

The Sun, the Moon, and the Freemason

Scientists tell us that without the sun and the moon we would not exist. The sun provides the energy needed for growth and development, powering the bacteria, plants, and animals that have become our world today. The moon has a calming effect on our planet's orbit and spin, preventing radical wobbles and erratic climate swings, thus providing a stable environment where the sun's energy could advance life's progression from organic molecules to modern man.

Our ancient forefathers, even without the help of all our science and advanced technology, recognized the importance of these two celestial bodies and venerated them as gods, giving them a special place in their lives. Archaeologists have found countless examples of this over the entire globe. Everywhere can be found pictograms, stone carvings, megalithic structures, and temples dedicated to the sun and the moon. And not just in prehistoric times, even more modern cultures, from the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and beyond have continued that reverence for these two bodies. Even today this continues, but maybe not as obviously; in the Western world we reference the sun and the moon every week with our calendar system, after all, is not SUNDAY followed by MOONday? Other cultures, for example the Islamic societies, have the moon as the basis for their calendars, every month starts at the rise of the first visible bit of moon after a new moon, rather than on a fixed date schedule. Even recently, the moon was so revered by Masons that it was, and in some cases still is, the controlling factor for when to hold Lodge Communications. Here is an excerpt from "*The Master Mason's Pocket Manual*" issued by the Grand Lodge of New Brunswick in 1933, showing the schedule of meetings for Lodges within the province.

- Sussex #4 – Thursday on or after Full Moon
- Saint Andrew #16 – First Monday on or before Full Moon
- Benjamin #31 – Thursday on or before Full Moon
- Carleton #35 – Thursday nearest Full Moon

These are just four examples of the ten Lodges listed as having their schedule tied to the moon. There were a total of 43 Lodges listed, so almost 25% referenced the moon.

Our archaeologists tell us that ancient man worshipped the sun and the moon as gods, but I think this is too simplistic a view. Humans come in a wide range of intellectual abilities and interests, with a corresponding range of spiritual beliefs. Yes, there have always been, and still are many people who look at the sun and the moon and worship them as gods, what you see is what you get – I call them the Sun Worshipers. At the other end of the scale you have those who question everything, they want to find something deeper in the world around them, they too look at the sun, but they see it only as a symbol, a representation of the power and glory of their deity, everything is a symbol with a deeper meaning – I call these the Alchemists. All of us live somewhere between these two extremes, choosing to accept some things on faith but questioning

and trying to find a deeper meaning in other things. Throughout all the ages there have always been small groups of enlightened ones, the high priests of the mystery schools, the hidden teachers, those who seek out this deeper understanding of our universe and try to pass it on to those who are worthy, typically through the use of symbols and allegory. Where **your** happy place is on that line between Sun Worshipper and Alchemist is up to you. The great thing about Masonry is that it gives you a place to satisfy those intellectual and spiritual pursuits, however deep they may go.

So, where do we find the sun and the moon in Masonry? Just about everywhere! We cannot even open or close a Lodge meeting without referencing the sun several times: Junior Warden – “To observe the **sun** at meridian height, which is the glory and beauty of the day.”; Senior Warden – “As the **sun** is in the West at the close of the day, so stands the Senior Warden in the West;” and again, just a bit later in reference to the Worshipful Master – “As the **sun** rises in the East to open and adorn the day, so rises the Worshipful Master in the East, ...”. As another example, we talk about the SUN ruling the day and the MOON governing the night as a guide to the Worshipful Master to rule his Lodge with equal regularity. Also, in many Lodges the jewel of the Senior Deacon is the SUN and the jewel of the Junior Deacon is the Moon.

Why is the sun so important to us as speculative Masons? Part of the explanation is that it was very important to our operative Brothers, here is just one example. Why is the Junior Warden concerned with the sun at meridian height? There is more to it than just knowing when to stop for lunch – by placing a rod vertically in the ground and observing it’s shadow over a number of days, if each day, exactly when the sun is at it’s meridian height (that’s it’s highest point, and thus the shortest shadow), a marker is placed on the ground at the tip of the shadow, then, after a number of days a line can be drawn through those markers, and that line will be exactly due North and South. Bisect that North – South line with another line at exactly 90 degrees to it and you get an exact East – West line. The sun has given us a way to find our cardinal compass points anywhere in the world and at anytime of the year, you don’t have to wait for the solar equinox to find true East – West, which was of great concern for the cathedral builders, past and present.

The sun and the moon are so important to us as Masons that they are amongst the first things taught to an Initiate on becoming an Entered Apprentice: Remember the line “My Brother, on being brought to light, you observe before you the three Great Lights in Freemasonry by the aid of the representatives of the three lesser lights.” Note the wording here “by the aid of the REPRESENTATIVES ...”. The three burning tapers are not the lesser lights, they are symbols, representing something more. So what are these three lesser lights? They are the SUN, the MOON, and the Master of the Lodge. Our first steps on the path of the Alchemist, we are not seeing the burning tapers, we are told to look beyond them, to see their greater meaning as symbols in Masonry.

Let’s take a quick look at a simple piece of symbolism. The sun and the moon are light bringers; the sun to the day and the moon to the night. Remember that question at

the altar; “Brother, what do you now most desire?”, and the answer; “Light”. The obvious connection is “Remove this hoodwink and let me see.” But in Masonry, when we speak of light we are also referring to it’s symbolic meaning of enlightenment. Thus, the sun and the moon are symbolically bringers of enlightenment. Now, to dig a bit deeper, the sun is an obvious source of light slash enlightenment, but why the moon, it is not a source of light in itself. A deeper symbolic meaning of the moon has to do with things hidden, so the sun can represent enlightenment by the direct lessons of Masonry and the moon points us to the hidden, esoteric meanings contained within them.

As in all things esoteric, there are levels of interpretations, meanings within meanings, the symbols are a guide to self-enlightenment at many levels. And is that not the essence of Freemasonry; “a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.”. Let’s take a quick dip into the deeper end of this pool of knowledge and symbolism. The most ancient, and still current, symbol for the sun is a circle with a dot at it’s centre – sound familiar? Here is an excerpt from the Explanatory of the First Degree: “... and since their time, there has been represented, in every regular and well-furnished Lodge, **a certain point within a circle**, embroidered by two perpendicular parallel lines, representing St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. On the top of the circle rests the Book of Holy Scripture; ...”. We are told that this represents the individual Brother and the boundary of his duty. An excellent and valid symbol, but there can be more for those who wish to look deeper. The circle with dot is also the symbol for the sun and, according to ancient wisdom, the sun is a symbol for deity. For those with a Gnostic bent, man must approach deity on a personal level, through knowledge, learning, and experience. So this symbol can be read on multiple levels simultaneously, we have man at the centre of the sun slash deity, bounded by learning and passion (the two Saints John) and topped by the Book of Holy Scripture which can be read as, that by regulating our emotions and intellectual pursuits, and by learning about our god, source book provided, we have a path to our goal. The sun at the heart of Freemasonry, part of the process for taking a good man and making him better through education and enlightenment.

How about the moon? Let’s start with a veiled reference rather than a symbolic allusion. Remember the penalty from the Entered Apprentice Obligation? In part it talks about the tide, ebbing and flowing twice in twenty-four hours. It is our moon that causes and controls the tides, so by referring to it’s cause and effects in our world, this passage is subtly reminding us of the importance of the moon in our lives. Even though not mentioned directly by name, by looking deeper into this passage and realizing that it is the moon that is being referred to by mention of the tides, we are shown that there is a connection between ourselves, our world, and the heavens; a direct example of that great Hermetic principle “As above, so below”.

Also considered a symbol of the subconscious mind and a symbol of the feminine, the moon is important in Lodge for these reasons too. Again, just one quick

example here; remember that line of text admonishing the Master to keep the sun and moon in mind while ruling his Lodge? Here, through symbology and allegory, we are telling the Master to use his whole person, masculine and feminine aspects, conscious and subconscious mind, to consider all avenues and options, not to limit himself by ignoring information that may be coming from non-traditional sources.

Ok, a bit deep there, but that was my intent, I wanted to provide a few examples to show how Masonry can be lived and enjoyed on various levels, able to satisfy the needs of every Mason. Not every Brother needs, or wants, much more than the fellowship and easy lessons of Masonry, but then, not every Brother is satisfied with just those things either. Freemasonry can be a home for all of us, enjoy the parts you want, but also, don't be afraid to dig deeper and find the level of learning you want, if that's what will make you happy – it's all available here, in our Lodges and amongst our Brothers.

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April, 2018