



# Work & Lectures

A Metropolitan Atlanta Masonic Newsletter



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June 2009  
The Master Mason

http://news.morelight.org

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*Deacon John J. McManus, Canon Lawyer, Archdiocese of Atlanta*

## The DeKalb County Masonic Association Report

### DCMA This Month

Thursday, June 11<sup>th</sup> will find us at Grant Park 604, which now meets in the facility of Masters 295. WBro. Young will only say that the program has something to do with handguns... I guess we'll know more soon enough. At least some copies of this newsletter will be present for those without email.

## Catholic Deacon Explains the Church's Position on Freemasonry

92 Brethren and friends were present at Gate City 2, of Atlanta, on Tuesday, 26 May, to hear Deacon John McManus give a presentation clearing the rumors about the Catholic Church's position on Freemasonry.

As a bonus section, his presentation is attached to this newsletter. Briefly, I will sum up the conclusions, although his presentation is a fascinating read.

- 1. Catholics may not be Freemasons; this has not changed since it was first declared in the 1700s.
- 2. There is no "standard penalty" for Catholics who are Freemasons; situations are to be judged on a case by case basis.



Remember, Grant Park meets at Masters, at 3038 LaVista Rd, Decatur 30033

### DCMA Next Month

July is Clarkston month in the DCMA, and Tuesday the 28<sup>th</sup> will find us at Clarkston 492.

### DCMA Last Month

As no clear consensus was reached, we had no official meeting last month. The social meeting hosted by EA Minor 603 and Glenwood Hills 703 had 17 present, including five 50-Year Masons. Tucker 42 took the Banner with 7, Panthersville 543 took the Gavel with 3, and \$63 was collected for our charities.

## Memorial Club Gets New Van!

I am happy to announce that the DeKalb Masonic Memorial Club now has a new van. I apologize for not having a picture, but it is an older model, low mileage van, in excellent condition, formerly owned by the government. In case you are unaware, the old van was having intermittent issues, and was seriously damaged by debris from a truck while returning from a service last month.

On behalf of the Memorial Club, I would like to thank everyone for their contributions; to date, the donations (specified for the van) have amounted to slightly less than \$2,000 short of what the van actually cost us. We are very thankful to our Anonymous Brother, who fronted the difference, and we hope to be able to repay that amount as donations continue. A special thanks go out to the door prize winners last month, each of whom donated their prizes back to offset the van cost.

*Special thanks to Bill Marsh for proofreading this mess!*

## DCMA This Year

- Pres:** David Herman, Chamblee-Sardis 444 & Gate City 2  
david @ morelight .org, 404 421 5279
- 1st VP:** James Tyroff, Philologia 178 & Metro Daylight 743  
jtyroff @ hotmail .com or 770 378 9531
- 2nd VP:** Jim Cline, Clarkston 492 (*Jim needs a second lodge!*)  
jclinejdcpa @ mindspring . com
- Sec/Treas:** Bill Eleazer, Glenwood Hills 703 & EA Minor 603  
billjoane256 @ aol .com or 770 922 5412

*The DCMA... Determined to Cover Masonry in Atlanta!  
We'd like for your lodge to join us - ask one of us how.*

## Directions & Maps

Brethren: directions, maps and meeting information for all DCMA member lodges can be found from the DCMA website at <http://dcma.morelight.org>

## Standard Disclaimer

This publication is created to inform the brethren. Any views or opinions that manage to sneak in are solely those of the editor, who does **NOT** speak for any organization whatsoever. Really.

## Where's YOUR News?

We'd be honored to support the community by publishing your news and events - all you have to do is let us know by emailing david @ morelight . org with all the information you'd like listed.

## Old Tiler Talks

by Carl H. Claudy  
PGM, District of Columbia  
Mostly written in the 1920s

### The Forgotten Word

"Never have I been so glad to get to lodge as tonight!" began the New Brother to the Old tiler in the anteroom.

"Some one here owe you some money or something?" asked the Old Tiler.

"No indeed! But lying awake last night, thinking about Masonry, I tried to recall the word of a Master Mason... and I couldn't! It was a lost word for me, sure enough! I couldn't sleep all night, trying to remember. I couldn't remember today and it bothered me a lot! So I was glad to come to lodge tonight and get instructed!"

"I shouldn't have worried over that," answered the Old Tiler. "Our memories play strange tricks. You didn't need it, did you?"

"No, but a Mason ought not to forget it. It's the most important thing in Masonry. If we don't have it we cannot visit and work as a Master- and everything!"

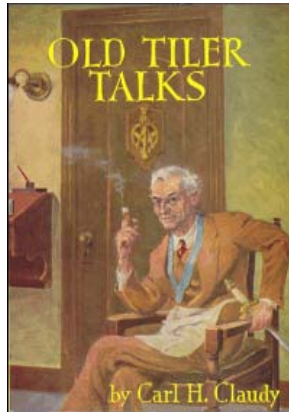
"So we are told," answered the old Tiler. "Yet don't you mistake the meaning? The syllables you are taught to pronounce are not important."

"Why, Old Tiler! How can you say that?"

"Because it is true," answered the Old Tiler. "Is it important what particular piece of cloth is put in an apron? Is it important what particular piece of iron is used to make a pillar, or what particular copy of a million Bibles is on the Altar, or what particular piece of wood is used in the gavel? Isn't it important that we wear an apron and know why, that we have a pillar to teach a lesson, that we revere the Great Light in Masonry, that we have a gavel for our control? Then are the syllables of the word important, or is the spirit, the meaning, the symbolism important?"

"Masons must know the word, the modes of recognition, the signs and tokens. But all these may slip from memory and still a brother have Freemasonry in his heart. They are audible symbols of spiritual knowledge.

"We are taught that in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. Do you read into that statement



some particular word? Or is the Word here used in the Old Jewish sense of the truth, the light of knowledge for which man may strive?

"Masonry's search for the lost word is for far more than a syllable, my brother. The substitute word is more than an exclamation. It is an inward knowledge of oneness with the Great Architect, for which all men of all ages have searched. Not all search in vain; many find their Word. Even the substitute word could only be given under certain circumstances; doubtless those earnest seekers who found the real word could never assemble the circumstances under which it, too, might be given to humanity.

"But we continue to search. Slowly but surely man has come up from barbarianism. The world improves with age. Except in war men are less cruel now than centuries ago; men know more than they did centuries ago. We are all brutes underneath, but to be underneath connotes something above. In our long struggle after the lost word we have put something above the brute. On that we climb, and are by so much nearer the Word we seek.

"It is this which is important. Let not your heart be troubled if that strangest part of all God's works, the human mind, plays a prank on you. Better men than you and I have forgotten their own names. Now and then one forgets the name of Deity. But in the end we remember, in some far place where angels see that our memories work! All you needed was conversation with any brother who had sat in lodge with you. If you desire, nothing prevents you from giving and receiving it as Masons are taught to do.

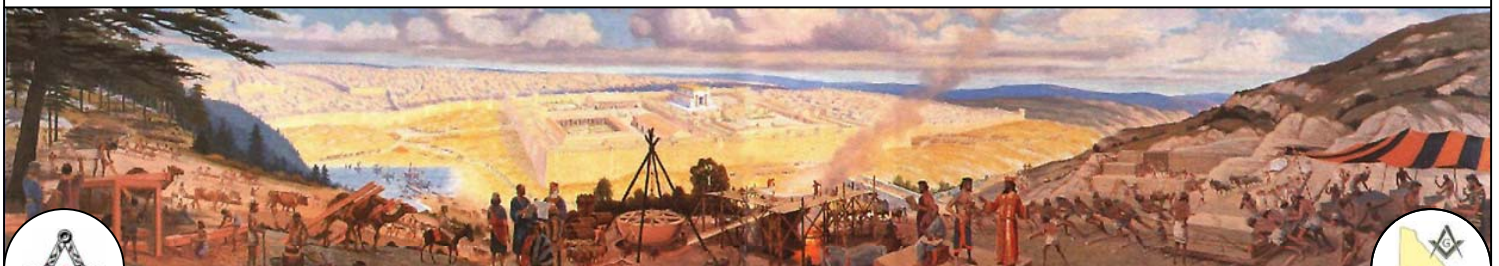
"Your only cause for worry is that you fail to keep always before you that Masonry in men's hearts searches for a word which no man has yet put into words. The tender lesson of the Master Mason degree has been a solace to millions. The Word, substitute though it is, has meant much more than the scholar translates. It is this which you must never forget, even when your memory temporarily takes from you the recollection of the letters and their pronunciation."

"You should be a travelling lecturer!" cried the New Brother.

"You mean that as a compliment, but I'd rather sit still and tile."

"But you can't get anywhere!" cried the New Brother.

"Neither can a sign post by the road," smiled the Old Tiler. "Yet it points the way."



# List of Special Events - June & July, 2009

## The Grand Master's Calendar

**13 Jun, Sat - 10<sup>th</sup> District Convention**  
at John S. Davidson 677, Augusta - 10:00 start.

**18 Jun, Thu - Official Visitaion**  
at Mountain Park 729, Stone Mtn - 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

**19 Jun, Fri - GA/SC Festival - see below**

**23 Jun, Tue - Official Visitation**  
at Sandy Springs 124, Sandy Springs. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

**25 Jun, Thu - Official Visitation**  
at Mableton 171, Mableton. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

**27 Jun, Sat - GA/AL/TN Festival - see below**

## Special Programs

**5-6 Jun, Fri-Sat - Shady Dale Rodeo**  
an actual rodeo with over 200 contestants and over \$20,000 in payouts; all proceeds go to local and Masonic charities. Located at GA 83 and GA 142, under an hour SE of Atlanta. An effort of Walton Lodge 200. Shows start at 8:00 pm. (open)

**13 Jun, Sat - DeMolay Fathers Day Program**  
at Nelms 323, Smyrna. 7:30 start.

**19 Jun, Fri - Bi-State Festival with South Carolina**  
at the Augusta Scottish Rite Center. This annual event to promote fellowship among our states starts with supper at 6:00 pm. (tyled)

**27 Jun, Sat - Tri-State Festival with Alabama & Tennessee**  
at Coosa 622, west of Rome. A team from each state, with their own ritual, opens a called communication and confers one of the three degrees on actual candidates. If you've never seen this, rest assured that it is worth the trip. Breakfast and lunch are served, so I suggest getting there by 7:00 am. (tyled)

**25 Jul, Sat - Tri-State Festival with Alabama & Florida**  
at Tyrian 111, Warner Robbins. Never having been, I can't really say what goes on. Since it starts at 9:00 am, I imagine lunch will be available. (tyled)

## Appendant Body Activities

**06 Jun, Sat - Scottish Rite Family Day Picnic**  
at Sweetwater Creek State Park, Shelter 1, Lithia Springs. 11-4

**11-14 Jun, Thu-Sun - Grand Eastern Star Session, Columbus.**

## 25/50 Year Awards, PM Nights

**27 Jun, Sat - Family Night & 25 Year Awards**  
at Campbellton 76, Campbellton. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start. (open)

## GACHIP Programs

**5-6 Jun, Fri-Sat - Jasper 50 & Walton 200, Sponsors**  
at the Shady Dale Rodeo, 6:00 pm - 11:00 pm - see above.

## Associations, Clubs, Instruction

**03 Jun, Wed - DeKalb Masonic Memorial Club (open)**  
at Clarkston 492, Clarkston. 2:00 start.

**14 Jun, Thu - DeKalb County Masonic Association (open)**  
at Grant Park 604, Decatur. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start.

**16 Jun, Sat - Gwinnett County Masonic Association (open)**  
at Norcross 228, Norcross. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start.

**24 Jun, Wed - Southside Mem. Assn. & Lodge of Inst. (tyled)**  
(*Jun Location?*). 6:30 Mem. Assn., 7:30 L/ Inst., 9:00 meal.

**28 Jul, Tue - DeKalb County Masonic Association (open)**  
at Clarkston 492, Clarkston. 6:30 meal, 7:30 start.

**29 Jul, Wed - Southside Mem. Assn. & Lodge of Inst. (tyled)**  
(*Jul Location?*). 6:30 Mem. Assn., 7:30 L/ Inst., 9:00 meal.

**31 Jul, Sat - Georgia Lodge of Research (open)**  
*The Geocentric World View and its Relationship to Freemasonry* will be the topic presented by Craig Curits at the Atlanta Masonic Center. 7:30 start.

**1 Aug, Sat - Masonic Home Workday for Dists. 5/8/10/11**  
all districts & visitors welcome. 8:00 start. (open)

## Fundraisers

**06 Jun, Sat - Breakfast Fundraiser**  
at Stone Mountain 449, Stone Mountain. 7:00-9:30 am.

**06 Jun, Sat - Breakfast Fundraiser**  
at Douglasville 289, Douglasville. 7:00-9:30 am.

**06 Jun, Sat - Chicken Fry Fundraiser**  
at Mountain Park 729, Stone Mountain. (*hours not listed*).

**11 Jul, Sat - Car Show**  
at Lawrenceville Auto Parts (Lawrenceville 131, sponsor).



## Degree Conferrals

*Conferral schedules are TENTATIVE; confirm with host lodge.*

**16 Jun, Tue - Fellow Craft Conferral**  
at Masters 295, Decatur. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

**16 Jun, Tue - Fellow Craft Conferral**  
at Kennesaw 33, Marietta. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.

**17 Jun, Wed - Master Mason Conferral**  
at Fulton 216, Atlanta. 6:00 meal, 7:00 meeting.

**27 Jun, Sat - All Three Degrees**  
at Coosa 622, west of Rome - see above.

**25 Jul - Entered Apprentice Conferral**  
at Mt. Vernon 22, Athens. 6:30 meal, 7:30 meeting.



## Interpretation of the Ritual of the Third Degree

*Excerpted from "The Lodge System of Masonic Education" (Lectures for the Third Meeting, Subject 1) by the Grand Lodge of Georgia*

You have been raised to the Sublime Degree of Master mason. It is indeed a "sublime" Degree, for a man may study for years without exhausting it. Any interpretation must necessarily be a hint only; yet a hint may stimulate a man to reflect upon it for himself and to study it more thoroughly in the future.

In the First and Second Degrees you were surrounded by the symbols and emblems of architecture. In the Third Degree you found a different order of symbolism, cast in the language of the soul - its life, its tragedy and its triumph. To recognize this is the first step in interpretation.

The second step is to recognize that the Third Degree has many meanings. It is not intended to be a lesson complete, finished, and closed up. Rather it is a pointing out of paths, a new departure, a series of inspirations, an awakening of all the faculties. It is like a great drama, picture or symphony to which one may evermore return to find new meanings as in an inexhaustible fountain-head of truth. Most essentially it is a drama of the immortality of the soul, setting forth the truth that while a man withers away and perishes, there is that in him which perishes not. That this is the meaning most generally adopted by the Craft is shown by our habits of language. We say that a man is initiated an Entered Apprentice, passed a Fellow Craft, and raised a Master Mason. By this it appears it is the raising that most Masons have found at the center of the Master Mason Degree.

The life of a man is organized in a number of groups of experiences, each different from the others. Some experiences are incidental to our passage through time, from childhood, through manhood to old age. Some are incidental to the life of the body: hunger, sleep, weariness, the senses, the feelings. Others cluster about the home and the family, about religion, worship, God, the meaning and purpose of life. Yet others have to do with a man's work, his trade or occupation, how he makes a living for himself and his dependents. Some center about his life in the community, as a social being, as a neighbor or a citizen. Unless one is adequate to deal with all these groups of experiences he cannot be happy.

The most difficult of all to deal with is that made up of the evils of life: hard experiences, sin, defeat, suffering, disease, pain, loss of friends or fortune, enmity, treachery, crime, wickedness, sorrow, death. Herin lie our greatest problems, our most trying ordeals, our severest testings. If we can find the wisdom to deal with these, if we can triumph over and solve their problems, our characters will be secure, our happiness assured. What are you doing about evil, in yourself and the world about you? This is a question life asks each of us. If we fail to give the right answer, it enforces the worst of all penalties.

Evil may be brought upon us by our own actions, or come through no responsibility of our own. If evils comes upon a man by his own acts, we feel that it is a just compensation. But what of the evil that comes upon a good man? Such we call a tragedy.

Evil in the form of a tragedy is set forth in the Drama of the Third Degree. Here is a good and wise man, a builder, working for others and giving others work, the highest we know, as it is dedicated wholly to God. Through no fault of his own he experiences tragedy from friends and fellow Masons. Here is evil incarnate and unalloyed, a complete picture of human tragedy.

How did the Craft meet this tragedy? The first step was to impose the supreme penalty on those who had possessed the will to destroy and therefore had to be destroyed lest another tragedy follow. The greatest enemy man has makes war upon the good, and to it no quarter can be given.

The next step was to recover from the wreckage caused by the tragedy whatever of value it had left undestroyed. Confusion had come upon the Craft, but order was restored. Loyal Craftsmen took up the burdens dropped by the traitors. It is one of the prime duties of life that a man shall toil to undo the harm wrought by sin and crime, or in time the world would be destroyed by the evils done in it.

But what of the victim of the tragedy? Here is the most profound and most difficult lesson of the drama. The victim was a good man, his goodness rooted in an unvarying faith in God, that which destroyed him in one sense could not destroy him in another. The spirit in him rose above the reach of evil. By virtue of it he was raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular.

Let us imagine a genuinely good man who has been the victim of the most terrible of tragedies, one caused by the treachery of friends. How can he be raised above the clutch of such circumstances? How can he emerge a happier man than before? By his spirit rising to the level of forgiveness, or resignation, of self-sacrifice, refusing to stoop to retaliation or to harbor bitterness. In such a spirit the truest happiness is found.

The secret of such power is in the Third Degree, symbolized by the Word. If that Word is lost a man must search for it. If a man possesses that Word he has the secret of Masonic Art. To rise to the height of spiritual life is to stand on a level above the reach of tragedy or the powers of evil. To have the spirit rest in God, to have a sincere and unvarying faith in truth and goodness, is the inner secret of a Master Mason; to teach which is the purpose of the Third Degree.



## Symbols, Emblems and Allegories of the Third Degree

*Excerpted from "The Lodge System of Masonic Education" (Lectures for the Third Meeting, Subject 2) by the Grand Lodge of Georgia*

The symbolism of the First and Second Degrees centers around the art of architecture; their purpose is to teach you, in the First, to be a builder of yourself, in the Second, a builder of society. In the Third Degree the symbolism takes another form. Although its background continues to be architecture, and its action takes place in and about a Temple, it is a spiritual symbolism of life and death. Its principal teaching is of immortality.

If a man permits himself to be buried under the rubbish heap of sins and passions it is possible, if he has learned the secret of the spiritual life and with the help of God and of the Brotherhood, to rise again into a new life, either here or hereafter. This gives us the key to the whole Degree, and in its light, all its symbols, emblems, all allegories must be understood.

The Tragedy of Hiram Abiff is the climax of the Degree. Indeed, the climax of all the ceremonies of Freemasonry of whatever Degree. Next in importance, and in many ways equal in interest, is the allegorical "Search For That Which Was Lost." All this appears in our Ritual in the form of allegory. A word was possessed. The Word was lost. Like all symbols this means many things. One of its more profound meanings is that if a man has lost the ideals and standards of his youth, his character, his faith in truth and goodness, the secret of what it is to be a man, he must, if he is to live the Masonic life, go in search of that which was lost and continue searching until he finds it. Without manhood it is useless to be a man.

You may wonder why the Ritual does not explain fully and clearly the meaning of this symbolism, why it leaves the candidate to find the meanings for himself. There are three reasons for this silence. First, lack of sufficient time. To explain them all fully would require not three nights but thirty, perhaps three hundred. Second, the Masonic life grows by what we do for ourselves infinitely more than by what others do for us. Third, the method of the Ritual is to bring us into the presence of the greater truths of life knowing that their mere presence will have a deep influence over us. Each man is left to work them out in detail according to his own needs.

The three steps remind us of how Youth, Manhood, and Old Age is each a unity in itself, each possessing its own duties and problems, each calling for its own philosophy. Unhappy is the man who reaches middle years having missed these undeniable and all-important truths. He has gone backward, not forward. He has ignored the fact that his life is in God's hands. The central teaching of the Master Mason Degree expressed in the Tragedy of Hiram Abiff, is a way for him to recover possession of his life. He can be raised to a new manhood, lifted from the dead level of death to a living perpendicular. He may be called back from a grave which is more terrible than the dissolution of the body. By repudiating and dying to his old life, by gaining again his faith in God by the Power of the Brotherhood, he finds the path to recovery.

Drama is conflict between a man and other men or other forces, resulting in a crisis or problem and is followed by a resolution or solution. If the resolution is against him and he becomes a victim or a sufferer, the drama is tragedy. The Masonic drama occurs in our own lives, to each of us, in our daily experiences.

The Tragedy of Hiram Abiff is a ritualistic drama. Ritual is the set words and fixed ceremonies addressed to the human spirit through the imagination. A ritualistic drama moves wholly in the realm of the spirit where the time, space and particular individuals are ignored. The clash of forces, the crises and fates of the human spirit alone enter into it, and they hold true of all men everywhere regardless of who they are or where or when.

It is an inexcusable blunder to treat the drama as a mock tragedy. The exemplification of our ritualistic drama should be as sincere, as solemn, as earnest as a prayer before the Altar; he who takes it trivially or with perverted humor betrays a shallowness of soul which shows him unfit to be a Mason.

Hiram Abiff is the symbol of the human soul. The work he was engaged to supervise was is the symbol of the work we do when we supervise, organize and direct our lives from birth to death. The enemies he met are symbols of those lusts and passions which in our breasts make war on our characters. His doom befalls every man who becomes a victim to those enemies: to be interrupted in his work, to be made outcast from the mastership over himself and, at the end, to be buried under all manner of rubbish - ill fame, defeat, demoralization, disgrace, weakness, misery, evil habits, and scorn. The manner in which he was raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular is the way by which any man rises from self-defeat to self-mastery. And the Great Architect, by the power of whose word Hiram Abiff was raised, is the God in whose arms we ourselves forever lie and whose mighty help we also need to raise us out of the graves of defeat, evil and death.

Did you ask, while participating in that drama, why you were made to participate? It was your drama, not another's! No man can ever be a mere spectator of drama in his own soul. It was intended that your participation should prepare you for becoming a Master Mason by teaching you the secret of a Master mason, by which the soul may rise above its internal enemies if a man is a Mason in reality as well as in name. The real Master Mason is Master of himself.

Did you ask why the three enemies came from his own circle, not from outside? The enemies most feared by the soul are always from within. Did you ask why it was that there was so much confusion among the Craftsmen? The Temple is the symbol of a man's character and therefore breaks and falls when the soul, its architect, is helpless.

The most we can obtain from others is such hints and suggestions as these. Ponder [these lessons]... and you will be wiser and stronger for having the guidance and the light the Tragedy provides.



## The Hiramic Legend and Rebirth

*Excerpted from Grand Lodge of California material.*

The historical Hiram Abiff that is recorded in the Bible was a skilled artificer and the son of a widow of the Tribe of Naphtali. The earlier accounts of Hiram are recorded in I Kings 7:13-14. His coming to work on the temple at Jerusalem is mentioned in a letter written to King Solomon by Hiram, the King of Tyre, and recorded in II Chronicles 2:13-14. The word Abiff is variously translated, but can mean "his father," and the name is often explained as "Hiram, my father." In a certain sense, he was regarded as the father of the workmen on the temple. His role in the Hiramic legend of Masonic tradition, however, is far more than simply that of a skilled architect. The Hiramic legend has at its heart the slaying and symbolic restoration of an ideal of purity and order. Because the legend of the Grand Master Hiram Abiff is consistent with the teachings and rites of the Ancient Mystery Schools, the participant of the Masonic rite communes with the archetypal forces that are the foundation of human spiritual tradition.

Initiation into the Ancient Mysteries was not simply a means of attaining intellectual knowledge, or "learning" (mathein in ancient Greek). Aristotle wrote that it was actually the "experience" (pathein), and not knowledge learned, that allowed the initiate to comprehend the secret meaning of the mysteries. This enlightening, transformative experience has generally been termed rebirth, or renatus in Latin, and appears to be the central theme of the most important rituals of almost all the Ancient Mystery Schools as well as modern initiatic organizations.

At Eleusis, the teaching on rebirth was revealed through the symbolism of Kore's descent into the underworld, her ascension from it, and the subsequent return of fertility. In the cults of Osiris, Dionysus, Attis, and Adonis, the main rite is their violent death and rebirth. In Mithraism, we find representations of Mithras slaying a bull whose blood turns into grain. In Christianity, the unjust crucifixion of Christ leads to the ultimate redemption of mankind. And within Freemasonry we learn of the murder of our beloved Grand Master Hiram Abiff by three impatient craftsmen and his subsequent raising.

According to many enlightened thinkers, the three strikes to our Grand Master's body symbolize the same vices that combined together to slay Christ. Namely, the corruption of the church, the oppression of the state, and the ignorance of the mob. Whether or not the blows are indeed symbolic of the same social vices that had combined to take the earthly life of Christ is probably a matter of opinion, but what is clear is that the ruffians had not been able to "subdue their passions" and were thus driven by them to commit the terrible act. Because the Fellow Crafts allowed themselves to be governed by their passions, they murdered the qualities of a master within themselves. It is for us, therefore, to learn to subdue our passions so that the master within each of us may be raised. In this sense, one of the lessons of the legend of Hiram Abiff is that of undying fidelity to the highest ideals and the ultimately victorious nature of such convictions.

Masonic tradition informs us that the master's murder leads to the loss of the word, leaving it to be discovered in future ages. This may suggest that mankind is yet to receive its salvation as a whole, while at the same time revealing the path to individual enlightenment within the allegory of the legend. But however one may wish to interpret the Hiramic legend, it is clear that the death and raising of Hiram presents some kind of teaching on rebirth. It only follows then that the doctrine of rebirth is something every dedicated Mason should become familiar with.

But before proceeding to rebirth, it may first be necessary to understand what causes the death in the first place. It appears that all the violent deaths—of Osiris, of Christ, of Hiram—have something in common. They symbolize vice, ignorance, and chaos, inevitably slaying the pure self and thereby making rebirth necessary for salvation. These legends reveal the nature of our circumstances and enlighten us to the trials that we must overcome. Only through the death of one's imperfect self, the leaving behind of the old, and acceptance of transcendent truth, can one truly be reborn into a new self, no longer tainted by the sins of one's past. In a certain sense, and depending on one's perspective or religious background, rebirth or regeneration is a process that is constantly occurring. With such an understanding, it is up to the initiate to ensure that he is improving himself on a daily basis by carefully watching and analyzing his behavior and motives.

It should be recognized that the doctrine of rebirth as a means of regaining one's purity or rediscovering one's true self has had great influence on the Christian doctrine of original sin. Christianity teaches that because of the fall following the transgression of Adam, all humanity has inherited a state of sin, with rebirth in Christ the Savior and in the life of the spirit as the only way to salvation. Within Islam, on the other hand, the doctrine of original sin is rejected because Allah accepted the repentance of Adam after the fall (Qurân 2:36-37) and thereby showed that each man is responsible only for his own actions, though still subject to temptation and folly. While it seems unclear which understanding is closer to what was taught in the various Mystery Schools of the ancient world, it does seem clear that regardless of the tradition one looks at, most would agree that man is constantly subject to temptation and almost always gives in sooner or later.

A good source for Freemasons to examine in the quest to overcome vice and temptation and understand rebirth is cited in the Cooke Manuscript of the Old Charges to operative Masons in England (circa 1450). This manuscript regards Hermes Trismegistus as the principal patron of the Craft. Some writers have even speculated that the name Hiram Abiff actually comes from Hermes Ibis. While this is unlikely, this connection may have merit only if Hiram is considered to be a symbol of the knowledge professed by Hermes that has become lost for most of humanity due to the vices of men.

The main body of surviving Hermetic wisdom is called the Corpus Hermeticum and, incidentally, book 13 of the Corpus is entitled On Rebirth. The text is in the form of a dialogue between Hermes Trismegistus and his son Tat. Tat begins by asking his father to reveal the teaching on rebirth, by saying that he is now "ready to become a stranger to the world," as this was the condition that Hermes had previously set forth. Hermes then explains that all things come from God, and are one with God, and it is His will only that determines who shall achieve rebirth. The dialogue continues with Hermes teaching Tat that it is only through mastery of self and transcending of the senses that the Divine intellect, or Nous, can be discovered.

