

In Thy Light We See More Light

“For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.” (Psalm 36:9)
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Masonic authority authenticates itself in the effective display of fraternal love. No written statement can have the authority which derives from the application of the five points of fellowship. However, York Rite Masonry acknowledges the compelling power of the great lights in Masonry. What appears in this address is a simple review of the Biblical usage of the term *light*. Any serious answer to the question “What is the meaning of more light in Masonry?” must begin at the center of the lodge room where each mason begins his fraternal journey.

GOD CREATED LIGHT

God’s first commandment formed light. “*In the beginning God created* the heaven and the earth. 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: and there was light.***” (Genesis 1:1-3) Light occurs 235 times and the derivative word day occurs 1,541 times.

The first application of light is administrative. “And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And ***God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.*** *he made* the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and ***to divide the light from the darkness:*** and God saw that *it was good.*” (Genesis 1:15-18)

The second application is communication of truth. “***Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father*** which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Ultimately light sets the boundaries of human understanding.

Immortal, invisible, **God** only wise,
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
Almighty, victorious, Thy great Name we praise.

For the Mason there is a process of shading the eyes until gradually it is possible to see more and more light. A sudden overwhelming light leaves everything in stunned darkness. The process accomplished through graded development by degree is more apt to lead to enlightenment.

LIGHT ORGANIZES AND DIRECTS LIFE

God's Word is the light which enables a person to travel through life. "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*" (Psalm 119:105) The furniture of a York Rite lodge is not optional. Arguments that the Volume of Sacred Law is negotiable and that the Bible may appropriately have companions at the center of a lodge is ludicrous *prima fascia*. The Koran and the Granth do not lead to the Lodge of the Holy Saints John in Jerusalem.

The purpose and meaning of life derive from God's light and other light is not visible without God's light. "For with thee *is* the fountain of life: *in thy light shall we see light.*" (Psalm 36:9) For the York Rite Mason the meaning of the symbols and the patterns of life appear as a student becomes accustomed to the light. Lights cannot be equal; light is or it isn't. The Great Light of the fraternity is the light which enables all other understanding.

Divine light progressively expands light. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble." (Proverbs 4:18-19) The degree system is only an expression of this experiential truth. No grand jurisdiction can change the way in which men come to understand truth. Festivals conferring three, nine, or ninety degrees are forms of cheating on exams.

There is only one actual light and consequently what differs from it and what it displays is not light. "To the law and to the testimony: *if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*" (Isaiah 8:20)

Here too the embodiment of Scottish Rite Masonry expresses the York perspective in his discussion of the Prince Adept. "The Christian, reconciled to God, sees the world in a new light. This great Universe is no longer a mere machine, wound up and set going six thousand or sixty millions years ago, and left to run on afterward forever, by virtue of a law of mechanics created at the beginning, without further care or consideration on the part of the Deity; but it has now become to him a great emanation from God, the product of His thought, not a mere dead machine, but a thing of life, over which God watches continually, and every movement of which is immediately produced by His present action, the law of harmony being the essence of the Deity, re-enacted every instant. And this is symbolized by the imperfect instruction given in the Fellow-Craft's Degree, in the sciences, and particularly geometry, connected as the latter is with God Himself in the mind of a Mason, because the same letter, suspended in the East, represents both; and astronomy, or the knowledge of the laws of motion and harmony that govern the spheres, is but a portion of the wider science of

geometry. It is so symbolized because it is here, in the Second degree, that the candidate first receives an other than moral instruction.”

Implicitly Isaiah and Pike are arguing that morality must be propositional in the way which Geometry is propositional. Western society historically denominated Theology to be the Queen of the Sciences and a Doctorate in Theology to be higher than a Doctorate in Philosophy.

While Puritanism can be traced to William Perkins and the explosive intellectual growth of Cambridge in the 16th Century, it has a much deeper root in English history and a close connection with the culture which emanated from York even before the days of Constantine. The symbols of York Rite Masonry do not appear *de novo* in the mind of some 19th Century degree salesman.

All the years of unceasing labor necessary to qualify a Mason for membership in the York Rite College become a small investment for the Mason who finally grasps the rich connections which intersect in Isaiah’s proposition and York Rite history. “To the law and to the testimony: ***if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.***” (Isaiah 8:20)

LIGHT GIVES PEOPLE PURPOSE AND MEANING

God makes the impossible possible. “And ***I will bring the blind*** by a way *that* they knew not; I will lead them in paths *that* they have not known: ***I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.*** These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.” (Isaiah 42:16) The Royal Arch degree cycles through a pattern of revelatory episodes in Israel’s history which demonstrate a distinctive world view and explore the platform for restoring a devastated culture. Though the stories do not speak distinctively with the term light, they do enlighten perspectives on a rich range of cultural issues.

The Principal Sojourner guides the pilgrim to a set of encounters with light on the way from Babylon to rebuilding the House of God, the place where Truth dwells among men. Then as the veils peel back, one learns a set of propositions which cannot be accommodated to multiculturalism.

As with the Royal Order of Scotland, the starting place for all genuine restoration is an encounter with I AM of the burning bush. Only the Triune God is and all other things exist.

The best science or magic of the dominant culture can and will be beaten at its own game. Rods become serpents and serpents become rods at the command of God’s servant. When the final tally is taken the rod in the Prophet’s hand survives.

The greatest builders are those who build the Tabernacle of God among men.

All men come from one source. The miasma of Evolution which conjectures mankind deriving from the mud through apes to Africans and on to Aryans leads to the 20th Century killing fields not to the treasures of the Temple. No one will pass the veil God spread till he knows Providential origin.

Ultimately rebuilding society will be through Truth not power. As the sweet singer of Israel said, "For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9)

God determines the meaning of all things. "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." (ISAIAH 45:7) The term רָע [ra'] can be used for "hard times" and does not necessarily convey moral implications. God Himself may have a beneficial purpose in marking a map across rough roads to His assigned objectives for pilgrims.

The New Testament focuses the idea of light on Jesus Christ. "In the beginning was the Word, and ***the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*** The same was in the beginning with God. ***All things were made by him;*** and without him was not any thing made that was made. ***In him was life; and the life was the light of men.***" (JOHN 1:1-4)

Albert Pike in his chapter on Knight of the Sun in the Morals and Dogma [page 639ff] explains the York Rite perspective on the Blue Degrees. After introducing the Christian principles for the discussion, Pike continues, "Notwithstanding the death of the Redeemer, man can be saved only by faith, repentance, and reformation. To repent, he must feel the sharp sting of conscience and remorse, like a sword piercing his bosom. His confidence in his guide, whom he is told to follow and fear no danger; his trust in God, which is caused to profess; and the point of the sword that is pressed against his naked left breast over the heart, are symbolical of the faith, repentance and reformation necessary to bring him to the light of a life in Christ the Crucified.

"Having repented and reformed, and bound himself to the service of God by a firm promise and obligation, the lift of Christian hope shines down into the darkness of the heart of the humble penitent, and blazes upon his pathway to Heaven. And this is symbolized by the candidate's being brought to light, after he is obligated, by the Worshipful Master, who in that light is a symbol of the Redeemer, and so brings him to the light, with the help of the brethren, as He taught the Word with the aid of the Apostles."

As the light which is God enters the world, the experience can be painful and offensive. “And this is the condemnation, that *light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.* For *every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.* But he that doeth *truth cometh to the light,* that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (John 3:19-21)

Something of Masonry's pacifism before its enemies becomes clear at this point. Light does not need to be defended and to attempt to do so is only to aid the darkness of those who are offended. Enemies are only interested in protecting their darkness.

God's people are His Holy City and at the end of time, He will be the light for that city. “And *the city had no need of the sun,* neither of the moon, to shine in it: for *the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* And the nations of them which are *saved shall walk in the light of it.* and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. ***And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.***” (Revelation 21:23-25)

York Rite Masons come from and return to a lodge of the Holy Saints John in Jerusalem. In Biblical usage, Jerusalem is a term for the Church of the Living God. The emblem T over H is a classical usage for the Jerusalem Temple in Latin manuscripts.

Before the current era when Biblical worship was practiced in Protestant churches, singing from the Psalter and explaining the linguistic usages in the Bible songs was normative in English-speaking cultures. As the York Rite degrees come to light from Entered Apprentice to Royal Arch, a cascade of fraternal *satori* explodes over a student accustomed to the Geneva Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

When more light becomes full light, God will be present and there will be no darkness. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that ***God is light,*** and ***in him is no darkness at all.***” (1 JOHN 1:5)