

GEOMETRY IN MASONIC SYMBOLISM

I have been perplexed to understand why Geometry is so much made use of in our Masonic symbolism. Why is this ? Does the Letter G stand for Geometry? - L.B.C., Ohio.

You have posed a large question at us, brother. As architects, with their handbooks of methods and materials were unknown until Queen Elizabeth's time, the earlier builders were obliged to use the methods of geometry in their work. That explains the shape and arrangement of many of the old cathedrals; they were laid out according to the squares, triangles and circles of geometry. In truth, architecture, as then practiced, was nothing other than applied geometry, and for that reason we find, as in the Old Constitution for example, that Masonry and Geometry are used as synonymous terms. As most of our Masonic symbols originated with the old builders they are naturally geometrical, so geometrical in fact, that a recent writer contends that one could spell out the whole Masonic system from Euclid's famous treatise; that is doubtless an exaggeration, but it is the exaggeration of a truth.

Another reason may be given for the large place occupied by Geometry, and the kindred arts and sciences in our ritual, especially in the Second Degree. As you doubtless know, William Preston had more to do with the construction of the present work, probably, than any other one man. Preston lived in a day of no public schools or cheap books, and he was absorbed by the scheme of making the Lodge into a school. Accordingly he transformed a part of the Ritual into an educational curriculum. (See Pound's lecture on Preston in his "Philosophy of Masonry.")

It is probable that G was originally the symbol of Geometry, and it is still recognized as such by the Ritual, as you will remember; but it has also come to stand for the Great Geometrician, and that very fittingly, for the whole of Nature is a vast objectified Geometry.

If you have access to a set of the Proceedings of the Lodge Coronati Lodge of Research we urge you to read Sidney Klein's essay on The Great Symbol; it is the best treatise on the Geometry of Freemasonry that we have ever seen.