

## **Reflections on a Lodge Painting, Masonic Practice and Freemasonry. “Light Shines in the Darkness”**

**Ferenc Sebök, Ph.D**

Catholic University of Louvain – Ballsbridge University

Email: [f.sebok@hotmail.com](mailto:f.sebok@hotmail.com)

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I will present two Tracing boards in this article. These Tracing boards remember me the prologue of John: “Light Shines in the Darkness”. I will share my thoughts.

Often, at the bottom of a lodge painting is the mosaic tile recalling the turbulence, passions, and clashes between spirituality and interests. Passions, addictions, are ingredients blocking the possibility of making Royal Art and entering the sphere of spirituality.

Man is selfish by nature, possessive in the sense that he tends to want to dominate and appropriate territories, goods, but also a culture that he wants to reshape, if not destroy it. These tendencies are likely to be accentuated by contact with others, since human beings are fundamentally social beings in whom mimicry is powerful, from early childhood.

The desire to possess is a natural and healthy thing, because possessing must lead to respecting what one possesses. For example, if a child has too many toys, or if he has thirty-six identical objects to play with, how can he respect these toys?

As a psychopedagogue, I have often noticed that children hold on to their toys, respect them if they were able to obtain them by paying the price; for example, after having worked hard at school, after having done a favour, helped their mother, etc.

In fact, being able to obtain everything you want without effort rarely leads to respect for the object. This is also true in human relationships where respect is one of the fundamental conditions for these human relationships to be positive, non-toxic and harmonious, with respect for others.

Freemasonry works with rites and rituals that encourage respect for others, through various realities such as the Chain of Union, the brotherly love mentioned many times, with the apprenticeships of the Apprentice and the Companion, through the Masters' seminars.

In many lodges, the Apprentices serve at the Agapes table, also called "harmony", clear the tables, do the dishes, etc. In addition, during their "apprenticeship", they must remain silent. This must lead them to greater humility, whatever the social rank they occupy in profane life.

With his qualities and his defects, man constantly builds and destroys for a world that he nevertheless wants to be better for himself and his family. Like the child, who reaches the "objects stage", who puts everything in his mouth, then throws the objects away, the adult man tends to do the same thing.

Freemasonry teaches its followers to be measured in their actions. They must learn not to be destructive towards a brother with hurtful words, to always put the right measure or equity in the balance.

Altruism often has little place in a world fragmented by nations that each pull the blanket to their side. Individualism also adds its share with regard to the tendency to always possess more in terms of goods, but also in terms of the exploitation of others.

Freemasonry presents the opportunity, at 180°, to place brotherly love, altruism, the search for beauty, the common good, in a spirit of tolerance.

It is therefore an ideal of peace and love aiming at justice and equity, as is, for example, the credo of the 32nd of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.

However, the question is whether the man is worthy of being a Freemason and practicing Masonry. Indeed, it is not uncommon to see in the lodges, Brothers displaying their jewels, medals and qualities; others displaying their often bookish knowledge, while Masonic knowledge is above all a matter of the heart and reason.

On the lodge board that represents the Temple of Solomon in a symbolic way, there is the Sun and the Moon with the Triangle with radiation towards the earth. In the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite rite, an eye often appears in the triangle.

On other tracing boards, yod appears in the centre of the triangle. The dimensions are often precise and the good board should fit into the golden ratio. However, depending on the rites, other representations will be present on the lodge board such as an ark, Jacob's ladder, etc.



Iris Lodge, Second degree, Oil on canvas, 120x90, 2005, Ferenc Sebök.



Iris Lodge, First degree, Oil on canvas, 120x90, 2005, Ferenc Sebök.

While respecting a necessary content, the artists often gave free rein to their imagination and also their personal interpretations of the tools composing the lodge paintings. Other objects appear on the lodge paintings, such as the Columns “J” and “B”, the grenades at the top of the columns, the planets, stars, etc.

A lodge painting often suggests the following formula, a reference to the Emerald Tablet: “What is Above is Below and what is Below is Below

Top”. The lodge table also contains the four directions West – East – North – South, and in a more discreet way, the four elements Earth – Water – Air – Fire.

The Fire of the Sun (male) floods the Earth. The Moon (female) influences the tides. Water is present everywhere, even in the Air.

A junction of the elements appears in the representation of the spheres signifying the One, of which Man is the depository. For some, the One is considered to be the Ein sof, dear to the Kabbalists.

Let us recall that Kabbalah is the mystical current of Judaism in the sense that the objective is the transmission of the “secret Law”, which is the word given by the divine and this, parallel to the Torah which is the written law. It is the divine who is Ein Sof, meaning that it is limitless, because it is infinite.

There is therefore a hidden essence, indefinable, ineffable, because inexpressible and immeasurable. It is the divine before any manifestation. The manifestation will be concretized by the "Knowledge" emanating from the divine.

Some masons will say, "God is everywhere and nowhere"; can man therefore manage the earth as he pleases? The Earth for better or for worse? The turbulence, conflicts and interests demonstrate that respect for the earth is minimal as well as respect for humans, if we know that during a war, humans are no longer worth much, whatever the "right-thinking" say.

War is therefore like a fracture, a hiatus where anything can happen, despite common sense... and this without any confidence, except interests. Man, therefore builds his joy or his sorrow. Man is responsible for his evils, his actions. Does he govern for good or his loss?

In Freemasonry, we will often remind ourselves to "leave our metals outside the Temple". Metals being politics, dogmas, but also passions and interests. The parable of the merchants from the Temple that Jesus chased away takes on its full meaning.

What does the ritual say?

"What do you come to do in Freemasonry?" ... "To conquer our passions and make progress in Freemasonry. This is how the mason brings his stone to the building, because his stone is well squared and well cut and can fit among the other stones. As such, the ritual of the fourth degree representing an ivory key says the following: "Yubulon is a good mason".

Progress is progress to be made on ourselves and on a daily basis. How can a brother hope to make progress when he manipulates and destroys his own because he is toxic?

The table contains tools such as the mallet, the square, the compass, the level, etc. It is through the study of the ritual and the symbolism of the tools that the Freemason will have to find his way by constantly rectifying his behaviour, his position, which recalls the Chamber of Reflection, also called "Cave" by some Masons.

On the lodge table, there are two figurines facing each other with two faces. Figurines, full of ambition, who stare at each other. Are passions and vices always the winners? Yet from the apex, two heads emerge in order to break with useless conflicts to attempt an elevation of the spirit. Does the Light shine in the Darkness?



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