

Right Angles, Horizontals, and Perpendiculars

By Ed Halpaus, MPS (life)

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It appears to me that there has been some confusion among Masons about the Lights in a Lodge, as relates to the Three Lesser Lights, The Three Great Lights, and The Three Lights, (of the lodge,) and also about the one light above the altar that is turned on when the Three Great Lights are displayed upon the Altar.

I will attempt to shed some light on the questions about these lights as relates to a Lodge Room as well as to some of the other "Threes" we find in Freemasonry. In Freemasonry we are encouraged to tell our Brothers what we want, and that is Knowledge, in Freemasonry Light means Knowledge. So when we talk about the three Triads of lights that are in a Lodge the symbolism behind the lights is knowledge.

The Three Lesser Lights and the Three Lights have often been confused, thinking that the Third Section of the Lecture of the First Degree stating that a Lodge has Three Lights which are situated in the East West and South refer to the Three Lesser Lights, which they do not.

In the Webb-Preston work, which much of the ritual of the Grand Lodges of the United States is based it says; the Lights of the Lodge are three, situated in the East, West, and South. There is none in the North because King Solomon's Temple was situated so far north of the ecliptic that neither the Sun nor Moon at Meridian height could dart their rays into the north part of the building. The North, therefore, among Masons has always been termed a place of Darkness.

In the Ritual of the Masonic Degrees there are many references to the sets of Three: The Lights of the Lodge are Three, which are fixed in the East, West, and South. The Three Lesser Lights, which represent the Sun, Moon, and Master of the Lodge. The Three Great Lights, which are the Holy Bible, Square and Compass. The Immovable Jewels of the Lodge are three namely, the Square, Level, and Plumb, (or Plumb Rule.) The Orders of Architecture most revered are three, which are the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The Movable Jewels are Three, the Rough Ashlar, the Perfect Ashlar, and the Trestle Board. There are also other sets of Three such as Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty in our ritual, but for now I will not list them all, and just comment on those I have mentioned.

The Lights of the Lodge refer to the Master, Senior Warden, and the Junior Warden, who are situated in the East, West, and South. In some old rituals and in some Masonic Lodges there were actually what are called Fixed Lights, which were windows in the East, West, and South, and were "to light the way of the workmen to and from their labors." Since in a Masonic Lodge there is a lot of symbolism I will suggest that the Master, and Wardens of the Lodge are symbolic of the Lights of the Lodge to shed light [knowledge] on the Craft in their labors.

A Masonic lodge cannot open without the Three Immovable Jewels - the Square, which is represented by the Master - the Level, which is represented by the Senior Warden - the Plumb, which is represented by the Junior Warden. So for a Lodge to be open we need the Master, and Wardens in their Stations, and by them we have represented the Immovable Jewels, and the Three Lights of the Lodge. In addition, the ancient and original orders of Architecture most revered by Masons are only three the Ionic in the East - signifying Wisdom, the Doric in the West - signifying Strength, and the Corinthian in the South - signifying Beauty.

It is said in one of the Lectures that the Three principal Officers represent "Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty," which as I mentioned above are represented by the Orders of Architecture most revered by Masons, the Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian, they are the three symbolic supports of the Lodge, and while they are represented by the

Master, and Wardens, they also represent the Master, and Wardens. So the Ionic, Doric, and Corinthian, represent Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. The Master represents the pillar of wisdom, which is symbolized by the Ionic, the Senior Warden represents the pillar of Strength, which is symbolized by the Doric, and Junior Warden represents the pillar of Beauty, which is symbolized by the Corinthian.

There is another allusion to Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty in our ritual, which we will notice from the Second Degree too, when it is explained that the letter G also alludes to the Sacred Name of Deity, which in English speaking societies we refer to as God.

The letters G.O.D. also are symbolic of Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. As it is mentioned in the book "Masonry Defined" they are the initials of Gomer, Oz, and Dabar, three Hebrew words, which mean Beauty, Strength, and Wisdom. The book goes on to say that "it is a coincidence worthy of a Mason's thought to consider that the English name for Deity should be the initials of these Hebrew words Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty." D. Dabar means Wisdom, O. Oz means Strength, and G. Gomer means Beauty.

The Three Lesser Lights represent only the Sun, Moon, and Master of the Lodge, they are placed in a triangular position in the Lodge, and their position is not further described in the work, except to say that they are the lights by which the Three Great Lights are visible, which would imply that they are near the Altar. They can be placed around the altar in whatever arrangement is convenient for the Lodge. They do not represent the Officers of the Lodge, there is some symbolism to them, which is explained in the First Degree, in that they represent the Sun, Moon, and Master, and the reason for the symbolism is then explained. Again in the Webb-Preston work, and as it is explained in Coils Masonic Encyclopedia, it is said: "that the Three Great Lights of Masonry, which are to be seen only by the aid of the Three Lesser Lights."

Which leads me to the Light above the Altar, which many Lodges have in their Lodge Room and turn on when the Three Great Lights are displayed, and off when the Three Great Lights are not displayed. There is nothing in Masonic Ritual to require this single light above the Altar, in fact this single light is not usually found in Lodges where there has not ever been a chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, because this single light is a part of the Eastern Star Ritual that we American Masons have come to use in our Lodges. Is there anything wrong with turning this light on and off during our communications? I don't know, but probably not. Is it something that we don't have to do in a Masonic Lodge? Yes it is something we do not have to do, and in my opinion if it is not necessary to do it then we shouldn't do it.

So as far as lights are concerned we have three sets of triads of Lights in the Lodge, and each is distinct from the other, not having the same meaning or symbolism at all – except that light symbolized knowledge.

I would just like to make an additional observation about one of the Immovable Jewels, the Jewel of the Junior Warden, which we are told is the Plumb, but as seen in the Jewel itself it is a Plumb Rule. The Plumb Rule is a board, that has a plumb line attached near one end, so that when held vertically, the line will lie along the midline of the board or rule, thus affording a straight edge which is perpendicular or vertical, making the use of a plumb line on a building, or pole, more accurate and, permitting the drawing of a vertical line.

In the First Degree in one section of the lecture a Mason is asked; "What are signs?" He answers "Right Angles, Horizontals, and Perpendiculars." The answer alludes to the three immovable jewels.

The Square, which is the Jewel of the Master, represents "Right Angles." The Level, which is the Jewel of the Senior Warden, represents "Horizontals." The Plumb, which is the Jewel of the junior Warden, represents "Perpendiculars."

Finally, as you may have already seen the pattern, and remember from the ritual, the Three Movable Jewels – The Rough Ashlar, the Perfect Ashlar, and the Trestle Board, are also represented by the Junior Warden for the

Rough Ashlar being that he also represents Youth as Entered Apprentices, The Perfect Ashlar is represented by the Senior Warden being that he also represents Manhood as Fellow Crafts, and the Trestle Board represents the Master as he also represents Age as Master Masons, that we may enjoy the happy reflections of a well spent life and die in the hope of a glorious immortality.