



Be “The Point Within a Circle”

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Our journey in Freemasonry starts with the Degree of Entered Apprentice, and so the ritual of the first degree informs us that becoming a Freemason is the beginning of a purposeful and laborious trek down a path adorned with symbols, a path well-trod by countless others through the ages, to a place no living being has yet discovered. (<http://justamason.blogspot.com/2009/04/purpose-of-symbols-of-first-degree.html>)

One of the symbols of the Degree of Entered Apprentice – the point within a circle – serves as a bridge from our non-Masonic to our Masonic experience, and also as a bridge from Operative to Speculative Masonry. The “Point within a Circle” is, in and of itself, a symbol-within-a-symbol – a visual symbolic representation linking our past to our present. This ancient, geometric Egyptian symbol binds the primary teachings and well guarded secrets of ancient operative Masonry with the moral and philosophical underpinnings of modern speculative Masonry. It focuses us on the

necessity of knowing the ancient Craft – if we are to begin to understand the modern Craft.

The concept of a “point within a circle” or a circumpunct, is not a unique Masonic symbol; it has many ancient and modern meanings. It has been used as the symbol of God, used, for example, by the Egyptians to represent the sun god Ra; it is the sign of the Archangel Michael; it is the symbol of the Monad, the most primal aspect of God in Gnosticism; it is the sign of the divine order; and the symbol of the singularity point before the big bang, and, thus, the representation of that which was before the beginning. It has represented light, freedom, life, good, happiness, infinity, existence, and chaos. (<http://www.excommunicate.net/what-is-the-philosophers-stone/>)

Some Masonic authors note that “the symbol is actually based on an old symbol of astrology and alchemy. The point in the center represented the Earth, which was thought to be the center of the universe. The heavens were believed to spin around the Earth, represented by the circle. The two lines represented the summer and winter solstices, the longest and shortest days of the year. For thousands of years, these days were celebrated as pagan feast days all over the world, and they were especially important to farming societies, because they were the astronomical methods of determining planting seasons.” (The Freemasons Monthly The Michigan Freemason, 1873.)

The “point within a circle” also has represented the alchemist’s attempt to produce gold from lead, which from a Masonic perspective is the effort to turn the rough ashlar into a perfect ashlar, or metaphorically to

make good men better. (<http://www.excommunicate.net/what-is-the-philosophers-stone/>)

The circle is a flawless form which signifies completeness, oneness, harmony and holiness, while the two parallel lines are said to represent the Saints John, and upon the vertex of the circle rests the Holy Scriptures. By this symbol, therefore, Masons acknowledge the Holy Scriptures and the two Saints. (The Freemasons Monthly The Michigan Freemason, 1873.)

Consider how a “point within a circle” is displayed within our modern symbolic Lodge rooms. If you were to look down upon the closing of any Lodge under the authority of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, what would you find? At the center of this circle, the “point within the circle” lies the altar, upon which rests the Volume of Sacred Law. When we contemplate the Masonic symbol of the “point within a circle” and its parallel lines, we think also of the altar and the candidate receiving the degrees with the Brethren representing the two parallel lines.

Freemasonry is the embodiment of mankind’s universal morals and values, which have one common feature, they are life protecting or life enhancing for all mankind, not just one portion of humanity. We calibrate our moral compasses by judging whether our actions are logical and psychologically healthy not just for us, but for all mankind. Our actions are our ethics. If we filter our thoughts and subsequent actions through the lens of right and wrong and then, if our actions are in accord with these universal ethical and moral values, we will be doing what is right. (Gourlie, 2010 – <http://www.policeone.com/patrol-issues/articles/2147811-The-ethical-warrior-Leadership-from-the-bottom-up>)

Hodapp suggests that the “point within a circle” is the individual Mason who seeks to strike a balance between his zeal, as represented by John the Baptist, and his compassion, as represented by John the Evangelist. He calls this balance a “graphic representation of the conscience”. (Hodapp, 2009 –

<http://freemasonsfordummies.blogspot.com/2009/06/st-john-baptist-day.html>)

My personal reflections lead me to the belief that the “point” within the circle represents our individual soul. God’s grace, love, and forgiveness are the constructs of the circle, which know no beginning or end but rather are a continuation of a flawless and complete oneness. Our soul occupies the position as a point within the circle where we are surrounded by the grace, love and forgiveness of the Supreme Architect of the Universe. We do not know when the hands of time will chime that magical hour which designates our earthly meridian, but if we apply the teachings found in the Volume of the Sacred Law, and remain within the two parallel lines, our time will be well spent. It is when we lose sight of the Volume of Sacred Law and the universal tenets of Freemasonry, and reach beyond the circle of morality, that we lose our moral bearings – and then we lose our way and ourselves.

Each of us should use the symbolism of the point within the circle to guide us in building our own spiritual temple, but as Master Masons we should also shine the light of Freemasonry to illuminate the path for others.