

Denver Oct 11<sup>m</sup>

In the beginning knowledge and sacredness were one and the same. Knowledge was seen as possessing a profound relation with that principal reality which *is* the sacred and the source of all that is sacred. But through the centuries knowledge became separated from the sacred in the Western world. Today, knowledge has become nearly completely externalized and desacralized. The result of this is that the bliss, which is the result of the union with the Divine, has become well-nigh unattainable and beyond the grasp of most people today. Modern man has lost his sense of wonder which results from his loss of the sense of the sacred.

An initiatic institution such as Freemasonry combines knowledge and sacredness – it does not make a separation between them. Yet here is the paradox: Freemasonry is seen today as a product of the modern world, an institution molded by the Enlightenment. Yet Enlightenment philosophy separated knowledge and sacredness. So when we view Masonry as a product of the Enlightenment, when we divorce knowledge from its sacred character, it leads us to forget the primacy of the sapiential dimension within Freemasonry.

In contrast, if we view the institution as the embodiment of the traditional world, a world now almost entirely extinct, Freemasonry can be seen as a form of knowledge, a knowledge that is hidden yet attainable, although not easily. When knowledge and sacredness became separated by the modern world, we became blinded to the primordial knowledge that lies at the heart of intelligence. Intelligence, which is the instrument of knowledge within man, is endowed with the possibility of knowing the Absolute, and sacred knowledge remains the supreme path of union with that Reality wherein knowledge, being, and bliss are united. Freemasonry originally, and still in some parts of the world today, retains its sapiential perspective and allows for the possibility of man to attain knowledge of the sacred.

Freemasonry, as an initiatic organization, communicates spiritual influences that have been continually transmitted unbroken and unchanged from the beginning and are of an ultimately non-human origin. Their influence is communicated to an individual by means of rites whereby the candidate is awakened to the possibility of a re-integration of the Self. Through the process of initiation, *if* it is effectively realized, the candidate may attain a spiritual state which allows him to rise to higher states of his being.

As a traditional organization, Freemasonry is concerned with the handing down of knowledge. Tradition means permanence in what is essential, and attachment to principles. In order for the institution to remain efficacious, the rites must retain their original character and transcendent aspect which is why every Master at his installation is charged never to make innovations in the craft. It is when we forget that most important of injunctions that the institution suffers and eventually becomes meaningless.

Freemasonry may have been changed by the Enlightenment era, but it still stands apart from the modern world. We are an institution that is *apart* from society, but not a part of it.

The philosophers that have so impacted the modern world appealed to the individual consciousness of the individual rather than to revelation, or to the intellect as it functions in the heart of man as the source of reason. The result was a reduction of knowledge to only the level of reason rather than the illumination of the mind by the Intellect. But Freemasonry, which had its genesis prior to the modern world, reflects in its ritual an understanding of the role of knowledge and of the intellect that is pre-

modern. Its ritual is the embodiment of a form of sacred knowledge that was almost lost with the secularization of knowledge in the West. For example, if we examine our staircase lecture at its highest level, we find that it is nothing less than the spiritual journey.

We are shown the beauties of the world as symbolized by the five orders of architecture; the knowledge of the world as symbolized by the seven liberal arts and sciences; but we don't stop there. We, as Masons, are pulled onward to the Middle Chamber. When we understand the staircase lecture in its full analogical sense, we find once again the union of knowledge and the sacred. Masonry does not deny to the mind the possibility of illumination by the inner Intellect.

Nonetheless, as Freemasonry in this country became increasingly divorced from its original moorings, and as it separated knowledge from sacredness in such a way as to make its ritual unknowable even to its adherents, the lodge hall itself lost its meaning and was no longer seen as an imitation of ineffable truth. It became a Masonic 'center' rather than a Masonic temple.

Knowledge of the sacred leads to freedom and deliverance from the limitations imposed by the modern world. As Freemasons, we should be in quest of that which has always been known but is now forgotten. The unknown, the world we have forgotten by separating knowledge and the sacred, lies hidden within the soul of man and can be recovered. The unknown is not out there beyond the present boundary of knowledge but is at the center of man's being here and now where it has always been. It is unknown only because of our forgetfulness of its presence.

It is a sun which has not ceased to shine simply because our blindness has made us impervious to its light. We are taught to subdue the passions because these keep man imprisoned and prevent the intelligence within him from functioning properly. The passions cloud the soul of man and the intellect which shines at the center of his being.

The truth of Freemasonry is that it illuminates all realms of existence. Its light is still accessible to man despite its apparent eclipse in this country. The knowledge which this light makes possible can still be realized; it can resuscitate our minds and thoughts and transform our being finally delivering us from the limitations of ourselves and of the world.