The Brothers of Freemasonry: The Unity of the One in the Many

By: W:. Michael Fay 32°

Knights of Light – Jacksonville Scottish Rite & York Rite

Inspired by the recent words of the Grand Master during his GMOV visit, this paper reflects on the profound significance of "us" within the Craft. Beyond titles, bodies, and degrees, Freemasonry is not a scattered constellation but a unified body of Light, one Fraternity, indivisible, whose strength lies not in separation, but in the sacred harmony of its parts.

Freemasonry, in its essence, is not an institution of fragmented bodies, but a singular mystical organism, a Brotherhood of Light, whose members, though diverse in degree, function, and expression, are united in the pursuit of Truth. The notion of *"us"*, a simple pronoun, reveals an esoteric truth. It is the sacred pronoun of collective consciousness, the utterance of a unified Will, the emblem of a temple built not of stone but of souls. The Grand Master's final visit underscored this truth: we are *not* divided, we are *one*. The perceived distance between the Blue Lodge and the appendant bodies is not an actual chasm, but a spiritual illusion, a veil yet to be rent by Light.

Albert Pike, in *Morals and Dogma*, touches this chord when he writes: *"The true Mason is not creed-bound. He realizes with the divine illumination of his Lodge that as a Mason, his religion must be universal: Christ, Buddha or Mohammed, the name means little, for he recognizes only the light and not the bearer"* (Pike, 1871, p. 219). This spiritual universality must extend beyond religion and reach into our Masonic structure itself. If Masonry teaches universality of faith and humanity, must it not also teach the unity of its own mystical body? The Lodge, the Chapter, the Consistory, these are not separate trees, but branches of one eternal vine.

Manly P. Hall, in *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry*, writes: *"Freemasonry is a philosophy that transcends all other philosophies, for it is the root from which they grow"* (Hall, 1923, p. 45). He speaks here not of institutional structure, but of the essence of Masonry, its archetypal truth. And yet, how often do we, as brothers, fall prey to the illusion of hierarchy or separation? How often is the Blue Lodge seen as a beginning and the appendant bodies as an ascent, when in fact all are simultaneous expressions of a greater Whole? The Apprentice who learns silence and labor, the Knight who defends virtue, and the Prince of the Royal Secret who contemplates divine law, they are all one man in different phases of illumination.

Philosophically, this mirrors the Neoplatonic model of emanation, in which all beings emanate from the *One* and return to the *One*. The Craft is the Earth, the foundation; the appendant bodies are the heavens, but both are contained within the soul of the Masonic cosmos.

Plotinus would have said that to perceive separation is to dwell in multiplicity, but to perceive unity is to dwell in the Nous, the Divine Mind. Likewise, the true Freemason sees no division between Rite and Lodge, between rank and humility, between the initiate and the Past Master. He sees only the reflection of the divine archetype of Brotherhood.

We must also consider the ancient Hermetic axiom: *"As above, so below; as within, so without."* The division we sometimes feel among our bodies reflects an internal division, a lack of alignment with the inner principles of Unity. A Lodge divided in spirit, no matter how unified in ritual, ceases to be a spiritual temple. Manly Hall warns that "the Temple of Solomon can only be built in the soul of the righteous man" (Hall, 1923, p. 63). Thus, the spiritual labor of each Mason is not just to build *a* temple, but to restore *the* Temple, a cosmic edifice wherein all degrees and bodies are harmonized.

When we refer to *"us"*, we invoke more than fraternity, we invoke ontology. We declare a metaphysical truth: that we are not many, but manifestations of the same spiritual flame. Just as a prism refracts one light into many colors, so the Craft refracts the Light of the Great Architect into multiple rituals, paths, and degrees. The Royal Arch, the Cryptic Council, the Scottish Rite, the Shrine, none of these exist in isolation. They are chambers of the same Temple, each resonating with a different note in the harmonic chord of Brotherhood. And the Blue Lodge, too often seen as merely the "entryway", is the very *keystone* of the Masonic arch. Without it, the edifice falls.

Therefore, to honor "us" is to reject the false dichotomies that divide our vision. It is to say that the Brother who wears the plain white apron in the First Degree is as much the image of Light as the Sovereign Grand Inspector General. In truth, the White Lambskin Apron binds us all, it is the *outer garment of the soul*, the only regalia that transcends rank. Pike speaks of Masonry as a system in which *"every man may find the Truth according to the measure of his own spiritual stature"* (Pike, 1871, p. 223). So too, every Masonic body is a facet of that system, reflecting the Truth from a different angle, but all toward the same Light.

To realize the true meaning of *"us"* is to move beyond ego and toward the egregore, the living, breathing spiritual being that *is* the Fraternity. The egregore of Freemasonry feeds on unity and purpose. It is strengthened not by ritual alone, but by genuine brotherhood, by fraternal love that recognizes no division of ritual or title. The lessons of Hiram, of the Temple, of the Word Lost and Found, all point back to this central mystery: that there is only one Builder, one Temple, one Brotherhood.

Let *"us"* no longer be a passive term. Let it be an invocation of Unity, a sacred word that binds Entered Apprentice to Illustrious Companion, Master Mason to Grand Master. As Masons, we have sworn oaths to each other, not to degrees or titles, but to the divine principle of Fraternity itself. The Blue Lodge is not the beginning, it is the foundation, the womb from which all other bodies are born. And the appendant bodies are not "higher", they are expansions, reflections, echoes of the original Word. *Us* is the Word. *Us* is the Temple. *Us* is the Light.

References

Hall, M. P. (1923). *The lost keys of Freemasonry*. Macoy Publishing.

Pike, A. (1871). *Morals and dogma of the ancient and accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*. Southern Jurisdiction of the United States.

Plotinus. (c. 250 C.E.). *The Enneads* (S. MacKenna, Trans.). Penguin Classics (1991 ed.).

Hermes Trismegistus. (2nd century C.E.). *The Emerald Tablet*. (Various Translations).