

Trestleboard

March 2010

Culver City Foshay No. 467 F. & A. M.



FROM THE EAST

January and February have already passed and my time as Master feels as if it is flying rapidly by! The only remaining months are March, April, May, June...OK, I guess I still have some time before I can plan my "outstallation." However, looking back, I can clearly remember the first time I set foot in the Lodge Room and the feelings that I felt as I beheld the Majestic Archways on the walls and Tiled Floor surrounding the Altar and I especially remember the deep impression made by the Officers in the presentation of the Work of the Lodge and Ritual. The first time I saw Illustrious Merrick Hamer sitting in the East on a 3rd Degree, I said to myself, "I wish I could have been Raised in this Lodge!" That still remains something that I think and feel each and every time we as Officers labor in the Work.

Speaking of the Work of the Lodge and Ritual, the years have passed and with the passing of time comes the Passing and Raising of Brethren, however, having recently reviewed our list of Entered Apprentice Brethren who are awaiting the 2nd Degree and also reviewing our list of Fellow Craft Brethren who are awaiting the 3rd Degree, I realize that we have a lot more work that we need to do.

The records for each Brother come on a single page record which reveals the name and dates that the Brother has received each step of his Journey to Master Mason. At final count, taking into account our recent 1st , 2nd , and 3rd Degrees. We have approximately 35 – 37 single record sheets totaling 35 – 37 Brethren awaiting their Degrees. Granted, some have or may have moved away and others just lost interest, however, it is our responsibility to follow up with these Brethren and find out exactly why they might have lost interest or if they have moved, do they wish to learn how to complete their Journey to Master Mason?

We have a lot of work that needs to be done in the area of Ritual and the Passing and Raising of Brethren who have either recently joined or have joined in years past. I look forward to contacting these Brethren and learning more of their needs and situations and I hope if fallen we can be instrumental and/or supportive in the encouragement for them to come back.

Finally, if you know of any Brother who at one point in time was active in the lodge and is now inactive, please reach out to him and invite him to come back. We care about each and every Brother in our Lodge and we look forward to your return to our Dinners as well as our Stated Meetings and Degrees. If you wish to help me as I reach out to these Brethren, please contact me and let me know that you would like to be a part of that Committee (310) 920-3510.

Fraternally,

Jonathan P. Dilley, Worshipful Master



FROM THE WEST

Light on the Staircase, Part VII

"As Above, So Below."

--Hermes Trismegistus

Our long and winding journey up the Masonic Staircase brings us at last to astronomy. Of all the subjects we have discussed, astronomy is the one that has changed the most over the millennia. When Masonry began, the positions of celestial bodies were still generally considered to determine our fate, and astrology was seen as an exact science. Fewer people literally believe this these days, and our knowledge of the universe reveals a radically different place than that which was assumed during Masonry's formative era. Is this subject therefore obsolete, or does it still have a place for Masons?

To grasp astronomy's original importance, consider the quote at the head of this article. "As above, so below," is one of the founding concepts of the Hermetic tradition, which is named after the semi-mythical ancient philosopher Hermes Trismegistus to whom many esoteric writings are ascribed. By this statement, followers of the Hermetic tradition meant that the outer universe was a sort of mirror to inner universe (physical, psychological, and moral) of individual humans. Thus, by the careful study of material and celestial worlds, we could come to fully understand ourselves.

Today, scientists and most of the general public consider it a quaint superstition to believe that the positions of the stars and planets literally govern, or even affect, the events of our lives; however, let us imagine life in a more archaic time where this concept had much more validity. To early humans who noticed the days growing ever shorter and the nights longer, it must have been a great comfort to know that the length of days followed a precise cycle, and that the longer days would soon return. They must have also been comforted and amazed that the skies provided a reliable timetable for the year's cycle. Through observation of the exact points on the horizon the sun, moon, and stars rose and set, they could with confidence predict the longest and shortest days of the year, the points at which the lengths of day and night were balanced, when to expect changes in the weather, when to expect the migrations of game animals, and, most importantly for agricultural societies, when to plant their crops. Even more advanced professions relied on the celestial clock—the guidance of the sun and stars first gave navigators the confidence to sail out of sight of land. Even our operative mason ancestors, when planning long term construction projects, must have taken into account the number of workable daylight hours for each season.

Therefore, in a very literal sense, the celestial bodies governed the ancient activities of much of humanity. Also, the beauty, mystery, and superhuman accuracy and reliability of the skies provided a natural basis for many religious concepts. The sky became a celestial kingdom, a pure and perfect heaven, and the stars and planets became gods and godlike beings who shepherded humanity's actions and ruled each person's fate.

However, when the first astrologer/astronomers endeavored to explain the heavens in more empirical terms, the old ideas of heavenly perfection got in the way. For example, Kepler wasted decades of his life trying to prove that the orbits of the planets corresponded to the diameters of the five perfect solid shapes (for example, see www.fas.harvard.edu/.../KeplersUniverse/KeplersUniverse.html). Only when Kepler gave up his human-centered notions of perfection was he able to formulate the Three Laws of Planetary Motion. The result was, on the surface, an unattractive, lopsided solar system whose bodies traveled in odd, egg-shaped ellipses, but the mathematics behind the three laws revealed a deeper symmetry and beauty. This has been the case for most of

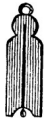
the discoveries of modern astronomy. Cherished and sacred beliefs have been swept aside only to reveal deeper mysteries and beauties than the human mind could ever imagine. The phrase "As above, so below," is perhaps even more true today than 2000 years ago, but in ways unimaginably different from what ancient stargazers believed. Most of the elements that compose our bodies are created only in the hearts of stars. Some of the forces that cause the stars to shine and the planets to bind themselves together also bind and govern the actions of the very atoms that make up our bodies.

Freemasonry has including both the practical and mystical qualities of the celestial world in its dogma and rituals. An earlier form of the Fellowcraft Degree includes an unciphered paragraph in the Staircase Lecture that we no longer use:

"Astronomy is that divine art by which we are taught read the wisdom, strength, and beauty of the Almighty Creator, in those sacred pages of the celestial hemisphere. Assisted by astronomy, we can observe the motions, measure the distances, comprehend the magnitudes, and calculate the periods and eclipses, of the heavenly bodies. By it, we learn the use of the globes, the system of the world and the preliminary law of nature. While we are employed in the study of this science, we must perceive unparalleled instances of wisdom and goodness, and through the whole creation, trace the Glorious Author by his works."

The next time you attend a Lodge meeting, listen and watch for the places in the opening, initiation, and closing make use of astronomical details and consider how the symmetry and regularity of the celestial world are reflected in the symmetry and regularity of our lodge room and rituals. As above, so below.

Fraternally,
Curtis Scott Shumaker, Senior Warden



FROM THE SOUTH

The Long and Arduous Journey

Beyond the portal whereupon one had knocked, in search of light and truth, lie the Mysteries of Freemasonry. Mysteries are they thus called, for all who have resorted thither have begun from a position of ignorance, symbolized by the womb, from which indeed, all have descended. But what manner of Faith had led the aspirant to the door that stood between himself and what existed beyond? His eyes were blinded and he had spent many a time in solitude, pondering over his past life and all things which had deluded him and which had also given him hope.

Hope, his true Guardian Angel, sustained him, as it had through every dark passage of his soul; for within the temple itself the sounds from his knocking fell not upon deaf ears. The Brethren, well pricked up, had waited patiently for the word from the East, when the Master would speak: "Let him enter!" and thus he had spoken. But low, even within, he found darkness yet prevalent; and the ground cold upon which he would kneel with a prayer in his heart, a prayer on his own behalf; and a soft voice bidding him "Arise!", "Fear not!", and "Journey as thou wilt!"

But long and arduous would be that journey; Faith abiding him; Hope still leading him on, once, twice, half shod and half ignorant, enduring his probations of will and worthiness. The Brethren surrounding his blinded body, well pricked up, had waited properly for the utterance "Let there be Light!" and the Master had spoken. But low, he was but half enlightened, encouraged by the joyous smiles he perceived on all sides, yet disheartened as they slowly evanesced; and a stern voice warning him "Kneel!", "Pray for thy self!" and "Alone, again, pursue thy journey!"

With feet bear and weary, naked before his Creator, had he wandered as it were, his sorrowful way through the Valley of Shadows, Faith and Hope eluding him, and all life seeming but a memory. The Brethren attending his limped state besought the Master's prayer; for wherewith shall he be healed, and so the Master prayed. After prayer, all doubt gave way, all minds were clear and the True Light which shown from breast to breast grew mightily in the hearts of men and Brethren; and that darkness Beyond the portal was forgotten before a Light that would never fail.

Fraternally,
Merrick Rees Hamer, PM, Junior Warden