



Scientia Coronati Research Lodge No. 4 F&AM

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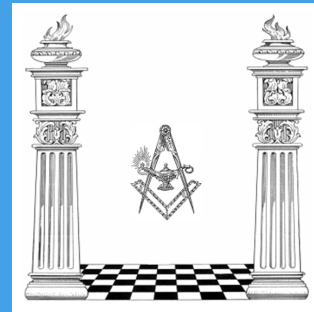
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And the Earth was without

form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, 'Let there be light'



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MASONIC ECHOES AND FOOTSTEPS - PREPARATION & MORE

By George E. Weil

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My Honored Brethren,

The depths of human nature and self knowledge, the hidden mysteries of the soul of man are not, probed into with impunity except by the "properly prepared."

In one of the Apocryphal Scriptures, 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.

Preparation proceeds at different levels. We may regard the physical preparation of the candidate as being important, in a symbolic sense, yet there are deeper levels of preparation which he must experience before the transformative influence of Masonic initiation can be fully effective.

It is better to remain ignorant than embark upon this unknown sea unwisely and without being properly prepared and in possession of the proper passports. For without proper preparation the candidate will be completely enveloped in deep spiritual night.

A candidate must be prepared in his heart before advancement to every degree, since it is the intuition of the heart, the ability to gain insights into his own nature, which is supremely important, more than the gaining of academic knowledge. Intellect here then, is the intellect of feeling and sensing rather than that of accumulation of knowledge. Part of this preparation has to do with freedom, and this again relates to different levels and to different aspects.

He must be, or intend to be, as practical as possible, free of material bonds, which may impede his progress towards spiritual advancement.

He should be free of selfish impulses and passions, which might similarly hold him back. And he must be free to choose, not impaired by any outside influences.

He should contemplate the theme and message that is presented in every degree, as if for the first time, in a state of spiritual innocence and nakedness. The Degree's pattern of meaning and message is implied in the passage of scripture voiced by the Chaplain or Master of the Lodge.

He has taken the first steps along a path that would lead him, circuitously, to the gates of enlightenment and spiritual growth. Like the Delphic Sibyl, (painted by Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel) who turns away from the scroll she has been contemplating, now suddenly begins to gaze wide eyed into the distance. So too, is our candidate's attention caught being aware at last that something is about to be disclosed to him, but does not yet know exactly what it is.

Our Lodge or temples exist for those who feel the inward call to come apart from the multitude and to dedicate themselves to a long discipline of body and mind. Our present ceremonies can be seen as faint echoes to this process, alluding once again that there are further components needed to unlock the secret sanctuaries, in the confidence that that door would open and that they would find in due course that for which they were seeking.

We give the candidate the privilege of celebrating the progress of human learning and the enlightened teachings through ritualistic words and symbols. Without proper preparation to receive these mystic gifts, the candidate sees those gifts as through a glass, darkly. We must be clear: Studying the Masonic Art is a lifelong process. The Masonic ritual and all of its symbols may be compared to a suit of clothes that is a bit too big for us. The challenge for us and our candidate is to grow so we feel comfortable in those set of clothes. Remembering that our key premise is to accept that growth, which comes in different ways and at different rates.

The candidate is but a pale and elementary shadow of the Master Mason. He improves himself through proper preparation and begins to understand that man in his present natural state is inherently imperfect and that his journey in our Craft is one of self purification, self building and hopefully self improvement. He is given a glimmer of the philosophy of the ancients and set upon a path to seek the light that he is presumed not to have succeeded in finding elsewhere.

It is not only the candidate that profits by our Lodge system of Masonic education and teachings. The Lodge itself is enhanced and strengthened by having new members:

- Who from the beginning are able to take part in its activities;
- Who are likely to become regular attendants; and
- Who can quickly grasp the aim and purpose of the Lodges' endeavors.

We describe Masonry as a “progressive science.” The Candidate makes a "progress," an advance, from place to place and station to station . He has traversed the journey which began from the first moment he entered the Preparation Room to the last emblem presented in the Lecture of the Third Degree. Before him unfolds a powerful but subtle panorama revealing the complete assemblage of those truths and realities, which are what Freemasonry is as a whole.

He may hear a whisper in the depths of human consciousness stating the following:

- We are more than we appear to be.
- Do not discount the ancient origin of these teachings because everything old is primitive and obsolete
- You are connecting with a story of humanity that humans have treasured from time immemorial. A story of a fraternity that has guarded its secrets, occasionally risking their lives to keep it alive. A story that has been passed from generation to generation as one would a most valuable family heirloom.

As a hammer divides fire into many sparks, so one Masonic symbol may have many meanings and many explanations. Every degree we see and experience illuminates our souls, every redundancy of expression we hear is freighted with meaning, every repetition of our rituals is made to give birth to new truth. But these small revelations come about only with the proper preparation of the candidate.

For the novice Mason, Freemasonry helps him take the first steps towards understanding the roots of human behavior and the laws of Nature. It is for those who strive to take charge over their lives and make them the exciting and joyous journeys they can be.

Ever remembering, that the true Light can come only to those who, asking nothing, give all to it.