

T.F.S. - Three, five, and seven - 3 5 7

Number 168 – April 01, 2010

“The things I want to know are in books; my best friend is the man who'll get me a book I ain't read.” President Abraham Lincoln

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“A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring; There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain; And drinking largely sobers us again.” Alexander Pope

Dear Masonic Student,

Before we begin with the article for this issue of T.F.S., I would like to mention the most recent issue of More Light, and its subject of the Memorial Service. The memorial service I reported about in the 1960 proceedings of the G.L. of MN has generated quite a bit of interest. Many of the comments and questions are about something I could have included in that issue, namely the arrangement of the candles.

The memorial services I've been at were something to witness. The candles have been arranged in different ways. Being Masonic events I have seen them arranged in a square and compass shape, and as just one of those shapes. At other times arranged as a 24 inch gauge, and a star; obviously the star shape would accommodate more candles. The number of Candles used will dictate the shape that is chosen. The most elaborate I saw had a very large number of candles: This was at a Grand Lodge and during the memorial service the name of every Brother who passed in the year between Grand Lodge Annual Communications was read along with his Lodge name and number then the Master or other officer would approach a large board with candle holders embedded in it to form a star and reverently placed a candle for that Brother in a holder. Some Lodges had a few deaths to commemorate, and others had fewer.

Widows and their families were invited to be present for the memorial service. The service was conducted in one case by the Grand Chaplain, who also included and introduced another Brother who was a Clergyman; our Brother from the clergy delivered a fine message for the event. This was conducted after the supper hour, and there were some refreshments and fellowship with the families and the Masons after. Sharon and I were honored to attend and to interact later with those present.

I hope this helps clear up any questions about the memorial service mentioned in the latest More Light publication. If anyone didn't receive that issue of More Light and would like a copy, just send me an email at erhmasonic@gmail.com letting me know and I'll send one by email.

“Never stop learning; knowledge doubles every fourteen months.” Anthony J. D'Angelo

Keep the “Great” Lights in Sight

Some things we might think should be known by every Freemason aren't always as well known as we think. In the United States, and maybe some other countries, the Three Great Lights of Masonry are disposed upon an Altar in the center of the Lodge Room. Some are surprised to learn that the protocol of not walking between the Master of the Lodge and the altar, so as to even temporarily block his view of the

Three Great Lights, is not always known by every Freemason. A Mason isn't likely to know this unless he is either very observant or he has a mentor to inform him of such things. Informing a Brother of what he should know about Masonry is very important. Just as it is important to inform a Brother about the rule of not walking between the altar and the Master when the Lodge is at labor it is also important to explain why there is this protocol.

The simple explanation is that the Master must keep the Three Great Lights in his view when he presides, so that he can draw inspiration and wisdom from them as he presides.

I often wonder what each Mason in the Lodge Room thinks of when he hears that short explanation and I also wonder if he gets the opinion that having the Great Lights in view is only important for the Master. What do we, as Brethren who attend the Lodge Communication, either as a side-liner, or an officer, think about having the Three Great Lights in our view? Do we think on those things, think enough to draw inspiration to assist us in subduing our discordant passions?

The design, or layout, of a Lodge Room for a communication as an Oblong Square with all the officers and Brethren arranged on the outside border of this oblong square we all have the Three Great Lights in view. And with but a few exceptions our view of the Three Great Lights is not interrupted, so we do know they are there and can look at them if we wish. We can, as the Master does, draw on the lessons of the Holy Bible, Square, and Compass, while we are in Lodge and have the opportunity to interact with our Brethren, as well as to keep the lessons of The Great Lights in mind when speaking and voting.

I once met a Mason who was wearing a Masonic ring that I thought was about the best Masonic ring I ever saw; it had The Three Great Lights on it: It depicted the Volume of Sacred Law open with the Square and Compass disposed upon it. I thought if I ever see one like that for sale I sure would be tempted to buy it, but I haven't ever seen one elsewhere, and I neglected to ask him where he got it. But a ring like that could serve a Mason well in continually reminding him of the important lessons contained in The Great Light, and in the symbolism of the other two Great Lights.

To me seeing the altar with The Three Great Lights disposed upon it, and seeing, in my mind's eye that ring, gets me to thinking about all there is to know about The Three Great Lights of Masonry. There is a lifetime worth of beneficial study for the Mason who wants to learn everything he can from these Three Great Lights. It's my opinion, and maybe mine alone, since I've never seen anyone else write about it, that all of us in the Lodge could look at the altar and The Three Great Lights, and think about them before we get up to interact in the Lodge.

When we enter the Oblong Square we know as the Lodge Room, it seems that it might be a good idea to leave the cares, and concerns of the everyday world outside of the Lodge Room door, and spend a few minutes in silence meditating on Freemasonry; the tenets and virtues might be a good place to start. Then when the opening ceremonies begin and the Great Lights are disposed maybe for the moments the others finish their duties we can view the Great Lights and be reminded of the lessons Masonry passes on to us about each one of them.

After we pray and conclude the final moments of the opening ceremony by the Pledge to the Flag, (at least here in the U.S.,) if we do our best we might be able to keep the precepts enjoined by the Three Great Lights in mind as we proceed in all our doings. And if we're diligent the lessons and precepts of the Three Great Lights and the other lessons of Freemasonry will be in our minds and doings outside of the Lodge too.

A friend and Brother mentioned recently about some Lodge Communications when some important subjects were discussed that discussions became heated. We would all prefer to avoid heated discussions in Lodge as well as elsewhere, but being human beings we don't always do what we would prefer. However, the design of the Masonic institution can help us avoid heated discussions. Again if we keep in mind how the Lodge Room is laid out with one Mason (the Master) in charge, with all discussion directed to him, and The Three Great Lights in our view as we sit or rise to speak in Lodge, we might be able to keep any discordant passions from rising to the top.

Another important protocol to observe is that in Lodge we are not supposed to talk amongst each other; not even to answer a question that has been posed by a Brother sitting anywhere other than the Master's chair; when we rise to speak, we don't speak until we are recognized by the Master, and when we are recognized we speak to the Master on the question or matter before the Lodge, not to another Brother. If we answer a question posed by anyone other than the Master we still address the Master to answer it. Speaking to the Master, (so all can hear,) helps us stay cooler than if we were to look at another Brother who we might not feel all that Brotherly towards at the moment.

Pondering and studying all that we can wonder and learn about in Freemasonry will help us become the better men we wanted to become when we began our Masonic journey. A truism that one can hear in many houses of worship is this: "If you can ignore something, you don't really know it, you don't really understand it, and you haven't really internalized it."ⁱ As far as Freemasonry is concerned if this is the case, the Mason hasn't begun to have a learning make a positive change in his life: Masonry is a way of life, but to make it so we need to study it, know it, understand it, internalize it, so we can apply it to our life. Then the individual Mason will see some positive changes.

"Those people who develop the ability to continuously acquire new and better forms of knowledge that they can apply to their work and to their lives will be the movers and shakers in our society for the indefinite future." Brian Tracy

For anything to become a way of life we don't study something just once and be set for life. The more time we spend studying and absorbing the underlying lessons available to the Mason from all the allegories and symbolism of the Craft, the deeper our awareness and understanding of them will become. And the deeper our awareness becomes, the more consistent we will be in reflecting that awareness in our actions. Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz – paraphrased

"I've never known any trouble than an hour's reading didn't assuage." Charles de Secondat

If you wonder about some questions, and where to find answers, talk to your Lodge Education officer, or the Grand Lodge Education Committee – if you don't know any of the members of our committee you can contact me at erhmasonic@gmail.com

"The doorstep to the temple of wisdom is the knowledge of our own ignorance."

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Words to live by: "The difference between a smart man and a wise man is that a smart man knows what to say, a wise man knows whether or not to say it." Frank M. Garafola

From volumes of Sacred Law:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."
Proverbs 1:7 Tanakh NASB

“And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” John 8:32 New Testament NASB

“Verily God is not ashamed to set forth as well the instance of a gnat as of any nobler object: for as to those who have believed, they know it to be the truth from their Lord; but as to the unbelievers, they will say, "What meaneth God by this comparison?' Many will He mislead by such parables and many guide: but none will He mislead thereby except the wicked,” Qur’an 002:026 Rodwell Translation

“Better indeed is knowledge than mechanical practice. Better than knowledge is meditation. But better still is surrender of attachment to results, because there follows immediate peace.” Bhagavad Gita

Please remember: if you would like to participate in the latest Masonic Monday Question, please go to <http://www.lodgebuilder.org> and click on the Lodge Education forum. When you have an answer send it to masonicmonday@gmail.com the Masonic Monday Question for the week of 03/29/10 is: **What is the Candidate’s Declaration?**

“A thorough knowledge of the Bible is worth more than a college education.”
President and Brother Theodore Roosevelt

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“Seldom if ever was knowledge given to keep, but always to impart. The grace of this rich jewel is lost in concealment.” Bishop Hall

The newest Education video from the Grand Lodge of Minnesota has been posted by Brother Ian Luhm at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAcUiBn8xI0>. Some of Ed’s papers can be read at: <http://www.mn-masons.org>

TFS & Masonic Matters can also be read on Ed’s Face Book page; <http://www.facebook.com/ed.halpaus>

Please remember – Ed’s new email address is erhmasonic@gmail.com the old one is going away.

With “Brotherly Love”, Ed Halpaus - Grand Lodge Education Officer

Seek to mentor a Brother Mason:

It’s good for him, it’s good for you, and it’s good for Freemasonry!

ⁱ The 6 constant Mitzvos; based on a series of lectures by Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz: by Rabbi Yehuda Heimowitz