

**GENESIS OF A BROTHER
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“In the beginning, GOD created the heaven and the earth, and the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep. . .and GOD said, ‘Let there be light’, and there was light. And GOD saw the light and said that it was good.”

When a candidate approaches the Lodge for the first time, he is said “to have long been in darkness and now wishes to be brought to light”. He is metaphorically created by the Grand Architect of the Universe without form and void. Prior to taking the obligation in the first degree, a candidate is a cowan. The definition of a cowan is one who is, as yet, uninformed in the mysteries of Freemasonry. This is comparable to the statement in the Book of Genesis that the earth was unformed. The candidate is, thus, attempting to fill the void left by his being in darkness.

Some definitions are in order before proceeding further. Darkness may be considered symbolic of the lack of knowledge. In his seminal book of Symbolism, Albert Gallatin Mackey states, light invests the candidate with the knowledge of the secret doctrines of the mysteries of Freemasonry, the existence of GOD and the future state of rewards and punishments. Therefore, darkness is a metaphor for lack of knowledge. Light is a metaphor for knowledge.

Mackey goes on to state, when the candidate makes a demand for light, this is not merely a demand for physical light, which is to remove physical darkness. Mackey states that the candidate is craving an intellectual illumination which will dispel the darkness of moral and mental ignorance. This granting of light will bring the sublime truths of religion, philosophy, and science which it is the grand design of Freemasonry to teach.

The new brother asks for light when taking the obligation in the first degree. He asks for more light and further light when being obligated in the second and third degrees. Nowhere in the ritual for all three degrees is it said that the brother receives all of the light and knowledge that there is to Freemasonry.

There are some 90 symbolic items in the three degrees. These are contained in the brother’s entrance into the lodge when he is hoodwinked and cannot see what is occurring. He does not understand what is being stated in the ritual up to the point the hoodwink is removed. He then receives more ritual regarding, among other items, the meaning of the apron, the working tools, and, in the first degree the symbolic meaning of being divested of all metals, being neither naked nor clad, barefoot nor shod. He is also placed in a cable tow without explanation of what it means to be restrained by cable tow. At the close of the degree, after returning to the preparation room and reinvested with his clothing, he is returned to the lodge to hear lectures giving the explanation and meaning of the earlier ritual. However, these lectures are not complete.

It takes much further study to understand the symbolism, philosophy, and meaning of the symbolic items in our ritual. It is also said that it is impossible to understand the current meaning of our fraternity without understanding the history of what went before.

How, then, does a brother emerge from darkness and gain the knowledge that is inherent in being brought to light. The answer is easy to understand, but difficult to achieve.

The start of a brother’s education in Freemasonry is the study of the ritual and lectures that can be found in the Book of Standard Work that can be purchased from our MW Grand Lodge, The next step in the brother’s

education comes from his Intender who initiates him in the answers to masonic questions contained in the guide books for each degree.

Finally, it is hoped that in maintaining continued contact with his intender after becoming a Master Mason, the brother will achieve a love of the study and learning regarding our brotherhood. It is the intender and the district and lodge education officers that should guide the brother in his masonic endeavors and study.

The beginning of this article depicted the new candidate as being a person similar to the description in the Old Testament Book of Genesis. As the brother continues his masonic study he has embarked on a journey designed to increase the light that he has received.

The prayer that every mason should have is that our fraternity be ensured to continue for years to come by the attempt to gain more and more light through the study of the history, philosophy, and symbolism of Freemasonry. Speculative Freemasonry and the Grand Lodge system has existed for almost 300 years. May the light of knowledge grant many additional years of Freemasonry. Let us all learn from the knowledge that just as OD saw that light was good, should we all have a similar sentiment.