



LODGE VEGAS # 32

The Ancient Landmarks - abusing them

Masonry is an old and entrenched institution. We have established a number of immutable laws which we call Landmarks. These Landmarks have helped to keep Masonry from being swayed by popular ideas which are fleeting and has helped the institution endure throughout time. However, strict adherence to unchanging ideals and misinterpretation over time of them can be the cause of a great amount of damage to this ancient and honorable institution.

Albert Mackey described over twenty ancient Landmarks. Most Masonic jurisdictions agree on seven.

1. Monotheism.
2. A belief in immortality.
3. The Volume of Sacred Law.
4. The legend of the third degree.
5. Secrecy.
6. Symbolism of the Operative Art.
7. A Mason must be a freeborn male.

The Landmarks themselves I have no problem with. Various authors I have read have done a good service attempting to describe their various depths and probe the intricacies of them. I find it somewhat disheartening that we have few modern day philosophers that have attempted a modern day analysis of these. And here I believe is the heart of the problem.

Masonry today seems to be sitting in a rumble seat of an old jalopy ... always looking backwards. I can hear the voice of the TV announcer now as it echo's in my head ... FAMOUS MASONS OF YESTERDAY..DAY..DAY ... No one is thinking critically today about the Landmarks. They are like an old book that has set on a shelf gathering dust. And thus, we have allowed false and misleading interpretations of them to become the norm ... nay ... law.

The three most harmful of these, as I see it are:

Monotheism, Secrecy, and The Freeborn Male

Monotheism

It is required that a person cannot be a Mason unless they have a belief in one God. Sounds pretty clear ... Until you do a little comparative religious study. Of course most Masons in the U.S. at least, think that means the differences between Baptist, Catholics, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Unfortunately, I have seen this Landmark used to reinforce the bigoted and anti-Semites that have been allowed to infiltrate our ranks.

A review of various world religions today is easier than ever. When I first began my journey into this area it started with a comparative religion course in college. This was my first exposure to anything outside of Christianity. I thought becoming a Mason would expand this curiosity and allow me to meet persons of several different faiths and traditions. I have been disappointed, to say the least. While it is said that Rudyard Kipling was raised in a lodge with five different books of faith upon the altar ... that could be hardly seen today. It is ironic that the Fundamentalist Christians accuse Freemasons of being Universalist when, in most lodges, Christianity is all that is represented. Which is why the abuse of this Landmark is so damaging to the craft. We should be universal in our view of this Landmark.

As an example, I direct you to brother Paul Bessel's fine website, <http://www.bessel.org/religion.htm> where he lists no less than 19 different monotheistic religions of the world. How many Wiccans would be accepted in your lodge?

Secrecy

SHssssssss! We can't be talking about that there masonry stuff. How many Masons have been lost to this misconceived Landmark. Now, I am not, nor have I ever been, a numbers, numbers, numbers Mason. However, the purpose of this landmark was never to hide your identity as a Mason. Nor was it the need to hide the precious secret rituals of our craft. Expose's of the Craft have been written long before most of us were born ... Duncan's, Lester's just to mention a few. Gentleman, let me let you in on something ... the secret is out!

It is my opinion that the whole necessity for the Secrecy aspect of Masonry is nothing more than a marketing tool. Which is more appealing to a man, The sunny goody good doer's association or the mystic secret handshake society? Consider this in the light of the era in which Freemasonry came about and you will see my point. Sorry Mr. Brown. You have sold a lot of books on the concept that Freemasons have a big dark secret ... it just ain't so.

The Freeborn Male

I think I will spend the least amount of time on this particular idiotic misconceived notion. " a man, freeborn, of lawful age, and coming well recommended" How many times have we heard this. Again, this little tidbit is a nice tool for our more bigoted brothers to look to and say: "see, likes I is always a sayin' no niggers or women's allowed".

Freeborn ... The idea is simple, and the language is ancient, and once again you have to see things while considering the concept of time. The Landmarks were written in a time where slavery and indentured servitude were quite common and the language has held over. If a person has no control over their destiny then how can they make an oath to such an affect. It does not mean that if a person's great granddaddy was a slave then you cannot be a Mason.

Well as far as the man portion of this landmark let me say that I for one am not interested in being a member of a co-ed lodge for reasons that are for another essay. However, there are female Masons ... there have always been female Masons. This is a hold over of a time when only men had rights and thus were able to sculpt their own destinies. Females of the time were as good as slaves when the language of the landmarks were crafted.

These are the most egregiously abused Landmarks that continue to hamper the progression of Freemasonry today. So ... what do we do? Well, let's first try to get out of the Rumble seat and get into the drivers seat. Forward looking and open mindedness is what is needed to take Masonry

forward. Scottish Rite theater was the height of technology when developed. It has been frozen in time ever since and so have the Landmarks. We need to bring items such as the Landmarks into the twenty-first century.

Now, don't get me wrong. I do not think we need to throw the Landmarks out the window and full speed ahead. I do think however that we need to look at the language of these landmarks and make a determination on what the modern day equivalent is. When did each one come about? What events prompted the addition of it? Are the concepts behind it still valid, two, three, five hundred years later. I am not so much of a scholar to be worthy to suggest replacement language or even deletion of some Landmarks ... however, I think we can all see that if we do not learn, adapt, change ... we will become another dusty tome on the shelf of society, to be looked at by some Sociologist one day saying "aahh, yes, I remember that era ... I believe it was a group called the Freemasons".

- Source: Knights of the North Masonic Dictionary

COLUMN

The Greeks called the top or summit of anything kolophon; in Latin culmen had a similar meaning; from these origins come our culmination ;" excelsior, colophon, colonnade, colonel, and climax appears to be closely related to it. A "column" is a cylindrical, or slightly tapering, support; a "pillar" is a rectangular support. Either may stand free or be incorporated into the building fabric. The officers of a Lodge are figured as columns because they are the supports of the official fabric of the Lodge. The Great Pillars are symbolical representations of the two pillars, which stood on the Porch of King Solomon's Temple.

- Source: 100 Words in Masonry

COLUMN

A round pillar made to support as well as to adorn a building, whose construction varies in the different orders of architecture. In Freemasonry, columns have a symbolic signification as the supports of a Lodge, and are known as the Columns of Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. The broken column is also a symbol in Freemasonry (see the titles Supports of the Lodge and Broken Column).

- Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

COLUMNS, THE WARDENS

In Freemasonry the Senior Warden's Column represents the pillar Jachin while the Junior Warden's Column represents the pillar Boaz. The Senior Warden's Column is in an erect position and the Junior Warden's placed horizontally during labor, these positions being reversed during refreshment.

- Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

COLUMN OF BEAUTY

One of the three principle supports of Masonry, the others being Wisdom and Strength. The column of the J.W. which is the Corinthian and is placed in the S. represents Beauty.

- Source: **Pocket Lexicon of Freemasonry**

THE COLUMN OF BEAUTY

BY Bro. Edward B. Paul, P.G.M., British Columbia

It is not often that the Beauty of Holiness and the Holiness of Beauty is described in language so true and so appropriate as in the following article, written by a Past Grand Master of British Columbia. The lessons which he draws from one emblem in the lodge room will surely inspire other brethren to look for other meanings, equally wide-reaching and profound in every symbol and emblem of our Craft. THE BUILDER believes that each and every article of furniture in the lodge each and every word and act of the ritual has a meaning and lesson of its own, always beautiful and always practicable; for this reason it urges upon all Masons to make a more thorough study of our symbols.

IN the Charge to the Brethren, usually delivered after the ceremony of the Installation of Officers, the lessons of Freemasonry are described as being "chiefly veiled in Allegory and illustrated by Symbols." Here the word "chiefly" is not used without intention. It seems to indicate that Allegory and Symbolism are the principal vehicles for the conveyance to the Initiated of the most important Masonic truths truths which it is the duty of every Freemason to try to discover and understand.

It must be granted that many symbols are explained in the course of our ceremonies; but the explanations of some of them are necessarily incomplete, and others receive merely passing mention. A great deal is left to the assiduous study of each individual Freemason, who is responsible, in proportion to his ability, for the elucidation of whatever seems to him lark and doubtful. He ought, therefore, to study carefully every act in our ceremonies, and every symbol in our lodge room, for the purpose not only of "improving himself in Masonry," but also of adding, as far as in aim lies, to our general store of knowledge. It is probable that he may, thus, be able to take a step nearer to the Truth, and guide his brethren forward, it may be only a short distance, on the right path. But even, should he himself err, it is more than probable that his mere attempt would, by indicating some new line of thought, be a suggestion to his more able brethren, who, avoiding his errors, might reach the goal which he had missed.

The subject of my article is one of the symbols which are conspicuous in our lodge room, and which, without audible speech, but, nevertheless, with silent eloquence, proclaim lessons of the highest importance o the Craft. I refer to the Column of Beauty.

As is only natural in a society whose profession is Masonry, most of its symbols are taken from the Science and Art of Architecture. Prominent among these are the three columns of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, placed respectively in the East, West and South, reminding us that there are three requisites for the erection of any great or important edifice: 1, It must be wisely planned; 2, it must be strongly built; 3, it must be pleasing to the eye.

John Ruskin, in the "Stones of Venice," asks, "What are the possible Virtues of Architecture?" and answers his own question in the following words:

"In the main we require from buildings, as from men, two kinds of goodness: first, the doing their practical duty well; then, that they be graceful and pleasing in doing it, which last is another form of duty."

In another place he says: "We require of any building

That it act well, and do the things it was intended to do, in the best way;

That it speak well, and say the things it was intended to say, in the best words;

That it look well, and please us by its presence, whatever it has to do or say."

It is that latter point which, applied to the moral structure we are called on to erect, is one of the duties laid down for us in the clearest way by Freemasonry, to which I now ask your attention.

And I would, here, in parenthesis, emphasize the fact that it is not for us to choose which of the lessons of Freemasonry we are to learn, picking out some of them as important, or, as is often said, "practical," and passing over others as trivial and unworthy of consideration. Believe me, brethren, there are many lessons taught by our beloved Craft which are vital to our characters as Freemasons, and which we can neglect only at the risk of building up one side of our natures at the expense of another.

The G. A. O. T. U. has laid his plans on the Trestle Board for the guidance of mankind. Those plans are of a two-fold nature:

(1) Those relating to the material or physical phenomena by which we are surrounded, and which, in comparison with the grandest efforts of human architects in any age are as the contrast between perfection and mediocrity, between the infinite and the finite, and

(2) Those relating to the moral conduct of mankind which we find in T. V. O. T. S. L.

But The Most High, while laying down general rules for our guidance, has, in His wisdom decreed that each individual shall construct his own spiritual edifice. In his hand are placed the pencil, skirret and compasses, wherewith to draw his own plans. Happy is he who has Wisdom to plan his life and to build up his character in Strength and Beauty so as to merit the approbation of his Divine Master!

A wisely conceived plan must recognize the architectural virtues referred to above. Man "must do his practical duty well, and he must be graceful and pleasing in doing it." He must, therefore, contemplate the columns of Strength and Beauty before he can determine the nature of the spiritual building he ought to erect.

First, and briefly, the fabric must be strongly supported by Morality and Virtue. As, in Architecture, an edifice must, above all, be built of sufficient strength to resist all possible stress, so, in "Moral Geometry," a Mason's character must be of sufficient strength to withstand temptation, however powerful. It must be "steadfast, unmovable."

But Masonry requires of us more than strength. It also demands beauty. Beauty is defined in the Century Dictionary as "that quality of an object by virtue of which the contemplation of it directly excites pleasurable emotions. The word denotes primarily that which pleases the eye or ear, but it is applied also to that quality in any object of thought which awakens admiration or approval; as, intellectual beauty, moral beauty, and so on."

But it is impossible, in a short definition to convey an adequate idea of the Theory of Beauty; and it would be beyond the scope of this lecture, even if it were desirable, to discuss that theory at length. Let us, in stead, at once proceed to ascertain, if we can, the practical teachings of the Column of Beauty.

One of the first lessons we have to learn is to appreciate the great work of Creation. Do we ever properly estimate the wealth of beauty the G.A.O.T.U. has lavished on the world around us? Or have we not become so accustomed to it that we are insensible or only partially alive to the countless beauties of form and colour which God has spread before our eyes, and the exquisite harmonies of sound with which He regales our ears. Think what the world would be like without those blessings the colours of the flowers, the perfect forms of leaves and stems, the songs of birds, the laughter of children! In humble gratitude, therefore, let us cultivate those faculties which enable us to value the glorious architecture of the Most High, lest it may be said of us that we have "eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; and hearts without understanding." Carlyle has said: "Man always worships something; always he sees the Infinite shadowed forth in something finite; and indeed can and must so see it in any finite thing, once tempt him well to fix his eyes thereon." The contemplation of the wondrous works of Creation, therefore, lifts up the mind of the observer from the Earth, which is God's footstool, to humble adoration of the Great Creator, whose infinite Wisdom and Goodness are proclaimed by every object He has made.

"How often from the steep Of echoing hill or thicket have we heard Celestial voices to the midnight air, Sole, or responsive each to other's note, Singing their great Creator."

The beauties of Nature have a refining effect on the minds and characters of men. There is much truth in the saying of a wise man of Ancient Greece that "Men's spirits are susceptible to certain influences, diffused like streams or currents by fair things or persons visibly present green fields or children's faces, for instance into the air around them, and which, with certain natures, are like potent material essences, conforming the seer to themselves, as by some cunning physical necessity." In other words, the mind of a man, who is surrounded by beautiful objects, if he be in a proper frame of mind, will imbibe their beauty, and become, in its turn, beautiful.

The masterpiece and crowning glory of Creation, distinguished from all other objects, animate or inanimate, by its perfect adaptation as an instrument used by the most perfect finite intelligence for the government of the world, is the Human Body. There is a passage in Carlyle's "Lectures on Heroes" in which this thought is brought out with such exquisite beauty that I cannot refrain from quoting it, although only part of it is pertinent to the subject immediately under discussion:

"But now if all things that we look upon are emblems to us of the Highest God, I add that more so than any of them is man such an emblem. You have heard of St. Chrysostom's celebrated; saying in reference to the Shekinah or Ark of Testimony, visible revelation of God among the Hebrews: 'The true Shekinah is Man!' Yes it is even so; this is no vain phrase; it is veritably so. The essence of our being, the mystery in us that calls itself 'I,' - ah, what words have we for such things? - is a breath of Heaven; the Highest Being of ours is it not all a vesture for that Unnamed? 'There is but one Temple in the Universe,' says the devout Novalis, 'and that is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier than that high form. Bending before men is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch Heaven when we lay our hands on a human body!'"

Worshippers of every nation, in all times, have devoted their wealth and skill in order to make their temples and churches beautiful, and worthy of the Deity in whose honour they are erected. Do not the inspired architecture and inimitable workmanship of the stately cathedrals of Europe the work of our ancient brethren bear eloquent testimony to the reverence underlying the erection of those glorious temples erected to the Most High? The devout cannot conceive of any edifice too rich or too beautiful for the services of their God- Any neglect or mutilation of their churches has always been regarded as sacrilege.

If such reverence is bestowed on inanimate creations of man's intellect, it seems strange to think that the "one Temple in the Universe" is so frequently neglected and abused. Is it because the true meaning of the Body of Man is not understood? No doubt that is the explanation. The Chrysostoms, Novalis and Carlyles of this world are few, and spiritual insight such as they had is rare. But we cannot fail to be impressed with their utterances, especially seeing that they give us a loftier idea of man, and show us his relationship to the Divine. Assuming the actual truth of the statement of Novalis that there is "nothing holier than that high form," are we not moved to regard our bodies in a new light? Should they not be the objects of our diligent care? Must not every act of omission or commission that tends to mar their beauty be avoided? Exercise and cleanliness now become solemn duties, while intemperance and excess should be shunned as desecration of the "emblems of the Highest God."

Lastly, the Column of Beauty suggests beauty of character. It is not enough that a man act morally and virtuously. He ought to do every duty in the most graceful and pleasing manner possible. The ancient Greeks and the Romans used the same words for expressing "manners" and "morals." And that there is a close affinity between them cannot be doubted, if we grant that the best manners are those which come straight from a man's heart, in his endeavour to please his fellow men or save them from pain; to communicate to them whatever joy or happiness he may possess; and, in his own sorrow, to abstain from adding even by a passing sigh to the great total of the world's unhappiness. How many an act of intended kindness is spoiled by tactless manners, converting it, sometimes, even into an offense! How often a refusal can be softened by the considerate manner in which a request is denied! What tragedies occur from the inability, or, from false shame, the unwillingness of people of kindly and loving dispositions to express the love which they feel for their nearest and dearest who, perhaps for years, have longed for words of affection!

How different the manners of the heart from the superficial tricks of the body and tongue that are sometimes mistaken for good manners! Like garish ornaments on an ill-planned and badly constructed building, which try to conceal the viciousness of the architecture, such manners often try to hide an unworthy and insincere character. Good manners ought not to be the monopoly of any class. They are within everyone's reach, for they are the natural concomitant of a beautiful disposition.

Let us, therefore, see to it that our plans are drawn with the view not only to the acts which morality and virtue require of us, but also to the manner in which we are to perform these acts.

Let us see to it that in our speech we use words and tones calculated not only for the purpose of avoiding offense to our brethren, but also of conveying to them pleasure and happiness.

Let us exercise tact, which, in its best sense, may be defined as that spiritual delicacy of feeling which is sensitive to every susceptibility and emotions of our fellowmen.

Let us cultivate our senses so as to better appreciate the beautiful things with which we are surrounded. By so doing we shall be drawn insensibly nearer and nearer to Him from whom flows every good and perfect gift.

Let us see to it that we keep our bodies clean and wholesome, and fit dwellings for clean and beautiful souls.

Then only shall we be doing the duties required of us by Freemasonry when she commands us to build with Beauty as well as with Strength.

It may be asked how can we attain to such high [deals. Freemasonry in another symbol, suggests the answer. As, throughout the degrees, we were accompanied by a brother who guided our

steps through dark paths, giving us instruction and counsel during our pilgrimage, so we are accompanied throughout our lives by a companion who never leaves us, who tells us what to do and say, and how to do and say it. The Romans called that companion a man's genius. To us he represents the Spirit of God, or Conscience, to whose whispers we ought to lend our ears, not in slavish fear, but with lively gratitude. If, as we, in the degrees, followed our guide trustfully and obediently, we act and speak as our Heavenly guide prompts us, we need fear no danger, knowing that with such leading we are sure to be conducted along the right Path, and be worthy of the great Fraternity to which it is our high privilege to belong.

- **Source: The Builder - May 1919**

BROKEN COLUMN

Among the Hebrews, columns, or pillars, were used metaphorically to signify princes or nobles, as if they were the pillars of a state. Thus (in Psalm xi, 3), the passage, reading in our translation, "If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?" is, in the original, "when the columns are overthrown," that is, when the firm supporters of what is right and good have perished.

So the passage in Isaiah (xix, 10), should read: "her (Egypt's) columns are broken down," that is, the nobles of her state.

In Freemasonry, the broken column is, as Master Freemasons well know, the emblem of the fall of one of the chief supporters of the Craft. The use of the column or pillars as a monument erected over a tomb was a very ancient custom, and was a very significant symbol of the character and spirit of the person interred. It is accredited to [Jeremy L. Cross](#) that he first introduced the Broken Column into the ceremonies, but this may not be true.

- **Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry**

Albert Pike XXXII; pp. 25-6.

“LUX INENS NOS AGIT: The Inner Light leads us on; or, The Light that is in us guides us.”

Prepare By, Br. Florian for the benefit of the Craft, April, 2013