

MORE LIGHT

Goethe was one of the myriad-minded men of our race, and a devout member of our gentle Craft. When he lay dying, as the soft shadow began to fall over his mind, he said to a friend watching by his bed: "Open the window and let in more light!" The last request of a great poet-Mason is the first quest of every Mason.

If one were asked to sum up the meaning of Masonry in one word, the only word equal to the task is - Light! From its first lesson to its last lecture, in every degree and every symbol, the mission of Masonry is to bring the light of God into the life of man. It has no other aim, knowing that when the light shines the truth will be revealed.

A Lodge of Masons is a House of Light. Symbolically it has no roof but the sky, open to all the light of nature and of grace. As the sun rises in the East to open and rule the day, so the Master rises in the East to open and guide the Lodge, in its labor. All the work of the Lodge is done under the eye and in the name of God, obeying Him who made great lights, whose mercy endureth forever.

At the center of the Lodge, upon the Altar of Obligation, the Great Lights shine upon us, uniting the light of nature and the whiter light of revelation. Without them no Lodge is open in due form, and no business is valid. As the moon reflects the light of the sun, as the stars are seen only when the sun is hidden, so the lesser Lights follow dimly when the Greater Lights lead.

To the door of the Lodge comes the seeker after light, hoodwinked and groping his way--asking to be led out of shadows into realities, out of darkness into light. All initiation is "Bringing men to light," teaching them to see the moral order of the

world in which they must learn their duty and find their true destiny. It is the most impressive drama on earth, a symbol of the divine education of man.

So, through all its degrees, its slowly unfolding symbols, the ministry of Masonry is to make men "sons of light"--men of insight and understanding who know their way and can be of help to others who stumble in the dark.

Ruskin was right: to see clearly is life, art, philosophy, and religion--all in one. When the light shines the way is plain, and the highest service to humanity is to lead men out of the confused life of the senses into the light of moral law and spiritual faith.

To that end Masonry opens upon its Altar the one great Book of Light, its pages aglow with "a light that never was on sea or land," shining through the tragedies of man and the tumults of time, showing us a path that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. From its first page to the last the keyword of the Bible is light, until, at the end, when the City of God is built, it has no need of the sun or the moon or the stars, for God is the light of it. Turning its pages, we read.

And God said, let there be light; and there was light

God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

The entrance of Thy word giveth light.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear.

There is light for the righteous, gladness for the true.

The Lord shall be to thee an everlasting light.

To them that sat in darkness, light is sprung up.

He stumbleth not, because he seeth the light.

I am come a light into the world.

While ye have the light believe in the light.

Let your light shine before men.

To find the real origin of Masonry we must go far back into the past, back behind history. All the world over, at a certain stage of culture, men bowed down in worship of the sun, the moon, and the stars. In prehistoric graves the body was buried in a sitting posture, and always with the face toward the East, that the sleeper might be ready to spring up early to face the new and brighter day.

Such was the wonder of light and its power over man, and it is not strange that he rejoiced in its beauty, lifting up hands of praise. The Dawn was the first Altar in the old Light Religions of the race. Sunrise was an hour of prayer, and sunset, with its soft farewell fires, was the hour of sacrifice. After all, religion is a Divine Poetry, of which creeds are prose versions. Gleams of this old Light Religion shine all through Masonry, in its faith, in its symbols, and still more in its effort to organize the light of God in the soul of man.

Such a faith is in accord with all the poetries and pieties of the race.

Light is the loveliest gift of God to man; it is the mother of beauty and the joy of the world. It tells man all that he knows, and it is no wonder that his speech about it is gladsome and grateful. Light is to mind what food is to the body; it brings the morning, when the shadows flee away, and the loveliness of the world is unveiled.

Also, there is a mystery in light. It is not matter, but a form of motion; it is not spirit, though it seems closely akin to it. Midway between the material and the spiritual, it is the gateway where matter and spirit pass and repass. Of all the glories of nature it the most resembles God in its gentleness, its benignity, its pity,

falling with impartial benediction alike upon the just and the unjust, upon the splendor of wealth and the squalor of poverty.

Yes, God is light, and the mission of Masonry is to open the windows of the mind of man, letting the dim spark within us meet and blend with the light of God, in whom there is no darkness. there is "a light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," as we learn in the Book of Holy Law; but too often it is made dim by evil, error, and ignorance, until it seems well nigh to have gone out.

Here now one of the most terrible words in the Bible: "Eyes they have, but they do not see." How many tragedies it explains, how many sorrows it accounts for. Most of our bigotries and brutalities are due to blindness.

Most of the cruel wrongs we inflict upon each other are the blows and blunders of the sightless. Othello was blinded by jealousy, Macbeth by ambition, as we are apt to be blinded by passion prejudice, or greed.

With merciful charity Jesus saw that men do awful things without seeing what they do. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The pages of history are blacker than the hearts of the men that made history.

Man is not as wicked as the wrongs he has done. Unless we see this fact, much of the history of man will read like the records of hell--remembering the atrocities of the Inquisition, the terrors of the French Revolution, and the red horror of Russia. It is all a hideous nightmare--man stumbling and striking in the dark.

No, Humanity is more blind than bad. In his play, St. Joan, Shaw makes one of his characters say: "If you only saw what you think about, you would think quite differently about it. It would give you a great shock. I am not cruel by nature, but I did a very cruel thing once because I did not know what cruelty was like. I have been a different man ever since."

Alas, he did not see what he had done until the hoodwink had been taken off.

More and more some of us divide men into two classes--those who see and those who do not see. The whole quality and meaning of life lies in what men see or fail to see. And what we see depends on what we are. In the Book of Holy Law, the verb "to see" is close akin to the verb "to be," which is to teach us that character is the secret and source of insight. Virtue is vision; vice is blindness. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they see God."

Thus, our gentle Masonry, by seeking to "Bring men to light," not simply symbolically but morally and spiritually, is trying to lift the shadow of evil, ignorance and injustice off the life of man. It is a benign labor, to which we may well give the best that we are or hope to be, toiling to spread the skirts of light that we and all men may see what is true and do what is right.

What the sad world needs--what each of us needs--is more light, more love, more clarity of mind and more charity of heart; and this is what Masonry is trying to give us. Once we take it to heart, it will help us to see God in the face of our fellows, to see the power of a lie and its inherent weakness because it is false, to see the glory of truth and its final victory - to see these things is to be a Mason, to see these things is to be saved.

O Light that followeth all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee;
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That is thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.