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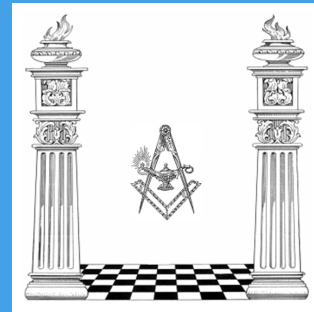
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And the Earth was without

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'



Address postal correspondence to:

Scientia Coronati Research Lodge No. 4 F&AM

1028 Willow Creek Road Prescott, Arizona, USA 86301-1642

Address electronic correspondence to:

secretary@scientiacoronati.org

THE SYMBOLISM OF 357 WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE CRAFT

LEON I. GILNER, M.D.

Our spiritual ancestor, Pythagoras, is quoted as saying: *"Number is the within of all things."* There is an extraordinary obsession with numbers, numerology, and numeric symbolism in the rituals and lectures of the craft. In 1869 Albert Mackey wrote: *"To study the symbolism of Masonry is the only way to investigate its philosophy."* To this I may add in a chiasmatic vein, that to investigate the symbolism of Masonry, we must study its philosophy. Flumini has described a symbol as "any element that refers to another independently of the methods by which the other is represented". Our ancient brethren utilized symbols to condense multiple ideas and teachings into a single element, thus making the symbol an accordion file of condensed concepts that appears small when collapsed but enlarges greatly when expanded. Another use of symbols, as described by the early Greeks and expanded upon by Giordano Bruno was as a mnemonic device for memorizing long speeches and similar dissertations. Bruno discussed the creation of a virtual temple of the mind in which apartments, furniture, utensils, and even circumambulatory pathways would stand for words, lines, and paragraphs. This use of a Lodge without walls as a memory aid, although well described by Bruno and others receives only scant mention in Masonic writings. For this discussion though, I shall concentrate on those symbols represented by numbers.

From whence comes this focus on numbers and numeric symbolism. The earliest, so-called Hermetic discussions, concentrated on natural numbers or, as we may say, those numbers that describe and illustrate natural law and the observed order of things. The most easily observed objects (or spheres) were the terran world around, the celestial cupola above, and man himself.

Conclusions based on the behavior of each of these three prime orbs were closely intertwined and thus the earliest philosophers were also the earliest mathematicians, astrologers (and later astronomers), geometricians, and in time, ethicists. Over time, observations became groups of observations and patterns were discerned—in the movement of the planets, in the change of the seasons, in the cycle of birth and decay, life and death. In fact, the various schools of empiricism taught that there was a definite and quantifiable effect of each one of the patterns on the other. The patterns had obvious numerical equivalents or were assigned such depending upon the orientation and tradition of the observer. It was later concluded that like patterns had like causes and like effects whether in the movement of the planets or in the digestive patterns of man. Thus, as Hermes Trismegistus is alleged to have written: "That which is above is the same as that which is below'...Macrocosmos is the same as microcosmos. The universe is the same as God, God is the same as man, man is the same as the cell, the cell is the same as the atom, the atom is the same as...and so on, ad infinitum." It followed that to understand say, the movement of the planets (which would be difficult to directly measure and plot), it would be necessary to investigate and understand similar patterns on the earth or in the rhythms of man. Such investigation might require esoteric illumination since

the patterns and rhythms might not be obvious or might be encoded, as it were, in symbolic form or abstruse numerical sequence. This empiricism gave birth to symbolism, but the symbolic tradition quickly diverged from its parent.

Object or numeric symbolism may be inductive, that is, one may identify a specific number, say 7, based on the number of visible planets (known in antiquity) and correlate that number with the seasonal changes and thereby define a seven day period—and call it a week. Thus the week is linked to the planets, a planet influences each day (and visa versa) and the number 7 symbolizes both groups. The number 7 has now been imbued with a multilayer symbolism, or as some would say, the multilevel symbolism of the number 7 has been illuminated.

Symbolism may also be deductive as in the following quasi-logical steps: a man has 5 fingers on one hand and therefore the number 5 symbolizes (or controls) the human hand. Other objects or patterns that are described by the number 5, such as the described human senses will also be controlled by the human hand or at least, be symbolized by it. Patterns of action of the human hand such as grasping or pointing may be projected onto the analogous senses and philosophical or even moral lessons taught—symbolically.

Thus, symbols may become numbers and numbers may be transformed into symbols. This bidirectional process is fluid, evolutionary, and subject to manipulation on many levels and over time making the interpretation of some symbols highly speculative.

Make note that the aforementioned symbolic relationships may seem unlikely, tenuous, or even mysterious. Nevertheless, the search for the meaning within the symbol has a meaning all its own—and within the esoteric travail, the ends justify the means. Furthermore, we may also discover that the lessons uncovered and discovered in symbols may be more than the original teachings that were implanted.

Freemasonry as an art and science of morality has inherited the practical technique of teaching by symbol and learning by pattern. The search for patterns appears to be hard-wired in our brains and the creation of patterns, that is connecting the dots, is beautifully satisfying even if the patterns appear, at first, meaningless. But, when our ancient operative brothers were first distinguishing themselves by their grasp of science and art, most of them were effectively illiterate. They needed a method to chronicle their discoveries, pass on their accumulated wisdom, and identify the members of their guild—hence teaching by symbol and learning by pattern became a practical solution. They sowed better than they knew, since the methods created and adopted by them—perhaps based on earlier teachings—are still in use by their speculative Masonic children and grandchildren. Of course, Freemasonry is not the only system that relies on numerical symbolism—it is found in most religious, philosophical, and hermetic traditions. There are, in fact, sequences, symbols, and patterns that may be found in both Masonry and other traditions although they do not necessarily mean the same in both. This is the main subject of this paper.

To illustrate this universality of certain symbols, I have chosen a number sequence well known to Freemasons and generally discussed in the Fellowcraft ritual, that is,

3-5-7. I will show that this sequence is not only important within the craft but holds an important place in other venues and traditions. First let me briefly discuss the symbolic references of the individual elements of the sequence, that is, 3 and 5 and 7. Then I will analyze the sequence itself.

From the first moments of the Masonic initiation with three knocks on the door to the three step gesture offered three times at a grave by two men and a third, the number three is densely scattered throughout Freemasonry. Let me name only a few: three Grand Masters, three Principle Officers, three Great Supports of Masonry, three movable Jewels, three Great Lights of Masonry, three Degrees, three Precious Jewels of a Fellowcraft, the Wages of a Fellowcraft Mason, three Ruffians, and many, many more. Few numbers seem as much to appertain to the rituals and the craft formulae as three. This may arise, in part, from our operative stonemason origins where the right angle triangle, a geometrical figure with three sides, became the first form that relied on a specific formula for its creation, that is, $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$.

Finally, There is an ancient wisdom that's says; "Messages or events that come in three's are worth noticing." Whenever anything is mentioned three times it is a warning that these things are of utmost importance. This is reflected in our proclivity to use triplets in our ritual as in...hele...conceal...reveal or strict trial, due examination or lawful information—indicating that the phrase within the triplet is of singular importance.

The number three is also a fecund symbol outside of Masonry. Here are but a few examples: its roots stem from the meaning of multiplicity. Three is a moving

forward of energy, overcoming duality, expression, manifestation and synthesis.

Three is the first number to which the meaning "all" was given. The power of three is the tripartite nature of the world as heaven, earth, and waters. Three is birth, life, and death. It is the beginning, middle and end. Three is a complete cycle unto itself. It is past, present, and future. The symbol of three is the triangle that is often the representation of the deity. Others symbols using three are: trident, fleur-de-lis, trefoil, trisula, thunderbolt, and trigrams. There are 3 phases to the moon. Lunar animals are often depicted as 3 legged. To the Pythagorean, three means completion. In Judaism, three days cannot pass without the Torah being taken from the ark and read. Naomi told Ruth to turn back three times before letting her finally travel with her. In Christianity three represents the mystery of the Trinity. Jesus was crucified with two others thus making three on crosses. In Kabbalah, the *sefirot* are divided into three triplets of three.

In Buddhism the theme of three is represented by the Three Precious Jewels. Indeed, there are three Precious Jewels in Buddhism as there are in Masonry. To wit, the core of Buddhism is made up of three pillars or gems 1) the historical Buddha, 2) the Dharma (his teachings) and 3) the Sangha (monks and nuns). The three gems are usually represented, of course, as three jewels. Of further interest is a triplicate phrase from the Gospel according to Mathew, which is echoed by a similar phrase in the Gospel according to Luke, and mirrored in our ritual. To wit, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Lastly, as an example of Hermetic triplets, the opening lines of the

Emerald Tablets of Thoth the Atlantean are:

Three is the mystery, come from the great one,
Hear, and light on thee will dawn.
In the primeval dwell three unities,
Other than these none can exist.
These are the equilibrium, source of creation,
One God, One Truth, One Point of Freedom.
Three come forth from the three of the balance,
All Life, all Good, all Power.
Three are the qualities of God in his light-home,
Infinite Power, Infinite Wisdom, Infinite Love.

Let us now take a look at the number five. In Masonry, the five-pointed star appears on the floor of the Lodge. In the second degree the symbolism of five becomes most prevalent. We find that a lodge of Fellowcrafts is composed of five officers (two masters and three Fellowcrafts). In due-form, the candidate's arms and legs form four right angles in different planes inside a fifth right angle. Our attention is drawn to the five senses, and the five orders of architecture. Our attention is particularly drawn to the fifth liberal art, geometry. In some countries the candidate is introduced to a blazing five pointed star suspended in the East. A Fellowcraft is said to have attained the age of five years.

Mackey writes: "It (the number five) is especially significant in the Fellow Craft's Degree, where five are required to hold a Lodge, and where, in the winding stairs, the five steps are referred to the orders of architecture and the human senses. In the Third Degree we find the reference to the five points of fellowship and their Symbol, the five-pointed star. Geometry, too, which is deemed synonymous with Freemasonry, is called the fifth science; and, in fact, throughout nearly all the

Degrees of Freemasonry, we find abundant allusions to five as a sacred and mystical number." Finally, in the third degree, the speculative mason is introduced to the five points of fellowship.

Outside the fraternity we learn, again from Mackey's encyclopedia, that among the Pythagoreans five was a mystical number, because it was formed by the union of the first even number and the first odd, rejecting unity and hence it symbolized the mixed conditions of order and disorder, happiness and misfortune, life and death. The same union of the odd and even, or male and female, numbers made it the symbol of marriage. Among the Greeks it was a symbol of the world, because, says Diodorus, it represented ether and the four elements. Five is the symbol of the human microcosm and the pentagram forms the human with arms and legs out stretched. The pentagon is endless ---sharing the symbolism of perfection and power of the circle. Five is a circular number as it produces itself in its last digit when raised to its own power. The pentacle, like the circle, symbolizes whole, the quincunx (the arrangement of five objects in a square, with four at the corners and one in the center) being the meeting point of the four cardinal points plus the center point.

The number five symbolizes meditation, religion, and versatility. It represents the five senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing) everywhere except in the East. In the East there are six---the extra being Mind. The five-pointed star depicts individuality and spiritual aspiration, and education when it points upward. The five-pointed star

pointing downward represents witchcraft, and it is used in black magic. In Judaism, there are five books of Moses, and in Christianity there are five points to the cross and the five wounds of Jesus Christ. Lastly, there are five fingers and five toes, which may have given rise to our decimal number system.

This brings us to the number seven. To again quote Mackey, "to the Mason, following the teachings of "our ancient friend and brother, the great Pythagoras," it (the number seven) may well be the symbol of Perfection, this significance being plainly derivable from the fact that Seven is the sum of the numbers Three and Four, the numbers of the two perfect figures--the Triangle and the Square." The triangle and square are, of course, most prominently visible in the Masons' apron. The third group of seven steps in the winding staircase is interpreted as referring to the liberal arts and sciences—which at one time was a combination of the trivium and the quadrivium. Seven stars surround the moon on some trestleboards—which may represent the seven planets. In Masonic tradition King Solomon was seven years building the Temple. The Temple was dedicated in the seventh month and the festival lasted seven days. Kent W. Henderson, in *The Masonic World Guide* (1984) states "there are in excess of 100 different Craft rituals in use in the regular Masonic world." He classifies these rituals into the seven main categories: American, English, Scottish, Irish, French, Anglo-Continental, and Swedish. Lastly, to quote Wilmhurst: "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 coordinated

into a unity so as to constitute a "just and perfect Lodge."

Outside Masonry, seven is probably the most important and most often used number symbol. I will present but a few examples. Jacob offered to work for Laban to obtain Rachel's hand in marriage (he actually had to work twice seven years). There are seven dwarfs, seven deadly sins, the seven seas, the seven sisters (which may be the Pleiades, women's liberal arts colleges, or seven relatively unexplored and isolated Indian states), the seven ages of man, the seven wonders of the ancient world, seven heavens, seven hells, seven notes of the ancient scale, seven colors of the rainbow as delineated by Isaac Newton, and seven stars of the Big Dipper constellation.

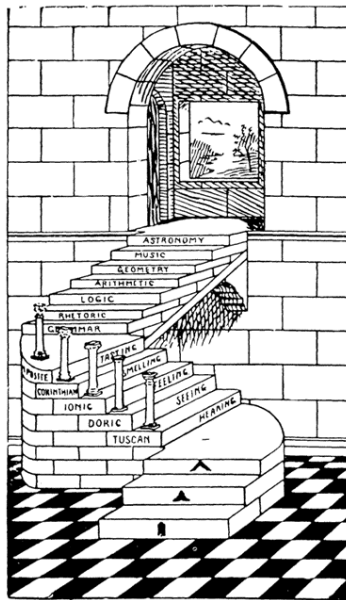
Seven is also numbers the days of Passover and the branches of the menorah. Since 4 lunar phases make a complete lunar cycle of 28 days, each phase is 7 days, and this defines the week. Seven is often used as a number of wisdom—as we see in Proverbs 9:1: *"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars."* Noah had seven days to prepare for the flood. Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dream as revealing seven years of abundance and seven years of famine. The Lord rested from the work of creation on the seventh day, every seventh year is declared a Sabbatical year, and seven years times seven years is declared the Jubilee year—when liberty is declared throughout the land—which should sound familiar. **[As the Liberty Bell was created to commemorate the golden anniversary of William Penn's Charter, the quotation "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the**

land unto all the inhabitants thereof," from Leviticus 25:10, was particularly apt. For the line in the Bible immediately preceding "proclaim liberty" is, "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year." What better way to pay homage to Penn and hallow the 50th year than with a bell proclaiming liberty?]

In Christianity, God is represented by the seventh ray in the center of the six rays of creation. Furthermore, there are seven sacraments, and seven gifts of the spirit. Finally, there is lucky seven, the seventh son of the seventh son—like Donnie Osmond, *The Seventh Son* by Willie Dixon, the movie entitled *The Seven Samurai* and its western knockoff, *The Magnificent Seven* and in Chinese culture, the seventh day of the first moon of the lunar year is known as Human's Day. That day is considered the birthday of all human beings universally. I could go on for hours.

Let me now discuss the sequence of 3-5-7 itself in terms of Freemasonry. The most well-known and obvious example 3-5-7 is in the ritual of the second degree. The winding staircase is formed of three flights of stairs consisting of three, five, and seven steps. Clearly, this sequence is a progression and all of odd numbers. It is said that all approaches to a temple in ancient times were made of an odd number of steps so that the foot entering the temple was the same foot that first stepped on the initial step. The staircase as a whole is said to be a symbol of the progress of a man from the low level of natural ignorance toward that high level of spiritual power and insight symbolized by the Middle Chamber. In some eighteenth century tracing boards the staircase is composed of only five steps, in others of seven. Preston divided them into one, three, five, seven, nine and eleven, making thirty-six in all. The Hemming lectures, which replaced Preston's at the time of the Union, struck out the group of eleven steps, thus reducing the number to twenty-five. The American

Ritual, in turn, further reduced the number to fifteen by striking out the one and the nine. Albert Pike was of the opinion that the nine should have been retained because he believed that the series three, five, seven and nine had an ancient meaning. It should be noted the architects of the House of the Temple at Washington, which is a monument to Albert Pike and headquarters of the Scottish Rite of the Southern Jurisdiction, have divided the steps that lead from the street to the entrance of that building into groups of three, five, seven and nine.



Be that as it may, the sequence of 3-5-7 cannot now be changed in the Fellowcraft ritual without altering the entire scheme of the working. A distinguished writer has said, "These steps, like all the Masonic symbols, are illustrative of discipline and doctrine, as well as of natural, mathematical, and metaphysical science, and open to us an extensive range of moral and speculative inquiry." To begin, the most popular explanation of the first three steps is that they represent the three degrees or the three principal officers of the lodge. This suggests that at the beginning of his journey, the candidate is helped on his way by an organized fraternity. It has also been written that the reference to the organization of the Masonic institution is "intended to remind the aspirant of the union of men in society, and the

development of the social state out of the state of nature. He is thus reminded, in the very outset of his journey, of the blessings which arise from civilization, and of the fruits of virtue and knowledge which are derived from that condition.” Other interpretations of these steps suggest that they represent the stages of human life, manhood, old age, and transfiguration. They also represent the ways in which we approach knowledge- with a willingness to hear and learn, a willingness to share what we have learned, and the ability to keep confidential those things that should be confidential.

The next set of stairs consisting of five steps invites the candidate to contemplate another series of instructions. The human senses, as the appropriate channels through which we receive all our ideas of perception, and which, therefore, constitute the most important sources of our knowledge, are here referred to as a symbol of intellectual cultivation. Architecture, as the most important of the arts which conduce to the comfort of mankind, is also alluded to here, not simply because it is so closely connected with the operative institution of Masonry, but also as the type of all the other useful arts. In his second pause, in the ascent of the Winding Stairs, the aspirant is therefore reminded of the necessity of cultivating practical knowledge.

At the third and final set of stairs consisting of seven steps the candidate arrives at that point in which the circle of human science is to be explained. This knowledge is symbolized by the seven liberal arts and sciences, themselves composed of the trivium and the quadrivium (the three and the four—much like the shape of the Masonic apron). We are now able to comprehend one interpretation of the symbolism of the Winding Stairs and the sequence of 3-5-7. They represent the progress of an inquiring mind through the toils and labors of intellectual cultivation and study, and the preparatory acquisition of science, as a preliminary step to the attainment of divine truth, which is symbolized in Masonry by the WORD. Another interpretation is that the first three steps indicate the mental attitudes or equipment

necessary for knowledge, the five steps show us the means by which knowledge reaches the mind, and the seven steps tell how we should evaluate knowledge, for they are "tools" of thinking. Whatever the exact symbolism and interpretation, the sequence is clearly pregnant with meaning and righteous material for contemplation—as is appropriate for a Mason.

Another example of 3-5-7 within the craft is the tradition that an Entered Apprentice lodge consists of seven, a Fellowcraft's Lodge of five, and the Master Mason's Lodge consists of three. On the other hand, another tradition, also demonstrating the 3-5-7 sequence states that the Entered Apprentice degree is founded on the number three, the Fellowcraft on the number five, and the sublime degree of Master Mason on the number five, all based on the number of steps in the proper advance and the number of movements in the complete signs as worked in England.

Lastly, there is the so-called "Mason's Magic Square." A Magic Square (Kamea in Hebrew) is an array of an equal number of rows and columns containing numbers that are arranged so that the sum of any row is also equal to the sum of any column in that square. Additionally, the sum of either of the two diagonals of the square also equals the sum of either a row or column in the square. The freemason's Magic Square is a 3 X 3 magic square, a magic square made up of three rows and three columns.

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

The middle three numbers are 3, 5, and 7. The numbers in each of the three individual rows all add up to the number 15. If you add the numbers in each separate column, each column adds to 15 and if you add the numbers across the

diagonals of the array, they too will equal 15. The significance of this is purely questionable although it has been noted that Benjamin Franklin was acquainted with magic squares, and that a Freemason's Magic Square was discovered among his papers after his death. Make of that what you will! Of course, the search for meaning presupposes that it exists and may be found—else why look?

As stated at the beginning of this paper, the sequence of 3, 5, 7 may also be discovered outside Freemasonry in some curious locations.

Shichi-Go-San (lit. "Seven-Five-Three") is a traditional rite of passage and festival day in Japan for three and seven year-old girls and three and five year-old boys, held annually on November 15. *Shichi-Go-San* is said to have originated in the Heian Period (794-1185) amongst court nobles who would celebrate the passage of their children into middle childhood. The ages three, five and seven are consistent with Japanese numerology, which dictates that odd numbers are lucky. The practice was set to the fifteenth of the month during the Kamakura Period (1185–1333).

In Judaism, the Torah is taken from the ark to be read on Saturday, Tuesday, and Thursday. If Sunday is designated the first day of the week (it is called that in Hebrew: *Yom Rishon*), then the Torah is read on the third day, the fifth day, and the seventh day of the week—all odd number days. It is written that Moses instituted this practice so that three days would not pass without the Torah being read. That the days are odd numbered may or may not be a coincidence.

The Priestly Blessing (the Birkat Cohanim) is found in Numbers 6:23-27.

Traditionally, the priests blessed the people every morning after the sacrifice at the Temple. Today, many synagogues end their service with this blessing as a benediction. In English, it is: *May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance*

upon you and give you peace. The blessing in Translation appears to have nothing to do with the 3-5-7 sequence. But, if one reads the blessing in Hebrew (transliterated) like this, we see something marvelous.

*Yivarechecha Adonai viyishmirecha,
Ya'er Adonai panav elecha veechuneka,
Yeesa Adonai panav elecha viyasem lecha shalom*

We know see that the prayer is composed of three lines with a progression of 3, 5, and 7 words. Not only do the number of words form the arithmetic sequence of 3,5,7, these numbers are all prime numbers, where the common difference between successive numbers is 2. If we also do a letter count by verse, then the first verse contains 15 letters, the second verse has 20 letters, and the third verse is comprised of 25 letters. Again, an arithmetic sequence, 15, 20, 25, arises where the common difference this time is 5. If we now add in the spaces between the letters of each verse and do a count, then the sequence is 17, 24, and 31. This is also an arithmetic sequence where the common difference between terms this time is 7. One can only wonder if this is simply a poetic structure such as one might find in a *haiku*, or if there is some deeper meaning to these sequences. This is a proper question for a Mason to ponder.

To go from the sublime to the ridiculous, we should also mention the .357 magnum bullet, the game of 3-5-7 poker, and the female duo of Oaktown's 357. Rounding out the subject with an example of 3-5-7 both within and without the craft, I refer you to a speech by Albert Pike. On June 24, 1857, Albert Pike delivered a speech in Muskogee Lodge No.93, Creek Nation, Indian Territory. At some point, a typed manuscript was made from Pike's original hand-written text. As was usual for Brother Pike, the oratory was long and detailed despite the fact that he had arrived in the Creek Nation just a few days before mid-June with few notes and little preparation. Of most interest to us is the fact that the speech consists of 10,572 words, divided into 357 sentences. Did Pike do this on purpose or is this merely a

coincidence? I leave that for your consideration and speculation.

Finally, the 3-5-7 sequence displays the typical properties of a number string. In this case, the sum of the first and third number, that is $3+7$, equals 10. Ten divided by two equals the center number, which is 5. Furthermore, the sum of the intermediate even numbers, that is 4 and 6 also equal 10. Interesting for sure. Important? Perhaps not. Then again, perhaps you disagree?

Some of you think I will now wax prolific on the sum of the sequence, that is, the number 15. Indeed one can site the fifteen Fellowcraft that conspired to murder the GMHA---but no, that I will leave for another day. To quote Kohelet, the teacher in Ecclesiastes: "Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body."

So, what does it all mean? Is our symbolism like a Zen Koan, the meaning of which cannot be understood by rational thinking but is accessible only through intuition? Is it merely coincidence or simply simultaneity in which we find the same numbers and sequences in varied and apparently disconnected venues? Or are there deeper meanings and connections that need to be discovered before the entire construct can be understood and the symbolism made clear? The answer I believe is, all of these and more. As William Blake wrote in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite."
(That line, by the way, inspired the title of Aldous Huxley's book, *The Doors of Perception*, and that book title inspired the name of the musical group, *The Doors*.)

Masonic symbolism induces in the candidate an instant connection with the Lodge and develops a spiritual bond between the reality of daily life and the experience of the represented symbol. Coleridge has described this as the "bond between the representative and the represented". Goethe has captured its essence thus: "... the

mission of the allegory and of the symbol is to connect the peculiar to the universal... a vivid and instantaneous revelation of the inscrutable.” But even more, the seeking of this magical connection both within and without our stated ritual is the quintessential mission of all our Masonic adventurers. As Mackey wrote: “Its (Masonry’s) philosophy is engaged in the consideration of propositions relating to God and man, to the present and the future life. Its science is the symbolism by which these propositions are presented to the mind.”

May we all heed the call to travel in foreign lands and find the wisdom, strength, and beauty that will be revealed to us through our Masonic journeys!

So mote it be.