

## THE LODGE: ITS FORM, SUPPORTS, COVERING AND LIGHTS

A Lodge is a certain number of brothers duly assembled, with a Holy Bible, a square, a compass and a charter or dispensation issued by the Grand Lodge which authorizes the brethren therein named and their successors to meet as Masons. A Lodge is thus an assembly of brothers exploring the mysteries of Freemasonry. A Lodge is also a place where Masons assemble to work and to instruct and improve themselves in the mysteries of the Speculative Science based upon an Operative Art. The term thus applies to persons as well as to place. These two distinctions are precisely the same as those to be found in the word "Church," which is expressive both of the building in which a congregation meets to worship and the congregation of worshippers themselves.

The English word "Lodge" comes from a French word meaning a hut. Operative Masons used temporary structures at the construction site of the cathedrals and other edifices which they built. In these structures, they worked, met, ate and perhaps slept. These structures became known as lodges. It is from these origins that the two senses of the word "Lodge" have developed: the place where the Masons meet and work as well as the association comprising the workers.

By the time that gentlemen joined the operative lodges, meetings were moving away from the building site. Meetings were increasingly held in a private room in an inn. Masonic halls (as we know them) are of relatively recent invention. The first Masonic Hall of which we have any record is the one that was erected by the Lodge at Marseille in France in the year 1765.

As the use of special purpose Masonic halls developed, prescribed forms for the shape and ornamentation of the building developed also. Such prescribed forms of ornamentation developed appropriate symbolism. A Lodge when duly opened becomes a symbol of the world. Its covering or ceiling is like that of the world, a sky or clouded canopy. To reach that canopy, as the eternal abode of those who do the will of the Great Architect of the Universe, a Lodge symbolically is furnished with the theological ladder which Jacob in his vision saw reaching from earth to heaven, the three principal rounds of which are denominated faith, hope and charity. A Lodge is illuminated, as is the world, by the rays of the Sun, symbolically represented in its rising in the east, its meridian height in the south, and its setting in the west. Accordingly, the lights of a Lodge are located in East, West and South.

A Lodge's form, a long quadrangle or oblong square, is in reference to the early tradition that such was the shape of the inhabited world. Although the custom has

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become obsolete, the flooring of a Lodge should be of alternating black and white tile squares, which we call a mosaic pavement. This floor is said to represent the ground floor of King Solomon's Temple, upon which the form of a Lodge is also based. It is emblematic of man's nature in the world, human life checkered with good and evil. This tiled flooring in King Solomon's Temple was said to be surrounded by a beautiful tessellated border made of mosaic tiles. It is said that this border is emblematic of the many blessings and comforts which surround human life, which we hope to enjoy by a faithful reliance upon divine providence, hieroglyphically represented in King Solomon's Temple by a blazing star in the center of the tiled flooring and which in each Masonic Hall is represented by the Holy Bible upon its altar.

Wisdom, Strength and Beauty are the three supports of a Lodge. They are sometimes referred to as the Three Great Pillars. Wisdom, Strength and Beauty are themselves symbols of creation, since without them nothing of worth comes into existence. "Wisdom to contrive and strength to support" is obviously as true of the universe as it is of a temple. "Beauty to adorn" is often misunderstood, because of a too limited thought of the fundamentals of beauty. In any final analysis, what is beautiful becomes so in men's thoughts because of its fitness for its purpose. It is in this sense that "beauty to adorn" is used in Freemasonry. It also refers to harmony or equilibrium between two seemingly opposite forces, such as Wisdom and Strength, Liberty and Equality or Justice and Mercy.