of what I saw. Now, at this draught of new wine, my inward intellectual eyes became opened too, penetrating beyond all forms, beholding their animating essence; seeing not separate existences and objects, but all life, all objects, in inseparable unity. Here was what Socrates so rapturously tells of in Plato’s *Phaedrus*—and I knew that, to tell it, he too must have been called to this same place and been granted this same measure of initiation—that it is a region of which no earthly bard has ever yet sung or ever will sing in worthy strains, one where for the first time one comes to know real existence, colourless, formless, intangible, visible only by the topmost crest of the human mind, the noetic intelligence that sits at the helm of the soul and that alone can share communion with Divine Mind; that cognises the essential substantiality, as distinct from the accidental properties and attributes of things; no longer thinking of what is just, strong, beautiful, righteous, and so on, or of any contrasted relationships, but directly beholding Wisdom, Strength, Beauty, Goodness, in their absoluteness and in their real essential being.

Here, too, I saw the prototypal “ideas” lying behind the patterns and models shown to me in the workshops of the Architects below, and realised the geometrical and mathematical principles upon which those fabrications were based, and how that every created thing is made by measure, number, and weight, as the Initiates of the Pythagorean School made known to men in the outer world, so that of a verity I saw that even the hairs of our head are numbered—not in the sense of being counted, but of existing conformably with mathematical necessity, —and that not a sparrow falls to the ground apart from that necessity or without recording a fact of, and a change in, the Universal Consciousness. For on this plane where, as Plato declared, “God ge-
ometrises,” the Divine Ideas are assimilated by the Geometricians who there labour continually, and thence are transmitted to the Lodge of the Architects below for expression in concrete form. And long would I have lingered here absorbing these inexhaustible wonders, but again I remembered my pledge and my directions, and besought my guide to lead me onwards.

V.

But how shall I relate what next befell me? How voice that which is of the Silence? I had been already led through two new supernal planes of being, one devoted to the building of form, the other to formless self-subsisting principles and abstractions—the ethereal embryos conceived by the Geometers, to which it was the function of the Architects to provide objective embodiment. Now I was to pass to a height surpassing, transcending, both these; one where there existed neither the formal nor the formless, but as it were a primal Chaos from which both had issued and into which both were resolvable; a Matrix beyond thought, beyond imagination, beyond description; and whilst within me was a great urge of my spirit to go further forward and enter it, there yet fell upon me for the first time in that realm of bliss and peace, of colour and sound, of bodily Strength and mental clarity, an apprehension that the limits both of my endurance and conscious possibility had been reached, that I could neither know nor bear more than I already knew and bore, and that to attempt to advance farther was presumption and foolishness destined to end in failure and disaster.

“Let strength be perfected out of weakness!” said my guide, reading my thought; “Come, let us go up the Hill of the Lord!” Once more his strong arm was around me, and holding my lesser and greater candles, my moon-light and my sun-light, in either hand, I ascended with him towards the third and topmost storey of the great Aula.

As we mounted, the path became less and less clear; as a highway, leading into open country, terminates in a mere track which finally disappears entirely. And despite the brilliance of the two lights I carried, a twilight seemed to be descending upon us that deepened more and more around us as we rose, until, on reaching a level landing, nothing about me remained visible, or only the most shadowy outlines of what was immediately adjacent.

Although within a building, the building itself no longer appeared as such, but to have become dissolved into something different, indefinable, indescribable—mere “place,” to which no epithet or attribute can be attached; no corridors, no departmental chambers, such as I had found on the floors below; no sign of life or activity, but utter desertsedness and dereliction, and yet, itthal, a sense
that life abounded there upon all sides. Yet thrice was I escorted around what, had it been a visible quadrangle, would have been its four sides, as though to habituate myself to these new conditions.

Deep silence and solitude ruled up here in this dark polar region of the human mind, and here the great music that flooded the lower altitudes failed, it seemed, to reach, as though the air was too rarefied for it longer to be audible or my hearing too gross to respond to it. At times we seemed to be in a dense forest, to be passing beneath the dusky boughs of giant cedars of Lebanon and other mighty growths. At length I enquired of my guide what this place was.

“This,” he answered, “is the House of the Sons of the Widow”; and then for the first time a mighty emotion swept through and shook even his strong frame, as he murmured, rather to himself than for my hearing, the words, “Sub umbra alarum Tuarum, Jeheschuah!”, as though he too longed to dwell for ever in that place of deep shadow.

And my thought turned to the remembrance of a teaching concerning the bereft Divine Wisdom, the Sophia, the Bride widowed through the ages of Her errant sons until, reverting from the ways of foolishness, they voluntarily return to sonship and She becomes justified of Her children.

We halted, at length, at a place at which, in the gloom, showed the outline of two pillars standing side by side, separated only widely enough for one man to pass between. From here, my guide told me, I must proceed alone, since he could accompany me no farther; but he would prepare me for my entry into that final sanctuary and would wait without Apocalyptic until I rejoined him.

Then he began upon me a great and solemn ritual of preparation.

He took from my one hand the great solar light it carried, and placed the candle in a sconce at the head of one of the pillars in front of me; and then took from my other hand the lesser lunar light and set its candle in a similar sconce at the head of the other pillar; repeating, the while, with intense earnestness the words: “Thou, sun, stand still in his heights; and thou, moon, stand still in his valleys, till his enemies be overcome in the great day of his perfecting!”

He divested me of all my garments, save one only the Apron with which the Great Hierophant had invested me in the Lodge below. For my other garments, ethereal though they were, were as the outgrowth of my own nature, the condensed exhalations of my own thought and desire, now become objective and clinging to me as raiment; and of these I must needs stand denuded if spirit is to meet Spirit and, out of my flesh, I am to see God. But my Apron no other hand could take from me than that which gave it, and it remained around my loins to be my strength and support in that day of my perfecting.

Then, from an overhanging tree, he plucked a feathery spray of acacia-leaf and, after weaving it into a fillet, placed it around my head, saying as he did
so: “Thou art crowned in the halls of death that hereafter thou may’st wear a
Crown of Life that fadeth not away.”

Further, he took the golden caduceus or thyrsos he had always carried,
and, standing before me, raised it aloft, as a crucifix is held before the eyes of
the dying, and exclaimed:

“Receive this Golden Bough, thou branchlet of the eternal Life-Tree, and
think upon it when thou hkest upon that Tree, that thou may’st become for
ever grafted thereinto, and thy leaves and fruit thenceforth be for the healing
of the nations!”

And by a gold cord he placed it upon me, so that it hung suspended against
my flesh as a pectoral cross.

Then, with his forefinger, he sealed me at five points with the sign of the
cross; upon my brow, upon my throat, upon my heart, upon the palms of both
my hands, and upon both feet. And after each sealing with the cross-sign, he
sealed me again at the same points with a peace-kiss, as though with his lips
to heal wounds which his finger had made; and he said:”Thou art wounded
in love in the house of thy friends that by love thou may’st be made whole.
These be thy five points of perpetual fellowship with Love Immortal; that in
love thou may’st think, may’st speak, may’st feel, may’st act, may’st walk,
when thou goest forth among the sons of men.”

And having thus done, he turned from me and passed to the twin pillars
standing in front of me. There, kneeling between them and with a hand laid
upon each, as though to unite them in himself, his voice pealed forth into
the distance beyond:– “In strength have I striven to establish this son of Thy
House, that he may stand firm and steadfast in the great day of his at-one-ment
with Thee, Most High!”

Finally, he rose, and taking his rod or wand, passed behind me, so that I
saw him no more. But I felt his presence, and that from it was now issuing an
energy that was directing, compelling—even propelling me forward; an energy
at once of will and of prayer, —of will that absorbed and gave direction and
intensity to my own will, of prayer that shielded me from all evil as that will
urged me on into the valley of the shadow of death; an energy, silent, yet
of such gathering intensity that, like a great sea-wave rising to the breaking-
point, I knew it must at last break into sound, and that that sound would carry
me forward with it.

Presently it broke. It broke upon my hearing, upon my whole being, as
one great clear word of power, the vibrancy of which swept me onward. What
that word was cannot be related, nor did I then understand it. But as it trans-
lated itself at that moment to my understanding, it was the heartspeech of my
directing guide saying:
“Father, into Thy hands I commend his spirit, which is also my spirit!”

And, impelled by that word of power, I passed forward along the straight and narrow way between the lighted pillars, into the gloom beyond.

VI.

The ground beneath my feet rose steeply. I felt myself to be ascending a hill in that dusk and stillness, though for some distance a state of twilight remained to me; for memories and remnants of the light that had previously suffused me lingered, and the great twin candles I had borne to this point still cast helpful beams of from the pillar-tops for a little way. But the farther Light I traversed, the higher I mounted, their illumination diminished, until at length twilight melted into utter dark. I remembered and comforted myself with, a great word: “The sun shall no more be thy light by day, neither the moon by night; but the Spirit shall be to thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory; and the days of thy travail shall be ended.” I knew what others have recorded of passing into the Divine Gloom, the agnosia of the human spirit, where vision fails and thought is paralysed, and where that zero-point of consciousness must be touched where nothing is known to be, neither one’s self, nor even God; and I knew, and again tried to comfort myself with the reflection, that even this appalling darkness was in fact light, albeit light of intensity so unthinkable as, to eyes not yet opened and inured to it, to appear as darkness. But I had yet to learn that even such comforts as thought and memory provided were staffs that must fail me of support.

In that darkness I now was. —In the rarefied atmosphere of the mount I was ascending my being took on an ever-increasing hyper-sensitiveness, until I felt my flesh, even the tenuous ethereal flesh of my present body, dissolving away, leaving me as but a quivering structure of exposed, unprotected nerves. The feathery fillet of acacia-leaf upon my forehead felt now as a heavy crown of coarse thorns clamped upon my brow, into which the tender, delicate frond-points pressed like steel spikes. The light gold thyrsos suspended from my neck became as an heavy cross, beneath the intolerable weight of which, with bleeding feet and hands, I toiled and staggered upwardly. I paused awhile to rest and with my forefinger swept, from time to time, the increasing blood and sweat from my brow and in my agony cried aloud:

“Come to my help, ye Sons of the Widow! for I, too, am the Widow’s son.”

But no answer, no help came; yet the oftener I lingered, the more I faltered, the more conscious became I of the propelling urge of that mighty word of
power by which my guide had sped, and still was speeding, me upon my willing quest; and I knew that from a distance—how far, how short, mattered not—the still was watching, directing me; that his rod and staff controlled and safeguarded me.

In the ocean-depths there is a point at which a sinking ship can sink no farther, the pressure upon it from above and the resistance from below so counteracting each other that it remains suspended and undergoes disintegration by the dual forces grinding upon it. In the ocean-depths of Universal Spirit there is a corresponding point of equilibrium, where the human soul, seeking to pass from terrestrial attraction to spiritual freedom, becomes caught and ground between similar upper and nether millstones. That point is the mystical Gethsemane, literally “the place of the wine and oil press,” for there the soul reaches the equator-line where the opposing attractive forces of soul and spirit meet, and where the former experiences to its joints and marrow a sundering of its parts. There—as wheat is winnowed from corn—stalk and chaff, as wine and oil are distilled from crushed fruit the soul’s spirit, its sublimated, refined, immortal essence, is dissected from the sheath in which it has matured, is separated and rendered free to commence a new independent life of its own, whilst that sheath itself is left to perish.

That Gethsemane I had now reached. My soul consciously knew the growing division of its kingdoms, “one dead; one powerless to be born;” and again and again cried in its anguish for help from the Widow’s Sons, yet without avail; and at last resigned itself to the compelling word and will that it felt still to urge it forward, higher.

Beyond Gethsemane rises the Hill Calvary-Kranion or Calvaria, the bald headland, the rocky summit, of no earthly situation, and known to none save the naked human spirit which ascends to it, there to be lifted up high above all terrene ground and magnetic attraction, and pass to birth and apotheosis in the free uncontaminated air of Spirit Absolute.

Reaching that summit, my limbs failing under me, one thing alone saved me from complete collapse, the strength and support that came, that seemed newly and increasingly generated, from the Apron girt about my loins. And then, from that central peak, my feet involuntarily losing touch with the supporting ground beneath, I felt myself lifted up above the earth.

No hand there was that touched or raised me. As one whose limbs become distended, rigid, under the infusion of a strong electric current, so now the charge of the Creator Spiritus passed into me, forcing my frame into vertical erectness and rigidity, extending my arms horizontally, making taut and tense under its strain every fibre of my being. In mid-air, my head held toward heights I could not reach, my feet down-pointing to the earth they no longer
touched, my arms wide-flung transversely into void space, I hung suspended upon that invisible impalpable Life-Tree; myself a cross; myself the crucified upon that cross.

For three hours of darkness —hours not of human time, but of that Spirit to which a day is as a thousand years— I hung upon that cross, that Stauros upon which from the foundation of the world Life Creative hangs self-immolated, that worlds may be built upon its pattern and Life Created be fashioned at last into its image.

As there I hung, my thorny crown stabbed its spikes more deeply, more insistently, into my brow, my hands unable longer to move and wipe away the blood and sweat. Yet a joy began subtly to tincture and relieve that pain, as I realised that, under the same strain that my own being knew, the life-sap of the fragile acacia-sprig was also being quickened, was pulsing fast, striving to break to golden bloom; and that, when that bloom broke, light would break for me also and my crown of thorns become a crown of life.

The gold thyrsos upon my breast burned itself into me, until its vertical shaft felt one with my own spinal column, from the base of which the upris- ing intertwined serpents were as dual streams of a new, larger, richer vitality surging upward through my nerves towards my head, where I knew that like the dual parts of an electric current that, meeting, flash into light-they would eventually combine and flame to conscious wings, wide-spreading as those of its symbol, far-reaching as my own wide-flung arms.

And my Craftsman’s Apron, at once a weight and a support to my straining loins, felt growing into me, to be becoming of my very flesh and substance. I knew now why, traditionally depicted as a loin-cloth, this garment alone was worn upon the Cross by the “King of the Jews,” the Supreme Chief of all Initiates, and why all the great painters of the Crucifixion-scene had been moved, intentionally or inspirationally, so to depict it and not otherwise, not from any paltry motive of delicacy or prudery, but to point, for those who can understand, the truth that the secret, basic, generative energies procreating the Universe and regenerating human souls must ever remain beyond the ken of all but the Divine Eye.

As with the dying, my consciousness fluctuated from a negative to a preternaturally acute and vivid stage, ranging at times to a wild yet orderly delirium; yet from both these extremes I knew the necessity of holding my will oriented and fixed upon its desired goal. At times it became cosmically comprehen- sive; at times it would focus upon trivialities and irrelevances. At one moment it would enlarge till, for the little leaf-crown on my head, I wore vast star-belts as a diadem; great constellations filled no more space than the palms of my hands and swam around my person as but dancing fire-flies; my trunk
and legs reached down through abysmal leagues of space to the dust-speck of earth below my feet. At another the heavens would open and expose their joyous contents—a lure and temptation promptly to be rejected as often as it recurred; for, though I thirsted, it was for richer wine than they could give to drink. Now each hair of my head seemed a filament and conduit linking me with angel-hosts and reservoirs of supernatural intellectuality, and now the nerves of my feet ramified into the finest rootlets and tentacles through which I became aware of the activities of nature and of life in the earth below and the minutest details of personal human interest. I heard the crackle of growing grass, the twitter of birds, the cries and laughter of children, equally clearly with the throb of engines, the activities of industry, the clash of armies. No grain of sand, or speck of dust, or cell of tissue, but disclosed its constitution, its potencies, its purpose, its destiny; all straining, striving, building, unbuilding, rebuilding; each sealed with and bearing, wittingly or not, its little cross in one universal effort to become raised to that final cross of transformation upon which I now hung, and thence to pass on to unimagined heights and destinies beyond. Even my Brother builders in the symbolic Craft for of them too I became vividly aware in their little dark circumscribed world below,—there they were in their Lodges, reeling off memorised rituals, correcting one another at a wrong or misplaced word supposed to affect the efficacy of their work; and some were in banquet halls, and, amid the pop of champagne corks, I heard them toasting one another, extolling the virtues of Masonry, shouting, “Prosper the Art!” and singing of the “mystic tie” that more truly than they know binds all together and advances the building of a Temple conceived of as yet by but few of them.

Darkness, over-intensified, at last of itself becomes as it were a pleasurable light; pain, when ability to feel it is exhausted, a measure of joy; for these opposites are but relative, the poles of a single fact; differing reactions to enforced environment. But neither such light nor such joy was that I longed for. They belonged to feeling, to desire, to thought; not to that deeper factor, the Spirit, which transcends them all, and to which I strove to keep my will one-pointed. But at length feeling died in me; I knew neither pain nor joy. Then desire died; what happened further to me, good or ill, I cared not. Lastly, thought died also; its flickerings and veil-wisps gradually falling away, till stark blankness only remained. Nothing of me still was, save the labouring spirit that strove to be born but could not. It was the zero-point of negative consciousness, the moment of the apparently everlasting NO; where nothing is, and God is not.

_Eloi, Eloi! Lama Sabachthani!_
VII.

I revived, yet not I, at length, in Light; a new indescribable light, so much more than light because it is also life; life beyond the category of personality; life in the Universal Spirit of light;

Light rare, untellable, lighting the very light;
Beyond all words, descriptions, languages!

The sprig of acacia had at last burst to golden flower upon my head.

No tongue may or can speak, nor pen write, of that “sleep in Light” as the Egyptian records call it, that conscious rest of the soul in God, that identical union between finite object and infinite Subject, that nirvanic absorption of the spirit’s still flame within the Fire of Divine Mind, of the human water-drop in the ocean of that Immaculate Illimitable which is Nothing, but without which nothing is—that impersonal yet self—consciousness which becomes possible only when every activity of sense and emotion has been quelled, every energy of the restless mind stilled, all thought obliterated; and the babe-soul rests upon the naked bosom of that Spirit of which it has been well written:

I am the Silence which is more than Sound.
If therewithin thou lose thee, thou art found!
The Nameless, Shoreless Ocean, which is I,
Thou canst not breathe, but in its bosom drowned!

What previously had seemed utter darkness was now a sea of softest light thronged with life; living light, lighted life. About me thronged the uncountable Sons of the Widow, God’s Master Masons, the Lords of Wisdom and sharers of the secret counsels of the Most High, whose inspirations, transmitted to the Geometers and Architects upon the planes below, dictated the plans upon which worlds are built, maintained, dissolved, and yet are but as foam upon the rising and falling waves on the surface of the Universal Life-stream.

And these great Sons, close present to me through my long agony, but invisible till a deeper sight was born in me that could share their intenser light, took me down from my cross;—but of the secrets and mysteries that thereupon became known to me I do not here speak, nor of the still higher grades of Initiation that lie beyond that I now testify to. When eventually I left them, I passed through their ranks, as I had passed through them upon my arrival when to my unperfected eyes they had appeared as a vast forest of Libanus cedars under whose swarth boughs I had walked; for were they not as great trees crowning the mountain-top of the world, diffusing over it from their spread branches the dark actinic rays of a Wisdom not yet recognised by men’s imperfect vision as Light? I rejoined my former brother and guide
at the point where I had left him, between the pillars. Upon seeing me he at once greeted me with a familiar sign in sympathy with my now vanished sufferings, and, kneeling, at the next moment shielded his eyes with his hand as my presence dazzled him with the light it now radiated. Then he rose, and bowing, drew near me and offered me his hand as a Brother of the Third Degree in that Grand Lodge, and as we embraced he exclaimed: “The Master is risen!”

And I to him responded: “He is risen indeed!”

And we passed back down the grand stairway, up which he had previously brought me, now no longer deserted, but thronged with Geometricians and Architects come forth to hail their new Brother, now journeying back as a light-bearer into outer dark world. And, upon rolling organ-music once more, came the chanted words “To him that hath overcome is given a crown of life!” and again, “To him that hath endured to the end is given a white stone!”

At length we reached the place where, in the gloom, still lay my sleeping body, couched upon a stone. But peering down upon them the stone was no longer a dark crude mass. It was a crystal cubical stone, upon the top of which rested three cornucopias, bearing corn, and wine, and oil; and against this, my stone of destiny, reposed my head, already faintly aureoled with light. My coronation was complete.

I knew that henceforth both my guide and my stone would be perfectly identified with me and that the contents of the cornucopias were the emblems of my perpetual future nourishment and represented the harvest I had garnered in each of the Three Degrees I had just taken; Bread of ‘Life from the first, Wine of Bliss and Illumination from the second, Oil of Wisdom from the third. Here was the realisation of the familiar words, hitherto but fanciful poetic imagery:”Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over!” Again my good Brother gripped me as a Master Mason. We drew together in an embrace of fellowship so fervent that we seemed to coalesce beyond the possibility of further separateness. “A measure of corn for a penny,” he said to me, “and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.” And I understood his hint to be prudent in my use of them.

“Ave, Frater, atque Vale!” were his last spoken of words to me.

And mine to him were “Vale, Frater, atque Ave!”

When I looked about me with the eyes of my flesh I was alone. Sunrise was breaking over the barren heath.
Chapter 5

Past and Future of the Masonic Order

1.- Observations and Examples

“First, that which is natural; after, that which is spiritual.”

I.-THE PAST

Beginnings, whether of nations, religions, institutions, or even of the world and life itself, are notoriously obscure and difficult of precise fixation. The reason is that nothing actually “begins” to be, but there merely takes place a transformation into new conditions of something that pre-existed in other conditions. Call the point or moment at which the change occurs a “beginning” if you wish; it will be found that such beginning is but an effect generated by, and issuing from, anterior causes. Life itself does not, at physical birth, begin to be; it merely then enters physical conditions and assumes physical guise. A corresponding change occurs at the birth or beginning of human institutions;— they are developments and formalizations of something which previously existed in a fluid incohesive condition. This is the case with Masonry, and accounts for the tradition that it is as old as man himself, whatever forms it has assumed, and that it is of Divine origin.

Modern Speculative Freemasonry had a beginning in the early years of the 18th century, but only in the sense that in 1717 originated that which afterwards developed into, and now subsists as, the English Masonic Constitution. Masonry itself existed long before that time, and in two forms: —(1) exoterically, in the Operative Building Guilds, and (2) esoterically, in a variety of secret communities of mystics and occultists, having no relation to the practical building trade but often using builders’ terminology for symbolical
purposes of their own.

Modern Masonry is a blend of both of these; its constitutions, charges, rituals, and instruction lectures incorporate elements drawn from each of them. The Ancient Charge, for instance, which is delivered to every Masonic candidate on admission to the Order to-day, is an example of what has come over from the Operative Masons. It is patently an instruction of the kind one would expect to find given to a youth on becoming entered as an apprentice to a handicraft and embarking upon adult and civic responsibilities; it is a mere admonition to him to be a moral man, a worthy citizen, a creditable workman and member of his trade-guild, to fear God, honour the King, love his country, and generally educate and improve himself. It does not contain the least reference to any knowledge or wisdom of an extraordinary kind, or suggest any vestige of acquaintance with subjects of a mystical or occult character.

But on turning to the ceremonial rituals, especially that of the Third Degree, and to the “Traditional History” and instruction lectures, we find, mixed up with references to the Operative Builders’ trade, matters of a highly esoteric and mystical nature, having no possible operative or materialistic connection and not to be thought of as associated with the technical equipment of a workman in material stone and brick.

This esoteric element descended, of course, not from the Operative Guilds, but from less public organisations of symbolic, or mystical Masons, and it is the latter alone whose necessarily obscure history and purpose repay investigation at this time of day.

These organisations were the representatives of a stream of Hermetic tradition and practice, the upper reaches of which go back into pre-Christian times, into Egypt, and to the Rabbinical mystics and Kabbalists, among whom existed a secret, guarded lore of the Cosmos and of human life; a lore which found only partial, though cryptic, expression in the Hebrew Scriptures in terms of building. With them the building and the subsequent vicissitudes of Solomon’s Temple (whether this was ever an historical material erection or not) provided a great glyph or mythos of the up-building of the human soul, whether considered individually or collectively; and as the course of Hebrew history advanced and the stream of circumstances and mystical tradition widened into its Christian development, the same symbolic terminology continued to be used. Accordingly the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse are found to teem with Masonic imagery and allusions to spiritual building. It is in these that the human soul becomes expressly declared to be the real Temple pre-figured by the previous historic or quasi-historic one. A spiritual Chief Corner-stone, rejected of certain builders, is mentioned; one in which the entire social fabric is—to grow together into a single universal Temple.
St. Johii himself, as the “beloved disciple” or most advanced Initiate of the Christian Master, becomes, according to the esoteric tradition, his Chief Warden and entrusted—as every Senior Warden in our symbolic lodges is with the task of keeping order in the West and, after the days of his flesh, of occultly controlling from the heavens the development of the law of Christ in the Occidental world. Hence he became, and still is acknowledged as, the Masonic Patron-saint, and is found spoken of in the Rosicrucian reference in Dante’s Paradiso as

He that lay upon the breast
Of Him who is our mystic pelican,
And from the Cross was named for office blest;

whilst one of his known pupils, St. Ignatius—who is reputed to have been the little child whom the Lord once took and set in the midst as a type of fitness for realising the kingdom of heaven—is found expounding religion in these purely Masonic terms “Forasmuch as ye are stones of a Temple which were prepared beforehand for a building of God, the Father, being hoisted up to the heights by the working—tool of Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, and using for a rope the Holy Spirit; your faith being a windlass, and love the way leading up to God. So then ye are all Companions in the way, spiritual temples, carrying your Divine principle within you, your shrine, your Christ and your holy things, being arrayed from head to foot with the commandments of Christ.” (Epistle to Ephesians.)

The pronounced Masonic imagery used by Ignatius (who was martyred at Rome in A.D. 107) tends to corroborate the tradition that the Square, Level and Plumb-rule, now allocated to the Master The Past and two Wardens of a Lodge, were originally associated with the Bishop, Priest and Deacon, when serving at the secret altars of the persecuted Christians. Put together, the three tools form a Cross, which, on the worshippers being disturbed by the secular authorities, could quickly be knocked apart and appear but as builders’ implements.

The most popular religious book of the earliest Christian centuries was The Shepherd of Hermas, a collection of teachings, visions and similitudes, couched in terms of Masonic allegory and veiling (as the title implied) the hermetic or esoteric instruction of some “Shepherd,” as the Hierophants and Adeptteachers of the Mysteries were, and in the canonical Scriptures are, uniformly designated.

To define the position which, after the event known as the Christian Incarnation, seems to have been assumed by all the mystical Builders, the spiritual Alchemists, the Rosicrucians, and the divers other schools of the secret
Gnosis who accepted that fact as the central pivotal one of human spiritual evolution and the culmination of earlier Mystery-systems, it may be said that they regarded themselves as one great Fraternity. in the Divine Mysteries under the unseen but actual guidance of Jesus Christ, “the Carpenter” (Tekton), as Supreme Grand Master, with the greater Initiate, St. John the Divine, and the lesser Initiate, St. John Baptist, as Senior and Junior Grand Wardens; the winter and summer solstices (the times of the sun’s lowest annual declension and meridian height) being allocated to the two latter as festival days or time-points peculiarly favourable for spiritual contact between the Grand Lodge Above and the lesser Lodges below.

All down the stream of history will be found the similitude of the human soul to a stone and directions for working it from a crude to a perfect state. The career of the patriarch Jacob begins with a stone. The Dervishes of the Arabian Desert are given a cubed stone smeared with blood on their initiation. The sacred object and palladium of the Moslem faith is the Kaabeh or Cubical Stone. The stone is found described as Lapis exilis and Lapis ex Coelis; it is always one said to have come from heaven, whence it is now in exile in this outer world. As a protest against materialising the idea of it, one finds exclamations such as Cornelius Agrippa’s famous Transmutemini! Transmutemini in viventes lapides! —become ye transformed into living stones! Those more advanced mystics, the spiritual Alchemists, have provided us with a wealth of obscure lore concerning the “Stone of the Philosophers”; and all through the Christian centuries, behind the activities of public elementary religion and the official work of the Church, can be traced evidences of this higher, esoteric, more abstruse and difficult work of mystical Masonry and stone-working being wrought by abbots, monks, and laymen, either in solitude or communities of less or greater size, yet in severest concealment.

The history of this movement in England cannot be written in detail here, but a few points of it may be cited as evidence of the fact that, beyond all operative-trade connections, the primary work of Masonry was one of mystical religion and had to do with the arcana of the human soul; that it was an intellectual and a spiritual science promoting the development of the individual initiate and, through him, the advancement of the general weal.

The English Masonic Constitutions of 1784, for example, reproduce a memorandum “concernyng the Mystery of Maconrye,” said to have been written early in the 15th century by King Henry VI with his own hand—probably for private rather than for state purposes, since he himself is alleged to have been made a Mason. Transposing his words from archaic into modern English, the King’s memorandum indicates as follows:— that Masonry is a spiritual science; that it originated in the East (in both a mystical and a geograph-
ical sense) and reached the junior human races in the West through travelling Phoenicians (misdescribed as “Venetian”); that its development had been greatly advanced by Pythagoras (curiously mis-called by the English names “Peter Gower”), who, after receiving his own initiations, founded the great Crotona school and instructed others in the science; that the science itself involves knowledge of and power over hidden forces of Nature, so that the expert Mason can perform acts which to the uninitiated would appear miraculous; that progress in the science comes by instruction, practice and silence; that the science is to be imparted only to worthy and suitable men, since abuse of it and of the powers arising with it would result in both personal and general evil; that Masons understand and can effect the art of alchemic transmutation and possess a universal symbolic language of their own by which they can intercommunicate, whatever their race or country; that they have the “skill of becoming good and perfect,” apart from all motives of fear and hope such as influence lesser minds and are held out by popular religion; that not all Masons realise their attainments or become perfect, for many fail in capacity, and more still in the arduous personal effort essential to the acquisition of this wisdom.

The genuineness of the King’s memorandum has been questioned, though prima facie it is well attested. But whether a genuine script of his or not, its contents, within their limits, accurately represent the nature of Masonry itself.

No one can read English or European history from the period of that memorandum onward without realising that to that history there has been an inner side not cognised or treated of by academic historians, or without feeling behind the march of external events —and as it were connected with or even directing them— the concealed presence of minds more than normally capable-Initiates, possessing and wielding the very powers testified to in Henry VI’s memorandum. The lives and literary remains of such men as —to name no others— Paracelsus, Abbot Tritheim, Basil Valentine, Jacob Boehme, George Johan Gichtel, Thomas Vaughan, and Elias Ashmole, provide above-surface indications of a strong current of sub-surface activity, a current of which no record exists or is ever likely now to be made. But to that current one must look for the perpetuation of the secret Masonic science, and to its projection, in a highly diluted and elementary form, into publicity in modern speculative Masonry.

The religious Reformation of the 15th century was the first great episode in a far-reaching revolutionary movement in the intellectual, social and political life of the West, a movement the end of which is not yet. Amid the intensifying unspirituality and materialism of the times and the impending disintegration of public instituted religion, a decision seems to have been come to by some
far-seeing enlightened minds to put forward the old mystical Gnosis and tradition in a simple form and to attempt to interest a small section of the public in it. This suggestion is incapable of rigorous proof, and will perhaps commend itself only to those who are in any measure conscious of the inner mechanism controlling the visible clock-face of historic events. But be this as it may, we find, about the year 1600 and onwards, the first small signs of a movement that has eventuated in the vast modern Masonic Craft, with its as yet further indeterminate possibilities.

The first recorded reception of a non-operative Mason to an operative Lodge occurred at Edinburgh in 1600. The Operative Lodges were then becoming obsolete and defunct, and by 1620 Operative Masonry had become entirely superseded in London by Speculative, the members of the former working no longer in guilds but striving still to keep alive their old form of fellowship. The first traceable initiation, on English soil, of a non-operative Mason occurred at Newcastle in 1641; and the second that of Elias Ashmole, already a student of arcane science-at Warrington in 1646. Accretions to the ranks of the Craft proceeded to be made, but were at first few and gradual, owing to disturbed political conditions. The Charter of the Royal Society, dated 1663, as drawn up by Dr. (afterwards Sir) Christopher Wren, seems to have been prepared with a view to giving official sanction not to science as at present secularly understood and pursued, but to science of a more occult character such as Masonry as before defined deals with, for the preamble of that document refers to private meetings of certain men devoted to the investigation of the “hidden causes of things” in the public interest.

In 1717 four old London Lodges combined to constitute a new nucleus. From them the first Grand Lodge was formed and thus Modern Masonry was born, at an inn, the Apple Tree Tavern, in Lincoln’s Inn Fields.

In 1721 Dr. Anderson was entrusted with the drawing up of the Constitutions of the new community. The conditions of the Craft in that year may be deduced from a statement of the eminent antiquary Dr. Stukeley, who writes: “I was the first person made a Freemason for many years. We had great difficulty to find members enough to perform the ceremony. Immediately after that it took a run, and ran itself out of breath through the folly of its members.”

Abuses supervened from the admission of all and sundry without due qualifications. In 1724 a Brother protested in a public journal that “the late prostitution of our Order is in some measure the betraying of it. The weak heads of vintners, drawers, wigmakers, weavers, etc., admitted into our Freemasonry, have not only brought contempt upon the Institution, but do very much endanger it.” In the same year was established “for poor brethren” the first benevolent fund, which since has developed into the great Charity organisations now
connected with the Craft.

In the course of the next fifty years the numbers of the Craft so increased that central headquarters were found advisable, and on May-day of 1775, the foundation-stone of the present Freemasons’ Hall in London was laid with great ceremony. Despite the fact that men were being admitted to the Order who were little qualified to appreciate the science of Masonry, and that consequently the understanding of that science was becoming increasingly debased, elements of the original intention still remained, and echoes of it can be caught in some of the recorded incidents of the occasion. In the Foundation-stone itself was inserted a plate perpetuating the event and the names of the then Grand Master, his deputy and the Grand Wardens; and stating that Masonry was of heavenly origin, ‘‘descendit e ccelo’’; and concluding with the maxim of Solon in Greek characters, ‘‘Know thyself.’’ At the religious service performed upon the occasion was sung an anthem of praise to the Great Architect:

“Who deign’d the human soul to raise
By mystic secrets sprung from heaven;”

Whilst a specially composed ode affirmed of the new Aula Latomorum that:

“Religion, untainted, here dwells;
Here the morals of Athens are taught;
Great Hiram’s tradition here tells
How the world out of chaos was brought.”

From these extracts it is clear that, at least to its leading minds, Masonry was a secret science of soul-building, and that the great central legend and mythos expressed in the Traditional History in the Craft’s Third Degree referred to no events in earthly time or history, but to Cosmic events of a metaphysical and mystical character. Further, from the preface to the Constitutions of 1784 it is made clear that the practical builder’s art is to be considered only as the substratum of Speculative Masonry; that the history of the Operative side is negligible, for when Speculative Masons became a separate body of men the science had no further concern with practical building; and that the Speculative work is a personal mystical one, rising like a pyramid “tending regularly up to a summit of attainments, ever concealed by intervening clouds from the promiscuous multitudes of common observers below.”

Freemasons’ Hall being completed, it was, on 23rd May 1776, triply dedicated, again with great ceremony; firstly to Masonry; a second time to Virtue;
and a third time to Universal Charity and Benevolence. The last-named of the three purposes came in course of time to dominate completely at least the first of them. The Craft became a great money-raising institution for relieving its own needy members and their relatives, and as a charitable society does excellent work which commands the devoted interest of many good Brethren who know nothing, and seek to know nothing, of Masonry itself in its only proper and primary aspect of spiritual science, and who regard it merely as a luxurious item of social life and maintain their connection with it solely from philanthropic motives.

From the facts thus roughly outlined it is clear that the pre-1717 Brethren were men of a very different calibre, and held a vastly higher conception of Masonry, from those who subsequently came to constitute the Craft and have expanded it to its present great dimensions. Of the latter class, whatever their merits, virtues, and good works in other respects, they cannot be said to have been either theoretic or practical ’mystics or to have cultivated the knowledge of Masonry as that science must be primarily understood. They cannot say of themselves as their predecessors truly could and did:

We have the Mason Word and second sight, for growth in the life of the spirit and the enhanced faculty and inward vision that come therewith have not been within the ambit of their desire. As one of the most deeply learned and understanding writers upon the subject affirms, (the authoress of A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery) “The outward form (or present practice) of Masonry is too absurd to be perpetuated were it not for a certain secret response of common sense to the original mystery. The Initiated moved one another on by words of power. The Masons ape this but have lost the magic key to open the door into the Hermetic garden. They want the words, which are only to be found by seeking them in the subjective fundamental life, from which they are as far out as the tools they use. The true tools also may be found on the way in; they will be given one after another as they are wanted.” Another learned author, who had every motive to speak well of the Craft —the late Brother John Yarker— was constrained to write in 1872, in his able and most instructive Notes on the Scientific and Religious Mysteries that: “As the Masonic fraternity is now governed, the Craft is fast-becoming the paradise of the bon vivant, of the charitable hypocrite who forgets the version of St. Paul and adorns his breast with the ‘charity jewel’; (having by this judicious expenditure obtained the purple, he metes out judgment to other brethren of greater ability and morality but less means); the manufacturer of paltry masonic tinsel, etc. No other institution is so intrinsically valuable as Craft Masonry, or capable of such superhuman things. As now governed, few societies perform less. None profess such great objects; few accomplish so very little real and
substantial good. May reformation be speedy and effective!”

Such facts are not pleasant to contemplate, nor would they be proclaimed here without good purpose and a constructive motive. But it is well to face them before proceeding further, since what remains to be said will not only deal with a happier aspect of the subject, but is based upon the premise that the otherwise deplorable perversion and materialisation of the true Masonic intention has been both an inevitable and a necessary prelude to a spiritual efflorescence which in due course will manifest itself and of which the beginnings are already perceptible.

In no censorious or reproachful spirit, therefore, are such observations as the foregoing recorded. They might indeed be extensively amplified if to do so would serve any useful purpose, but no one with intimate experience of the Craft will fail to recognise either their truth or the cogency of their reproach. It is undeniable that, through ignorance of the true principles of Masonry, the Craft has suffered itself to become debased and overrun with members lacking alike the intellectuality, the temperament, and the desire, to appreciate those principles. To-day’s newspaper, for example, contains the advertisement of a turf bookmaker who proclaims himself to be “on the square,” and on the strength of that qualification seeks to engage the services of a betting-tout. It is well known that commercial houses to-day find it advantageous, for business purposes, to insist upon their more important employees being members of the Order. In the Order itself advancement is notoriously connected with social position and the extent of a member’s contributions to the Charities. Honours, and even medals, are bestowed for money payments to this or that subscription list. Any man with a title, from a mayor to a prince, needs only to be a Mason a matter of months to find himself elevated to some figure-head position in the Craft, without the least merit of a purely Masonic kind or any understanding of the science itself. The central ideas and teachings of the Craft are left unexplained; ceremonies are discharged quite perfunctorily, and with the majority are of entirely subservient importance to the indissociable feasting and wearisome rounds of speechmaking that follow; and the general ignorance of Masonic truth provides ample scope for the selfassertion of men whose ideas of moral grandeur and Masonic virtue are evidenced by an ambition to attain office in the Craft and to adorn their persons with as much purple and jewellery as they can acquire.

It is all woefully wrong and misconceived. Of course worthier traits exist. The heart of English Masonry is sound, if its head be obtuse and muddled and the work of its hands not of the character it might and ought to be.

When the worst has been said that can be charged against the methods of modern Masonry, it amounts merely to an exhibition of venial human weak-
ness, vanity and sycophancy, the growth of which, whilst obscuring and falsifying Masonic principles, has been due to failure to grasp what those principles imply and entail. Many tares have sprung up among the corn; but good corn has not failed to grow, and that the two can grow together in the same field is a tribute to the richness of the soil from which both spring and the nourishing power of the Masonic intention, which, like sunlight, shines impartially upon both and quickens whatever seed is sown within its field, whether tares or wheat.

There are few received into the Craft to whom Masonry does not bring, if but dimly and momentarily, some measure of new vision, some impulse towards its ideals; few who do not feel it to contain something far greater than they know or than appears upon its surface-presentation. Moreover, in the deep heart of every man exists a responsiveness to ultimate truth, and a fondness, amounting sometimes to a passion, for it when expressed in ceremonial grandeur and impressiveness; a sub-conscious reminiscence, as Plato would explain, of truth and glories it has once known and must one day know again, and which Masonic ritual does something to revive, as was of course the intention of all the Initiation systems of the past and is still the intention of our present Order. And how often one finds minds which are denied, or which would repudiate, the use of symbolic ritual in their Church, leap to it with admiration and affection in their Lodge, as though the Protestant rejection, in the religious sphere, of the rich symbolism and sacramentalism wisely once devised for instructing eye, ear, and mind, and exalting the imagination towards spiritual verities, had starved them of their rightful nourishment. It is not surprising that to many such minds Masonry becomes, as they themselves say, a religion, or at all events a precious fact to which their souls respond however inarticulately, and that for them the door of the Lodge is, as was once said of the Altar-rails, “the thin barrier dividing the world of sense from the world of spirit.”

II.- The Future

In the fact that, amidst so much imperfect apprehension of its meaning and intention, Masonry should not only have survived, but should continue to make an ever-widening appeal to the imagination, exists the proof that, inherent in it, however deeply veiled, is a vibrant, indestructible vital principle which awakens a never-failing response, whether loud or feeble, in its devotees. The Light is in the darkness, though as yet that darkness comprehendeth it not. The modern Craftsman may not as yet “have the Mason Word” in his own
possession, like his earlier Brethren; but, nevertheless, that Word itself abides within the Masonic system, and he faintly hears and responds to its overtones; it is, for most, a Lost Word, but it patiently awaits recovery; and many to-day are impatiently seeking to find it.

That vital principle became implanted in the Order system by those wise, far-seeing, now untraceable minds which, as we have said, some three centuries ago conceived and inspired, if they did not directly devise, the formation of the Order as a means of perpetuating in an elementary way the ancient Secret Doctrine through a period of darkness and disruption, and until such time as that Doctrine, and the Mysteries that once taught it, can again be revived in a larger way.

The evidences of the presence in the Masonic system and texts of the ancient arcane teaching, are threefold. Firstly, the grading of the system itself into the three traditional stages of spiritual perfecting, involving in turn the discipline and purification of the body and sense-nature; the control, self-knowledge and illumination of the mind; and, finally, that entire abnegation of the will and death of the sense of personality which lead to union with the Divine Will, beyond personality and separateness. Secondly, the incorporation of the myths of the building of Solomon’s Temple and the death of Hiram, both of which are allegories and portray not historic, but metaphysical, truth of profound importance. Thirdly, the insertion into the texts of the Ceremonies and side-lectures of a number of pieces of esoteric teaching common to all the Initiation-doctrine of East and West, but not known to be such by the average Brother who is unfamiliar with that doctrine, and so cryptically expressed and so interwoven with more elementary moral teaching as only to be recognisable to the more fully instructed observer. Examples of this esoteric teaching and of its implications are given in the second section of this volume, dealing with “Light on the Way.”

The compilation of the text of the present Rituals and Instruction Lectures is supposed to have been, and no doubt was, undertaken in or soon after 1717, by Dr. Anderson and others whose personality is now of no moment.( Royal Arch Masonry was introduced into England in 1778 by a Jewish Brother, Moses Michael Hayes ) Nor is it material to inquire how far those compilers were deliberately obscuring and crypticising occult knowledge they personally possessed or, if personally lacking it, were unconsciously led into perpetuating greater wisdom than they knew. The subject has been ably and exhaustively discussed in a work of very high value to the Masonic student, Studies in Mysticism, by Brother A. E. Waite, who takes the view that the compilers did not for the most part know what they were doing, yet that they wrote as if guided by a blind though unerring instinct “which
made even the foolish old scholars of the past see through their inverted and scoriated glasses something of what Masonry actually is, and therefore, in the midst of much idle talk, they provided, unconsciously to themselves, a masterkey of the Sanctuary.”

This is probably a true verdict, for from various evidences Anderson and his colleagues show little signs of having been —esotericists of any depth or ability. But, be it accurate or not, the fact remains that our system was so designed and devised as to be a true compendium of universal Initiation; one that reproduces the salient features of every system that has existed, or that elsewhere still exists, for advancing human perfecting.

In that fact lies the strength, the vitality, the attractive power, of the Masonic system; the subtle charm that it casts over minds sensitive to its implications, but as yet unable to interpret them or to understand their own responsiveness to them. And in the demonstration and elucidation of the doctrine concealed in the system lies the hope of the Craft gradually educating itself and fulfilling its original design in the years now before it.

The point up to which these observations are meant to lead can now be stated. It is that before the true spirit and inward content of Masonry could be appreciated upon a scale sufficiently wide to constitute the Order a real spiritual force in the social body (as one hopes and sees indications that it will become), it has been necessary in the first instance to build up a great, vigorous and elaborate physical organisation as a vehicle in which that spirit may eventually and efficaciously manifest. In view of the importance of the ultimate objective aimed at, it matters nothing that from two to three centuries have been needed to develop that organisation, to build up that requisite physical framework, or that the material of which it has been constructed has not been so far of ideal quality. With the larger prospect in view we can afford to look both charitably and philosophically upon momentary matters that may be regarded as regrettable and as falling far below the standard of even the surface and letter of Masonic principle; we can be content that the Order has been composed so largely of men little understanding or capable of assimilating its profounder purpose; that its energies have run off from their true channel to the subsidiary ones of social amenities and charitable relief; that its higher ranks have been filled, not with adepts and experts in spiritual science, capable of ministering wisdom and instruction to the humbler ranks below (as the symbolism of our great hierarchical system surely implies their doing), but with “great kings, dukes and lords” and other social dignitaries, displaying no signs of possessing arcane wisdom and placed in their complimentary or administrative positions (which they nevertheless admirably and efficiently fulfil) merely to give the Order social sanction and—as the nauseous doggerel
runs "our mysteries to put a good grace on."

The growth of a great institution—a nation, a Church, a system of the Mysteries—is a slow growth, proceeding from material apparently unpromising, and involving continual selection, rejection, and refining, before something becomes finally sublimated from it and forged into an efficient instrument. To take the most appropriate analogy, the erection of Solomon’s Temple was a work of years, of diversely collected material and engaging numerous interests; but not until it was completed, dedicated and consecrated as a tabernacle worthy of the Shekinah, did that Presence descend upon it, illumining and flooding, the whole House and enabling the earthy vehicle to fulfil a spiritual purpose.

So now, too, with the Masonic Order. As a physical vehicle, a material organisation, it is as complete, as elaborated and as efficiently controlled, as perhaps it can ever be expected to be. It now stands awaiting illumination. That illumination must come from within itself, as the Divine Presence manifested within the symbolic Temple. The Order awaits the liberation and realisation of its own inner consciousness, hitherto dormant and repressed by surface-elements now proving to be of no, or of illusory, value. No sooner is the deeper and true nature of the Masonic design revealed to Brethren than upon all hands they leap to recognition of it and desire to realise it; and, for such, there can be no going back to old ways and old outlooks. The people that have sat in darkness have seen glimpses of a great light; they will now cultivate that light themselves, and be the means that others behold it also. In this way the Craft throughout the world will become gradually regenerated in its understanding and so fulfil the destiny planned for it by those who inspired its formation three centuries ago. And it will become in due course the portal to still higher and more important spiritual eventuations.

The coming change must be and will be worked out, not from anything emanating from the higher ranks of the Craft the Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodges but from the floor of the individual private Lodge. For the private Lodge is the Masonic unit. The higher ranks are but recruited therefrom at present for complimentary or administrative purposes, although when the time comes for those hierarchies to realise their own symbolic value, it will be their members who will descend upon the Lodges of common Craftsmen, no longer as makers of merely complimentary speeches, but as real authorities upon Masonic wisdom and instructive missionaries and purveyors of Masonic truth. The private Lodge is the point from which the transformation must be achieved. One such Lodge in a town or district, that applies itself to Masonic work upon the lines indicated in these pages, will be as a powerful leavening influence and set up wholesome reactions in neighbouring Lodges. Some
resistance, and even derision, may be anticipated at first from those content with old standards and not yet ripe to appreciate a higher one, for the “nations” of less refined understanding may always be expected to “rage furiously together” at any suggestion involving departure from habitual methods or implying a possible reflection upon their wisdom. This, however, can be met with patience and charitable thought, and will soon disappear before a quiet, resolute adherence to principle. Moreover, the problem of the admission of unsuitable applicants for membership of a Lodge will soon settle itself when the standard of Masonic interpretation has been thus raised.

Let it here be emphasised that nothing in this volume is intended to advocate the least departure from or alteration of current Masonic working, or any deflection from loyalty to established usage or the governing authority. Those forms are so efficiently contrived, so perfectly adapted to the work of the Order, that, save perhaps in a matter of detail here and there, they can be altered only to their disadvantage and at the peril of disturbing ancient landmarks fixed where they are with greater wisdom than is perhaps at present recognised. Even as things are, in the haste to get through — ceremonial work as quickly as may be, there is an unfortunate tendency already in official quarters to clip and curtail certain ceremonies, thereby depriving the Brethren of some valuable and significant pieces of ritual which, if continued to remain unworked, will soon become obsolete and forgotten.

Nevertheless, a little flexibility in matters of Lodge procedure would be permissible and is even desirable when Degrees are conferred. Merely to reel off a memorised ritual in a formal, mechanical way too often results in but mechanical effects, and the subject of the Ceremony goes away perhaps unimpressed or bewildered. There is nothing to prevent the delivery of the official rite being supplemented by unofficial words of explanation and encouragement such as would lend that rite additional impressiveness, a more intimate and personal bearing, and awaken in him who undergoes it a more deep and real sense of becoming vitally incorporated into living truth and into a Brotherhood to whom that truth is no mere sentiment but a profound reality. Moreover, with a view to inducing favourable atmosphere and conditions for the conferment of a Ceremony, before the candidate enters, the assembled Brethren should always be notified from the Chair that they are about to engage in a deeply solemn act which claims the concentrated thought and aspiration of each of them, to the intent that what is done and signified ceremonially may be realised spiritually in both themselves and him to whom they desire to minister. Further, the ceremonial preparation of the candidate before being brought into the Lodge should be treated, not with levity or as a mere incidental formality, but as a profoundly sacramental act, in the significance of which
both the officiating deacons and the candidate himself should be instructed. Let all Brethren be assured that there is no detail of Masonic ceremonial but is charged with very deep purpose and significance; this will appear to them more and more fully and luminously in proportion to their faithful endeavour to realise the intention of even simple and apparently unimportant points of ritual.

Sundry other matters may here be mentioned as deserving the consideration of the Craft.

The first is the co-ordination of the Rituals with a view to securing uniformity of working and instruction throughout the Craft, coupled with a certain but slight amount of desirable revision.

An official standardised Ritual would be beneficial and would no doubt be widely adopted even if its adoption were left optional to Lodges preferring to continue their present form of working. Upon all new Lodges, constituted after the date of standardisation, the official working should be imposed, so that, in course of time, virtual uniformity of procedure would be achieved. The present divergencies in the working of Lodges are not great and are easily capable of adjustment so as to secure a common footing of work throughout the Craft. Some Lodges use points of working not used in others and which they are rightly jealous in desiring to conserve; for example, many Lodges neither work nor know of the traditional five signs connected with the Third Degree, and merely communicate three of them, omitting two which are of great significance. On the other hand, some Lodges retain details brought over from the Operative bodies, details now obsolete and without moment to Speculative Masonry and which nowadays might well be dropped. The “Ancient Charge” delivered to Entered Apprentices on their reception, is an instance of an Operative tradition, for which, if it be not abandoned altogether, an alternative Charge, more suited to present conditions and more in consonance with Speculative Masonry, might well be substituted. For a Charge that was intended for, and that was delivered to, youths upon entering an Operative Building Guild is unsuited to men already immersed in civic, family, and business responsibilities, and seeking now to acquire knowledge of a purely mystical character; it is absurd and grotesque to counsel a middle-aged experienced man to perform elementary duties of citizenship, or to express to—perhaps an ecclesiastical dignitary who joins the Order, the hope that he “will become respectable in life”!

Revision of the Rituals would, of course, be a delicate task; one not to be undertaken at haphazard or to meet the chance whims and un instructed notions of this or that Brother, but one calling for the enlightened guidance of minds conversant with Initiation-science; otherwise the Craft may lose more
than it may gain, and good plants may be pulled up and thrown away in mistake for weeds. As an example of a point needing revision and excision, let me instance those passages in which a candidate is enjoined to extend charity and relief to those needing it “if he can do so without detriment to himself or connections.” These qualifying words surely vitiate the whole spirit of “Charity.” If Charity means anything—and mere financial help is not charity, but only one form of its practical manifestation involves a wise but unstinted selflessness, a self-sacrifice at whatever personal cost. To hedge round that supreme virtue with a cautious verbal reservation in one’s own favour is a limitation entirely unworthy of Masonic magnanimity and the words come as a shock to one’s moral sensitiveness.

To come to the next point the Festive Board. In previous pages it has been indicated that the customary practice of refreshment and social conviviality is not only practically useful, but has a deep sacramental value. It is, of course, technically extra-Masonic and non-official, or perhaps quasi-official; but it provides real and useful opportunities for fraternising, and intellectual opportunities for enlarging upon Masonic matters not dealt with in the Lodge sanctuary itself; whilst, in its symbolic and higher aspect, it illustrates that relaxation from labour, and that refreshment derived from the inter-communion of those united in a common work, which in the providential order are arranged for us both in this life and hereafter.

The value, or otherwise, of the Festive Board, depends, therefore, upon its good use or its abuse. If it be regarded and used as the natural extension of the more formal work of the Lodge, it can exercise a ministry of great service; if, on the other hand, it be but an occasion for junketing and social frivolity under the cover of Masonry, but with little or no Masonic relevance, it is apt to become a thing of reproach; the sublimities of the Lodge-work are falsified by it and any good issuing from that work is forthwith neutralised. The test of true Masonic devotion and sincerity would be the honest answer each Brother can give to the question: “How far would my interest in Masonry extend and continue, if the practice of the Festive Board did not exist and Masonic proceedings were confined to the formal work of the Lodge?” With this reflection the matter may be left to the good judgment of the Craft.

There must also be mentioned a question which has already rankled as a thorn in the side of Grand Lodge and will doubtless become still more troublesome—the “Women’s question”; and if I approach it, it is not with the idea of presuming to offer suggestions to the governing authority of the Craft, but of defining the position for the guidance of the average Brother.

As things stand, Grand Lodge is the trustee of a system which it has inherited, which it is pledged to continue upon established lines, and which it
has no power to alter if it wished, save at the request and by the common consent of those whose interests it exists to conserve. It has no power to sanction the admission of women into the order, nor is there any desire in its ranks that it should; indeed the fact that women can to-day take elsewhere precisely the same degrees as the Craft confers is a fact unknown to the majority of Brethren.

Whether Grand Lodge should extend official recognition to societies professing to be Masonic and admitting members of both sexes is another matter, and depends upon the view to be taken of the regularity or irregularity of the societies in question. Can such societies produce satisfactory evidence of their regularity and right to recognition, or have they sprung into existence through the treachery or disloyalty of members of the Craft? That is not a question falling to the present writer to determine, nor has he sufficient material before him to do so. The only conclusion he can come to for himself, and the only advice he can offer to others, is to abide loyal by the existing ordinances of the duly constituted authority. The Craft so far has been the “Men’s House,” and must so remain until such time as circumstances—which do not now exist and for a long time to come are unlikely to exist—clearly warrant a departure from the present position. It may be that the “Men” do not make the best use of their “House”; it may be that the now banned societies have sprung into existence because of that fact; it may be—and there are grounds for supposing it that in those societies Masonry is worked with greater decorum, a far fuller understanding, a deeper reverence and appreciation of what it implies, than in the orthodox Craft. But the fact remains that we are committed and pledged to our own Constitution for the present and we shall do neither it nor our individual selves a service by departing from strict loyalty to it.

Upon the general question of the fitness of women to receive the Masonic or any alternative form of Initiation, I must record an affirmative conviction of the same strength—as the negative one I make to the suggestion that women should be admitted to the Craft or that visiting relations between the latter and the unauthorised societies should be sanctioned; for, in existing conditions, such relationship is undesirable and might prove disastrous to both. Although the sexes meet upon a common footing in the field of both religious and secular affairs, and — although the whole modern tendency is towards equality of rights, function and responsibility, Masonry at present stands outside both the religious and the secular categories, and by the majority of its members is viewed merely as a social luxury and a casual appendage to other activities of life. Until it is accorded a far higher appreciation than this, until it can be viewed from a standpoint not merely of ordinary morality—but from one involving a high standard of personal sanctity; until the mental conception of
it is sufficiently lofty and compelling to neutralise emotional frailty and the chances of moral lapse, Masonry is far better reserved as the “Men’s House,” even though that House be, in the prophet’s words, one “of untempered mortar” and lacking the advantage of feminine association.

The human soul is essentially sexless, yet to the feminine side of humanity is notoriously credited exceptional intuitive power and capacity for the finer apprehension of truth, and upon this account, in the days of the Eleusinia, women were never excluded from initiation into the Mysteries, but were allotted special rites of their own, and, in the processions of the Thesmophorim, passed along the public street bearing upon their heads the volumes of the Sacred Law,—an eloquent symbolic tribute and testimony to the superior power of the feminine understanding to intuitise the finer sense and implications of that Law. It was to a woman—the mysterious Diotima of Megara—that the amazed Socrates owed his supreme initiation into that last Mystery of Love about which he speaks in the Symposium with such awe and moving eloquence; yet a woman with whom stands exhibited, in purposed contrast, that opposite pole of womanhood the futile, mindless Xantippe whom he had wedded. There have been Egerias, Aspasias and Hypatias, besides those known to history; and Dante’s hierophantess, Beatrice,—but types that “eternal womanly” which, Goethe truly divined, always exists with us to lead the male intellect ever upward and on. It is almost needless to point to the mass of work done by women still living in the exposition of mystical philosophy and religion, or to say that such great mines of instruction in matters of Masonic moment as Isis Unveiled, The Secret Doctrine, and A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery, have come from the pens of women learned and enlightened in things pertaining to the Craft to a degree seldom evidenced by its own members.

In every interest, then, it is desirable that the “women’s question” should rest where it is. Nothing can prevent those, of whichever sex, who are really builders in the spirit, from privately fraternising in that spirit. To such, formal collaboration, however agreeable it might be were it permissible, can be dispensed with, for their work is not dependent upon facilities of a formal character, and they will be the first to recognise the wisdom of Order accepting and the expedience of conforming to current technical necessity. When the time and conditions arrive for present barriers to be removed, it will be because the Craft itself will have removed them by entering into a fuller realisation of its purpose than now obtains, and because Grand Lodge will have been influenced to alter its laws by an authority higher even than itself—the Grand Lodge Above.

To pass now from these considerations of things of the moment to the
larger vista towards which those things are leading, what is the prospect before the Order?

That prospect is perhaps sufficiently indicated by the familiar words written at the head of this paper: “First, that which is natural; after, that which is spiritual.” For nearly three centuries the Craft has been developing from a small germ to a great robust body characterised by tendencies of a purely natural kind, manifesting natural human weaknesses, and displaying the inexperience, the irresponsibility, and the limitations of outlook common to all youth. It has meant well, even when it has misconceived its purpose. If it has provided a field in which numbers of men, blind to the Order’s real significance, have sought merely social amusement and personal distinction, it has also proved a source of light and guidance to many obscure souls not subject to those vanities and who have realised and profited by its implications, and some of who from the portal of the Craft, have passed on in silence to more advanced methods or colleges of spiritual instruction. A sacramental system is not invalidated by the default of those accepting its jurisdiction; and as saints often flourished in the Church amid most unsaintly conditions, so not a few Masons have won to the Light despite the surrounding darkness of their Brethren.

But now is coming ’a change, and it is significant that it comes not from the higher ranks of the Craft where, with all desire for the Craft’s best interests, every tendency is towards conservatism and the sufficiency of old standards, but from the rank. and file, from the younger, newer blood now flowing into the veins of the Order. It is, of course, not a movement even remotely resembling disaffection, but now, as never before, Brethren in numbers are asking from Masonry bread of life; they are caring less and less for ceremonies and ancient usages unless these can be shown to have supporting justification; they look to the leaders and ’teachers of the Craft for, not a perpetual reiteration of complimentary but unsatisfying speeches, but for instruction in real Masonic light and wisdom.

The future of the Order cannot be appraised without reference to the general social life surrounding it; for it is not something apart and detached from that life but an integral element of it, and between the two there is perpetual interaction and reaction. The gradual disintegration of the Churches affects the Craft, tending both to increase it numerically and to advance the exploration of its concealed spiritual resources. Religion will not die, the religious instinct can never die, nor will “the Church” in some form cease to exist and to fulfil a certain ministry. But today a supplementary form of ministry is required and Masonry can provide it. A regrouping and redistribution of energy is taking place, in the course of which we may come to find that that pow-
erful psychological phenomenon, a new group-consciousness—the Masonic consciousness—has been in process of formation; a consciousness which may become in time as potent a factor as was the Church-consciousness of mediaeval days, or as was the moral power of the Delphian Mysteries during the seventeen centuries of their great influence.

When the time ripens, the Mysteries—as a science of life and an art of so living as to qualify for—attaining ultra-natural life—will come to be restored. For long past, both within and without the Church, the tide of human persuasion and events has been deadest against the tradition of regeneration into that ultra-natural life, as originally taught and practised. But that which has been, is that which, in the course of cyclic recurrence, shall be again, and upon a higher level of development than before. It is not that the Christian Church is not a steward of the Mysteries—or at least that portion of it which does not reject the authentic sacramental signs and channels through which those Mysteries may be realised,—but, from reasons too complex and lengthy here to detail, there has been failure—on the human side to realise them. as they are now presented, with the result that the Christian Ecclesia has degenerated into a state analogous to that into which the pre-Christian Mystery-systems had fallen when the new era began. To the clear-seeing eye the narrative in the Gospels, apart from all questions of historicity, is a drama of Initiation written for that time, for every eye to see, and for every mind to profit by; for what previously had been but adumbrated and approached by a few individuals in the concealment of the Mystery-schools, became, at the Incarnation, objectified, universalised and made generally accessible;—in other words the Gospels became a manual of Initiation-instruction to the whole world according to the measure of individual capacity to receive it, notwithstanding that large tracts of knowledge remained unproclaimed in those Gospels but were reserved for more private communication. The recurrent cycle of the Church’s year, with its feasts and fasts, its ‘symbolic seasons pointing to inhibitions and expansions of the soul’s consciousness, is a true chart of the path to be followed by those who themselves seek initiation under the mastership of the Great Hierophant and Exemplar of regenerative science; while in the Sacrament of the Altar is portrayed, albeit under different symbolism, the actual process of Initiation and the same transmutative changes in the body and mind of the recipient as are emblematised to the Masonic candidate in the Craft Degrees.

Truth remains static, although temporal expressions and ministries of it follow the temporal order, and are born and die. When this form of the Mysteries becomes neglected or abused, or that steward of them decrepit or ineffective, another—in the Divine providence and patience—stands ready to carry forward their torch; truth becomes “fulfilled in many ways lest one
good custom should corrupt the world.” The Masonic system was devised three centuries ago, at a time of general unrest and change, as a preparatory infant-school in which once again the alphabet of a world-old Gnosis might be learned and an elementary acquaintance made with the science of human regeneration. However misunderstood and misapplied, however materialistically conceived, have been its rites, the soul and consciousness of every voluntary participant in them stands imperishably impressed with the memory of them. The maxim “Once a Mason, always a Mason” expresses an occult truth not realised by those who are unaware of the subjective value and persistence of one’s deliberated objective actions; though the Church implies the same truth when it deems the act of sacramental baptism to bring a given soul within the fold of Christ for ever. In each case, and especially so when the deliberate will of the neophyte assents to the act, a new addition is made to the group-soul of the community into which the individual becomes incorporated; and, in the case of the Masonic initiate, the aggregate and volume of what we have termed the Masonic Consciousness is enlarged. Reactions and consequences follow of a nature perhaps too abstruse to dilate upon here, but to which the Roman Initiated poet referred in the well-known words:

\[\text{Magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo.}\]
\[\text{Iam redit et Virgo; redeunt Saturnia regna;}\]
\[\text{Iam nova progenies coelo demittitur alto.}\]

Meanwhile, tinctured and affected by this metaphysical influence from the subjective world, the work of the Craft proceeds within this bourne of time and place; beginning, as we have shown, crudely and following the grosser tendencies of the natural order, until a moment is reached when a new birth becomes possible. Then the natural gives way to the spiritual, and the great material organisation, a “body prepared,” becomes the requisite physical vehicle for a correspondingly great office as a minister of real Wisdom.

Operative Masonry preceded and became spiritualised into Speculative, and the gross beginnings of the latter are now becoming sublimated into a more subtle conception and tending to a scientific mysticism at once theoretic and practical. We may look forward to the gradual increasing spiritualisation of the Craft and to its becoming—in a future the nearness or distance of which no one can presume to indicate—the portal to a still more advanced expression of the Sacred Mysteries. For, foretold the Great Master, the time will surely come when in the present ways of neither this “mountain”— neither this Church nor that Craft—nor any Jerusalem that now serves as a place of peace, will men worship the Universal Father, but after another manner and mystically, that is, after the manner of the eternal Mysteries. “For salvation is
of the Jews,” He added, and it has previously been explained that by “Jews” is implied the Initiates of those Mysteries, acting under the Grand Mastership of Him who was named “the King of the Jews.”

The Churches, therefore, may be left to continue to discharge their proper ministry, whilst those who feel the need of a larger science, an alternative and perhaps richer fare than the Churches provide, may find it in the ancient Gnosiss to which Freemasonry serves as a portal of entrance. By following the path to which that portal leads, they may be brought to a deeper knowledge of themselves and of the mysteries of their own being; to which end, and which end alone, the Masonic Craft was designed. That Craft will only become what its individual members make it. If they see in it only a ceremonial procedure, at such it will remain, and their initiation will be but one in name and not in fact. But if they strive to realise and make their own the living spirit and intention behind the outward rites and formal usages, the dramatised quest of Light and of the Lost Word may result for them in a blessed finding of that which they profess to seek, and what they find themselves they will become able to communicate to other seekers, until the Craft is justified of all its children, and itself becomes—as it was intended to become—a great light in a dark world.

Postscript

And now let me close this book, as every Lodge is closed, in peace and concord with all my Brethren, and with the ancient prayer that the Order may be preserved of God, and its members be cemented with every virtue. If, in what has here been written, Masonry has been given a conception spiritualised beyond the measure of its common understanding, I have but followed the example of our Ancient Brethren, who, lifting up their eyes to hills whence cometh strength, wrought their Masonic work upon the highest eminences of the mind and discerned the Mysteries of the Craft, not with eyes of the flesh, but with the vision and understanding of the spirit. And they it was who perpetuated for us of later time an Order and a Doctrine by the right interpretation and use of which we, too, might ascend where they had risen, and from the same Mount of Vision behold the same things that they had seen.

Few, perhaps, ascend to those high hills to-day, in this more than usually troubled and dark age. But some are ready and eager to do so, and for them especially it is that this book is written. All must ascend thither at last. But, at the moment, the World-spirit is dominant in all our institutions. Wisdom is little apparent; for want of vision the people perish; and the quest of Light has
to be pursued under conditions of peculiar adversity. But there is a mystery of Darkness no less than one of Light, and, in the moulding hands of the, Great Architect of the House of Life, the darkness and the light are both alike and serve as twin pillars that, finally, will establish that House in strength.

Those, then, who cannot, or are not yet prepared to, mount the higher path of understanding the things of the Craft, must nevertheless be thought of in charity, and spoken of in faith and iii hope. For, placed as we all are in different and unequal degrees of perception upon the chequer-work floor of Life, around all alike-black and white, wise and foolish, learned and uninformed—runs the unifying, surrounding skirtwork and border of a common Providence; about us all are flung the Everlasting Arms; whilst, from the mutual interplay of the light and darkness in us all, becomes gradually generated the realisation of that Wisdom in which, even now, we are all one, though of that unity few as yet are conscious. And since Wisdom will at last be justified of all her children, we need not complain of her processes, which, as they work out through the ages to a beneficent conclusion, temporarily involve the sharp and painful contrasts that we find.

Twenty-four centuries ago, at a time of similar darkness and degeneracy to the present, an aged seer and golden-tongued poet, who through a long life had contemplated the Ancient Mysteries of Light and Wisdom, spoke of the difficulty of conveying them to a world not yet able to appreciate them; and yet recognised the truth that, in the opposition—of the World-spirit to them, the Divine purpose was nevertheless being effected. In sending forth this book, then, and exhibiting the Mysteries of Masonry in a light towards which, doubtless, some who read it will not at once be responsive, let me appropriate that poet's words, and welcome any inappreciation of what I have written with the same serenity as his; the same confidence of forward-looking faith in its ultimate acceptance:

Knowledge, we are not foes!
I seek thee diligently;
But the World with a great wind blows,
Shining—but not from thee!
Yet blowing to beautiful things,
On, amid dark and light;
Till Life, through the trammellings
Of laws that are not the Right,
Breaks, clean and pure, and sings
Glorying to God in the height.

Euripides, Baccha; (trans. Murray).
Part IV

The Ceremony of Initiation
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THE CEREMONY OF INITIATION

Analysis and Commentary

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Chapter 1

The Ceremony of Initiation

Introduction

I.

These notes are intended as a Manual of Instruction for the benefit of Masons who have recently taken their First Degree, and for that of other Brethren wishful to understand the purpose and the meaning of the Initiation Ceremony. The endeavour to indicate the reason for the existence of the Masonic system, to draw aside the veil of allegory and symbolism in which the Initiation Ceremony is clothed, and to reveal its spirit and subsurface significance.

The First Degree Ceremony used on the reception of a Candidate into the Craft is designed to introduce him to the first stage of a system of knowledge and self-discipline which, if faithfully followed up and lived out in his personal life, will clarify and transform his mind from its natural state of darkness to one of Light, i.e., expanded clear-seeing spiritual consciousness raised far beyond and existing independently of the perceptions of the natural senses. It is, therefore called a Ceremony of Initiation from in ire to go inwards, i.e., beyond the merely material surfaces of things), and because it is meant to mark the beginning (initium) of a new order of personal life and consciousness. It might equally well be called one of Regeneration or Rebirth; indeed its parallel in Religion is the sacrament of Baptism, which is the initial incident of the religious life and is performed at the West end of a Church, just as a Masonic Candidate enters the Lodge and begins his Masonic career in the symbolic West. It is a ceremony provided to give an answer to what the Candidate professes to be the predominant wish of his heart — a wish well expressed by probably the oldest prayer in the world, which is still used daily by millions of our fellowmen in the East:—
From the unreal lead me to the Real;
From the darkness lead me to Light;
From the mortal bring me to Immortality!

The presence or absence of this aspiration in a Candidate should be the test of his fitness for Initiation. Any less exalted motive for seeking Initiation falls short of the true intention. The Candidate’s attitude should be one of definite intelligent expectation of spiritual good to come to him, and of positive aspiration and heart-hunger for it; equally definitely it must not be for any material or social advantage, nor a merely negative state of curiosity or uncertainty as to what is to be found in the Craft.

II.

For every Candidate the Initiation Ceremony implies that whatever academic or scientific learning he possesses, whatever philosophical ideas he holds, whatever religious creed he professes, prior to Initiation, there remains something more — indeed something vastly more — for him yet to learn and to which the Craft can help to lead him. This does not mean that he will necessarily discover his previous convictions to be false; on the other hand, so far as they be true he will find abundant confirmation and amplification of them, and so far as they are erroneous or imperfect he will learn to modify them. It means that he must be prepared to find some of his wonted and perhaps even most deeply rooted ideas to be apprehensions of Truth so partial and limited that they operate as obstructions to the wider vision which might be his, and that the more tenaciously he clings to them the more he may be blocking his own light. If, therefore, he is to profit by the Light to which the Craft leads he must be prepared to keep his mind open and fluid and to make such mental self-surrender as occasion warrants. We all tend to feel so certain of ourselves, so wise in our own conceits, and too often are unaware that we have much to unlearn before we can become truly teachable. But from earliest times the Candidate for Initiation has been called a “child” and taught to regard himself as such.

Accordingly the divesting of the Candidate’s person prior to the Ceremony is symbolic of the mental unclothing required of him, whilst his self-abandonment to be taken wherever he is led and to do whatever he is told betokens the meekness and docility with which his mind should follow Truth wherever it may lead, even into apparently perilous places and among ideas not recognised by the conventions and orthodoxies of the world without. For true Initiation involves a spiritual adventure, a voyage of the mind, not into the unknowable but into what the Candidate has never yet known or experienced; and it leads to regions where he travels farthest who carries least
burdens, where he acquires most who casts away most of himself, and where the really hearthungry are increasingly filled with good things from which the intellectually rigid and the rich in conventional knowledge are automatically precluded. To the single-minded. Wisdom has ways of revealing itself which the learned understand not.

Mental self-tripping and readjustment is, of course, not a sudden, but a gradual process. No Candidate is called upon to do undue or too sudden violence to himself, but rather to adapt himself gradually to the new conditions and to become transformed by a slow but steady renewing of his mind and outlook. See how this is evidenced by his progressive unclothing as he passes on from Degree to Degree! In the First only certain parts of his person are bared; in the Second, only certain other and complementary parts. It is not until the Third Degree that the maximum unclothing is called for, by that time he is presumed to be inured to self-surrender and better able to make the larger sacrifice which that sublime Degree involves.

III.

To turn now to the Ceremony itself. Up to about the year 1700, formally compiled Rituals did not exist. The working was transmitted orally. There was no such thing as a memorised form mechanically repeated with such word-perfectness and dignified elocution as may be, but an extempore pronouncement of real power and spiritual efficacy, performed by a Master possessing complete understanding of what he did, and able to adapt or amplify the ceremony in accordance with the culture, intelligence and probable requirements of a properly prepared Candidate. The actual form of words employed was (and still always is) the least important element about the Ceremony. What is of far vaster consequence is the ability of the Initiator, and those co-operating with him, to infuse into such spiritual fervour and emotional momentum that what is done and said over the Candidate shall penetrate his heart and mind, and awaken certain truths in his soul, — a result requiring, as its first condition, that the Candidate be a fit and proper person and properly prepared for it.

Even to-day, the Irish and many Continental Masonic Constitutions work to no set ritual. Certain traditional landmarks and age-old usages are uniformly observed, but for the rest (e.g. The various charges, explanations, and entrustings) the wording of the Ceremony is left to the inspiration and emotion of the moment.

The Ritual which, with slight local variations, has become traditional with us, embodies all these land-marks and usages, and has been compiled with
extraordinary and, indeed, inspired skill and wisdom. To treat it superficially, or regard it as a composition to be reeled off one’s memory in a “non-stop” fashion, is to miss the purport and the beauties of a highly complex and comprehensive compilation. Analysis of it shows that it is built up of fourteen distinct “movements” or episodes, in two series of seven each.

The first series is associated with the Candidate’s state of darkness; it is an ascending or crescendo series rising, like an emotional wave, to a climax at the moment of his symbolic restoration to Light. The second series is associated with the state of Light to which he has been lifted up; it is a descending or diminuendo series dealing with matters consequent upon his attainment of Light; the emotional billow, as it were, dies gradually away, but leaving the Candidate’s being flooded with new perceptions and stimulated by a quickening influence such as he never previously knew and which will probably take him some time to assimilate.

The sequence of these episodes is as follows; and they will indicate what a large range of ideas has been compressed within a short Ceremony:–

STATE OF DARKNESS

STATE OF LIGHT

Each of these fourteen incidents provides scope for prolonged reflection and comment, but in these notes only brief observations can be made upon each of them in succession.

The separation of the Ceremony into two main sub-divisions, the “state of Darkness” and the “state of Light,” has a far-reaching allusiveness; first to cosmic truth and in relation to human life generally; secondly, historically and in correspondence with the Ancient Mysteries.

Cosmically, all human life begins its quest for Light and Truth in a state of darkness as our nature, our purpose and destiny. We are, as it were, born blind or hoodwinked about them; as the Ancients taught, we have all drunk the cup of Lethe and the water of forgetfulness before descending to birth in the flesh. Our quest, therefore, at the outset of our earthly career must necessarily be a darkened one, a mere hoodwinked fumbling about for we know not what, until the pains, sorrows, and disillusionments of existence awake us to the
fact that we are wasting our substance among shadows and futilities, and that there may be something higher and better worth hunting for. This preliminary condition of mind and soul the Initiates likened to being in a place which they called “the Hall of Ignorance” or “the Hall of Truth in Darkness,” in which we grope about for a Light and Wisdom which are at all times around us, but which we cannot find because our faculties are as yet sealed from perceiving them.

Later on, when experience has caused a man to turn away in distaste from outer interests to the quest of better things, he becomes initiated in to the science of them, and was said to have entered the “Hall of Learning” or the “Hall of Truth in Light,” for by this time he is no longer ignorantly groping in the dark, but has become actuated by a definite and enlightened resolve to find the Reality behind the shadows.

It is these two conditions, one of groping ignorantly and with blinded eyes for the Reality behind temporal existence, and one of seeking it intelligently and with the opened eyes of the Initiate, that are reproduced in the two subdivisions of our First Degree Ceremony. There remains a third condition, but for the novice it is as yet a long way off and is, therefore, beyond the purview of our present enquiry; its attainment is described as entering the “Hall of Wisdom,” which is possible only to Master Masons who have passed beyond the two previous “Halls,” and whose search has been rewarded with finding the ultimate secrets of life.

Preceding the actual Ceremony, however, there is implied a preliminary and very necessary routine, — the due Preparation of the Candidate, some remarks upon which must preface our commentary upon the fourteen points of the Ceremony itself.

As to the sources of the Ceremony, it (as also the official E.A. Lecture and Tracing Board Explanation provided to interpret it) is a blend of various streams of influence. The chief of these is the traditional method — usually called the “Secret Doctrine” — common to all the Ancient Mysteries and Initiation systems from the dawn of history; a method and doctrine always held in reserve from the knowledge of the masses of the people, constituting stronger “meat” and imparting deeper truths than the more simple instruction, or “milk,” provided for the general public by the current education and religious institutions of a given time or place. As is well known to students of the history of religion, behind the exoteric doctrine of every great Teacher or religious Founder, has always existed an esoteric counterpart of it for advanced disciples.

Combined with elements of this ancient esoteric wisdom are elements from more recent cognate systems, such as Hermeticism, the Hebrew Ca-
bala, and Rosicrucianism, as also survivals from mediaeval Gild Masonry, whilst the Holy Scriptures which have served to nourish the religious life of the West are interfused with all these and act as a unifying and explanatory "great light."

Accordingly we find our Masonic Ritual, as the offspring of these sources, continually using the language of its parents, speaking now in the terms or symbols of one and now in those of another of them; and it becomes clear that all these sources have been stewards of the same Mysteries, that they proclaim the same truth and mean the same thing, and can be constantly cross-referenced and found to be mutually interpretative.

Take one of a host of possible examples — the Preparation of the Candidate. The Craft requires every Candidate for Initiation to come “properly prepared.” In Religion this paralleled by the Church requiring its neophytes to be “prepared” for Confirmation into fuller realisation of spiritual life. And every ancient and modern Initiation system has required it; indeed the preparation insisted on an antiquity and in more advanced secret Orders than the Craft, was, and still is, of an extremely intensive character. But the point to be stressed here is that, for those who really desire Light, a preliminary orientation of will, heart and mind is indispensable to their desire becoming fulfilled, and “Prepare ye the way of the Lord!” is the Biblical confirmation of what the Ancient Mysteries required and what the Craft still inculcates. And when, with us, the Master of the Lodge dispatches his Deacon to prepare the Candidate for his reception, is he not still echoing and giving a personal value to words of impersonal and cosmic application. “Behold, I will send my messenger to prepare the way before me”?}

IV.

The mental preparation of the Candidate should have been proceeding for a considerable time before the Ceremony is conferred. It can be considerably assisted by his Masonic sponsors upon whom rests the responsibility of vouching for his fitness for Initiation, and who in private converse can adumbrate to him a broad idea of what is involved, and assure themselves of his sympathetic response to it.

As to the symbolic preparation of his external person, much closer attention is paid to this in Continental Lodges than is usual with us. He is taken to a quiet ante-room and there left alone for some time to compose his mind and read some sentences warning him of the solemnity of his project and the desirability of proceeding with it in a spirit of meekness and confidence or of withdrawing from it while there is yet time.
After an interval he is interviewed by the Deacon and asked for his decision. If he desires to proceed he is then asked to write brief replies to some such questions as these:– (1) What is your view of the purpose of human life and the nature of human destiny? (2) What is your object in seeking to be initiated? (3) What may the Craft hope to receive from you in return for what you expect to receive from it? He is left to write his replies, which are then taken into the Lodge and submitted to the Master’s approval, who declares whether they are satisfactory, in which event only the ballot is taken. Upon his election the Deacon is despatched to greet the Candidate with the tidings and to invite him to surrender his metals and money. After which the formal preparation of his person proceeds as with us; this being done with solemnity, the reason for each separate act of preparation being briefly explained by the Deacon.

It were well if the above practice or an approximation of it were always followed. In any event great importance attaches to the due performance of the Deacon’s ministrations so as to create the most favourable mental conditions for the Candidate before he enter the Lodge. (The symbolic value of the Deacon’s work is explained in our Lodge Paper No. 4, and it is in the spirit of that explanation that he should discharge his duties).

If it be essential that the Candidate should enter the Lodge properly prepared, it is equally important that those waiting to receive and initiate him should themselves be prepared in heart and intention to do so. Even the atmosphere of the Temple should be prepared by rendering it peaceful and free of commotion. The W.M. can ensure this by enjoying complete silence during the interval preceding the Candidate’s entrance and inviting the Brethren to reflect upon the nature of the work in hand and to unite with him in earnest aspiration that that work may be spiritually effectual.

The unofficiating Brethren present are not meant to be mere spectators of the Ceremony. The whole Lodge, and not only the acting officials of it, should participate in the mystery. Great is the power of united concentrated thought and intention in impressing a Candidate’s mentality and awaking it to new and spiritual perceptions; and to this end the spoken work of the Master and Officers actively concerned can be very greatly assisted by the silent mental co-operation of the unofficiating Brethren.
Part I.

1.- The Admission

From the place of preparation the Candidate is led to the door of the Lodge. This he finds close tyled. He “meets with opposition” (as the E.A. Lecture says) and cannot gain admission save in the prescribed way.

In other words, on turning from the world without to the world within, his first discovery is to find his way blocked by an intervening barrier. What is that barrier? What does the door of the Lodge symbolise?

Obviously it symbolises some obstructive element in himself. He is made to recognise that any opposition to his own spiritual advancement comes from within himself and must be overcome by his own efforts. (Hence it is that the Candidate is required to give the knocks himself; they should never be given for him by any one else.)

The purport of this episode is expressly declared in the E.A. Lecture to be subjective and mystical. The knocks are there stated to be interpretable in the light of the Scriptural direction, “Ask and ye shall have; Seek and ye shall find; Knock and it shall be opened to you.” This threefold direction, observe, not only corresponds with the triple knocks, but also with the triple faculties of the Candidate himself. He should “ask” with the prayerful aspirations of his heart; he should “seek” with the intellectual activities of his mind; he should “knock” with the force of his bodily energies. He who hopes to find the Light within must devote his entire being to the quest; it demands and engages the attention of the whole man.

How true to life and to psychology is this symbolic opposition at the door of the Lodge! We all erect our mental barriers. The habitual thought-methods, prejudices, preconceptions and “fixed ideas” in which we indulge in the course of life in the outer world, become obstructions to the perception of things of the world within. They create mental deposits which condense and harden, until they obscure the wider, deeper, clearer vision we might have but for own self-created limitations. We erect and tyle our own door against ourselves and block our own light, and eventually on seeking to turn to the Light find ourselves confronted by darkness and opposition of our own creating. And it is just these barriers that must be broken down by our own efforts and the force of our own persistent “knocks.”

For “knocks” it may be helpful to think of a more modern term, — vibrations. Persistent vibrations, in a given direction will, as is well known, eventually break down whatever is opposed to them, whether physical or mental. Vibrations of faith remove mountains. Vibrations of intellectual energy re-
sult in the solution of problems. Vibrations of emotion break through into the hearts of others. Vibration of spiritual aspiration penetrate into higher worlds and open doors into them. And all this is signified by the simple incident of the Candidate meeting with opposition at the door of the Lodge and gaining admission as the result of his own symbolic knocks.

2.- The Prayer of Dedication

The initial act of the Ceremony is appropriately a prayer by the assembled Brethren (1) that the Candidate (who has already been elected to formal membership of the Craft) may now become spiritually incorporated into the Great Brotherhood, and (2) for his endowment with such an influx of wisdom as, by virtue of that incorporation, will give him increasing power to manifest the beauty of holiness.

The brevity and simplicity of this prayer are liable to obscure its deep implications. Observe (from the three words just emboldened above) that it contains the first unobtrusive reference to that trinity of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty of which the Candidate will hear later on, and of which it is prayed that he may become a living manifestation.

Note too, that there is no reference in the prayer to morality of merely ethical virtues; it invokes something far loftier than these, — the gift of the Spirit; it strikes a keynote intended to govern the tone of both the Ceremony and the Candidate’s whole after-life.

Observe, too, that it is not a prayer by the Candidate (who is required only to “kneel and listen” to it), but one for him and for the Craft itself; it is a prayer that the spiritual efficiency of the whole Fraternity may become augmented by this new accession to it. Every Brother present, therefore, should unite with the Chaplain in a strong tension of aspiration that the prayer may become realised in the joint interests of both the Craft and its new member. Later on, the latter should make the prayer his own, remembering throughout his life that it was once offered over him in his darkness and helplessness on behalf of the whole Craft, and that it falls to himself to justify increasingly the invocation then so solemnly made in his behalf.

3.- The Perambulation or Mystical Journeying

Next follows the Perambulation. But this preceded by an inquiry to the Candidate; where does he repose reliance in circumstances of danger and difficulty? It is obvious that he is about to be exposed to circumstances of that character, and the question is therefore put to ascertain whether he ought to be allowed
to expose himself to them or not. The answer to the question should always be his own and should spring spontaneously from his own mind and lips; to prompt him with an answer detracts from the reality of the Ceremony and encourages him to give a reply which may be insincere. The Ceremony implies that if he cannot voluntarily give the proper response to the question, he is unfit for Initiation and should be led back out of the Lodge. If, on the other hand, he responds satisfactorily, well and good; the Ceremony may proceed and will be a test of the Candidate’s profession of faith.

What are the dangers and difficulties he is about to be exposed to? In our Ceremony they are, of course, merely theoretic and symbolic. But in the Initiation Rites of the Ancient Mysteries (of which ours are a faint echo) they were extremely exacting, realistic and affrighting, and such as put a Candidate to severe tests of mental stability and moral fitness. They may be read about more fully in literature on the subject, from which it will be gathered how very essential it was that a Candidate for Initiation into the secrets and mysteries of his own being should possess not only a stable faith and moral centre, but also a sound mind in a sound body. Otherwise grave responsibility rested upon both the Initiators and the Candidate, and grave risks of damage to the latter’s reason attached by suffering an unfit person to “rashly run forward” towards experiences for which he was unsuited.

Hence it is that a Candidate is still called upon to make a public declaration of faith and to be passed in review before the Lodge ere the Ceremony is proceeded with, so that his Initiators may be satisfied of his fitness.

This is the first reason for the ceremonial Perambulation. But there is another, of equal importance. The journey round the Lodge is a symbolic representation of the Candidate’s own life-journeyings in this world prior to his request for Initiation into the world within. The dangers and difficulties referred to are the vicissitudes encountered in his own personal Odyssey; indeed the wanderings and buffettings of Odysseus are an ancient poetic allegory of these experiences, of a like character to the parable of the career of the Prodigal Son before he “came to himself” and struck the true path.

We must observe two most noteworthy details in connection with this symbolic journey. The first is that, though in a state of darkness himself, he is not alone, but has with him an enlightened guide. Moreover he is compassed about by a cloud of witnesses keenly anxious for his spiritual advancement and restoration to light. The significance of this detail is that every traveller through life has within himself his own invisible guide and that his soul’s upward struggles are observed by many unseen watchers.

The second is that in the course of his symbolic journey he is led to each Warden in turn, whom, by a particular gesture, he as it were arouses from
silence and stirs to utterance. The gesture itself is in fact a repetition of the knocks previously given at the door of the Lodge. But whereas those knocks were first addressed to inert material (the door), they are now applied to a living being (the Warden). What does this imply? It signifies that in our efforts to turn away from the outer world and penetrate to the Light of the inner one, we not only overcome our own self-created opposition, but we awaken and stimulate into activity certain living but hitherto dormant energies within ourselves.

Of those latent energies with him the Candidate will come to learn more later. Suffice it for the moment to know that his desire for Light awakens real but as yet slumbering potencies within himself, which from now onwards will become stimulated and promote his spiritual advancement. In each of us reside certain dormant principles (represented by the two Wardens) higher — than the normal benighted human reasons knows; it is these which it is possible to provoke into activity, and which, then awakened, no longer block our passage but speed a man on his ways with, as it were, the mystical greeting: “Pass, Good Report!”

The expression “Good Report” is a modern form of a very ancient mystical title accorded to the Candidate. It means much more than “good reputation” in the popular sense of the phrase. It implies that the Candidate’s nature is one animated by spiritual sincerity, one that rings true like a coin, and that sounds forth a convincing note when it speaks. “True of voice” was the Egyptian form of “Good Report,” and it is for this reason that, on approaching each Warden, our present Candidates are called upon to sound forth their own note so that the Warden may determine whether they are indeed “true of voice” and qualified to be passed on.

“Say something that I may see you” said Socrates to a shy youth who sought his instruction, for a man’s speech betrayeth him to the sensitive ear, which is able to judge of the speaker’s sincerity and spiritual status. And hence it is that the Candidate is required to sound forth his own voice to the Wardens.

4.- The Professions of Freedom, Motive, and Perseverance

After both Wardens have assured themselves of the Candidate’s fitness for advancement to the East, he is so certified and presented to the Master for Initiation. But before the Master accepts him the Candidate is required to

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1These latent spiritual principles in man, symbolised by the Wardens or “Watchmen,” are frequently referred to in the V.S.L., e.g. “I have set watchmen upon thy walls which shall never hold their peace day nor night” (Is. 62, 8); “Unless the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain,” (Ps. 127, 1).
pledge himself to three requirements:—

1. That he seeks the Light voluntarily, for its own sake, and from no unworthy or material motive.

2. That his objects in seeking it are two-fold; (1) knowledge for himself, and (2) a desire to make himself, in virtue of that knowledge, of more extensive service to humanity.

3. That he will persevere in the path about to be disclosed to him; (which means perseverance not merely through the formal Ceremony, but in pursuing throughout his subsequent daily life all that that Ceremony typifies).

It is important that these questions, too, should be answered spontaneously and without prompting. For they involve definite personal commitments of a far-reaching character to which no one should be suffered to pledge himself lightly or under persuasion.

Especially noteworthy is the second promise — that such higher knowledge as he acquires shall be used in human service. Now no one can truly serve humanity until he knows how to do so; a good deal of activity is displayed nowadays that passes by the name of service, but is not such enlightened or sanctified service as is meant by the Craft; therefore the acquisition of special knowledge is mentioned first, so that the Candidate may learn how to serve really and effectually; but, when acquired, that knowledge is not to be for selfish purposes but to be put to selfless service of the race. The enlightenment of Initiation is not to be for his private benefit only; it must become of importance to, and a trust for, the general good. Every real Initiate by the mere fact of his enlightenment, becomes so much salt and seasoning to a corrupting world; hence he is called upon not to hide his light but to use it and let it shine before men that they may see in him an example worth following.

Service, indeed, is and ever has been the ulterior motive of the Mysteries; but there are many forms of it and service can be rendered in quite other and higher ways than ordinary altruistic activity. Of these the Candidate will learn more later. But let him never forget that, at the threshold of his Masonic life, he pledged himself to become a servant of humanity

5.- The Advance from West to East

This is a small episode, yet one of far-reaching significance.

The Candidate has just completed symbolic Odyssean journeying around the Lodge, which exemplifies his benighted life wanderings since he came to
birth in this world (the “West”). During his career he has passed blindly, yet never without unseen guidance, through regions and experiences sometimes of darkness (the “North”), sometimes of less or greater enlightenment (the “South,” “West” and “East”), yet entirely ignorant whither he was going or what the purpose of his life was, or whether at a given moment he was near to or far from its true goal. Is not this symbolic journeying true to human life? Until one’s eyes eventually are opened to the whole plan of it, who shall say whether this or that event in our personal life-experience drew us nearer to or farther from the goal we are all unwittingly seeking?

But these ignorant wanderings in a circle, these buffettings of fortune and the tests of character they constitute, at last terminate, and the moment comes when the Prodigal Son at last turns homewards and heads definitely away from the West to the East. His steps may still continue to be irregular; but no matter, they are in the right direction. Intellectually and emotionally he may still tack and wobble from side to side before he attains stable foothold and finds the straight way of peace; but where there’s a will there’s a way, and he who is bent on finding the way to the East at all costs will assuredly arrive there, and he will arrive bearing within his own character those certificates of fitness for higher things which are implied by the S.W. presenting the Candidate to the W.M. as a fit and proper person and properly prepared to be made a Mason.

6.- The Obligation

Following the traditional practice of the Mysteries and of all secret and monastic Orders, a vow of silence and secrecy is next required from the Candidate as a further preliminary to the conferment of Initiation and the entrustment with any secret information.

This Obligation is often thought of as merely perpetuating the usual covenant of secrecy required by new members of the old Trade Guilds as a guard to the privileges of the Guild and the protection of technical trade secrets. But whilst the Speculative Craft certainly follows the Operatives in this and other respects, the reasons for secrecy and for being solemnly obligated to it run much deeper than to the need for silence about the formal secrets of the Order.

The main purpose of the Obligation is to impress the beginner upon the path of Light and self-knowledge with a sense of the extreme value of silence about the new perceptions that will come to him, the new ideas and experiences he will encounter, and the mental reactions he will experience as the result of them. And it must be emphasised that silence and secrecy are imposed not so much in the interest of the Fraternity at large (which could suffer
little from his indiscretions) as in that of the individual Brother himself. Expe-
rience will teach him, later on, the deep personal value of silence. He will find
that Light and Wisdom are acquired not from anything that can be ocularly
shewn or orally imparted to him, but from the gradual assembly of new ideas
and their gradual digestion and co-ordination by his own mind, for which
purpose it is above all things essential that his mental energies should be con-
served, not frittered away in talk. To use an electrical analogy, he must become
an “accumulator,” receiving new impressions and letting them revolve in the
closed circle of his own mind. which will gradually digest them and extract
their final values.

In the world without the Lodge an appalling waste of human energy oc-
curs daily in the form of needless private chatter and public utterance, which
might be re-directed to higher ends. The way of the inner life, upon which one
symbolically enters on passing the door of the Lodge, is the reverse. It calls
for silence and economy of speech. It remembers one’s moral accountabil-
ity for each spoken word. And because it calls for the conservation of one’s
verbal energies and prohibits their needless diffusion in frothy exuberance, it
leads by deep and still waters of knowledge, and silence generates the power
needed for speaking with authority and effect when the time for such speaking
comes.

Turn now to the V.S.L., the Mason’s supreme light in these matters. It
declares “There is a time to be silent and a time to speak,” (Ecc. III., 7). Note
that the time for silence comes first in orders; for indeed it is not possible to
“speak” at all in the high sense here implied until, by a previous discipline of
silence, one has acquired the wisdom to know what to say, how, when, and to
whom to say it, and is possessed of the spiritual momentum which transforms
ordinary speech into winged “words of power.” Only after a long discipline of
silence is it that “out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

It is common with newly made Brethren in the first flush of their new Ma-
sonic life to find hosts of new perceptions and ideas welling up in their minds
as the result of Initiation and of the thoughts and studies to which their Initia-
tion has led them. To these they feel impelled to give expression, and to teach
and share with others things they are just beginning to learn themselves. It is
always satisfactory to find that the forces of Initiation have proved effective in
them and have kindled their inner fire even to that extent; but it is precisely to
the curbing of this crude enthusiasm, that the Obligation is largely directed at
silence is ordained, and that we owe the traditional practice of restricting the
giving of instruction in Masonic science to those who have become Masters
of it and for whom the “time to speak” has come.

For peril attaches to premature and unwise speech no less than to more
flagrant violations of secrecy; a peril pointed to in the penalty of the Obliga-
tion. That penalty (when we discern the spiritual intention behind the literal
expression of it) implies that he who is unfaithful to his duty of silence and
secrecy may come to lose the power of effective speech altogether. By frit-
tering away energies which need to be conserved and consolidated he may
automatically render himself spiritually unvocal. Says a wise old counsel:-

Word is thrall but Thought makes free;
Hold thy speech, I counsel thee.

Observe this further point. The Candidate takes the Obligation upon the
visible emblem of the ever-speaking Divine Word (than which nothing is more
continually speaking yet nothing is more silent), and by a manual act attaches
himself to and indentifies himself with it. By emulating its silence he may
eventually recover that Lost Word for which Masonry is the search, and be-
come able to sound it forth through his own person.

A word upon the posture observed during the Obligation, and compare
it with what has previously been said about the partial measure of symbol-
ical disrobing the Candidate undergoes in this Degree. Remember also the
changing and progressive nature of both the posture and the measure of dis-
robement adopted during the three Degrees, for they are deeply significant.
They imply that, before the aspirant can attain a new regenerate self, his old
selfhood must become broken down, its pride humbled, its attachment to ex-
ternal possessions and ingrained mental prejudices severed. All which is not
the work of a moment but a gradual process. He is, therefore, not called upon
to do anything beyond his immediate powers, but to follow the principle of
“precept upon precept; line upon line; here a little and there a little.” Hence
it is that the posture (and the unclothing) change in each Degree and affect
different limbs and parts of the Candidate’s person. In the First Degree only
one knee rests on the ground; in the Second it will be the other knee that will
mark his progressive humility; whilst in the Third the posture will signify that
his humility is no longer partial but total, and that all resistance of mind and
stubbornness of will have at last sunk to complete self-surrender to the Good
Law upon whose symbolic volume he places first one hand and finally both.

7.- The Restoration to Light

The Candidate is next reminded that for a considerable time he has been in a
state of darkness.

Let no one be so literally-minded as to imagine that this naïve and simple
phrase alludes merely to the few minutes during which the Candidate’s sight
has been shut off for symbolic reasons. Remember that the whole ceremony is allegory, a parable of the soul's life; that it dramatises in small "the entry" of all men upon this their mortal existence"; and that the entirety of that existence has hitherto been spent in a state of darkness and blindness and will so continue to be spent until that spiritual consciousness is regained which we call "Light."

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting," says the poet. Our re-birth, he might have added, is an awakening and a remembering; but it comes about only when there is kindled within us that latent central "Light," to seek which is the purpose of our entrance into this world and to find which is really the predominant wish of every human heart, whether that wish becomes a definite conscious urge or remains dormant and subconscious.

In every Candidate that wish is presumed to have become a definite conscious urge, and because it has become so predominant and overpowering in him that he is without peace of soul until he finds what he has been blindly seeking, he is, by the law of life itself, entitled to have his prayer answered, to have the door opened to his own knocking, and to hear spoken over him the fiat of his own re-creation, "Let there be Light."

Throughout our Ritual by "Light" we must understand "consciousness." "Let there be Light" implies, therefore, "let there be a quickening, heightening and expansion of consciousness in that which has hitherto been unconscious, or but limitedly conscious."

Some measure of consciousness is present in everything, in every kingdom of Nature, from mineral to man. In man is gathered up the consciousness of all the sub-human kingdoms, and in him that consciousness is capable of being advanced still farther; indeed, to a stage beyond the human.

Our First Degree, therefore, implies the first stage of an expansion of consciousness beyond that of the normal mentality. The Second Degree implies a still farther advancement; the Third implies a "raising" to a still higher one; whilst the Supreme Degree of the Royal Arch points to a final sublime "exaltation" of consciousness to which the prior Craft Degrees lead up.

Throughout the sequence of grades is implied a progressive advance from the normal natural mentality to the heights of spiritual consciousness, an advance which is biblically spoken of as "ascending the Hill of the Lord." And each of our Masonic ceremonies has been designed to promote a grade in that ascent.

How far that ascent will be promoted by a particular ceremony, how far a Candidate's conscience may be thereby quickened and expanded, depends upon a combination of three conditions; (1) the help of God; (2) the preparedness of the Candidate; (3) the efficiency of the Lodge and the Initiating Master
as instruments for bringing the two former into union.

It need not be supposed that an actual accession of spiritual consciousness to the Candidate comes about instantly and simultaneously with the symbolic act of restoration to light. It may or may not do so. Usually new consciousness emerges but slowly through the darkness of our clouded understanding. To use Masonic analogy, the Sun at the centre of our personal system only mounts to the meridian gradually; there is first a dawn and a gradual rising and a scattering of the darkness before its light manifests in fullness and strength at high noon.

Significance, of course, attaches to the symbolic “firing” in which all present engage at the moment of restoration to light. It is, as it were, a discharge or liberation of the tension to which the assembly has been subjected during the ceremony; it is the outward expression of their co-operation with the Initiating Master in bringing the Candidate from darkness to light; whilst to the Candidate himself it should mean the sound of the breaking of his inward fetters, resulting in that uplifting of soul and sudden access of vision which enables him to say “Whereas before I was blind, now I see!” Summary of Part I

The Restoration to Light, the climax and peak-point of the Ceremony, concludes that first portion of it, that series of seven ascending steps of the mystical Mountain, which are associated with his “state of darkness.” The remainder of the Ceremony, a series of seven descending steps, occurs in the newly won “state of light,” and is devoted to imparting information and instruction in regard to conserving, nourishing and developing that Light within oneself, now that it has once been glimpsed.

Before passing on to this, let us summarise what has preceded. The Ceremony has dramatised in symbolic, swiftly-moving, but comprehensive ritual-form the path to be allowed by any one who, under the stress of his own deepest heart-impulses, turns in discontent from the interests of the natural world without, in quest of those of the world within. It explains his own nature and his own past life to him; it indicates the conditions and terms upon which a re-orientation of himself and the satisfaction of his hopes are possible to him; it shows that he must empty himself of his old self, divesting and detaching himself from his past acquisitions, whether intellectual or material. These — his “personal comforts” — will, like those literal ones of the Candidate’s, all be restored to him later on, but what new values will they then take on! how amplified and multiplied will their value become to him, who, like Job, has consented to be stripped of them that he may find a higher good! To which end, further, he must make a great adventure of faith; letting all go; surrendering himself to invisible guidance; maintaining a resolute will to find what
he seeks; breaking down all opposition and interference between himself and his goal; and dedicating himself to the source of Light and to becoming, as a light-bearer himself, an instrument for forms of human service higher than he could ever render without it.

Such is the path of real Initiation as marked out in this Ceremony. It involves blinding the eyes, baring the heart, and tyling the mind to things external and shadowy that they may open again upon things internal and substantial in a true Restoration to Light.

Then comes the Sun’s Light to our hut
When fast the senses’ door is shut.
For such a pure and perfect guest
The emptiest room is furnished best.

If the Ceremony does not mean all this, it means nothing worthy of pursuing and is but a vain tradition and formality. If it means all this, but is performed without understanding and without transplanting its implications into our life-conduct, we profane it, increase our own darkness, and act no differently from those who turn mechanical praying-wheels. But if the dispersion of our natural darkness and the rising into consciousness above it of that Sun which glows at the centre of every man’s personal system be what we look for, then in our Ceremony surely we have in our hands a means of grace of the first value and efficacy.

Part II

8.- The Revelation of the Greater and the Lesser Lights

It is impossible to formulate in words the condition resulting from actual “restoration to Light.” Psychological states are indescribable and must be experienced before they can be understood. But an analogy may help us to an understanding of the enlargement of consciousness which real Initiation effects; for the re-birth of one’s mind and spiritual nature (which, as we have said, is implied by Initiation) stands in exact correspondence with, and follows the same law and process as physical birth; the process of “birth” is repeated upon a higher level of the spiral of creation.

Now when a child is born into this world physically, it, as it were, undergoes an initiation into a new state of existence and attains a consciousness which it never previously experienced, and it requires some considerable time before its consciousness becomes adjusted to its new environment, and its vision duly focussed upon objects around it. It is only conscious vaguely and
incoherently; time and practice are requisite before it can accustom itself and its eyesight to its surroundings.

Similarly with psychological rebirth. Individual experience of it varies, but broadly one passes into a state of awareness of something having happened in oneself of an expanding and illuminating character. One cannot tell oneself, let alone others, what it is; one merely knows that there has been an upheaval from within, a shifting of one’s focus of consciousness from a lower to a higher level, entailing a feeling of liberation from former mental limitations, the promise of much wider mental vision and deeper understanding for the future, and withal a sense of deep, uplifting, but inexplicable happiness. Such is a very crude description of what a duly prepared and responsive Candidate is likely to experience as the result of his Initiation; possibly, but not necessarily, during the conferment of the ceremony, but at some less or greater interval after it. He is, in biblical language, one of those who having previously sat in darkness, has now suddenly seen a great light, but cannot yet say what that light is or involves, or define any detailed perceptions. All he knows is that he has “received his sight,” and that whereas before he was relatively blind, he is now at last beginning to see.

Now it will be a very promising fact, if the Candidate’s Initiation result is a “restoration to light” to the extent just mentioned. For it means that subsequent reflection upon his new experience will steady his quickened emotions and facilitate the adjustment of his mental sight until it is able to attain clear precise vision of certain truths, just as an infant learns to adjust its eyes to objects around it.

Then certain great primary truths of life will gradually emerge and become revealed to him. And those great primary truths are, in our Ceremony, symbolically figured forth in what we call our “Three Great but Emblematic Lights.” These emblems are actually revealed to the Candidate by the Master as the first objects upon which his eyes look after being given light, and the Candidate is appropriately kept in a kneeling posture, and facing the East, whilst they are exhibited and briefly explained; for how should one contemplate primary fundamental Divine truths save in an attitude of humility and upon one’s mental knees? It is very fitting, therefore, that the Three Great Lights should be the first objects of the Candidate’s perception, and that they should be revealed to him whilst facing East, and whilst in a kneeling posture.

Of what, now, are these Three Great Lights the emblems? They consist, observe, of the V.S.L., the S., and the C.; the three being always displayed as if they were organically and indissociably combined; the V.S.L. lying undermost and forming the base for the other two which rest upon it. the C. being partially concealed by the S.
These three emblems we may interpret thus:–

1. The V.S.L., although embodying the Divine Law as — revealed to the Western world, has a far wider significance. For us Masons, it is the visible emblem of the invisible Cosmic Law, through which Deity is manifested in the Universe. It virtually, therefore, represents God Himself who, as Law, underlies everything, and is the basis of all being. “Law” has many forms or modes, and we must, therefore, not limit our ideas of it to any one of them, but rather think of it as comprising them all, as physical law, intellectual law, moral law, and as unifying the dual qualities of Justice and Mercy, of Severity and Love, which characterise the Divine Nature.

So broad is the Craft’s conception of the “Sacred Law” that Masons are not committed to treating the Bible as the only expression of it. Accordingly, the Holy Scriptures of any religion are permitted to be exposed in the Lodge in substitution for the Bible: the principle adopted being that a Candidate may be obligated upon the particular revelation of Cosmic Law which he recognises as true for himself and binding upon his conscience.

Thus in many Lodges where men of non-Christian faith are admitted, alternative sets of Scriptures are kept, so that a Jew may be obligated upon the Pentateuch, a Moslem upon the Koran, an Indian upon the Vedas or Puranas, and so on.

2. The Compasses resting upon the V.S.L. represent the Divine Spirit or Divine Principle issuing forth from Deity into manifestation, both cosmically and in the individual, and proceeding to function in accordance with the Divine Law.

3. The Square set opposite to, but inextricably conjoined with, the Compasses, represents the sheath or vesture of cosmic Matter, in which the Divine Spirit takes form and proceeds to function.

Read in conjunction, then, the Three Great Lights reveal the Cosmic Purpose; i.e., Spirit and Matter working in unison and according to Divine Law to realise an idea or intention latent in the Divine Mind.

What is that Divine Idea? It is that of constructing a perfect Universe, occupied by perfect beings; a Universe in which the animating Spirit and the material form shall stand in perfect balance and, being made in the Divine image and likeness, shall be a perfect expression of the Divine Thought and a fitting tabernacle for the Deity to indwell.
Masonically, we speak of Deity as the Great Architect, and of the Universe as the Cosmic Temple in process of being built in accordance with the Divine Law and Order and with the help of the Divine Compasses and Square; and it is this idea, as being the basis of Masonic doctrine and philosophy, which is, therefore, the first “secret” revealed to every Candidate and displayed to him under the guise of our Triune Great Lights; for, as a Mason, it becomes his duty to co-operate with the Great Architect in executing His plan and erecting the Great Cosmic Temple.

Having been shewn the Three Great Lights (or, as we may call them, the three great Cosmic Principles), the Candidate is now turned round from facing the E., and shewn Three Lesser Lights burning in different parts of the Lodge. Now these Three Lesser Lights stand in direct correspondence with the three great ones. They are meant to indicate to the Candidate that the three great Cosmic Principles or Lights which sublie the Universe, are reproduced and present in miniature within himself. The Universe is the Macrocosm (or great image of the Divine Thought); he himself is the Microcosm (or image in small of the same Thought), and in him too reside three “lights” enabling him to co-operate with the Great Architect’s plan. To him, too, have been entrusted the Compasses of the discerning Mind to direct his own personal life; the Square of bodily form which it will be his task to work into due shape and make meet as a living stone for the Cosmic Temple; whilst the Master Light of Conscience also resides imperishably within him to indicate to him the path of duty.

By the assistance of these Three Lesser Lights the Candidate is enabled (as the Lecture of the Degree will teach him) to perceive for the first time the form of the Lodge; to behold its arrangement, its furniture and jewels, to contemplate its length, breadth and height, the disposition of the Brethren round its sides, whilst its middle portion is left as empty space and illumined by the “Glory in the Centre.” Translating this into personal significance, he is meant to realise that all this external-imagery is but a picture of himself, seen from within himself and no longer from without. For just as he is now within the Lodge, and able to see what was previously closed to him, so now by the help of his own inner lights he may hope to become able to enter within himself, to contemplate introspectively the spaciousness of his own soul, to observe with what graces and jewels of character he must furnish and adorn it, and to perceive his own personal faculties at the circumference and the presence of that bright Star which blazes at his own centre.

To sum up; the instruction in the Great Lights is to reveal to the Candidate the basic Law and Principles of all being; whilst that in the lesser ones constitutes his first lesson in the “knowledge of himself” and teaches him that those
Principles exist also within his own soul and provide him with lights sufficient to shape it into perfection and bring himself into harmony with Cosmic Law.

In the concealment of the lower points of the C. beneath the S. lies a most instructive lesson. Thereby is implied that man’s immortal and powerful spirit (represented by the C.) is at present overlain and prevented from full function by the contrary tendencies of his mortal material body, represented by the S.) Now this position must become reversed. If man is to become perfected and rise to the full height and possibilities of his being, his spiritual principle must not remain subordinated to the flesh and its tendencies, but gain ascendancy over them. This the Mason is taught to achieve for himself, and in proportion as he subdues his lower nature he will liberate the powers and faculties of his immortal spirit and rise to mastership over all that is fleshly and material in himself. In the subsequent Degrees this triumph of the spirit over the body will be symbolically evidenced by the points of the C. being progressively raised above the S, first one and then the other, until the Candidate for perfection becomes at last “able to work with both those points and render the circle of his Masonic conduct complete.”

9.-The Entrustment with the Secrets

Next follows the Candidate’s entrustment with the “secrets” of the Degree. This, however, is preceded by an explanation to him of certain dangers which, unknown to himself, he is told he has already passed, and he is shewn the sword and the cabletow. These, of course, are but visible symbols of certain subjective spiritual perils incident to rashly embarking upon the path of spiritual experience and to the moral suicide involved in receding from that path when one’s eyes have been opened to it. To the novice these perils are imperceptible, and will not become apparent until after considerable experience; meanwhile he should accept the warning as a wise counsel from those more advanced than himself.

As to the sword that is shewn him, let him reflect upon the frequent Scriptural references to the two-edged “sword of the Spirit,” to its penetrating power and the way in which it is said to guard access to the central “Tree of Life.” This will help him to understand the use of the sword in the Ceremony, and why, on his first entrance to the Lodge, he is made to feel its sharp point.

To the cabletow attaches very considerable significance; indeed, so important is this item of equipment that it appears in one guise (or disguise) or another in each of the three Degrees, as also in the Royal Arch. It is not expedient that its deeper meanings should be spoken about promiscuously
even among Masons; like many other things in the Craft, those meanings will either disclose themselves to advancing experience or be imparted privately by a teacher to approved pupils. It may be said, however, that biblically, the cabletow is referred to in the familiar phrase “or ever the Silver Cord is loosed” (Ecc. XII., 6) and whoever understands that phrase will perceive why the “cord” is used in each of our Ceremonies.

The “secrets” (or arcane truths) imparted in this Degree are explained as consisting of certain peculiar marks or signs, intended to distinguish all Brethren of the elementary grade of Apprentice. Outwardly, in this and in subsequent Degrees also, they are expressed by step, sign, and word. These, of course, are not the full or real secrets, but only figurative emblems of them. It is what they signify that constitutes the secrets, and that significance is left for the Candidate to meditate upon and reduce into daily personal practice. Only so will he really learn them and come to understand why they are called “secrets” and why we insist upon their use. They can never be orally communicated, except in symbolic form, but must be learned by experimental practice. Just as a prosperous business man can never convey the “secret” of his success to someone who has not himself practised it, so the secrets of Masonic progress are learned only by those who actually live them. They are clues to spiritual progress rather than confidential communications of secret information.

In being given the formal symbolic secrets the Candidate should reflect that he is receiving a first lesson in a long course of instruction of a private and occult nature; i.e., one not taught outside the Lodge, but hidden from public knowledge and intended to help him upon the path of his personal inner life. For having but just entered upon that path, it is proper that he should now be instructed how to tread it. He has a long journey to take to reach the goal the Craft opens to him, a goal not yet visible. Hence he should absorb instruction slowly, proceed warily, understandingly, and withal humbly. He has been given a first far-off glimpse of the Light he seeks, but that Light would only confound and blind him were it revealed to him in its fullness, suddenly and abruptly. In his quest of it he should apply to himself the well-worn words of Newman’s hymn, “I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me.” And it is one step, and only one step at a time, that the Craft permits and teaches in each of our Degrees. Let him see that he carries into daily life all that one step signifies, for until he has taken it in actual living he will be incapable of taking the subsequent ones. And to the Apprentice Mason seven years are allocated to taking it, though (as the Lecture states) less will suffice if he be found worthy of preferment.

Why so long a period as seven years? The answer lies in the fact that the
First Degree of spiritual and Masonic life is one of purification of body and mind in preparation for the attainment of Light in all its fullness. The unpurified natural man can never reach that Light; his own inherent, impurities and darkness will always clog his mind and keep him self-hoodwinked from it. Therefore, purification is necessary and the elimination of everything in him that clouds his vision and coarsens his nature. This takes time. We know our bodies undergo change every seven years. Physiologists declare that during that period every cell and tissue of us undergoes renewal. The man who understands himself and resolutely sets about at the work of regeneration can, therefore, rely on Nature’s assistance in enabling him within seven years gradually to work off his own impurities and replace them with new material, thus building a cleaner, purer body for himself, one better fitted for being suffused by the Light resident at his own centre. This “septenary law” — one of the key-secrets for interpreting life — was well known to the Initiates of old and it is for this reason that seven years are allotted to the work of the First Degree.

There is much to be learned about the “word” of the Degree and the posture in which it is imparted, but this again must be left to private oral tuition. The directions about the Candidate being “expected to stand perfectly erect,” and the references to “right (i.e., straight) lines and angles” and “well-squared actions” comprise a wealth of allusion to secret truths into which the average Brother never thinks it worth while to inquire. To the experienced, however, such matters as bodily posture and the “well-squaring” of one’s personal actions (even in such minute matters as writing legibly and with every letter well-formed) have both a physiological and a character value of great importance in relation to the effort to attain spiritual perfection. Nature has had a purpose in slowly raising man’s animal body from a horizontal to an erect posture and in transforming his animal instincts and passions into moral rectitude, and she has still further purposes to disclose as resulting from physiological erectness. “Unto the upright ariseth light in the darkness,” says the Psalmist; and to Initiates this is literally true. It is a part of their training and discipline to adopt a physically erect posture of the spinal column when engaged in their devotions and meditations, that pillar-like posture being known to be conducive to the attainment of spiritual consciousness or “light.” Hence all prayers in the Lodge are said with the Brethren upstanding, for which reason the Masonic Candidate is instructed to “stand perfectly erect” at the moment when the light of the “word” is communicated to him. In former times, for well understood psycho-physiological reasons, a deformed or diseased person was never accepted as a fit and proper Candidate for Initiation.

As to the “Word” given to the Candidate, a brief hint may be given here. It is said to denote Strength; a better rendering would be Power, Energy, Ardour,
all of which are implied by it. It refers to the energy and ardour with which the Candidate should pursue his work of self-perfecting now that he has once begun it; and the word is given him because keenness and energy will prove one of the key-secrets of his successful progress. All creative work depends upon two interacting active and passive forces, energy and resistance, labour and rest. (In the Creation God first laboured and then rested). The Ceremony reminds us that these two forces were represented at the forefront of Solomon’s symbolic temple by two “pillars,” i.e., foundation principles. And it is these two principles — activity and contemplation — that the Candidate must learn to apply to himself in rebuilding his own personal temple.

10.- The Testing by the Wardens

Following the entrustment with the Secrets, the Candidate is directed to be led to each Warden in turn and told to communicate them to him. Why is this? It is to ascertain whether he retains the instructions and impressions already communicated to him and can reproduce them, or whether he will fail in so doing, or will pervert or falsify them. In a word he is subjected to a test of his own capacity to retain and live up to what has already been imparted to him.

This episode not only perpetuates the practice of the Ancient Mysteries but is entirely accordant with Scriptural authority and with spiritual experience. For it is a fact, indeed a law, of life, that no one receives an accession of knowledge or power or even of material wealth without being soon afterwards put to a test as to how he will use it and whether he is able and worthy to retain it, if he is, he will be still further advanced; not, he will remain where he was or be degraded to a worse position than at first. ’To him that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” Remember to what a severe testing Job was subjected after acquiring great wealth; remember, too, the “temptation” or testing episode related in the Gospels as occurring to Jesus immediately after his accession of spiritual light at the Jordan baptism.

And so it will be to everyone for whom our Initiation Ceremony becomes translated into terms of actual life-experience. As soon as Light or Wisdom has been vouchsafed him, he will find himself tested in one or another way as to his worthiness to receive it. “He who has not been tested knows nothing” says a wise Master (Thomas a Kempis), for no new truth can become one’s own until it has been reduced to personal conduct and lived out under the stress of opposition and temptation to the contrary.

Earlier in our Ceremony, you will remember, the Candidate was conducted to the Wardens in turn and, arousing them from silence, provoked them to
speak to him; and it was explained that in doing so the Candidate was symbolically calling into activity certain higher forces latent in himself but previously dormant. It is those same latent forces or higher principles in himself that will put him to the test now that his intelligence has been accorded a certain small measure of Light. Can he retain that Light? Does he still exhibit the “sign” of a true Mason? Is he still striving to tread the path and to take the “step”? Does he remember and act upon the “word” that was given him”? Does his daily life show that he is uttering that word, — if not in its completeness, at least in broken syllables or letters? (Our practice of “half-ing” or “lettering” the word is not merely for precautionary reasons or to show that we share its secret with other Brethren, but as a most instructive and delicate reminder that though we be unable to utter that word in its entirety, yet if we can only sound it forth in stumbling but sincere fragmentary efforts, those fragments will suffice to let us pass our test).

If, therefore, we pass the test, we are permitted and directed to pass on to higher attainments, and it is of this that the sending round of the Candidate to the Wardens to prove himself a Mason is a dramatic and symbolic representation.

11.- The Investure with the Apron

Since each episode in the Ceremony follows its predecessor with far-seeing wisdom and psychological accuracy, we shall now see how great and fitting a reward awaits the Candidate as the result of passing the test to which he has just been submitted.

On the S.W. reporting to the Master that the Candidate has made real and demonstrable progress in the science, the Master forthwith gives directions for the investment with the Apron. Thereupon, for the first time the Candidate becomes masonically clothed and entitled thenceforth to wear the glorious badge of the Order.

Behind this act of investment lies an important but ultra-physical truth, namely, that every spiritual state into which the human soul passes is accompanied by an appropriate bodily form.

The ancient maxim of the Initiates about this is “Nullus spiritus sine indumento;” no spirit (or spiritual condition) exists without possessing its appropriate form or garment; or, in Scriptural words, “God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him, and to every seed (or soul) its own body.” And accordingly, on the Candidate being certified as having attained a new phase of soul-growth, the Master (as the Divine representative in the Lodge) at once orders him to be clothed upon with a vesture expressive of his spiritual condition.
How fitting a vesture the Apron is will appear on perceiving its emblematic value. It is at once one of the most important and comprehensive of our symbols. Its shape is that of an equilateral triangle, superimposed upon a quadrangle whose sides are equal also. The triangle is the primitive and universal emblem of what is Spiritual and Formless, whilst the quadrangle is that of what is Material and possesses Form (or body); and, since human nature is a compound of both, the Apron is a figure of man himself. And because the triangle and quadrangle are among the most ancient ideographs in the world, and indeed as old as humanity itself, the Apron is very truly described as being “a badge older than that of any other Order in existence.”

The Apron is also of white lambskin; an emblem, therefore, of purity, of innocence, and infancy; an appropriate clothing for one just born into the Masonic life. It is five-pointed, in allusion to man’s five-sensed nature and to many other occult truths concerning humanity. If you add the three sides of its triangular part to the four of its quadrangular, you get seven, the number of completeness in Nature, corresponding with the septenary of colours in the spectrum, the notes of the musical scale, and the days of the week. If you multiply them, you get twelve, the cosmic number, comprising the twelve Zodiacal Signs through which our Solar System moves and which are reflected in the twelve Hebrew Tribes and the twelve Apostles.

As the Candidate advances through the Degrees and perhaps eventually becomes advanced to the higher sections of the Masonic Hierarchy, he will find at each new step a corresponding change in the form and colours of his Apron. It will manifest what are known as the sacred or royal colours, blue, purple and scarlet, whilst to its unadorned simplicity will be added ornamentations of the precious metals, at first silver and afterwards gold. These elaborations of the Apron are meant to symbolise corresponding progress in him who wears it, and point to the unfolding of spiritual graces and powers from the depths of his own inward being. As the strength of his central spirit grows, so his Apron will burgeon forth in symbolic rosettes and become decorated with celestial blue and ornaments of silver; and, as it intensifies still further, the pale azure will deepen correspondingly to royal blue, and silver will be displaced by gold, — the emblem of wisdom and spiritual royalty. The Apron, moreover, is attached to the body by a fastener in the form of a serpent — the emblem of Wisdom, to indicate the wisdom with which his whole organism has been devised.

Let the Candidate, then, see in the Apron a symbol of himself and, in its progressive beautifying, reflect that it calls for the manifestation of corresponding growth of spirituality in his own life. Let him regard his Apron with a respect comparable to that with which he should regard his own soul,
keeping it so far as may be sacred and undented, never treating it with levity nor entrusting it to any hands but his own. For, being the symbol of himself, it should be respected as the outward and visible image of his inward invisible self.

As it is written that no man may enter heaven without wearing a “wedding garment” (i.e., a vesture qualifying him for union with the celestial life), so no Mason may enter a Lodge without wearing the Apron that proclaims his fellowship and amity with the universal Craft. But we need not restrict our thought or even our use of the Apron to wearing it in Lodge; it is helpful to imagine ourselves as clothed with it at all times, whether we are actually wearing it or not. There are some Brethren who gird on their Masonic clothing in private, ere engaging in their personal devotions. And there are some who, loyal to its meaning in their lifetime, like still to wear their Apron in the grave.

12.- The Charge in the N.E. Corner

Clothed upon Masonically, the Candidate is then placed in the N.E. corner of the Lodge. By “the Lodge” was formerly meant not the room in which the Ceremony takes place, but the Lodge-board or Trestle-board, now called the Tracing-board, to the N.E. corner of which the Candidate’s feet were angulated; a practice still obtaining in some Lodges and one that seems desirable to pursue.

The N.E. corner is a point of much symbolic significance. It is the meeting place of N. and E., of darkness and light, and, therefore, representative of the Candidate’s own condition. Standing at this point, he can henceforward at will step onward to the E., or backward to the N., advancing further to the Light or relapsing into darkness; it will rest with himself which direction his life will henceforth take.

He is charged, however, to make his present position the basis of renewed spiritual activity and to regard his personality as a “foundation-stone,” now well and truly laid, as the material for raising thereon a “super-structure.” By this expression is meant something much more than mere character-building, as it is often thought to mean. What is implied may perhaps be gathered by reference to some of the older Masonic rituals in which instead of “super-structure,” the Candidate is told to build a “castle in the air,” an expression which, far from meaning something dreamy and imaginary as it popularly has come to do, really refers to an “airy,” ethereal or spiritual body, “a house not made with hands nor subject to decay (like his temporal body) but eternal and heavenly.”

This leads one into deeper metaphysics than can be dealt with here, and
the subject must be left to private reflection and tuition, with merely the hint that as our mortal visible body has been built up gradually, cell by cell and tissue by tissue, out of the essences and life forces of temporal Nature, so Man has within him the capacity to raise thereupon, and to evolve from himself, an immortal invisible “super-structure.” an “airy” castle or fortress into which his conscious soul will retreat and clothe itself when its earthly vesture fall away. The erection of the super-structure is known in Masonic mysticism as the “building King Solomon’s Temple,” which every Mason must build for himself.

A further subject upon which the Candidate is charged in the N.E. corner is the duty of Charity, the complete attainment of which is elsewhere spoken of as the summit of the Mason’s profession. Now it is idle to think of this virtue and its attainment as being fulfilled by money-donations to those who are financially poor, distressed or deserving. The usual words of the Ritual may suggest that it does, but remember that the Ritual throughout is a veil, and always masks far deeper truths than its surface-words exhibit.

The “Charity” the Candidate is so earnestly entreated to cultivate at this important moment and throughout his subsequent life would perhaps be best interpreted by the word “compassion,” — universal compassion for, and sympathetic feeling with, all living creatures, human and sub-human. Such a definition includes Love, which is the usual synonym for Charity, but it embraces even something more. “Charity,” in its Latin original Caritas, means “dearness,” and the Masonic virtue and duty is that of regarding all creatures in a spirit of universal and impartial dearness, as being all pilgrims upon a single path and, whilst in differing degrees of development, yet all evolving towards a common goal. In their struggles and sufferings to work out that destiny, which is theirs no less than yours, and whether they are conscious of that destiny or not, and whether they will thank you for your help or not, it is nevertheless the Mason’s duty to give them all the compassion and help he can.

Giving what is personal and material is the lowest and not always a wise, form of giving. Giving mental and moral succour is relief of far greater value, because it braces the mental and moral nature of the recipients. Giving oneself from the heart in a constant sacrificial outpouring of the spirit may yield no visible result but is yet the highest of all forms of giving, and it is this which the Mason is counselled to practice, since what he radiates will quicken the life of all around him and send forth leaves from his own tree of life for the healing of the nations. At the Centre of each man’s personal system dwells a sun, clouded though it may now be by the fogs and mists of his own making, which, like the solar orb in Nature, can send forth its generous beneficent
radiation persistently, unstintingly, and impartially to the good and the evil alike. All the great teachers and enlighteners of humanity have been suns in that sense and because their lives were based upon compassion for the whole world; and it is for the Initiate to try to emulate them.

Consider the philosophy of giving and why it must needs be more blessed than receiving. Natural man is necessarily selfish, grasping, self-acquisitive. All his days he has been receiving — from Nature, from his parents, from society — and has become egocentric and habituated and trained to securing for himself a living, a position, and an individuality. But the Mason is a man who, by the very fact of his seeking Initiation, is impelled by forces within himself to rise beyond Nature and to submit himself to a law higher than that of self-acquisition. All his energies have now to be reversed; getting must give way to giving; centripetal tendencies must become transformed to centrifugal radiation of the highest qualities in him. In Matthew Arnold’s words:-

Know, man is all that Nature is but more,

And in that “more” lie all his hopes of good. From that “more” the Mason builds a “super-structure” upon the foundation of his old self; not as formerly, by a process of getting and receiving but by one of giving forth that others may live. And the more he gives the more he must eventually receive, for all energy is conserved and, like expanding water-ripples, returns upon its source, enriched by every contact it has made in its passage.

Hence it is that the Candidate is charged to learn that self-giving is the foundation-law and foundation-stone of the higher life; that Charity has its degrees and may be practised in many ways and upon different planes, the highest of which is the habitual pouring forth of compassionate love to all beings; that he who has freely received must as freely give; and that as he, by his Initiation, has been given the blessing of light and understanding he never before possessed, so now the Law of life itself requires that, from this moment, he shall never withhold that light from any who asks it from him.

Surely one of the most moving moments of an impressive Ceremony is that in which the Candidate, pauperised and denuded of everything material, is invited to make a gift to his poor and distressed fellow-creatures. Out of what resources can he make it save from treasury of his own heart — without the backing of which no gift, whatever its form, can have any true value? The incident is meant to teach him that if that treasury be empty how can he really give at all, however opulent he be pecuniarily? but if it be filled, he will be giving what guineas cannot buy.
13.-The Working Tools

In the N.E. Corner the Candidate is advised what to do, what to aim at, in order to promote his own advancement. The next thing is to tell him how to do it. He is, therefore, recommended to pursue certain lines of self-discipline and self-improvement which are referred to under the guise of “working tools.”

These working tools are three, and as their mystical significance is sufficiently explained on their presentation to the Candidate it is needless to repeat it here. They must not be looked upon, however, as merely emblems incidental to the Ceremony and thereafter to be ignored or forgotten, but as representing duties essential to Masonic progress and meant to be put to practical daily observance.

One of these three tools, the measuring gauge, is itself threefold in its application. It allocates one’s daily time to the performance of three distinct duties, duties not necessarily involving equal expenditure of time, but duties each of which is of equal value.

It inculcates (1) a duty to God and a persistent devotion to spiritual things, (2) a duty to oneself, involving due attention to material pursuits and the care of one’s own person, and (3) an altruistic duty to those less happily placed than oneself; as it were an equilateral triangle of duties each of which is as important as the other two, indeed it will be helpful to think of the sides of such a triangle as signifying God, oneself, and one’s neighbour respectively, and constituting a unity, a whole of which each part is necessary to the others.

The Mason must find a way of balancing his performance of these three duties, so as to make of them an equilateral and not an unequally-sided triangle. Equal attention is called for to spiritual things, to himself, and to what is other than himself, i.e., his neighbour; undue preponderance in either direction will prevent a true balance. That is why, whilst told to give altruistic help to his neighbour, he is also told that he should not do so “unless he can do it without detriment to himself or connections.” At first blush these qualifying words sound selfish, contrary to the spirit of self-sacrifice. But there is great wisdom in them. For only he can really serve and help another who has first discharged his duty to himself and made himself competent to serve. “Self-love (says Shakespeare) is not so vile a sin as self-neglect”; and there are many people who neglect to improve themselves, whilst fussily trying to improve others. But selfishness will itself disappear if devotion be habitually accorded to what is higher than self, and this attainment will then in turn qualify him to help his neighbour.

As the Candidate progresses he will learn of other working tools in the further Degrees, but these he will find himself unable to use unless he has first
accustomed himself to those of the First Degree. Therefore, he is counselled to slur nothing over, but to pay attention to even the minutest instructions of the Ritual until they suffuse his life and their performance becomes a habit. He will find his education greatly helped if he will enter upon the systematic reading of literature dealing with Masonic and cognate subjects. “Reading is good prayer” says an old counsel, provided it be of a kind that helps one’s quest for Light, and since Masonry is so largely a work of the mind, every study that conduces to the expansion of his mental faculties will prove a “working tool” and open fresh doors of perception to him.

14.- The Tracing Board

The concluding instruction to the Candidate is the explanation of the Tracing Board, though for convenience this is often deferred to another occasion, since it is necessarily lengthy.

It will have been observed that the Candidate has already been instructed in certain spiritual and ethical matters; and there now only remains to supplement these by appealing to his intellectual nature. This is done by introducing him to the Tracing Board and imparting to him certain esoteric information of a philosophical character. By “esoteric” is meant information not imparted outside the Lodge or taught by churches and other systems provided for public instruction, but which has always been reserved for more private and advanced tuition and which has been perpetuated in secret and embodied in hieroglyphic or symbolic pictures. At one time these cryptic designs were never exposed to the risk of public gaze. but were drawn upon the floor of the Lodge by the Initiating Master when occasion required and were expunged by the Candidate at the close of the Ceremony. Today they are kept permanently depicted upon the Lodge Board. A detailed examination of the First Degree Tracing Board appears in a previous Lodge Paper, and need not, therefore, be repeated here.

In the official Lecture explaining the Board the new Mason is recommended “to seek a Master and from him gain instruction,” once more instancing the truth “Seek and ye shall find.” This refers to an age-old practice by which every junior Brother sought out and attached himself for seven years to an expert Master for the purpose of gaining much fuller private tuition in the science than is possible at meetings of the Lodge. The relationship of Master and Apprentice, which obtained in the Trade Guilds and later on became an ordinary business practice, was originally one in which the Master undertook not the commercial but the spiritual training of the neotype, a practice which obtains throughout the East to-day and which was always observed in
the Mysteries of antiquity. With us the practice has, unfortunately, fallen into desuetude because so few Masters are competent to teach and so few Candidates are wishful or even ripe to learn what lies beneath the surface of the Craft doctrine.

Where, however, the true relationship of Master and Disciple does exist it becomes an intimate and precious one, involving the forging of a spiritual tie and a reciprocal responsibility which neither of them would lightly sever. This is a subject about which far more can be said than is possible here, but let us reflect that old maxim of our science is that “when the pupil is ready the Master will be found waiting,” and that such Master will impart personal instruction of a far deeper and wider character than can be given publicly or promiscuously.

Finally, the Candidate is told to retire from the Lodge to be restored to what are called, a little ironically, his “personal comforts” — the poor trappings and belongings he surrendered before entering a place where such possessions have no value. Nevertheless, a pointed lesson lies in his being directed to resume them, for henceforth it will be his duty to recast his estimate of them, and whilst using them for what they are worth, to learn to discriminate between what is of transient and what is of enduring moment. What he has hitherto deemed and clung to as “comforts” he may find to be irksome discomforts later on, until he acquires that wisdom and balanced understanding which reacts neither to comfort nor discomfort, but looks beyond both.

* * *

The “Ancient Charge” with which the Ceremony usually concludes is self-explanatory and need not be examined here. Strictly it is not an integral factor of the Ceremony, from which it differs both in method and language. The Ceremony proper is “veiled in allegory” and contains cryptic phrases and sub-surface allusions at every turn, whilst the “Ancient Charge” has no ulterior meaning whatever. It is merely a simple homily complimenting the Candidate upon his reception into the Order and informing him of some observances with which he will be expected to comply.

The Charge obviously embodies advice formerly tendered to young men on becoming apprenticed to the Operative Building Guilds, enjoining them to good citizenship and to leading a moral and useful life. But as present day Candidates for Speculative Masonry are assumed to hold these qualifications before joining the Craft, the Charge is of interest only as perpetuating an old custom of the Trade Guilds on admitting an Apprentice to membership. Conclusion.
Summing up this examination of the Ceremony, then, we see its purpose is as follows. The first half of it designed to restore to Light (in the spiritual sense already explained) a Candidate who seeks Light from his heart and comes prepared in mind and person to receive it. The second and complementary half of it is meant to teach him who has been brought to that Light, how to retain it and increase it, so that he may never relapse into his former darkness.

In being initiated a Candidate is being vouchsafed an initial glimpse into supra-natural Light, but only a first glimpse; it rests with himself to prove worthy of it and to enlarge that temporary glimpse into wider and permanent vision. The Ceremony dramatises, in a few swift episodes and pregnant words, the “Apprentice” stage of the spiritual life; it inculcates that, with increasing self-purification and discipline of his material nature, the light of that spiritual Sun which burns and blazes at his own centre and which has now for the first time appeared above his conscious horizon, will manifest in ever-increasing power. As that Sun rises higher and higher within him, so will his own darkness become correspondingly dispelled, and his materialism spiritualised, and his personality transformed into a translucent vessel. “If thine eye (soul) be single (simple and unadulterated by passion and wrong notions), thy whole being will be full of Light.”

He is taught by that Light to see that the substratum of all things is Divine Law, Law which comprises physical, moral, and ultra-physical aspects, and in which the roots of his own being are integrated; and, therefore, in proportion as he unifies his personal will with the Universal Will and harmonizes his mind and conduct with their Cosmic Prototype, he must needs become a more perfect expression of them and a conscious collaborator with them. And because Love is the fulfilling of the Law, he is enjoined to cultivate that boundless charity and compassion towards all beings which bears, believes, hopes and endures all things, because it under stands the operation of that Law and sees clearly the end to which it is shaping us. Tout aimer, c’est tout comprendre.

The Apprentice stage of Masonry is, therefore, one of purification, education and self-control, which every Brother must work out and live out for himself. No amount of book knowledge or instruction from others can teach him what can be learned only from his own experience and effort. Even these notes, lengthy as they are, are but an elementary preface to far deeper aspects of Initiation than can be spoken of openly, yet which any ardent aspirant may come to learn as he proceeds. To tell the fuller truths about the subject would scare and discourage rather than enlighten and help; and for this reason the science is and always was a veiled and secret one.

One useful counsel may be added which the Candidate should observe if
he wishes to progress. It is, never to measure what he finds within the Lodge by his own opinions or by the same standard of judgment that he applies to things without it. Many Brethren go wrong here by lacking humility and teachableness. They try to look at matters of the inner life with the same eyes as those of the outer life. They reserve their ideas of Masonry till they see how far they can square it with other views and beliefs that they hold, and they seek to apply their worldly wisdom to a wisdom which is hidden and not of this world, and their “common sense” to a subject requiring a special education and the use of a sense which in the present state of human evolution is far from common. But spiritual things must be spiritually discerned and not from the standpoint of unenlightened opinion and unspiritual perception.

He who enters the Lodge in quest of Light should leave all his previous learning behind him with his garments and loose the shoes of personal opinion from off his feet. He should think of himself as a child, and as being taken into a world of new sights and sounds, and where new ideas and even a different logic obtain from those with which he has previously been familiar, and where he must begin to recast his ideas and his life. Will his pride suffer him to stultify himself to this extent?

If it will not, he will but continue to darken his own light and the Craft can teach him nothing of value whatever titular rank he may attain in it. If it will, then he may hope to become an Initiate in tact as well as in name and to find his eyes opening to depth beyond depth of truth of which he is at present unconscious.

In the Mysteries of old the Candidate, because of his new birth into Light, was always spoken of as a “child” or a “little child,” and in the Sacred Volume which forms the chief textbook of our science we find how often, and for the same reason, such expressions as “the young man” and “little children” are employed.

It accords little with the modern mental temper to cast aside all one’s knowledge and preconceptions and reduce oneself to the docility, the naivete and singlemindedness of infancy. Yet these qualities still remain indispensable to the Candidate for Wisdom, and it still is not the learned, the critical, and the worldly-wise, but the “little children” who are suffered to come to the Light and are not forbidden from finding it, for of such are both the Kingdom of Heaven and the Craft of Masonry which is designed to lead to that Kingdom.

A Note upon the Frontispiece.

The picture forming the Frontispiece to these pages not only depicts the Sign of Silence, but is a symbolic illustration of one who has attained complete Initiation and Illumination.

The beautified arched design framing the figure is know as the Vesica
Piscis. “This mysterious figure (says Dr. Oliver, the well-known Masonic authority) possessed an unabounded influence on the details of sacred architecture, and constituted the great and enduring secret of our ancient brethren.” It formed the geometrical basis of the great Christian cathedrals, and was the womb-shaped symbol of Initiation and of Candidates being thereby brought to spiritual re-birth.

The aureole or solar imbus round the head typifies the Candidate’s attainment of spiritual consciousness; the “Sun” at the centre of his personal system has fully risen above his mental horizon and illuminated his mind.

His clothing, a white inner tunic surmounted by a black cloak, typifies the separation of light and darkness in himself. The darkness of his outward mind and nature is dispelled by the light and purity of the soul within. This is the result of his following the secret path of Initiation in regard to which the Sign of Silence or Sign of the Child attaches.

**The Sign of Silence**

The above was formerly the first sign imparted to and use by every Candidate for the Mysteries. By the Egyptians it was called the Sign of Horos. and by the Greeks the Sign of Harpocrates. i.e. Har the child; “the child” being the title given to the new Initiate. As the above illustration shows (from the Museum of St. Mark. Firenze,) the Sign then became used by Christian Initiates. Hear; See; Keep Silence, is the Motto of the United Grand Lodge of England.
Part V

The Ceremony of Passing
Walter Leslie Wilmshurst

THE CEREMONY OF PASSING

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Other works by the Author of this Paper and bearing upon it are:-
THE MEANING OF MASONRY
THE MASONIC INITIATION
THE CEREMONY OF INITIATION, — Analysis and Commentary
CONTEMPLATIONS
PARSIFAL

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Chapter 1

The Ceremony of Passing

Introductory

I.

We are now to examine a Ceremony which, because it is less dramatic and spectacular than that of the First Degree, is often regarded as a somewhat colourless interlude between the impressive surprises of the one which precedes and the awesome grandeur of the one which follows it.

This feeling it is desirable to remove, as unjustified. If the introduction of a Candidate to the elementary knowledge of Masonic principles, represented by the First Degree, has meant much to him, his advancement to a higher grade of the Craft should surely mean much more, not less, both to him and to ourselves; whilst the Ceremony which sacramentally signifies that advancement should, as surely, be one of greater value and purport than its predecessor. If we fail to recognise this, had we not better inquire whether the fault lies rather in our own lack of perception than in the Ceremony? Do we ourselves possess the insight requisite for the understanding of a Ceremony which claims to mark a much higher degree of progress in the work of making a Mason and assisting him to a much more advanced level of spiritual attainment than he has yet known?

So our present study is made in the hope of revealing some of the Ceremony’s usually undiscovered and extremely valuable contents, and with the view of securing greater interest in it than it usually receives. Being a “veil of allegory” the Ceremony must not only be looked at but looked through, if its significance is to be realised. Merely to look at it and treat it as a formality is like looking at a closed box containing valuables, and ignoring the contents.

Before the Grand Lodge formation in 1717 the Ceremony in its present
form and as a distinct rite did not exist, and its compilation belongs to that confused and nebulous transitional period during which the ancient principles of our mystical science were reduced to our present tri-gracial system. This purely historical question may be left to the historians and archaeologists, our present purpose being solely interpretative. There is no doubt, however, that the Ritual now in common use (with local variations) suffers from cuts and misunderstandings of the 18th century compilers and contains errors of statement since made by not too well informed or educated Brethren and still perpetuated by those who are too conservative to sanction any correction. It is also the fact that at one time and in some Lodges the work now forming the Mark Mason Degree constituted part of the Second Degree, as it still does in Scotland, being a side branch or annexe to it, much as the Royal Arch Degree is an extension of the Third Degree. By the Act of Union between the two Grand Lodges of English Masons in 1813 it was solemnly declared that “pure Antient Masonry” consisted of our present three Craft Degrees, including the Royal Arch, and no more, the Mark work being thus eliminated by consent of both sections of Masons. In 1856 an attempt was made to restore it into the Craft Degrees but was ruled out by Grand Lodge upon the ground that to do so would infringe the express terms of the Act of Union and the constitutions which every Master of a Lodge is pledged to observe. The Mark work therefore became side-tracked under a separate constitution of its own and is available to any Brother who desires to acquire it. The merits of the Mark Degree are so high that the regret of many Brethren at its disassociation from our Second Degree is not surprising. Moreover, it contains the dramatic and spectacular elements which are lacking in the latter Degree, for which also much can justifiably be urged. The matter of its inclusion or exclusion in the Second Degree having, however, been definitely settled since 1856, it is useless now to pursue the arguments for and against any further, and it is only mentioned here to lead up to the view of the Second Degree which is about to be offered in this paper.

That view is based upon the conviction that, in the wisdom which (despite much blundering on the part of its human instruments) has always inspired and guided our Craft since its inception, it was deemed desirable that one Ceremony of its series should be definitely less spectacularly attractive than the others. This for two good reasons.

Firstly, whilst dramatic ritual and spectacle have immense value in their appeal to the imagination and in awakening the mind to the truths they are designed to express, there is nevertheless a risk of their becoming valued for their own sake rather than for their significance. In that case they not only cease to promote real advancement; they actually hinder it. That is, the in-
evitable risk attaching to all ritualism. Gorgeous and impressive as were the spectacles of the Ancient Mysteries they nevertheless made wise provision for a considerable part in every Candidate’s training to consist of silence, solitude, and experiences involving a complete absence of all form and ceremony and of all reliance upon outside help, so that he might be thrown back upon himself, might learn that there are truths which speak by silence and which only silence can express, and might be brought to realise that true Initiation depends upon inward experience of what is formless and spiritual rather than upon anything imparted by formal and external methods.

Secondly, in the Craft’s tri-gradal scheme the Second Degree has especially to do with the inner man and the inner life, rather than with the outward personality. The re-ordering of the life and conduct of the outward man formed the subject of the First Degree; the purpose of which was to set his face definitely towards the East and make him virtuous by right living and self-purification. But the Second Degree is directed more especially to his intellectuality, so that the purified understanding of the man of virtue may be crowned with wisdom and attain that intellectual light which is called interior illumination. But this is a process and an experience of purely subjective and psychological character, which is difficult, or even impossible, to dramatise and make spectacular, and is therefore wisely left to silence and the reverent imagination.

Let us, then, regard this Ceremony as deliberately designed to stand in marked contrast with the other two, so that it may impress by what is implied but left unformulated. The fault will be our own if we still find dull and lacking interest a Ceremony which really glows with rarer light and greater instructiveness than its predecessor.

II.

The Ceremony is called one of “passing”, since it relates to a midway, transitional phase of personal experience through which every aspirant to perfection must inevitably pass before he can think of attaining the ultimate degree of soul-development and mastership to which our system leads. The First Degree began in darkness and, as we have already seen, involved an entrance into new life and the first glimpsing of new and supra-natural Light. Although addressed to the Candidate’s personality in its entirety, its message was primarily addressed to his exterior nature, to his reason, and it stressed the necessity of the practice of virtue as a preliminary to his subsequently being assisted to still larger experience of Light. That discipline being presumed to have been undergone, the time comes when he is qualified for further advancement. It
is now not his reason and senses but his higher and more interior nature—his
soul, his mind and emotions—that are addressed and hoped to be advanced to a
greater measure of self-knowledge, control and illumination. He is to take an
upward step in his own evolution, to enter upon and explore a higher storey
of his own being with a view to understand- ing and controlling it, just as he is
assumed to understand and control his bodily nature. On his journey from the
realm of the senses to that of the ultimate spirit he must needs pass through
an intermediate region, that of the soul or mind, which is the half-way house
between the sensible and the spiritual. Hence the three Degrees of Masonic
progress, from (1) the darkness or benightedness of the natural reason, to (2)
illumination (lumen) of the mind, and thence to (3) the ultimate enduring.
Light (lux) of the Spirit — and hence the present Ceremony being called one
of “passing” from the first to the third of these. All growth is gradual and
involves a series of efforts before we can come to full knowledge of what
we ultimately are. Non uno itinere perveniri potest ad tam grande secret um;
not at a single essay can we win through to so sublime a secret as the Craft
enshrines.

Now were we true to our Symbolism and not hampered by exigencies
of space and expense, we should not confer this Passing Ceremony in the
same room or upon the same, floor-level as that in which that of the First
Degree was performed. We should go upstairs to another room, to an “upper
chamber”, made ready as a Fellow Craft Lodge, and we should mount to it,
as our Hebrew forbears did, by a winding staircase and there open the Lodge
in the Second Degree and confer the Ceremony. By so doing we should more
vividly impress both ourselves and the Candidate with the fact that we and he
were now withdrawing to a still farther remove from the outer world and from
things of sense, and were ascending upwards and inwards to a finer and more
subtle plane of being and to dealing with the more abstract life of the mind
and understanding.

"They went up, by winding stairs, into the middle chamber” (1. Kings
6; 8). We can still visualise the Hebrew Initiates mounting from the ground
floor of their symbolic temple to the middle storey or “holy place,” chanting
as they went their “Songs of ascent” or “Songs of Degrees,” as some of their
Temple Hymns are called in the Bible, e.g., “Who shall ascend into the hill of
the Lord or rise up into his holy hill?” (Ps. 24; 3). But it is the human mind
(or soul) which is the “middle chamber” actually signified, since it stands
midway between things sensible and things spiritual, and it is it which must
be treated as the intermediate “holy place” to be passed through before that
ultimate “holy of holies” is reached where everything sensible, material, and
even mental, is transcended and only those who are high priests of the Spirit
can, “after many washings and purifications,” enter.

Even in Christian churches this ancient symbolism of a gradual ascent from the material to the spiritual is preserved in the steps which lead from the nave to the chancel (or “middle chamber”) and finally from the chancel to the sanctuary and high altar. In our Lodges, since space necessitates our using the same room for all our Degrees, we secure the idea of ascending to progressively higher levels by ceremonially “opening up” from one Degree to another and exposing in each the appropriate Lodge Board or Tracing Board. But in doing this we should never forget that each such “opening” implies an uplift of mind and heart to a much higher level of contemplation than was called for in the Degree below it.

The Candidate’s Qualifications

Before taking the Degree the Candidate is required to hold certain qualifications. As in the former Degree he must come properly prepared and produce evidence of fitness.

First, he is not entitled to advancement at all unless and until he asks for it. At first sight this seems a trifling point; it is not so in fact, and the Craft does not provide for it without full reason. For it is a law of life that there can be no advancement unless there first be strong inward desire for it. No growth of vegetation or faculty occurs in Nature apart from some inward impelling urge towards larger self-expression, and whoso desires increase of Light in a Masonic or religious sense must first be actuated by that urge in his own heart. “Ask and ye shall have” applies to each of our Degrees, and it is Masonically improper to persuade a Brother to take a Degree; he must be left to ask for it spontaneously as evidence of his own soul-desire.

In practice this asking is usually a sheer formality, a Candidate at the conclusion of the First Degree being prompted to request that he may “take the next Degree as soon as possible”. The rule of “asking” is thereby observed in form, though what the Order really contemplates is something much more than a technical compliance with the requirement. He is expected to ask from his heart, not merely from his lips, and to be obliged to do so is in itself a salutary discipline. It teaches him to reflect, firstly what dependent beings we are, how incapable of advancement by our own strength or apart from others, or without help from beyond ourselves; and, secondly, to learn that help is never withheld from those humble enough to ask for it and to stake their faith upon its being forthcoming.

Next, the Candidate must give evidence to the whole Lodge of having as-
similated the teaching already imparted to him. For this the Ritual provides a few formal test questions, the answers to which are usually learned and repeated by rote. In some Lodges those questions are supplemented by many others, with a view to ensuring something more than a mechanical test. Indeed, every member of the Lodge has a right to ask that additional questions shall be put, and the Master often invites those present to do so, and also to say if they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the Candidate’s knowledge. Since the Lodge is meant to function as a corporate whole, its work ought not to be weakened by the presence of members who fail to maintain a satisfactory standard of knowledge and understanding of that work. An unsound stone let carelessly into a building may one day imperil the whole structure.

A simple way of proving the Candidate’s knowledge is to invite him, some time before the Ceremony is conferred, to submit to the Master a written paper recording his conceptions of the purpose and teaching of the Craft so far as he has already perceived then, and indicating why he desired to proceed further and what he hopes to gain by so doing.

In this present paper there is no time to examine even the stock test-questions and answers a candidate is expected to learn. But it may be stated that much more significance underlies their surface simplicity than is usually recognised. They contain allusions to cryptic truths calling for deep and prolonged attention, and they allude to matters involving far greater experience than is possible to a Brother who has only entered the Craft a month or so previously. How can such a Brother honestly affirm, for instance, that he “knows himself to be a Mason by the regularity of his Initiation, by repeated trials and approbations, and by a willingness to undergo further examination when called upon?” By what criterion can he be confident that his Initiation has been “regular” and in conformity with principles of Initiation as old as humanity? To what “repeated trials” of his virtue, his courage, his purity and his faith, has he been subjected since he was initiated?; what “approbations” has he received, and from whom?; has he indeed so surmounted his trials as to have heard in his soul and conscience those “approbations” which enable him to “know” with self-convincing clearness that he is on the right path and that he is, in spirit as well as in form, a Mason in the service of the Great Architect and engaged in the mystical work of World-building?; and is he from his heart content to suffer, “when duly called upon,” more and perhaps severer trials that may fit him still further for that great work? — It cannot be too earnestly impressed upon Brethren how deep and rich with meaning are both these test-questions and our official Lectures, which ordinarily they are content to hurry over and treat as but routine formalities.
The Passport

Following the testing of the Candidate’s knowledge comes one of the most illuminating episodes in our Masonic Ritual. Although only a preliminary to the Ceremony and, as such, too often regarded as a formality of small moment, it sounds the key-note of the Degree and introduces us to a whole range of new and instructive ideas. This is the entrusting of the Candidate with a passport by which he may claim re-admission to the Lodge after leaving it to undergo his further preparation.

This passport calls for detailed notice. It consists of a word, a token, and an emblem; and it is entrusted to him because he has himself earned it; it is his reward for his labours in the First Degree and for having satisfied the knowledge-tests to which he has just been subjected.

First as to the word. It is a Hebrew word, signifying in English “sprouting forth”. It is given to the Candidate as a title expressive of himself at this juncture. For, as the result of his work in the First Degree and of the “trials and approbations” he has there undergone, new life has germinated within him. He is already a changed man and beginning to “sprout forth” spiritually; the inner forces of his soul have begun to organise and manifest themselves in his thoughts, his conduct, his speech, and his person. To a trained eye this spiritual change is easily perceptible. “How do you know a Mason by day?” (i.e., exoteric-ally), asks a subtle question in the E.A. Lecture; and the equally cryptic reply is “By seeing him and observing the sign”. But the sign observed is not the formal gesture of salute; it is the perceptible radiance of new life from within, suffusing and issuing from the man, who is intently building the temple of his own soul. That is the true Mason’s “sign”, and only those can observe it in-others who can display it themselves. A further question asks “How do you know a Mason by night?” (esoterically). The answer “By feeling the grip and hearing the word” will be intelligible to those who know how real a thing is that “mystic tie” which, in spiritually advanced Brethren, binds soul to soul into conscious contact and inter-communion.

"They can parley without meeting; Need is none of forms of greet-ing
They can well communicate In their innermost estate."

Next, the token or pass-grip. This is given in a particular way which cannot be written about and must be left to the discernment of Brethren. But a hint may be given. As the E.A. Lecture teaches, there are two places where Initiates traditionally meet, on the “high hills” (or as is often called “the Mount of Initiation”) and in the “low valleys” between those hills. The form of greeting
given in the latter differs from that given on the former and indicates the rank attained by the Brother giving it.

Lastly, the emblem of corn growing near water. Why is this emblem used? The short answer is that the ear of corn is a symbol of the Candidate’s own soul-growth, nourished by the fall upon it of the Living Water from above. With it may be read the passage in the first of the Psalms, “the righteous man is as a tree planted by the waterside which bringeth forth its fruit in due season”, but in view of its great antiquity and use in the Ancient Mysteries it is desirable to explain it at greater length and connect its use in the Craft with its use in antiquity.

In the Egyptian Rituals the Candidate, holding an ear of corn fertilized by the sacred water of the Nile, declared “I am a germ of eternity!” and at his death grains of corn were buried with him as emblems of immortality. At Eleusis one of the most advanced and secret initiation rites was that in which an ear of corn was presented to the Candidate, when the “mysteries of Ceres” associated with it were revealed to him and he was raised, by certain secret methods, to consciousness of his own deathlessness. To-day, at the consecration of every Masonic Lodge, grains of corn are scattered to the four quarters of space; our Second Degree Lodge Board displays growing corn, with a stalk of which each Candidate for the Degree becomes personally identified; whilst the “full corn in the ear” is prominently exhibited in gold embroidery on the full dress collars of all grand Lodge officers as an emblem that what once was sown in them as bare grain has at last ripened to full and prolific fruitage. In entrusting the Candidate with the ear of corn our Craft is therefore perpetuating a sacred practice of extreme antiquity and invested with a wealth of significance little thought about to-day but deserving of prolonged reflection.

Why is corn used in preference to any other symbol of growth? The traditional secret teaching is briefly this: — Corn is a “Sacred plant”. Its source has always puzzled the botanists. It is not indigenous to this world; it is never found, like other cereals and seeded grasses, in a wild state, from which its growth has been stimulated by intensive culture. This golden, graceful, prolific, and needful plant, it was taught, was never a growth of this earth, but a gift of the Gods who in the dawn of time transported it to our world from another planet with the double purpose of providing the staple food of humanity and of giving man an emblem of his own soul and of its infinite and prolific potentialities. (This ancient tradition is repeated in Psalm 78; 24-25, A.V., “He gave them of the corn of heaven; man did eat angels’ food”).

So, too, with the human soul. Like the corn, it is not indigenous to this time-world but is a native of eternity, whence it has become transported and sown as bare grain in the individualised patch of earth constituting the hu-
man body. There, like a seed of natural corn, it is subjected to the opposing forces of Nature, to the painful process of disintegration, dying and rising again, multiplied exceedingly as the result of the experience. Once again the Scriptures state the ancient doctrine: “He that goeth forth (into the trials of incarnation) weeping, bearing precious seed, shall come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Ps. 126, 6). The truth is embedded even in secular folk-lore in the old ballad of “John Barleycorn,” the “hero bold” who, however beaten upon by storms, however often cut down and threshed, never failed to reassert himself and come to life again more vigorously than ever.

When, in founding a Lodge, the Consecrating Officer scatters corn to the four quarters of it, he is performing a profoundly sacramental act for the instruction of those who form the Lodge. He is emulating in small the cosmic activity of the Great Sower who continually goes forth sowing souls in space, like grain, which fall into natural earthly bodies that they may grow and be raised therefrom as spiritual bodies.

This, then, explains why in the Craft to-day, as in the Ancient Mysteries, there is presented to the Candidate at this particular moment an ear of corn ripening near a fall or flow of water. It is intended as a similitude of himself at this stage of his spiritual growth. It could not appropriately be revealed to him earlier, because until a man has made good headway in the First Degree work of purifying his sensual nature, tilling and weeding the soil of his personal earth-plot, acquiring virtue, and weaning his mind more away from material interests, he cannot be “permitted to enter upon the more hidden paths of his own nature” or to experience any change or growth in himself. But having submitted himself to this discipline, he at once becomes self-qualified for advancement to deeper truths; he automatically prepares his own passport to a realm of new and spiritual ideas; he can think of himself as a growing ear of wheat destined to ripen in due time into abundant corn that will sustain himself and, haply, serve as bread of life to others.

Of the many gems of symbolism in our Ritual there is perhaps none more sparkling with significance than this ear of corn. It is dealt with here at length because it is not an emblem to be carelessly passed by or treated as a casual ceremonial detail. It is a symbol meant to be personally used. It is given us as an idea to be taken into our private meditation and mentally dwelt upon until it ceases to be a symbol and the truth veiled by it breaks upon our consciousness as an irrefutable self-convincing light. The lesson the ancient Initiate was trained to learn from it was: “I am a germ of the Eternal! ’Sprouting forth’ is my name, for the hitherto latent energies and faculties of my soul are now beginning to germinate.” And the Mason of to-day who is in earnest with his subject is meant to realise the same truth and to see, in this simple episode
of entrustment with the passport to a higher Degree, the promise of his own immortality and the evidence of the illimitable potentialities open to his own soul.

After the presentation of this emblematic passport the Candidate retires; actually for a few moments only, to make his ceremonial preparation for his advancement; but symbolically for a long period, during which he will devote himself to reflection upon the mystical ear of corn and fall of water and in the light of their significance prepare his heart and mind for a new accession of Light from on high.

The preparation of his person now differs in certain details from that in the former Degree. As was explained in our study of that Degree, advancement to Light and Wisdom is gradual, orderly, progressive; and one’s preparation for it must be correspondingly so; “line upon line; precept upon precept; here a little and there a little.” The sense-nature must be brought into subjection and the practice of virtue be acquired before the mind can be educated; the mind, in turn, must be disciplined and controlled before truths that transcend the mind can be perceived.

In the First Degree, therefore, the symbolic preparation had reference primarily to the Candidate’s sense-nature, which he submitted to humiliation and self-denial, applying an emblem of torture to his flesh when taking his Obligation.

In the Second Degree his dedication is that of his intellectual nature, his mind, and the symbolic preparation is varied accordingly and complementarily. The reason, of course, is that in the work of the First Degree certain energies are required to be active and others passive, whilst in the Second Degree their relationship must be reversed. When the mind, for instance, is busy or called to concentrate, the senses must he quiescent, and vice versa. Brethren may he left to think out for themselves why first the right and then the left side of the body is divested in the successive Degrees, with the hint that the right side is associated with active effort and the left with passive receptivity.

The h.w. and c.t. are dispensed with in this Degree as unnecessary at this stage of the Candidate’s progress. But in other respects the bodily preparation implies the same willing renunciation and self-detachment from material and mental possessions as in the former Degree, in expectation of a higher good, and the same meekness in following whatever path may lead him to his goal.

Thus prepared and entrusted with the emblem proclaiming his title to advancement, he is permitted to approach the Lodge in his quest for a further accession of Light.
The Opening of the Fellow Craft Lodge

Meanwhile the Brethren have reconstituted themselves into a F. C. Assembly by raising the Lodge to the Second Degree. As we have learned previously, that raising implies a corresponding uplift and tension of mind on the part of all present, a sursum corda, an elevation of the imagination to a loftier level than was called for in the First Degree. For in this Degree we are to pass—and to help the Candidate to pass—beyond the concrete things of time and space to the realm of the supra-sensual, the more abstract world of mind, of ideas, of soul. “They went up by winding stairs”; and we too are meant, in this Degree, to make an imaginative ascent to “a rarer aether, a diviner air”, than that we breathed in the previous Degree.

This explains why the Lodge is now declared “opened upon the S”. That simple builder’s tool takes on for the Speculative Mason a philosophical value. It is one composed of two arms joined at a right angle; one arm being horizontal, the other vertical. When one arm is laid level on the ground the other stands erect, pointing upwards. Those two arms then become a similitude of the right relationship of body and soul when we are engaged in the mystical labour of the Second Degree. The bodily energies (represented by the horizontal arm) should subside into repose and passivity, while the higher faculties of mind and soul (represented by the upright arm) should become active and aspire upwards. Then, as one of the old texts says, “the sleep of the body becomes the awakening of the soul, and the closing of the eyes true vision”; whilst an early Initiate (Synesius, Bishop of Cyrene) refers to the same truth in stating:- “You who have been initiated in the Mysteries know there to be two pairs of eyes (the bodily and the mental) and that the lower pair must be shut when the upper pair open, and that when the latter pair close the lower ones re-open.”

Every Brother present, therefore, is required to “prove himself” a Mason of this Degree; which means he must demonstrate by a ceremonial gesture that, for the work in hand, his outward and inward energies stand in the relationship symbolised by the arms of the S,—the former temporarily dormant, the latter in a state of activity, uprightness and aspiration. Only upon the supposition that all those present “prove themselves” united in this condition can the Lodge really be “opened upon the S.”, and its work upon the Candidate be effectually performed. When a whole Lodge consists of Brethren each of whom is indeed a living S. for the time being, it may be imagined that a wonderful atmosphere is created for the reception of the Candidate, how appropriately the Lodge can in those circumstances be declared to be “open upon the S.”, and how favourable are the conditions for the fulfillment of the in-
vocation by the Master that “the rays of heaven may shed their blessed and benign influence upon us and enlighten us in the more hidden paths of nature and science”.

Thus the Opening must not be created as mere formality. It is a solemnity by which the stage becomes set, the atmosphere created, and the minds of the Brethren unified and attuned for the work about to be clone. More desirable is it than even in the former Degree that perfect silence should prevail and that no disturbance, conversation or moving from one’s place, should mar the quietude and serenity which the Ceremony presupposes. As before, the Master should invite the co-operation of those present by uniting with him in prayerful concentrated thought upon the work about to be performed.

The Prayer of Dedication

Again after the Candidate’s admission the Ceremony begins with a prayer; a prayer which is a marvel of succinct but comprehensive statement, covering in a single sentence the whole process of transforming the unenlightened man into an initiated intelligent co-operator with the Great Architect in the work of Spiritual Masonry. It divides that process into three distinct stages, corresponding with our three Degrees—a beginning, a middle period of continued effort, and a completion. Its petition is that the work (1) begun in the Divine name maybe (2) carried on to the Divine glory, and finally (3) perfected (or established) in conformity with Divine precepts. (Possibly the prayer is based on one of similar brevity and comprehensiveness — the Church Collect which speaks of ‘all our works begun, continued, and ended in Thee’). The terms of this prayer make it abundantly clear that the process of becoming a Mason is a work, not merely a ceremony; that that work is a sacred work, not a social compliment or per-sonal privilege; and that the object of that work from beginning to end is not the Candidate’s personal aggrandisement, but to augment the glory of God by transmuting so much lead into gold, so much unconsciousness into living intelligent energy. There-fore (as in the former Degree) it is less the prayer of the Candi-date than of the Lodge, into more advanced fellowship with which he is in process of becoming spiritually incor-porated. It is meant to be the earnest supplication of the whole Craft that its value as a spiritu2” force may be enlarged by the Candidate’s accession to it.
The Perambulations

Note that immediately following the Prayer, the Candidate is required to perambulate the Lodge. This is instructive. There are, of course, ceremonial reasons for the perambulations; (1) he must demonstrate to the Lodge his status as an Apprentice, (2) he must produce his passport qualifying him for a higher Degree, and (3) he must finally make his way to the East. But behind these there is a deeper reason for these symbolic journeyings.

We saw that the perambulations in the First Degree symbolised the Candidate’s benighted wilderness-wandering before he struck the path of Light; we spoke of them as representing the odyssean vicissitudes of his previous career. But now that he has actually found that path, why are his wanderings resumed? Because no human soul stands still until it has finished its appointed course and reached its goal. Motion is inseparable from life. Stagnation and inertia spell death. The Unconscious is wrought into conscious being as the result of constant movement. “Move on!” applies equally to solar system, planet and man; each has to tread its path of self-fulfillment to the end. Men, like the stars, move in their courses towards a goal, though, unlike the stars, their ignorance and self-will cause them to miss the track until the pains of life force them back to it. The human Ego may either move of its own will towards good or evil, light or darkness, or be driven about like a blown leaf by forces extraneous to itself; but move it must.

The perambulations in the present Degree, therefore, signify the Candidate’s willing forward motion towards perfection under the urge of his own heart’s promptings. You remember the Pilgrims’ March in Wagner’s “Tannhauser,” where the music so graphically suggests the resolute persistent plod-plod of weary but courageous feet, toiling through dangers and difficulties, up hill and down dale, but ever onwards to a distant but assured goal. It represents, and was meant to represent, the inward urge that impels all aspirants along the path of Light, and therefore may be thought of as admirably illustrating what is implied by these ceremonial perambulations of the Masonic pilgrim. Let us think of these mystical journeys about the Lodge as typifying his soul’s continued forward movement to the goal of his desire; let us see in the deacon who companions and guides him, the impersonation of his own unerring enlightened conscience; let us discern in the salutes he makes to his superiors during his progress, his recognition of spiritual powers higher than himself, and, in the examinations he has to undergo, the testings, the ordeals and titles to advancement which every soul experiences upon its upward way. There is, you see, a wealth of significance (usually wholly unperceived) concealed within these ceremonial details.
Let us turn now to another of them. The perambulations are made on the level floor of the Lodge, which the Candidate keeps on “squaring,” visiting each of its four sides in turn. But at the end of the third circuit the moment comes when his forward motion on the level ceases, and he is directed to mount spirally, by a series of winding steps. Linear motion gives way to circular; he advances now not merely forward, but up. “They went up, by winding stairs, into the middle chamber”. By this change of motion, this spiral ascent, is implied that the time has come when the Candidate must leave the level of the sense-world and rise to the supra-sensual; must divert his thoughts and desires from sensuous objects and concentrate them on the insensible and much more real things of the world of mind. For, as we have said, this Ceremony is one of Initiation into the mysteries of the purified mind and the more hidden paths of nature.

We must not hurry over this point but give it the reflection it deserves. For there is a scientific justification for this ceremonial detail. All motion is really circular, spiral, vortical (like the winding staircase). Nature knows no straight lines.

Line in Nature is not found;  
Unit and Universe are round.  
In vain produced, all rays return;  
Evil will bless and ice will burn.

The earth’s surface looks flat to our ignorant confused perception, but continued motion upon it brings us back to our starting-point and teaches us it is round. Beams of light, once thought to be straight, are now known to bend and become circular. And this is especially true of thought-energy, which is mind in motion. Strongly concentrated thought and desire function spirally, like a corkscrew boring a passage into the world of mind—the “middle chamber” between the material and the spiritual to which the Candidate must ascend. An ancient and biblical emblem of penetrative, one-pointed thought-energy was the spiral horn of the unicorn projecting into space from the centre of that mythical animal’s forehead.

Before we can climb to a height we must first learn to walk on the level, as the Candidate does in this Ceremony. And in doing so, he follows the Great Architect’s law as expressed in Nature. Everything in Nature is created upon the principle of the Square; all animal forms tend to proceed from the horizontal to the upright. Worms and creeping things precede the quadruped, from which comes the upstanding biped. A child creeps “on all fours” before it walks. A man must walk before he can fly, and even then his aeroplane will “taxi” on level ground before soaring into the blue. The same law holds on
the plane of thought and morals; our ideas are grovelling, materialistic and sensual to begin with. Hence the need for their drastic purification and the uplifting of the inward eyes to the hills whence cometh strength and a whole new realm of being becomes visible.

From the moment of ascending the winding staircase, then, the Candidate is mentally leaving the outer world more and more behind him and rising into an inner invisible world. He is making what has often been called Itinerarium mentis in Deo, the ascent of the mind to the Source of Light; and it will be to exploring these new regions and learning their many secrets and mysteries that his labours as a Fellow Craft will be devoted. It will be a task claiming all his energies of mind and desire, but the exercise of these will create new faculty as he proceeds, and make possible for him what at first he may deem hopelessly beyond his powers.

Does the road wind up-hill all the way? Yes, to the journey's end.

Will the long journey take the whole long day? From morn to night, my friend.

What is thus described as a full time occupation is, with us, symbolically dramatised by ascending to the East (or source of Light) by a journey of five steps. Why five, and neither more nor less? Because, as we have learned previously, man's nature is resolvable into a series or spectrum of seven distinct principles (corresponding with the seven officers forming a Lodge), but of these seven the two, lowest are left out of account in this Degree and the five higher ones alone are actively engaged. Our two lowest principles are the senses and the carnal reason, both of which are, as it were, left behind and transcended in the Second Degree work, whilst the higher or psychic and spiritual faculties alone come into function, and it is to each of these that a step is allotted. The Pentagon or five-pointed star is a geometrical symbol of man's five higher principles.

You may ask, how can I dissociate my five higher principles from my two lower ones and use them separately, when they all seem so blended as to be inseparable? Well, to learn to do so is one of the chief lessons of this Degree. In coming to any true knowledge of ourselves we must begin by discriminating between what belongs to the sense-world and the supra-sensual world respectively; to distinguish between things transient and things enduring. This we do in a measure when our bodies sleep and the mind continues to function vividly, as it often does in dreams, and we shall certainly have to do so when, at death, the outer senses and reason drop away altogether, leaving us with only our five higher principles. But it is practicable to learn to do this now and it is a work of the Second Degree, the training of the mind and higher principles to function consciously apart from the senses. The subject cannot
be pursued here for reasons of space; every one must pursue his own study of it in his own way and the ardent seeker will soon learn details and methods for himself or acquire them from some more expert Brother. We can only indicate here what the ascent by live steps alludes to and leave those to take them who so desire.

But before being “passed” into these high regions of self-knowledge the Candidate is called upon to make further covenant of secrecy in regard to what their light may reveal to him. Hence the Obligation follows at this point of the Ceremony.

The Obligation

The Obligation to secrecy follows in form that in the First Degree and to it apply the same observations as were made in that Degree. Therein it was explained that secrecy is imposed not merely to protect the Order from the divulging of its formal secrets, but in the Candidate’s own interest and to teach him the art and the value of silence. Secrecy, in fact, forms part of his personal discipline. For, in its deeper sense, secrecy involves concentration; the indrawing of one’s powers instead of diffusing them needlessly; the conservation of energy needed for strengthening and upbuilding the soul and husbanding its forces. “Waste not, want not” applies to one’s inner energies as well as to one’s outer goods. Silence secretes power and wisdom; their secretion is itself a secret, an incommunicable mystery to be learned only by those who practice meditation and observe silence.

“The secrets of each Degree are to be kept separate and distinct from those in the former,” says the Ritual. Reflect, therefore, in what respect those of the Second Degree are “separate and distinct” from those of the First. The secret of the First Degree had to do with the head, i.e., with the practical everyday intelligence and the performance of active duties. But those of the Second Degree are different; they are secrets of the heart or soul; of the intuitional and affectional side of our nature, which is subjective and passive. The Candidate for self-knowledge has to train himself to understand and discipline both his head and his heart, to balance activity with contemplation; to labour zealously at practising virtue and his external Masonic duties, especially the control of his sense-nature, but also to “study to be quiet,” to watch for and examine perceptions, enthusiasms and passion urges (whether good or bad) that well up from within him; above all to listen for the “still small voice” that may be heard speaking in his heart when the winds of passion drop and the tremors of the senses subside.

This distinction between the things of the head and those of the heart
accounts for the difference in the posture assumed by the Candidate when taking his Obligation. If we recall that in the Craft as in the Scriptures the right side and limbs of the body are associated with the head and the left with the heart, we shall readily see why, at the Obligation, complementary parts of the Candidate are exposed or covered. For both head and heart, though intimately related, have their distinct functions and must be separately understood by those who seek knowledge of them-selves. Both are as necessary to us as the two sides of the body, but until the head is so enlightened by the heart that reason and intuition function in unity and cannot act separately, either of them may prove a terribly treacherous and misleading faculty. Wrongheadedness is far more common than evil-heartedness and responsible for far more mischief and suffering, because we are prone to form our judgments by the darkened carnal reason, in preference to consulting the luminous intuitions of the heart. Let us recall the Biblical injunction, “Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth!”, by which we must understand that the heart will often have to refuse its sanction to the impulses of the head.

The penal provisions of the Obligation call for notice. They too are appropriate and instructive. In the First Degree the penalty related to the head; we saw that infidelity in the form of abuse of speech occultly reacted upon the voice, in the sense that all power of spiritual utterance might vanish from it. In the Second Degree the penalty relates to the heart, which, if unfaithful, may become sterile and uprooted. In the Third Degree Obligation we shall find still a third region of the body imperiled.

Let no one imagine that these penalties are introduced by way of hyperbole or that the three separate regions of the human organism to which they are related are mentioned without both purpose and justification, even if we fail as yet to appreciate the reasons for them. And since the penalties are such that, in existing social conditions, their literal exaction is unthinkable, the description of them may strike us as needlessly barbaric and blood-thirsty. We shall be wiser, however, if we treat them as having veiled significances and as intended by their very frightfulness to serve as danger-signals, warning us that infidelity to one’s solemn dedications is a very serious sin and one entailing correspondingly terrible physical and spiritual reactions analogous to the physical penalties mentioned in the Obligations. To those who treat our Ritual as but formality these considerations will carry no weight, but since such know nothing as yet of what is meant by “spiritual wickedness in high places” they are unlikely to commit it in any serious measure or to attract the penalties that attend it. But the informed Brother will know that it is possible to sin psychically as well as physically and will be aware that there exist sound psycho-physiological reasons for the references, in the penal provisions, to
certain parts of the body, and that the prescribed penalties have a singular
though concealed propriety to the offenses involved.

The subject cannot be pursued here, but the point of it all is that we are
most strongly warned to “keep the heart with all diligence” and to protect it
“from the attacks of the insidious,” a warning which the Ritual emphasises
again and again.

Who, or what, are “the insidious”? The expression may, of course, be
taken as referring to inquisitive busy-bodies anxious to pry into things they
are not entitled to know. But as common sense will enable us to deal with
such, this explanation is alto-gether too shallow and we had better look for one
more in keeping with the obvious gravity and solemnity of the subject. Now
in the penal clause of the Obligation is a reference to the heart being thrown
to “the ravenous birds of the air as a prey.” Lest this phrase also be deemed
fantastic imagery, let us remind ourselves that it is taken from the Old Testa-
ment where it occurs more than once and is used in a terribly realistic sense.
(See Ezek. 39; 4, and Is. 34, 11-15). “Ravenous beasts” and “ravenous birds
of the air” are Scriptural terms for invisible evil entities and intelli-gences
which infest our planetary atmosphere and find easy prey and nesting places
in hearts allowing them entrance. Classical literature also abounds in allu-
sions to these “harpies,” “furies” and “vultures” and to their tormenting power.
Modern psych-ology, sceptical of the ancient science, speaks of these “pow-
er s of the air” more prosaically, as obsessions by alien wills, as secondary
personalities, uncontrollable impulses and uprushes from the subconscious,
the unhappy victims of which are often relegated to asylums for the mentally
afflicted. It is these which are referred to as “the insidious”, from whose in-
vasion the heart has to be “shielded” and “kept.” In many ways not necessary
to mention here it is possible to succumb to their attacks and, though this
subject is one to which the average Brother of to-day gives little heed, this
explanation would be incomplete if it failed to elucidate the reference to the
“ravenous birds of the air” and to point out that those who venture into “the
more hidden paths of nature and science” are indeed exposed to certain real
dangers from the “air” or plane of mind upon which much of the work of
the Second Degree is meant to be conducted. Because those dangers are real
our Obligation expressly refers to them before the Ritual goes on to say that
“you are now permitted to extend your researches into the more hidden paths
of nature”. Until one possesses a high degree of personal purity, virtue and
understanding, such research is not “ permitted”, the Craft thus perpetrating a
principle uni-formly insisted on by teachers of wisdom throughout the ages.
One of the greatest of these declared that “where the carcase is, there are the
eagles gathered together”, implying that if the human personality suffers itself
to become passive and evacuated of its controlling principle, to lose contact with the central spiritual Ego appointed to dominate it, it becomes as but an empty shell or “carcase” liable to invasion by all manner of undesirable and insidious entities.

To the man of strong virtue and level-headedness, who knows beforehand what he is doing and acts under a competent teacher, there is no danger in venturing into “the hidden paths”. He will act, and with safety, upon the age-old enjoinder of the Mysteries “To know; to will; to dare; and to keep silent.”

**The Silent Climax of the Ceremony**

In our study of the First Ceremony it was pointed out that, following upon the Obligation, that Ceremony reached its peak point at the Restoration to Light. In the present Ceremony, how-ever, no such corresponding culmination occurs; at the conclusion of the Obligation the officiating Master usually hurries on with the Ritual without break or pause. This, it is submitted, is a grievous mistake and indicates a failure to realise the spirit and implication of the ritual at this point.

Let us examine the position. As the two Ceremonies run on parallel lines (being alike in general form and differing only in necessary details), one would expect to find, following the Second Degree Obligation, a dramatic climax corresponding with and complementary to the act of restoration to light in the First Degree. But no such climax is provided; something seems lack-ing at this point; the emotional crescendo of the Ceremony, after moving towards a culmination, seems suddenly to stop short and never reaches it.

Does this mean that the Ritual is defective here or that, in the course of time, some ceremonial incident corresponding with the restoration to light has dropped out and ceased to be worked? In my submission, no. In my view the Second Ceremony, like the First, does reach a true climax after the Obligation, but a climax which is, and is meant to be, a passive non-spectacular one, a climax to be expressed in and by silence as the climax in the First Degree was expressed by the sound of the Fiat Lux! and the thunder-clap of hands.

Obviously the real culmination of the Passing Ceremony must be the moment when the Candidate’s consciousness is presumed to experience a change by “passing” from a lower to a higher level; and the context of the Ceremony shows that that “passing” is presumed to be effected immediately following his covenant to keep his new experience secret. Such an experience must needs be of a subjective and silent character. No uttered word, no ceremonial gesture, is capable of symbolising what occurs in the middle chamber” or “holy place” of the human soul when it becomes illumined to perceive the se-
crets and mysteries of its own nature. What then occurs can be signified only by silence. Deus loquitur; taceant omnes doctores. When “the Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth (everything material) keep silence before Him”.

To rattle on with the Ceremony at this point (as is usually done) is to mar it, to overlook its central point and purpose. The Obligation, it is suggested, should be followed by a pause sufficiently definite and prolonged to mark it as the supreme moment of the Ceremony—a pause during which the upstanding Brethren should direct the full tension of their united thought towards the Candidate in the desire that the Light which in the former Degree was symbolically manifested to his outward eyes may now arise and shine inwardly in his heart.

Further, the Ceremony being essentially an aspiration that the Candidate may henceforth be illumined in his inward parts by Wisdom from above, it would be extremely apposite to conclude the pause referred to by reading a selection of versicles from the Wisdom books of the Bible, declaring what Wisdom is, and by what methods and in what circumstances Wisdom flows into the human mind. A suggested series of such versicles is

Ecciesiasticus II., 1-5; III., 17-19; IV., 11-1.8
or
Wisdom IV., 12-18; VIII., 1-7; IX., 1-11.

The Three Great Lights

Immediately following the climax of the Ceremony, the Candidate’s attention is drawn to the altered position and relationship of the “Three Great Lights. The alteration of the physical symbols is extremely slight, but the spiritual change in the Candidate signified by it is enormous. He is “now midway in Freemasonry,” superior to an E.A., but still far inferior to the rank he is hoped eventually to attain. The altered relationship of the S. and C. implies that his hitherto latent spiritual principle is at last beginning to emerge from dormancy and concealment into activity and personal consciousness, whilst his subordinate personality or form recedes correspondingly into the background. Tide one increases, the other decreases, in importance and function.

How has this great change in him come about? Partly as the result of his own labours in the apprentice stage, which have purified his personality, disciplined him in virtue and made him a more lucid vessel for the transmission of Light; but partly also by the help of God, the assistance of the square (in the sense previously explained, and the help of those who are initiating him and we see now the justification for the pause just described is “the silent climax of the Ceremony”; it marks the moment at which the change was effected (so
far as it can be ceremonially represented). From that moment he is an Initiate of the Second Degree and able to perceive truths of which he was previously unconscious.

Apart from the personal application of all this to the individual Mason, let us view it in a wider, a cosmic sense. We may apply it to mankind at large, for humanity as a whole, as it were, passes unconsciously through its initiations into the mysteries of life. In a broad general sense our race has emerged from its primitive darkness and taken its First Degree in the life-process and is now "mid-way" in — not the more highly refined and specialised development of it signified by Freemasonry, but mid-way in its moral and spiritual progress as a social organism. As a corporate, whole it is socialised, ethicised, and, in some small measure, even spiritualised, having worn off at least some of its grosser defects, though its present condition is "far inferior to that which it is destined ultimately to attain" as the ages pass. Slowly yet gradually its darkness is being dissolved by light; slowly but surely one point of the Great Architect’s Compasses is coming into sight and overlaying the Square of human activities. There are signs everywhere and in every department of life and thought that materialism is a decreasing, and idealism an increasing, tendency. Physical science has revealed the seeming solid earth to be as immaterial as moonshine, and is leading men’s thoughts up winding stairways of research to explore middle chambers of space and being, the very existence of which it but recently denied. Human consciousness is expanding as these new vistas open; new and enlarged mental perceptions are manifesting in new expressions of art, literature, music; new conceptions of social life and duty are being put to practical test. It is all very crude, imperfect, grotesque even, at the moment. But it signifies real growth, and the pains attending the readjustment of the Square and Compasses are the growing pains incident to all rebirth and reconstruction upon a higher level.

The Mason, personally initiated as lie is into the mystic and cosmic principles of the Square and Compasses, and knowing them to rest — as in the Lodge their symbols do — upon the un-shakeable basis of Divine Law, is thus peculiarly privileged and favourably placed for interpreting these world-changes. They are the enlarged reflection of himself; he in turn is a miniature of them. In his "mid-way" position in the Craft he will discern, in both himself and them, the fluctuating conflict of darkness and light, with the light always conquering in the end; and he will expect to experience pains and difficulties similar to those society at large is suffering in endeavouring to focus its sight to new perceptions of truth and to adjust its life to the new claims made upon it.
The Entrustment with the Secrets

The Entrustment repeats the procedure adopted in the First Degree and our comments upon it in our study of that Degree apply equally here. Of the real secrets nothing can be said in writing, and the Obligation prohibits their mention except in special circumstances. Of the formal secrets we can only repeat that the ceremonial signs and tokens serve as the clues to the actual secrets, which can only be acquired by private effort and experience. To quote a leading authority (A. Pike), “What is worth knowing in Masonry is never openly taught. The symbols are displayed, but they are mute. It is by hints only, and these the least noticeable and apparently insignificant, that the Initiate is put upon the track of the hidden secret. It was never intended that the masses of Masons should know the meaning of the Blue Lodge Degrees, and no pains were spared to conceal the fact.”

The following remarks may, however, help to the better understanding of the signs and tokens.

The Step. As before, a pre-requisite to this is perfect physical erectness, with the feet Masonically quadrated, implying that, for real progress, physical and moral rectitude must reflect each other and the heart’s intuitions be checked by and balanced with intellectual perception. Then from that position, a further forward step may be taken in this Degree; again a single step only. We saw that the First Degree step covered a theoretical period of seven years, allotted to purifying and re-ordering the sense-nature. The Second Degree step covers five further years, devoted to the purifying, control and illumination of the mind; these five years thus corresponding with the five steps of the winding staircase.

Seven and five make twelve, a number always found associated with extension and fullness of development. The space of our solar system is bounded by a belt of twelve zodiacal signs; our clocks divide time into periods of twelve hours. The “chosen people” were ranged into twelve tribes. The Christ radiated his influence and teaching through twelve Apostles. The cubical Holy City of the Apocalypse had twelve gates, and the Perfect Ashlar (which the bellow Craft-Mason aspires to become) has twelve edges.

Geometrically all these twelves are exemplifications of that wonderful figure of completeness, the dodecahedron or solid figure with twelve equal bases and comprising twelve pentagons, which provides the philosophical mystic with matter for endless contemplation.
Conformably with this the Initiate who had fulfilled these two periods of seven and five years, mastering his sense-nature and attaining a high degree of mental illumination, was formerly said to be, mystically, “twelve years old”. It was this mystical age which Jesus is described (Luke 2; 42) as having attained when his abnormal wisdom and insight amazed the official teachers of his time. Solomon records (Wisdom 7; 17-21) the wonderful pene-trative insight that came to him in his youth from the luminous uprush of wisdom into his mind as the result of his previous right living and aspiration for light. “All such things (he says) as are either secret or manifest, them I know. For Wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me.... and in, all ages, entering into holy souls, she maketh there friends of God and prophets.”

These examples from the V.S.L. repeat themselves “in all ages” and become re-exemplified in every one who lives out the implications of our Second Degree. It is possible for every Fellow Craft Brother to become “twelve years old” and to share with the legendary head of our Craft that “wisdom of Solomon” which indeed still floods and saturates with supra-sensual Light the understanding of those who yield themselves to their utmost limit to “obedience to the Divine precepts” enshrined in this Second Degree of ours. If confirmation of these assertions be needed, it may readily be found in the numerous psychological studies available to-day of instances of expanded and “cosmic” con-sciousness.

**The Sign.** This is a single Sign with a threefold gesture. It is probably the oldest Sign in the world, being traceable to every ancient country and race. Like our other Signs, having no possible relation to the operative builder’s trade, it must be regarded as connected with spiritual science and the education of the soul. This is confirmed by our Ritual’s reference to its having been used at a time when Joshua was “fighting the battles of the Lord,” an obvious reference to the conflict between the good and evil, the higher principles and the lower tendencies, in man himself. But the Sign is far older than Hebrew history and embodies a host of ideas that cannot be explained here. Indeed a whole treatise might be devoted to the Masonic signs in even then exoteric significance, but their vital interpretation becomes known only to those who

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1In many Lodges a serious error is perpetuated in saying that the sign was “used by Joshua in the Valley of Jehoshophat.” For this there is no biblical or other justification. The passage in Exodus 17, 10-13 has been confused with that in Joshua 10, 11-13. In the latter passage no mention of a sign is made; in the former a sign, but not that of our Degree, was given by Moses on the heights whilst Joshua fought in the plains (“Rephidim”) below, not in “the valley of Jehoshophat” as often wrongly worded.
learn it from a qualified teacher or by private experimental use of them.
For once more it cannot be too earnestly repeated that all our Signs are provided for private use out of Lodge as well as for ceremonial use within it, and that they are not mere formal gestures but acts of worship, into which one’s understanding must enter so fully that the outer signum becomes a faithful reflection of the habitual quality of mind of him who uses it. It is one thing, and a vain one, to give a sign in ignorance of what it means; it is quite another, and one of potent value, to give it “with intention”, with full awareness of its implications and as a sacramental reflex of one’s spiritual condition. Whoever has learned to do this will know how extremely appropriate and valuable our Signs are, and to what varied and beneficent purposes they can be applied.

Now the First Degree Sign implies (among much else) humility; the humbling (to the point of removal) of the head or natural carnal reason in the presence of the great mystery of Being, of which we, as initiates, are seeking to learn something. The Second Degree Sign, on the other hand, refers (also among much else) to the need for purity, fidelity and perseverance of heart in the pursuit of that mystery. In each case these virtues—humility, purity, fidelity, perseverance — must become the habitual ingrained features of the Mason’s soul, which then will of itself become a living sign, apart from any physical gesture he may casually use. On a previous page we referred to the question in the E.A. Lecture “How do you know a Mason by day?” and to the answer, “By seeing him and observing the sign”;— not merely the ceremonial sign (which no one goes about publicly dis-playing), but by instant insight into his inner being and observing whether it exhibits the virtue to which that sign relates. And as no Mason may enter his earthly Lodge unless duly clothed and in possession of the appropriate sign, so we may be assured that on the higher planes of life he will be unable to gain entrance to the Grand Lodge Above if his soul fails to exhibit those inward Signs of grace which the bodily ceremonial signs are meant to be a reflex expression.

Let us reflect now for a moment upon what we call the Sign of Perseverance. Perseverance in the work of the Masonic life is every Brother’s duty; in the First Degree every Candidate pledges himself to “persevere”. In this Degree the duty of perseverance is still further emphasised by a special sign. As previously men-tioned, motion (which involves perseverence) is inseparable from life; hence in one of its many implications our Sign of Persever-ance is the equivalent of the ancient pastern
Swastika, the emblem of perpetual motion and of the eternally persevering Divine Energy — whirling into manifestation and differentiating itself into creatural life and form. Observe that, like the Swastika or Fire Cross, our Sign displays a series of squares, built up out of horizontal and vertical lines, and therefore is specially appropriate to a Lodge which is “opened upon the Square”.

Everything in Nature tends to evolve from the horizontal to the upright and to comply with the principle and the form of the builders’ Square. The Great Architect’s Compasses define the circular area in which Nature is to work. Thereupon she begins to “lay down levels and prose horizontals” and afterwards to erect vertical lines at a right angle to them. She prepares the level strata of soil and sedimentary rock, and then, as if dissatisfied with these, the volcanic energy of her fiery centre proceeds to tilt them on end to heave up Mountain peaks in an effort to attain an upright position. Look at a mountain pine-tree, the most primitive, the most “perfectly erect” and, in virtue of its erect-ness, perhaps the most graceful of trees; it is Nature’s first effort to set tip a vertical vegetable at a right angle to the earth’s mineral surface. Every spire of grass stands at a right angle to the soil it grows from. Horizontal reptiles, worms and creeping things, learn eventually to stand up and evolve at last into the vertical biped. With what immense and patient perseverance through axons of time, has Nature succeeded in producing from protoplasmic slime a creature able to “stand perfectly erect”, physically and morally, and capable of himself continuing that perseverance still further—from Nature to Nature’s God!

"The capacity to stand erect (says Tagore in his Hibbert Lectures for 1930, ['The Religion of Man’] has given our body its freedom of posture, making it easy for us to turn on all sides and realise ourselves at the centre of things. Physically it symbolises the fact that while animals have for their progress the prolongation of a narrow line, Man has the enlargement of a circle. As a centre he finds his meaning in a wide perspective and realises himself in the magnitude of his circumference”.

Hence the propriety and deep significance of our Sign of Perseverance. Nature has perseveringly built man’s body to the state of erectness and provided him with a physical vehicle to the limit of her powers. There her work ends; from that point she leaves man to continue the building work with like perseverance and to promote his own advancement to spiritual heights beyond her jurisdiction.

A man standing in the position of the Candidate about to be entrusted
with the secrets of this Degree is Nature’s finished product. She leaves
him now to continue her work himself, to carry it on to still loftier
heights, to become the shaper of his own soul, the squarer of his own
living stone, to which work he must apply the same perseverance as did
Nature from whose quarry lie has been drawn.

Hence we are given this Sign of Perseverance. No wonder that this sign
is of such age and universality; no wonder that the earliest guardians
of our race taught it to primitive man from whom it has reached us
Masons of to-day, still providing a clue to secrets and mysteries of life.
In all ages and lands, barbaric and civilised, it has served as an act of
prayer, worship, self-dedication; whilst for Initiates it is of potent use
in other ways,-ways to which the rule of silence attaches.

The Word. Not until alter the taking of the Step and the use of the Sign
have been disclosed is the ceremonial word imparted. From this we
may deduce that no one will learn the real secrets of the Degree until
he has first qualified for them by undergoing file necessary preliminary
discipline.

Like that in the First Degree, the word is a biblical one, and the two
words are meant to he used in combination; they are as inseparable as
the two symbolic pillars at the entrance of Solo-mon’s Temple. (At one
time both words were imparted in the First Degree, not separately as
now).

Solomon’s Temple, like many earlier ones, was a symbolic structure,
figurative of the architecture of the human organism. Near its entrance,
but not inside it, stood two pillars, representing the metaphysical prin-
ciples upon which that organism is based The first of these is our B.
which is biblically translated as “Strength”, but really means primal
energy, the basic dynamic force behind all manifestation, the “Fire”
(or electrical energy) which the earliest philosophers called “the father
of all things”. The second principle (or “pillar”) necessarily involves
something opposite but complementary to the first. If the first is active
energy and power, the second implies resistance to it; inertia; a passive,
steadying, restrictive element. And this is precisely what the word J.
means. Speaking broadly and in modern terms, B. means spirit and J.
the form or body which clothes spirit but yet limits its action. Of these
two every man is compounded. With-out an origin in spirit we should
not be mortal or immortal beings; without a material body and envi-
ronment to limit and check our incorporeal fiery energies, our spirits
would remain unstabilised abstractions. These two opposite principles are present in our-selves; and our business is to bring them into perfect balance.

Now the word J. is a shortened form of the Hebrew word “Jehoiakin”, which literally means “Jah establishes” or makes firm; Jah being an abbreviation of Jehovah. Taking B. and J. together the meaning is “God stabilises fire” (or spirit); i.e. God individualises undifferentiated spirit into distinctive human beings and, by subjecting it to material conditions and limitations, renders it stable and differentiated, (to use a simple analogy, diffused electricity, which manifests destructively as lightning, can be so controlled and harnessed as to serve constructively in globes of electric light). This may be taken as a modern paraphrase of “In strength will I establish this My house that it may stand firm”. For God's “house” is man and the building of man from the quarry-stone of unconditioned Nature into a strongly individualised living stone, perfect in all its parts and redounding in honour to the builder, is the whole aim and end of the Masonic Craft.

In the union of B. and J., then, the Candidate is taught to see that the two opposite but complementary “pillars” or principles are blended in himself. Both B. (spirit) and J. (matter), are present in him; he is himself a combination of dynamic energy and of a static inert principle opposed to spirit, but necessary for the restraint and education of his spirit. For spirit to be effective needs confinement in body; and body, to become perfect, must be suffused and sublimated by spirit; whilst to be “established in strength and stand firm” implies the attainment of perfect balance and harmony of these two opposites. (Other emblems indicating the same truth are the interlaced triangles forming “King Solomon’s Seal”, and the United Square and Compasses).

In a duly equipped Lodge two moveable pillars are employed as part of the regular furniture, one (B) coloured white, and the other (J) dark, and at appropriate parts of the Ceremony the Candidate is placed between them to signify that the two opposed principles must be equilibrated in himself. For at present, with most of us, spirit and body are far from being balanced and harmonised, and the office of the Craft, as of all Initiation Schools, is to assist its members to a knowledge of themselves so that they may reduce their disordered principles into unity and concord. Few Lodges, however, possess such pillars or understand their meaning; hence the desirability of providing instruction upon a point that stands at the very threshold of Masonic science, just as the pillars themselves
stood at the entrance to King Solomon’s symbolic temple.

"I come from between the pillars” is a frequent utterance by the Candidate in Egyptian rituals far older than Solomon’s Temple, and it signified “I have trodden the narrow way and balanced the good and evil in myself”. In the Telesterium or great Initiation Hall of the temple at Delphi there are said to be the pediments of two stone pillars between which, authorities have suggested, the Candidate had to stand and pass through. They are so close together that in standing between them he touched both, uniting them as it were in his own person, whilst to squeeze through them was a matter of effort and difficulty. Hence the references elsewhere to “the narrow way”, to “passing through the eye of a needle” and to “the street which is called Straight,” (Acts 9: 11).

The Testing by the Wardens

Following the entrustment with the secrets, the Candidate is, as in the former Degree, bidden to resume his “pilgrim’s march”. He is sent round to the Wardens to be examined about them and to demonstrate whether he retains and continues to observe the precepts which have been disclosed to him. As was intimated in our study of the First Degree, every accession of Light from above is followed by a subsequent personal test of our worthiness to receive it, and there arc higher spiritual principles within our-selves-principles represented by the two Wardens — which during one’s personal soul-growth subject us to “repeated trials and approbations” — or perhaps disapprobations of our fortitude, our fidelity, and our perseverance.

This small episode of scrutiny by the Wardens is, therefore, big with meaning. To discern its true value we must magnify it imaginatively till we see it referring to an actual period of trial certain to be experienced by everyone who tries to live out in personal experience the transitional stage to which the “passing” Ceremony alludes. Being a transitional stage it is notoriously one usually involving considerable mental and emotional upheaval, since the mind is gradually detaching and weaning itself from its former interests and has not yet become re-established upon a new and higher basis. The process of “passing” is like a sea-voyage from one land to another; one may have — and generally does have — a rough passage. Indeed this is the actual imagery used in the V.S.L. to describe the psychological unrest and emotional instability of those who journey into the “more hidden paths of nature” and the as yet unplumbed depths of their own being. They are likened to those who “have their business in great waters”, where they come to see “the works of the Lord and his wonders in the deep”. But, during the voyage, it is said that
they “reel to and fro, and stagger as a drunken man and are at their wits’ end”,
though finally they are brought to “their desired haven” (Ps. 107; 30). To this
scriptural metaphor we probably owe the reference in our Ritual to “steering
the soul by the helm of rectitude over the rough seas of passion, that we enter
not the harbour of vice.”

Another allusion to the personal troubles encountered in the “passing”
stage is the reference to “wages” and to their payment in the porchway or
entrance to the Temple, i.e., in the initial stage of one’s spiritual progress.
(This mention of “wages” in the present Degree is a remnant from the Mark
Degree, where it is dealt with much more fully).

Now every Craftsman may rest assured of receiving good wages for his
work and for all effort he expends in promoting the spiritual development of
himself or his Brethren; the Great Over-seer and Paymaster will see to that.
But as soon as he whole-heartedly sets about to do such work he may, and
probably will find wages of a disagreeable and unexpected kind coming to
him, in the form of obstacles, illness, losses, estrangements; as though, at the
very moment he had begun to reconstruct his life and outlook, all the powers
of darkness were crowding in upon him to prevent his advance. Well, so they
are; but they are powers proceeding from within himself; he is encountering
opposition from his own self and experiencing the reactions of the Moral Law
to his own past, and perhaps forgotten, breaches of it. The soul of each of
us contains its own judgment-book with a debit and credit account of what
is due from or to us by the Law underlying our being, an account which is
often overdrawn and which sooner or later has to be balanced; and there are
“wages of sin” as well as wages of righteousness. The “wages of sin” is always
“death,” i.e., a deadening and dulling of spiritual faculty, and it is the peculiar
trial of every real Initiate that, after his first glad glimpse of Light and after
most. earnest resolves to be faithful to his vision, he loses it and finds himself
suddenly confronted with unexpected inexplicable difficulties in recapturing
it.

Hence, then, our Craft’s reference to receiving our mystical “wages” with-
out scruple or diffidence, well recognising ourselves to be justly entitled to
them and in complete confidence in the Employer into whose service we have
entered. We leave to learn what darkness is, as well as what light is; and in the
inner life of man, as in the outer life of Nature, it is always darkest just before
dawn.

By those who see and wish to see in Masonic “science” nothing but cer-
emonial and social pleasantries tempered with elementary ethics, these in-
terpretations will be discredited as fanciful. For such, however, they are not
written. They are meant for the happily increasing number of Brethren who re-
alise the Craft to be a custodian of the “knowledge of oneself” and to enshrine profound truths of spiritual science beneath its veil of allegory. Even among ourselves there are many who already have personally verified the truth of what is here being affirmed; who have found themselves subjected to those “repeated trials” — so sudden and unforeseen, so distressing and disturbing — which visit those who are earnestly turning from shadows and pressing towards the Light; who have experienced that divided and un-stable state which arises when the soul is as two kingdoms, “one (lead, the other powerless to be born”. It is a state when a man may well doubt his own sanity and is, as the Psalmist says, “at his wits’ end”; when he asks himself whether he is not being fooled by fantasy, whether the newly glimpsed ideal be not a dream or at least a goal unattainable by himself, and whether it is not better to abandon it and return to the old forsaken fleshpots.

Let all such be of good cheer, accepting what comes “without scruple or diffidence”, and persistently holding aloft the Sign of Perseverance until their troubles pass, until their “enemies” are discomfited, and the sun of clear spiritual consciousness stands still and permanently established in their personal heaven. Let them count themselves privileged that they are experiencing; that painful transitional state prefigured in our Ceremony of “passing” from a low to an advanced order of life; assuredly it is they who, best of all, will be qualified to understand the significance of the symbolic testing by the Wardens which decide whether, as they tread their path, their steps are true and the signs of their pro-gress sure.

**The Investiture with the Apron**

In our study of the former degree it was stated that as th, Candidate advanced in the Order he would find a corresponding change and beautifying in his apron. Those changes are the “marks of his progress” — of both his ceremonial and his personal spiritual advancement. Mind moulds body. It can dominate, and suffuse the animal tendencies of the flesh or be smothered by them. The fleshy clothing can become sublimated and transfigured by the wisdom, strength and beauty of the soul within, or if that soul be itself impure and sensual, its defects will display themselves in its outward body.

"For of the soul the body form doth take,
For soul is form and doth the body make."

This elementary psychological truth is exemplified by the altered form of the Apron with which the Candidate is directed to he invested “to mark his further progress in the Science”. Note that it is not the W. M. who invests,
but his chief officer, acting under delegated authority. The point is a subtle one, but symbolically and psychologically justified. The supreme principle or spirit, being above all form and embodiment, does not directly create form or “clothe”; it is the soul or derivative principle which by its own thought and actions clothes itself, taking on form of embodiment which is then tested by the Divine Square to determine whether it be “wrought into due form”. Hence the Master (representing the spirit) delegates the actual clothing to his subordinate chief officer, signifying thereby that the soul fashions body for itself out of its own substance and by its own actions, and marks its own progress by its own self-made vesture.

The Apron’s form becomes altered in this Degree in two respects; (1) the triangular flap is lowered and identified with the quadrangular part; (2) blue rosettes burgeon forth upon the formerly unadorned lower part of the Apron. These must be explained in turn.

1. The triangular flap has already been said to signify the spiritual, and the quadrangular base the material or bodily, aspect of man: the soul attaching itself to body as it approaches birth.

Incarnation of the soul, however, is not complete or total at birth; it is a gradual process covering many years and marked by well defined physiological changes every seven years. And because it is not assumed to be complete until that “mature age” and those “years of discretion” are reached when a man is accorded full civil rights and treated as a fully responsible being, it is on this account that no one is permitted to seek initiation till of “the full age of twenty-one years”, till then he is deemed psychologically immature and physiologically unfitted for the strain which real initiation involves.

As the Apron with the raised flap refers to “the entrance of man on this their mortal existence”, so the lowering of the flap testifies to that entrance becoming complete; the soul has now descended fully into incarnation, has become completely involu-tionised, and must now begin its evolutionary re-ascent, just as a seed sown in the earth begins at once to struggle back to the air and light. This descent of the soul into body is, in the mystical language of Scripture, the “going down into Egypt”, (Egypt denoting the bondage and constriction of material existence), and the purpose of this descent is that the soul may gather experience and wisdom and develop its innate faculties as it could not do in any other way. For “there is corn in Egypt”; there are lessons to be learned and experience to be acquired which can only be learned in the flesh and by “spoiling the Egyptians”, i.e., by extracting the full Value of all
mundane experience. By so doing the soul is raised from unconsciousness to self-consciousness, brought from nescience to “knowledge of itself”; from the seed state it becomes the growing “ear of corn” which, as previously shown, is so prominently associated with this Degree.

2. But birth and involution of the soul into body sets up reactions. There is opposition, conflict, constant warring between the higher and lower natures; our rational and irrational principles are at strife. One or the other of them must prevail, for a divided house cannot stand for any length of time. We need not consider here what happens when the lower or animal man prevails, but if the higher man dominates, if the submerged involutionised soul–energies struggle forth from the grave of the body and “acquire dominion over the passions”, then they begin to manifest as virtues, faculties, and graces of character. Like yeast pervading a mass of dough and causing it to rise, the soul suffuses, sub-limates and gives glory to the body, which proceeds to bring forth the flowers and eventually the fruits, of its indwelling spirit.

This flowering is figured in our symbolism by the blue rosettes which now for the first time appear upon the Candidate’s Apron. They are the symbolic evidences of the further progress his soul is making. The former bare wilderness of his personality is now beginning to ‘rejoice and blossom as the rose.”

Why are the borders and rosettes of the Apron blue? Why is our Craft System called “Blue Masonry?” For the same reason that the sky is blue. Blue is the highest colour in Nature, and at the summit of the spectrum of light. Nature, the garment of God, is a “coat of many colours”, of which three are primaries and most in evidence. Her mantle is red at her volcanic fiery depths; green in her seas and surface vegetation; blue in her airy heights. As we look up in wonder to the blue heaven, so the Apron calls us to lift our ideas from mundane levels into limitless, “the blue”. When the visible sun shines upon massed unclouded air, we see the latter as blue sky; and when the invisible Sun at the Centre of each of us gets the chance to shine through a purified personality, the mind is raised to its highest power and becomes illuminated with the azure light of “the place of sapphires” (Job 28, 6).

Those who devised our system and clothing were expert symbolists, well versed in much higher branches of our science than are taught in our elementary Craft. The blue and the rosettes of our Apron derive from the stream of Rosicrucian influence which contributed so largely
to the formation of our Craft in the 17th century, and they have a much
deeper signifi-ance than can be explained here. Both the rose and the
cross are Rosicrucian symbols, and we are given the rose in our Sec-
ond and Third Degrees, whilst the cross (in the form of the Hebrew
Tau-Cross) supersedes it on the Apron of every Master and Past Master
of a Lodge. Would that every Brother who wears them realised their
meaning!

The Charge in the S.E. Corner

After his symbolic, clothing in the West, the Candidate is placed in the S.E.
corner of the Lodge, as previously he was placed in the N.E. Note that S. is the
left or heart side of the Lodge, so that once again the appeal is to his heart or
spiritual intuition, rather than to his head and reason. (As before, the Tracing
Board of the Degree should be exposed on the floor and the Candidate’s feet
angulated to its S. E. corner).

Immense progress is signified by the change from the N.E. to the S. E.
In the language of the Bible and the Mysteries the North is associated with
mental darkness, the south with illumina-tion. In many places no one ever
sits in the North of the Lodge, save the Candidate after his initiation. Being
placed in the S.E., the sun at the centre of the Candidate’s personal system is
deemed now to have risen above his mental horizon; in the words of Scripture
lie has been given “a south land, his captivity has been turned as “the rivers
in the South”. In some Masonic districts “I will meet you in the South” is
a happy greeting implying “I will meet you in the place of genial light and
refreshment”.

The Candidate is now charged so to conduct his future life as not only to
prevent his newly won illumination from evaporating, but to tend to enlarge
it. He is urged to persist in practising all that was enjoined upon him in the
former Degree, but also now to devote himself to the study and practice of
‘such of the liberal arts and sciences as are within the compass of his attain-
ment”. The classical arts and sciences, seven in number, were called “liberal”,
because their exercise keeps the body fit and supple, whilst it has a liberating
effect upon the mind, disentagling it from material and sensuous interests, and
rendering it flexible and free for function-ing on abstract levels. A sound mind
in a sound body was and still is ever desirable for the Candidate for perfection
as ensuring for him that perfect harmony of all the parts of his sevenfold na-
ture to which the seven arts and sciences applied. Masonic “harmony” has no
relation to song-singing. It means the harmonisation of the too often discord-
dant elements of one’s being. Its old name was Eirene, Iris, the Rainbow; the
“bow set in the cloud” of man’s earthly organism. Look at a natural rainbow; it is not a confused jumble of colour, but an ordered series of seven hues, each issuing out of the former, the heat rays culminating in light rays. So in ourselves; the white light of the divine principle has been “set in the cloud” of our material bodies but remains obscured until our “fervency and zeal” makes it possible for its rays to shine out from us in order and harmony, as our “coat of many colours.”

It is not essential, though by no means inadvisable, for us of to-day to pursue the arts and sciences of the ancients, for times have altered and have forced upon us intellectual and social conditions which provide other means of reaching the same result. None the less it remains true that a corresponding discipline of some kind must still be practiced to purify body and mind and make them efficient receptacles of light. Any form of mental exercise that promotes abstract thought and intellectual flexibility and power is therefore useful; equally so is any exercise at controlling thought and banishing it at will; for the mind grows as much by passivity and recollectedness as it does by energising actively. The active acquisition of knowledge by reading and working upon abstract problems needs balancing by reflection, meditation, and the prayer of recollection and quietude. Paraadoxical as it may sound, moments of profoundest mental passivity are found by those experienced in these things to be moments of intensest illumination. The unruffled “still waters” of the contemplative mind involve the highest mode of mental activity, for then those waters serve as an unrefracting mirror to the Light from above, and sun and mirror become as one light. *Summa scienta nihil scire; supreme knowledge comes when we still and empty the mind and are content to know nothing.*

It may be urged that multitudes of highly intellectual people exist to-day whose minds work habitually upon abstract levels and in pursuit of non-material truth, yet who never become Initiates in the Masonic or religious sense. True, and their labours will eventually prove of the highest benefit to them, for they are unconsciously building new faculty for themselves and so advancing their evolutionary progress. But the answer is, what are their dedications? One only finds what one seeks. There are ignorant seekers of truth as well as enlightened ones. The Masonic truth-seeker has the advantage of knowing in advance what he is looking for and, according to the energy of his quest, so he will find. The other type is but casually and benightedly exploring for anything that may turn up, and, should he make a discovery, he is not equipped for interpreting its value!
The Working Tools

Certain further working tools, appropriate to the task of a Craftsman, are next presented. As before they are three in number and are originally associated with each other, like such other triadic combinations as the Master and two Wardens, and the Greater and Lesser Lights.

The duty of presenting and explaining them, or of seeing that they are presented and explained, is incumbent upon the W.M. Having risen to Mastership himself by their use, he guarantees their efficacy to the Candidate, who is thus assured that, by using them, he too will rise to a like exalted position. Thus the keys of progress are and always have been passed on from Master to novice through the ages.

In practice the W.M. usually delegates the presentation to the J.W. in the First Degree and to the S.W. in the Second. But as the W.M. and Wardens are an organic trinity, the presentation by a Warden is the act of the Master, whilst the delegation serves to indicate the Degree to which the tools apply. In the First Degree they applied to the discipline and education of the Candidate’s outward person; in the Second they relate to the government of his mind.

The Ritual itself provides an exposition of the tools of this Degree so full that it appears adequate. So indeed it is, within the elementary limits, disclosed on the surface of the Ritual, and we shall do well to accept and act upon the simple explanation provided. But the explanation is not exhaustive and once again, we must look beneath the surface for the fuller significance of the tools.

Taking the tools separately they constitute an evolutional, geometrical progression:-

(1) A single line; (the vertical Plumb-rule). |
(2) Two lines, vertical and horizontal, at a right angle; (the Square). ⊥
(3) Three lines, forming two right angles; (the Level). ⊥

If these lines (or the tools) be arranged in such a way that they form four right angles meeting at the centre, they yield the figure of the Cross? +

If they be arranged so that the four right angles do not meet at a centre but away from it, they produce a superfice (or symbol of the perfect ashlar)? □

Into the mathematical and geometrical ideas behind this progression of 1, 2, 3, 4, we cannot now go, but they form the basis of all the religio-philosophical teaching of antiquity and of the Tetragrammaton of four-lettered name of Deity. Summed up in modern and personal terms they imply that, to attain the state of spiritual development signified by the Perfect Ashlar (which is the work of our Second Degree), the individual soul and body must first be brought into right and balanced relationship, and then pass through the cru-
cial regenerative experience known as “the Cross—or transition from natural to supernatural life.

It is well recognised that the Cross as a philosophical symbol was in use ages before Christianity and is found in connection with all the great pre-Christian religions. Amongst many significances was that of the four primordial elements (fire, water, air, earth) in a state of balanced union, for of them everything in the Universe, including ourselves, is composed, though in different proportions. Each of us has usually too much or too little of one or other of them in our composition and to restore them into balance and harmony in ourselves is the life-problem of each of us.

Accordingly in the Ancient Mysteries the Cross was as central and conspicuous a symbol as it is to-day upon the altar of a Christian church and into its closely screened secrets and mysteries only duly qualified Candidates were initiated. Contemplating it the pre-Christian Candidate was taught to see in it an emblem of himself; to discern that the Cross is the basic structural principle of the Universe and of his own cruciform body, to recognise that the human soul or Ego stands as it were bound and crucified upon the Cross of the four material elements which it must subdue into balance and harmonious function; to learn (as our Ritual still teaches) “to make all his passions and prejudices coincide with the strict line of virtue and in every pursuit to have eternity in view”. And by it he received the counsel to “take up his cross” and, as a later and Christian Initiatee came to put it, so to carry it that eventually it would carry him.

Eventually the time came when the teaching of the Mysteries and philosophy was suppressed by the Roman Empire and the use of their symbols forbidden. The Initiation Schools still persisted, however, in secret, — Christianity itself being at first a closely tyled secret system — and there survives the interesting tradition that when, from fear of being raided by the civil authorities, it was dangerous for a private assembly to be found using such a symbol as the Cross, recourse was had to camouflage, and a loosely made cross of builder’s tools was used which, in emergency, could readily be knocked in pieces and reveal nothing more than the Square, Level and Plumb rule which we exhibit to Candidates to-day.

Be this tradition true or fabulous the fact remains that our Second Degree tools do indeed form a Cross when combined and that their ancient philosophical significance is still implied and remains applicable to the Candidate of to-day.

And so with the presentation of the three Working-tools the Ceremony fittingly ends, leaving the Candidate to convert their moral implications into practical conduct in the career of a Fellow Craft now opening before him.
Considered merely as simple separate builder’s tools each of them can teach him much, and if his life becomes an expression of their moral meaning he will do well and travel far. But he will be well-advised if he can see them also unitedly and in syntheseis, forming that ancient and once secret symbol, the Cross, and perceiving it, as the Mysteries of old always taught, as a geometrical and philosophical emblem of himself and of that conflict between the spirit and the flesh which will go on in him until these twain are brought into due balance.

After all, whether he take up his builder’s tools separately and lives out their respective meanings in the sense taught by our Ritual,—or whether he take up his Cross and follow all that the Cross implies, matters little;—the difference is but one of ex-pression. What is of moment is that he shall faithfully do what he sees to be necessary for his spiritual perfecting. In either case the task and the end will be the same; it will involve the same labour, the same self-denial, and it will ensure the same result—the shaping of himself into a “perfect ashlar.”

The Closing

The Lodge now closes down to the First Degree and the tension of the Brethren becomes relaxed to that lower level of thought and labour. But as it does so, there rings out from the Master’s Chair, one searching question; a question the answer to which furnishes the key to the whole purpose of the Degree. “What have you been enabled to discover in this Degree?”

The question is addressed to the J.W., the officer who in the Lodge represents the faculty of enlightened perception; but his answer to it is meant to voice the united testimony of every Brother present. And, be it noted, the question does not say “What have you discovered in the course of this Ceremony?” It implies: What great truth has become revealed to you from your whole experience as a Fellow Craft Mason? What have you succeeded in realising from your life in that Degree?

It is a question we ought to answer honestly and after searching our conscience. If we have discovered in this Degree (as some profess to do) nothing but a comparatively dull and un-interesting ceremony, it would seem that we have wholly failed to understand it or its place in our scheme of Degree: and to profit by our initiation into it. The confession expected of us as we stand in Lodge with hand on heart, displaying the dual signs of our fidelity and our perseverance, is that this Degree has brought us to vivid realisation that in the heart of each of us there burns invisibly a “blazing star or glory in the Centre”, of which a visible emblem hangs burning in the centre of the Lodge. That is the discovery we are expected to testify to; we avouch that we have found
the source of all Light dwelling at our own Centre and that the kingdom of the Grand Geometrician is within ourselves. The personal realisation of that supreme truth is the whole pur-pose of the Second Degree.

Doubtless that discovery will not come to any one suddenly or until after a period of devoted labour in the work of the Degree. The rising of the inward Sun into the personal consciousness is usually gradual, like the dawn of the outward sun in the world of Nature. At first we may hold it but as a notion, a theory, a belief; later, there will come a rising of light into the mind, scattering intellectual darkness and searchingly purifying the heart, burning up one’s rubbish and building one’s faculties anew; finally a realised fullness of light, as the meridian Sun shining in its strength, making all clear where once all was dark. No novice could bear the sudden manifesting of that Sun’s full glory; whilst the unpurified man is self-barred from all perception of it. “If the Light within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” - and modern psychological science has revealed something of the clotted darkness and unsuspected filth usually pervading the sub-consciousness and choking the action of man’s immortal spirit. Hence the Craft’s insistence upon adequate preparation, upon purity and the wearing of symbolic white garments. For the Candidate who hopes to realise the Craft teaching in its spirit and intention, and not merely in its letter and ceremonial, must indeed be candidus, a “white man” within and without, and as such he may hope to receive that “white stone” which the Scripture promises to him who endures to the end and which in our Order is signified by the Craftsman transforming himself into the “perfect ashlar”.

But candidus implies something more than whiteness in point of colour. It involves the idea of incandescence, the white glow resulting from heat, from ardent devotion of one’s whole being to the task of self-reconstruction, from that fervent self-denying energy which overcomes natural inertia and sloth and burns up one’s darkness and superfluities as with fire. One of our official Lectures refers to this under the emblems of “chalk, charcoal, and clay,” whereby the old Freemasons cryptically taught that by the fire of labour our earthly understanding must be transmuted from the blackness of charcoal to the purity of chalk. And it is this idea which is preserved in the prayer offered on closing the Lodge in this Degree, that our service may be continuously characterised by “freedom, fervency and zeal,” freedom of will and opportunity to pursue the Masonic task; fervency in advancing it; and a consuming zeal for the Lord’s House which, as mystical Craftsmen, we have pledged ourselves to build.
Explanation of the Frontispiece

This quaint diagram is believed to be the work of an en-lightened and crudite Brother, long ago deceased, whose private papers, among which I found it, came to me. It was intended to serve as an illustration to a book on arcane science which he meant to publish, but eventually abandoned from scruples of preserving secrecy and because, for such a subject, there were so few students.

The diagram bears a Greek title, To Zumpan, meaning Man, the all-comprising; the microcosm; the measure of all things; the Universe in miniature. Its purpose is to portray the gradual evolution of human life from a negative, nescient state (“the Unconscious” of modern psychology), to self-
consciousness as a human personality, and thence to God-consciousness or conscious-ness in the Universal Spirit. In Masonic terms it represents the bringing of the human ego from darkness to light.

The background of the design is the Infinite, the realm of universal un-conditioned Being; it is marked *Circulus ceterni motus*, the sphere of eternal cause and motivation. Enclosed within this is the subordinate sphere of the Finite, within which the Divine Idea is becoming realised in the creation of Man. This finite sphere is shut off from the Infinite by a veil or curtain, bright on one side, dark on the other. As its nether pole are black clouds and fumes, marked *Physica Subterranea*, representing the Unconscious, the primitive chaotic substate (*phusis*) out of which Light, i.e., consciousness, is to be distilled and chaos transformed to an ordered cosmos of wisdom, strength and beauty in a creature who shall be the realisation of the Divine Idea.

Emerging from this blackness and towards the Light, rises a human form. At the lower part of its trunk are the organs associated with the necessary but sensual and most elementary form of consciousness, which manifests as desire for nutrition, self-preservation, self-propagation, and other forms of selfish acquisitiveness. These viscera are shewn studded with small astronomical signs to mark the first faint beginnings of consciousness, emerging like stars or pin-points of light from a dark sky. This sensual, selfish desire is consciousness in its First Degree.

Higher up, in the chest, is placed the Moon-symbol, marking an advance of consciousness from the merely sensual to the rational stage; not, of course, to suggest that the seat of reason is in the chest, but that homo animal has developed to homo sapiens. The Moon, a moving body whose light is a reflected one only and waxes and wanes, is a fitting symbol of the unstable natural reason. It is shewn in the diagram as an alternative blend of darkness and light, and represents human consciousness: in its Second Degree.

Finally, higher up still, the head is represented by the symbol of the Sun, ‘shining in his strength’, signifying the attainment of the supreme spiritual consciousness; intellectually raised to it: sublime or Third Degree. In the Lodge this state is personifies by the Master, who “marks the rising Sun”. It is the Sun hidden at the centre of each man’s personal system, and around which the lesser lights of the reason and the senses should move in due order and control, as the natural sun is a fixed body at the centre of the solar system with the earth and other planets revolving around it.

Stars, Moon, and finally Sun, are therefore shewn in the diagram as symbols of progressive degrees of consciousness evolving in human individuals out of primitive darkness, chaos and unconsciousness. And this evolution forms the spiritual history of the whole human race and of each member of
it. Each of us is summary and repetition of the creative process at work in the Cosmic Universe; each of us has to become as it were a solar system, with a sun at its centre as its ruling principle and with lesser lights moving in order around it.

The diagram shows the figure holding in one hand an equilateral triangle, marked Symmetria, to signify that he has brought his threefold nature (senses, reason, and spiritual intellectuality into balance, symmetry and unity; and, in the other hand, a lyre denoting the harmonious relations of all parts of his being. The curtain or veil of finite existence has become drawn apart for him and he stands in the Infinite Light.

The figure is, therefore, one that illustrates not only Masonic progress towards perfection; it provides a bird’s eye view of human evolution generally which, in the words of a recent writer, is

"the history of an exceedingly slow and painful emergence of love through a heavy atmosphere of lust, ambition, fear, envy and all the dark emanations of egoism...

The full emergence of love, the full revelation of the immortal self within this word of mortality is, in my view, the climax to which humanity, and perhaps all sentient creatures, are imperceptibly progressing."

But the diagram contains further notable features. It indicates how this birth of new consciousness may be stimulated, and how a man, the Masonic “superstructure” becomes formed within the old one. Food is as necessary to nourish the higher life, as it is for the bodily life. Within the food-sac or stomach of the figure, therefore, are shewn ears of corn and grapes—the emblems of mystical bread and wine—by feeding upon which is generated the new man, the embryonic figure of whom is shewn in the region of the heart and attached to the old nature by an umbilical cord like a miniature cable-tow. Upon this the reader may be left to reflect for himself; it is full of significance for the Masonic Student.

From the right side of the picture the hand of an invisible teacher points to the word Experientia, signifying that, to learn these truths, they must be reduced to personal experience; whilst, from the left, another such hand points to the letters R A T F O. These, as often occurs in cryptic designs, are the initial letters of some instructive maxim, and probably stand for Rectitudo ac Temperantia Faciunt Oleum, — Uprightness and intelligent temper-ate labour generate oil, i.e., wisdom.
This Diagram, by an Initiate may be commended to Brethren as a key to the Masonic science in which the Craft urges them to make “a daily advance”. In conjunction with it, and as a corroboration of it, may be read the testimony of another Initiate,—the writer of the vision described in Revelation 1: 10-19
Part VI

Note-book’s Material
Chapter 1

Wilmshurst’s Tracing Board of the Centre

Whilst cataloging and transcribing the note-books of W. L. Wilmshurst the following drawing of a tracing board was discovered. It was signed by Wilmshurst and is a symbolical summary of his thoughts on the significance of the Masonic symbol of the Centre.

Writing in his book *The Meaning of Masonry*, Wilmshurst described the centre in the following terms.

“What then is this «Centre», by reviving and using which we may hope to regain the secrets of our lost nature? We may reason from analogies. As the Divine Life and Will is the centre of the whole universe and controls it; as the sun is the centre and life-giver of our solar system and controls and feeds with life the planets circling round it, so at the secret centre of individual human life exists a vital, immortal principle, the spirit and the spiritual will of man. This is the faculty, by using which (when we have found it) we can never err. It is a point within the circle of our own nature and, living as we do in this physical world, the circle of our existence is bounded by two grand parallel lines; “one representing Moses; the other King Solomon”, that is to say, law and wisdom; the divine ordinances regulating the universe on the one hand; the divine “wisdom and mercy that follow us all the days of our life” on the other. Very truly then the Mason who keeps himself thus circumscribed cannot err.

Masonry, then, is a system of religious philosophy in that it provides us with a doctrine of the universe and of our place in it. It indicates whence we are come and whither we may return. It has two purposes.

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1Dr. Robert Lomas wrote in The Web of Hiram: http://www.bradford.ac.uk/webofhiram/
Its first purpose is to show that man has fallen away from a high and holy centre to the circumference or externalized condition in which we now live; to indicate that those who so desire may regain that centre by finding the centre in ourselves, for, since Deity is as a circle whose centre is everywhere, it follows that a divine centre, a “vital and immortal principle”, exists within ourselves by developing which we may hope to regain our lost and primal stature. The second purpose of the Craft doctrine is to declare the way by which that centre may be found within ourselves, and this teaching is embodied in the discipline and ordeals delineated in the three degrees. The Masonic doctrine of the Centre — or, in other words, the Christian axiom that “the Kingdom of Heaven is within you” — is nowhere better stated than by the poet Browning

“Truth is within ourselves. It takes no rise
From outward things, whate’er you may believe. There is an inmost centre in ourselves Where truth abides in fullness; and to know Rather consists in finding out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape Than by effecting entrance for a light Supposed to be without.”
Figure 1.1: This is how Wilmshurst pictured the Centre