Knights of Light Education Series

Darkness to Light, 2021 Knights of Light address

by Todd Connor

We've all knelt at our sacred altar for that first time and recall the august moment when all present stretched forth their hands and assisted the Worshipful Master in bringing us from darkness to light for the first time. Upon being brought from darkness to light, your attention is first directed to the three Greater Lights in Masonry. This is intended to impress upon you that you are embarking upon a timeless and endless journey endeavoring to surmount the Square with the Compasses. To seek more and further Light in Masonry. But this notion is by no means unique to Masonry. If you are a student of the Authentic School of Masonry, you'll assert that this idea was borrowed from the myriad Mystery Schools of the Ancients. And, of course if you're of the Romantic School, you'll insist that Masonry was there when it began, and it's since been handed down from Antiquity.

Albert Pike, in his lectures on the 24th Degree, Prince of the Tabernacle, writes that "The Hierophants, men of intellect, and well understanding the disposition of the people and the art of controlling them, used every appliance to attain that object, and give importance and impressiveness to their ceremonies. As they covered those ceremonies with the veil of secrecy, so they preferred that Night should cover them with its wings. Obscurity adds to impressiveness and assists illusion and they used it to produce an effect upon the astonished Initiate. The ceremonies were conducted in caverns dimly lighted: thick groves were planted around the Temples to produce that gloom which impresses the mind with a religious awe." According to Demetrius Phalereus, the very word "mystery" was a metaphorical expression that denoted the secret awe which darkness and gloom inspired.

In actuality, a fear of the darkness seems inherent in mankind. What child does not have a night light in his bedroom to keep away the bogeyman? Some folks whistle when they

pass by the graveyard on a moonless light. Of course, we really are a little more fearsome in the dark. Real dangers may be there. Bad things may be hiding in wait. This may be because our vision is not as keen in darkness, and when we are in darkness, there may be much beyond our sight that we cannot discern. We carry flashlights so that we might be able to see more clearly what surrounds us and we become much more aware and comfortable when we can see all. Is this not what Masonry brings to the Initiate? Do we see more as Masons? Understand more? Are our eyes more able to discern?

In Pike's discourse on the 28th Degree, Knight of the Sun, or Prince Adept, he writes that, "Light was the first Divinity worshipped by men. To it they owed the brilliant spectacle of Nature. It seems an emanation from the Creator of all things, making known to our senses the Universe which darkness hides from our eyes, and, as it were, giving it existence. Darkness, as it were, reduces all nature again to nothingness, and almost entirely annihilates man." From this basis, the alignment of "Light" to "Good" and "Darkness" to "Evil" was drawn, and their coexistence expressed by the Ancients in their Mysteries. Of course, the light does not "create" Nature every day just as darkness does not annihilate it every night.

Further advancing the idea of the Light as goodness and Darkness as evil, the Ancients celebrated the increase of light after the winter solstice as the promise of the return of life and vigor, and the decrease in light after the summer solstice as the imminent return of death and darkness. From these notions, we begin to expose the fact that the Universe is a combination of opposites, as Euripides said, "The Good is never separated from the Evil. The two must mingle, that all may go well." Zoroastrianism explicitly expresses this with the opposing Divine essences of Ormuzd and Ahriman, with Ormuzd representing the principle of light and Ahriman the principle of darkness. Zoroastrianism teaches that these two gods are in eternal opposition – first one conquers and then is overcome; back and forth throughout eternity. Similarly, the Egyptians and Greeks represent this

with Osiris and Set or Typhon, and we see this repeated through myriad theologies through history.

So here's a question to ponder: If there cannot be an effect without a cause, and Good cannot be the cause of Evil, then it is fundamentally necessary for there to be a cause for the Evil as well as for the Good. If God is good, omnipotent, and omnipresent, then where does the evil come from? The very words omnipotent and omnipresent indicate that there is literally no room in creation for an evil being.

So before you get all depressed with that thought, consider Pike's comment "take away suffering, and there is no longer any resignation or humanity, no more self-sacrifice, no more devotedness, no more heroic virtues, no more sublime morality. If there were no physical evil, there would be no possible virtue." To illustrate this, you might adapt the line in the Bible from John 1:5, "The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it," to read "The light became discernable as soon as there was darkness to differentiate it."

The perhaps obvious hazard in this notion is rooted in relativity. If you were to be thrust into a darkness so complete that only a bat could function, it would render you essentially blind. Similarly, that same bat taken from his dark forest becomes blinded in the full light of the Florida sunshine. The opening charge of our Blue Lodge states that "The ways of virtue are beautiful. Knowledge is attained by degrees. Wisdom dwells with contemplation; therefore, we should seek it." When we are brought from darkness to light for the first time, we see both points of the Compasses surmounted by the Square, indicating that while we may begin to see the light, we still do not see and comprehend all that is before us. Even as we progress to the Master's Degree, we are simply informed that we are eligible to receive all the secrets that may be conferred in a Master Mason's Lodge – but that we are not yet in possession of all of the secrets of a Master – and that we might never be in possession of them. As our eyes become more and more

acclimated to the Light, we may become increasingly able to discern the true beauty of Nature and our Creator. Also, we may be afforded the ability to help guide our Brothers to greater discernment and understanding.

Keep moving towards the Light, my Brothers.
Good night.
So mote it be!