

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MASONRY

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the Grand Master of Massachusetts,
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PHILOSOPHERS are by no means agreed with respect to the scope and subject matter of philosophy. Nor are Masonic scholars at one with respect to the scope and purpose of Freemasonry. Hence one may not expect to define and delimit Masonic philosophy according to the easy method of Dickens' editor who wrote upon Chinese metaphysics by reading in the Encyclopedia upon China and upon metaphysics and combining his information. It is enough to say at the outset that in the sense in which philosophers of Masonry have used the term, philosophy is the science of fundamentals. Possibly it would be more correct to think of the philosophy of Masonry as organized Masonic knowledge-- as a system of Masonic knowledge. But there has come to be a well-defined branch of Masonic learning which has to do with certain fundamental questions; and these fundamental questions may be called the problems of Masonic philosophy, since that branch of Masonic learning which treats of them has been called commonly the philosophy of Masonry. These fundamental questions are three:

1. What is the nature and purpose of Masonry as an institution? For what does it exist? What does it seek to do? Of course for the philosopher this involves also and chiefly the questions, what ought Masonry to be? For what ought it to exist? What ought it to seek as its end?
2. What is- and this involves what should be-the relation of Masonry to other human institutions, especially to those

directed toward similar ends? What is its place in a rational scheme of human activities?

3. What are the fundamental principles by which Masonry is governed in attaining the end it seeks? This again, to the philosopher, involves the question what those principles ought to be.

Four eminent Masonic scholars have essayed to answer these questions and in so doing have given us four systems of Masonic philosophy, namely, William Preston, Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, George Oliver and Albert Pike. Of these four systems of Masonic philosophy, two, if I may put it so, are intellectual systems. They appeal to and are based upon reason only. These two are the system of Preston and that of Krause. The other two are, if I may put it that way, spiritual systems. They do not flow from the rationalism of the eighteenth century but spring instead from a reaction toward the mystic ideas of the hermetic philosophers in the seventeenth century. As I shall try to show here-after, this is characteristic of each, though much more marked in one.

Summarily, then, we have four systems of Masonic philosophy. Two are intellectual systems: First that of Preston, whose key word is Knowledge; second, that of Krause, whose key word is Morals. Two are spiritual systems: First that of Oliver, whose key word is Tradition; and second, that of Pike, whose key word is Symbolism. Comparing the two intellectual systems of Masonic philosophy, the intrinsic importance of Preston's is much less than that of Krause's. Krause's philosophy of Masonry has a very high value in and of itself. On the other hand the chief interest in Preston's philosophy of Masonry, apart from his historical position among Masonic philosophers, is to be found in the circumstance that his philosophy is the philosophy of our American lectures and hence is the only one with which the

average American Mason acquires any familiarity.

Preston was not, like Krause, a man in advance of his time who taught his own time and the future. He was thoroughly a child of his time. Hence to understand his writings we must know the man and the time. Accordingly I shall divide this discourse into three parts: (1) The man, (2) the time, (3) Preston's philosophy of Masonry as a product of the two.

1. First, then, the man. William Preston was born at Edinburgh on August 7, 1742. His father was a writer to the signet or solicitor -- the lower branch of the legal profession -- and seems to have been a man of some education and ability. At any rate he sent William to the high school at Edinburgh, the caliber of which in those days may be judged from the circumstance that the boy entered it at six -- though he was thought very precocious. At school he made some progress in Latin and even began Greek. But all this was at an early age. His father died while William was a mere boy and he was taken out of school, apparently before he was twelve years old. His father had left him to the care of Thomas Ruddiman, a well-known linguist and he became the latter's clerk. Later Ruddiman apprenticed William to his brother who was a printer, so that Preston learned the printer's trade as a boy of fourteen or fifteen. On the death of his patron (apparently having nothing by inheritance from his father) Preston went into the printing shop as an apprentice and worked there as a journeyman until 1762. In that year, with the consent of the master to whom he had been apprenticed, he went to London. He was only eighteen years old, but carried a letter to the king's printer, and so found employment at once. He remained in the employ of the latter during substantially the whole remaining period of his life.

Preston's abilities showed themselves in the printing shop from the beginning. He not merely set up the matter at which he worked but he contrived in some way to read it and to think about it. From setting up the great variety of matter which came to the king's printer he acquired a notable literary style and became known to the authors whose books and writings he helped to set up as a judge of style and as a critic. Accordingly he was made proof reader and corrector for the press and worked as such during the greater part of his career. He did work of this sort on the writings of Gibbon, Hume, Robertson and authors of that rank, and presentation copies of the works of these authors, which were found among Preston's effects at his death, attest the value which they put upon the labors of the printer.

Preston had no more than come of age when he was made a Mason in a lodge of Scotchmen in London. This lodge had attempted to get a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Scotland, but that body very properly refused to invade London, and the Scotch petitioners turned to the Grand Lodge of Ancients, by whom they were chartered. Thus Preston was made in the system of his great rival, Dermott, just as the latter was at first affiliated with a regular or modern lodge. According to the English usage, which permits simultaneous membership in several lodges, Preston presently became a member of a lodge subordinate to the older Grand Lodge. Something here converted him, and he persuaded the lodge in which he had been raised to secede from the Ancients and to be reconstituted by the so-called Moderns. Thus he cast his lot definitely with the latter and soon became their most redoubtable champion. Be it remembered that the Preston who did all this was a young man of twenty-three and a journeyman printer.

At the age of twenty-five he became master of the newly constituted lodge, and as such conceived it his duty to make a thorough study of the Masonic institution. His own words are worth quoting:

"When I first had the honor to be elected master of a lodge, I thought it proper to inform myself fully of the general rules of the society, that I might be able to fulfill my own duty and officially enforce obedience in others. The methods which I adopted with this view excited in some of superficial knowledge an absolute dislike of what they considered as innovations, and in others, who were better informed, a jealousy of pre-eminence which the principles of Masonry ought have checked. Notwithstanding these discouragements, however, I persevered in my intention."

Indeed one cannot wonder that the pretenses of this journeyman printer of twenty-five were scouted by older Masons. But for the present Preston had to contend with nothing more than shakings of the head. Unlike the scholarly, philosophical, imperturbable, academic Krause, Preston was a fighter. Probably his confident dogmatism, which shows itself throughout his lectures, his aggressiveness and his ambition made more enemies than the supposed innovations involved in his Masonic research. Moreover we must not forget that he had to overcome three very serious obstacles namely, dependence for his daily bread upon a trade at which he worked twelve hours a day, youth, and recent connection with the fraternity. That Preston was not persecuted at this stage of his career and that he succeeded in taking the lead as he did is a complete testimony to his abilities.

Preston had three great qualifications for the work he undertook: (1) Indefatigable diligence, whereby he found time and means to read everything that bore on Masonry after twelve hours of work at his trade daily, six days in the week; (2) a marvelous memory, which no detail of his reading ever escaped; and (3) a great power of making friends and of enlisting their enthusiastic co-operation. He utilized this last resource abundantly, corresponding diligently all with well-informed Masons abroad and taking advantage of every opportunity to interview Masons at home. The results of this communication with all the prominent Masons of his time are to be seen in his lectures.

It was a bold but most timely step when this youthful master of a new lodge determined to rewrite or rather to write the lectures of Craft Masonry. The old charges had been read to the initiate originally, and from this there had grown up a practice of orally expounding their contents and commenting upon the important points. To turn this into a system of fixed lectures and give them a definite place in the ritual was a much-needed step in the development of the work. But it was so distinctly a step that the ease with which it was achieved is quite as striking as the result itself.

When Preston began the composition of his lectures, he organized a sort of club, composed of his friends, for the purpose of listening to him and criticising him. This club was wont to meet twice a week in order to pass on, criticise and learn the lecture as Preston conceived it. Finally in 1772, after seven years, he interested the grand lodge officers in his work and delivered an oration, which appears in the first edition of his *Illustrations of Masonry*, before a meeting of eminent Masons including the principal grand officers. After delivery of the oration, he expounded his system to the meeting.

His hearers approved the lectures, and, though official sanction was not given immediately, the result was to give them a standing which insured their ultimate success. His disciples began now to go about from lodge to lodge delivering his lectures and to come back to the weekly meetings with criticisms and suggestions. Thus by 1774 his system was complete. He then instituted a regular school of instruction, which obtained the sanction of the Grand Lodge and thus diffused his lectures throughout England. This made him the most prominent Mason of the time, so that he was elected to the famous Lodge of Antiquity, one of the four old lodges of 1717, and the one which claimed Sir Christopher Wren for a past master. He was soon elected master of this lodge and continued such for many years, giving the lodge a pre-eminent place in English Masonry which it has kept ever since. Preston's Masonic career, however, was not one of unbroken triumph. In 1779 his views as to Masonic history and Masonic jurisprudence brought him into conflict with the Grand Lodge. It is hard to get at the exact facts in the mass of controversial writing which this dispute brought forth. Fairly stated, they seem to have been about as follows:

The Grand Lodge had a rule against lodges going in public processions. The Lodge of Antiquity determined on St. John's Day, 1777, to go in a body to St. Dunstan's church, a few steps only from the lodge room. Some of the members protested against this as being in conflict with the rule of the Grand Lodge, and in consequence only ten attended. These ten clothed themselves in the vestry of the church, sat in the same pew during the service and sermon, and then walked across the street to the lodge room in their gloves and aprons. This action gave rise to a debate in

the lodge at its next meeting, and in the debate Preston expressed the opinion that the Lodge of Antiquity, which was older than the Grand Lodge and had participated in its formation, had certain inherent privileges, and that it had never lost its right to go in procession as it had done in 1694 before there was any Grand Lodge. Thus far the controversy may remind us of the recent differences between Bro. Pitts and the Grand Lodge authorities in Michigan. But the authority of Grand Lodges was too recent at that time to make it expedient to overlook such doctrine when announced by the first Masonic scholar of the day. Hence, for maintaining this opinion, Preston was expelled by the Grand Lodge, and in consequence the Lodge of Antiquity severed its connection with the Grand Lodge of Moderns and entered into relations with the revived Grand Lodge at York. The breach was not healed till 1787.

Upon settlement of the controversy with the Grand Lodge of Moderns, Preston, restored to all his honors and dignities, at once resumed his Masonic activities. Among other things, he organized a society of Masonic scholars, the first of its kind. It was known as the Order of the Harodim and included the most distinguished Masons of the time. Preston taught his lectures in this society, and through it they came to America, where they are the foundation of our Craft lectures. Unhappily at the Union in England in 1813 his lectures were displaced by those of Hemming, which critics concur in pronouncing much inferior. But Preston was ill at the time and seems to have taken no part whatever in the negotiations that led to the Union nor in the Union itself. He died in 1818, at the age of 76, after a lingering illness. A diligent and frugal life had enabled him to lay by some money and he was able to leave 800 pounds for Masonic uses, 500 pounds to the Freemason's charity for

orphans--for which, left an orphan himself before the age of twelve, he had a natural sympathy-- and 300 pounds to endow the so-called Prestonian lecture--an annual lecture in Preston's words verbatim by a lecturer appointed by the Grand Lodge. This lecture is still kept up and serves to remind us that Preston was the first to insist on the minute verbal accuracy which is now a feature of our lectures. It should be noted also that in addition to his lectures, Preston's book, *Illustrations of Masonry*, has had great influence. It went through some twenty editions in England, four or five in America, and two in Germany.

So much for the man.

Now as to the time.

Three striking characteristics of the first three quarters of the eighteenth century in England are of importance for an understanding of Preston's philosophy of Masonry: (1) It was a period of mental quiescence; (2) both in England and elsewhere it was a period of formal over-refinement; (3) it was the so-called age of reason, when the intellect was taken to be self-sufficient and men were sure that knowledge was a panacea.

1. In contrast with the seventeenth century, the eighteenth century was a period of quiescence. Society had ceased to be in a state of furious ebullition, nor was there a conflict of manifestly irreconcilable ideas as in the time just gone by. On the surface there was harmony. True, as the events of the end of the century showed, it was a harmony of compromise rather than of reconciliation--a truce, not a peace. But men ceased for a time to quarrel over fundamentals and turned their attention to details and to form. A common theological philosophy was accepted by men who denounced each other heartily for comparatively trivial differences of opinion. In politics, Whig and Tory had become little

more than names, and both parties agreed to accept, with little modification, the body of doctrine afterwards known as the principles of the English Revolution. Political ideas were fixed. Men conceived of a social compact from which every detail of social and political rights and duties might be deduced by abstract reasoning and believed that it was possible in this way to work out a model code for the legislator, a touchstone of sound law for the judge and an infallible guide to private conduct for the individual. In literature and in art there was a like acquiescence in accepted canons. A certain supposed classical style was assumed to be the final and the only permissible mode of expression. In other words acquiescence was the dominant tendency and finality was the dominant idea. For example, Blackstone, a true representative of the century, thought complacently of the legal system of his time, with its heavy load of archaisms, almost ripe for the legislative reform movement of the next generation, as substantially perfect. Nothing, so he thought, was left for the completion of five hundred years of legal development but to patch up a few trivial details. In the same spirit of finality the framers of our bills of rights undertook to lay out legal and political charts for all time. Indeed the absolute legal philosophy of our text books which has made so much trouble for the social reformers of yesterday and of today, speaks from the eighteenth century. In this spirit of finality, with this same confidence that his time had the key to reason and could pronounce once for all for every time, for every place and for every people, Preston framed the dogmatic discourses which we are content to take as the lectures of Freemasonry.

2. For the modern world, the eighteenth century was par excellence the period of formalism. It was the period of formal over-

refinement in every department of human activity. It was the age of formal verse and heroic diction, of a classical school in art which lost sight of the spirit in reproducing the forms of antiquity, of elaborate and involved court etiquette, of formal diplomacy, of the Red Tape and Circumlocution Office in every portion of administration, of formal military tactics in which efficiency in the field yielded to the exigencies of parade and soldiers went into the field dressed for the ball room. Our insistence upon letter perfect, phonographic reproduction of the ritual comes from this period, and Preston fastened that idea upon our lectures, perhaps for all time.

3. The third circumstance, that the eighteenth century was the era of purely intellectualist philosophy naturally determined Preston's philosophy of Masonry. At that time reason was the central idea of all philosophical thought. Knowledge was regarded as the universal solvent. Hence when Preston found in his old lectures that among other things Masonry was a body of knowledge and discovered in the old charges a history of knowledge and of its transmission from antiquity, it was inevitable that he make knowledge the central point of his system. How thoroughly he did this is apparent today in our American Fellowcraft lecture, which, with all the abridgments to which it has been subjected, is still essentially Prestonian. Time does not suffice to read Preston in his original rhetorical prolixity. But a few examples from Webb's version, which at these points is only an abridgment, will serve to make the point. The quotations are from a Webb monitor, but have been compared in each case with an authentic version of Preston.

"The Globes are two artificial
spherical bodies, on the convex
surface of which are represented

the countries, seas, and various parts of the earth, the face of the heavens, the planetary revolutions, and other particulars.

"The sphere, with the parts of the earth delineated on its surface, is called the Terrestrial Globe; and that with the constellations, and other heavenly bodies, the Celestial Globe.

"The principal use of the Globes, besides serving as maps to distinguish the outward parts of the earth, and the situation of the fixed stars, is to illustrate and explain the phenomena arising from the annual revolution and the diurnal rotation of the earth around its own axis. They are the noblest instruments for improving the mind, and giving it the most distinct idea of any problem or proposition, as well as enabling it to solve the same."

It has often been pointed out that these globe on the pillars are pure anachronisms. They are due to Preston's desire to make the Masonic lectures teach astronomy, which just then was the dominant science.

Note particularly the purpose, as the lecture sets it forth expressly: "for improving the mind and for giving it the most distinct idea of any problem or proposition as well as enabling it to solve the same."

In other words, these globes are not symbolic, they are not designed for moral improvement. They rest upon the pillars, grotesquely out of place, simply and solely to teach the lodge the elements of geography and astronomy.

We must remember that Preston, who worked twelve hours a day setting type or reading proof, would look on this very differently from the Mason of today. What are commonplaces of science now were by no means general property then. To him the teaching of the globes was a perfectly serious matter.

Turn to the solemn disquisition on architecture in our Fellowcraft lecture. As we give it, it is unadulterated Preston, but happily it is often much abridged. You know how it runs, how it describes each order in detail, gives the proportions, tells what was the model, appends an artistic critique, and sets forth the legend of the invention of the Corinthian order by Callimachus. The foundation for all this is in the old charges. But in Preston's hands it has become simply a treatise on architecture. The Mason who listened to it repeatedly would become a learned man. He would know what an educated man ought to know about the orders of architecture.

In the same way he gives us an abridgment of Euclid:

"Geometry treats of the powers and properties of magnitudes in general, where length, breadth and thickness are considered, from a point to a line, from a line to a superficies, and from a superficies to a solid. A point is a dimensionless figure, or an indivisible part of space. A line is a point continued, and a figure of one capacity, namely, length. A superficies is a figure of two dimensions, namely, length and

breadth. A solid is a figure of three dimensions, namely, length, breadth and thickness."

But enough of this. You see the design. By making the lectures epitomes of all the great branches of learning, the Masonic Lodge may be made a school in which all men, before the days of public schools and wide-open universities, might acquire knowledge, by which alone they could achieve all things. If all men had knowledge, so Preston thought, all human, all social problems would be solved. With knowledge on which to proceed deductively, human reason would obviate the need of government and of force and an era of perfection would be at hand. But those were the days of endowed schools which were not for the many. The priceless solvent, knowledge, was out of reach of the common run of men who most needed it. Hence to Preston, first and above all else the Masonic order existed to propagate and diffuse knowledge. To this end, therefore, he seized upon the opportunity afforded by the lectures and sought by means of them to develop in an intelligent whole all the knowledge of his day.

Now that knowledge has become too vast to be comprised in any one scheme and too protean to be formulated as to any of its details even for the brief life of a modern text, the defects of such a scheme are obvious enough. That this was Preston's conception, may be shown abundantly from his lectures. For instance:

"Smelling is that sense by which we distinguish odors, the various kinds of which convey different opinions to the mind. Animal and vegetable bodies, and, indeed, most other bodies, while exposed to the air, continually send forth effluvia of vast subtilty, as well in the state of

life and growth, as in the state of fermentation and putrefaction. These effluvia, being drawn into the nostrils along with the air, are the means by which all bodies are smelled."

This bit of eighteenth-century physics, which makes us smile today, is still gravely recited in many of our lodges as if it had some real or some symbolic importance. It means simply that Preston was endeavoring to write a primer of physiology and of physics. He states his theory expressly in these words:

"On the mind all our knowledge must depend; what, therefore, can be a more proper subject for the investigation of Masons ? By anatomical dissection and observation we become acquainted with the body; but it is by the anatomy of the mind alone we discover its powers and principles."

That is: All knowledge depends upon the mind. Hence the Mason should study the mind as the instrument of acquiring knowledge, the one thing needful. Today this seems a narrow and inadequate conception. But the basis of such a philosophy of Masonry is perfectly clear if we remember the man and the time. We must think of these lectures as the work of a printer, the son of an educated father, but taken from school before he was twelve and condemned to pick up what he could from the manuscripts he set up in the shop or by tireless labor at night after a full day's work. We must think of them as the work of a laborer, chiefly self-educated, associated with the great literati of the time whom he came to know through preparing their manuscripts for the press and reading their proofs, and so filled with their enthusiasm for enlightenment in what men thought the

age of reason. We must think of them as the work of one imbued with the cardinal notions of the time--intellectualism, the all-sufficiency of reason, the absolute need of knowledge as the basis on which reason proceeds, and finality.

How, then, does Preston answer the three problems of Masonic philosophy ?

For what does Masonry exist? What is the end and purpose of the order ? Preston would answer: To diffuse light, that is, to spread knowledge among men. This, he might say, is the proximate end. He might agree with Krause that the ultimate purpose is to perfect men -- to make them better, wiser and consequently happier. But the means of achieving this perfection, he would say, is general diffusion of knowledge. Hence, he would say, above all things Masonry exists to promote knowledge; the Mason ought first of all to cultivate his mind, he ought to study the liberal arts and sciences; he ought to become a learned man.

1. What is the relation of Masonry to other human activities? Preston does not answer this question directly anywhere in his writings. But we may gather that he would have said something like this: The state seeks to make men better and happier by preserving order. The church seeks this end by cultivating the moral person and by holding in the background supernatural sanctions. Masonry endeavors to make men better and happier by teaching them and by diffusing knowledge among them. This, bear in mind, was before education of the masses had become a function of the state.
2. How does Masonry seek to achieve its purposes? What are the principles by which it is governed in attaining its end ?

Preston answers that both by symbols and by lectures the Mason is (first) admonished to study and to acquire learning and (second) actually taught a complete system of organized knowledge. We have his own words for both of these ideas. As to the first, in his system both lectures and charges reiterate it. For example: "The study of the liberal arts, that valuable branch of education which tends so effectually to polish and adorn the mind is earnestly recommended to your consideration." Again, notice how he dwells upon the advantages of each art as he expounds it:

"Grammar teaches the proper arrangement of words according to the idiom or dialect of any particular people, and that excellency of pronunciation which enables us to speak or write a language with accuracy, agreeably to reason and correct usage. Rhetoric teaches us to speak copiously and fluently on any subject, not merely with propriety alone, but with all the advantages of force and elegance, wisely contriving to captivate the hearer by strength of argument and beauty of expression, whether it be to entreat and exhort, to admonish or applaud."

As to the second proposition, one example will suffice:

"Tools and implements of architecture are selected by the fraternity to imprint on the memory wise and serious truths."

In other words the purpose even of the symbols is to teach wise and serious truths. The word serious here is significant. It is palpably a hit at those of his brethren who were inclined to be mystics and to dabble in

what Preston regarded as the empty jargon of the hermetic philosophers.

Finally, to show his estimate of what he was doing and hence what, in his view, Masonic lectures should be, he says himself of his Fellowcraft lecture: "This lecture contains a regular system of science [note that science then meant knowledge] demonstrated on the clearest principles and established on the firmest foundation."

One need not say that we cannot accept the Prestonian philosophy of Masonry as sufficient for the Masons of today. Much less can we accept the details or even the general framework of his ambitious scheme to expound all knowledge and set forth a complete outline of a liberal education in three lectures. We need not wonder that Masonic philosophy has made so little headway in Anglo-American Masonry when we reflect that this is what we have been brought up on and that it is all that most Masons ever hear of. It comes with an official sanction that seems to preclude inquiry, and we forget the purpose of it in its obsolete details. But I suspect we do Preston a great injustice in thus preserving the literal terms of the lectures at the expense of their fundamental idea. In his day they did teach-- today they do not. Suppose today a man of Preston's tireless diligence attempted a new set of lectures which should unify knowledge and present its essentials so that the ordinary man could comprehend them. To use Preston's words, suppose lectures were written, as a result of seven years of labor, and the co-operation of a society of critics, which set forth a regular system of modern knowledge demonstrated on the clearest principles and established on the firmest foundation. Suppose, if you will, that this were confined simply to knowledge of Masonry. Would not Preston's real idea (in an age of public schools) be more truly carried than by our

present lip service, and would not his central notion of the lodge as a center of light vindicate itself by its results? Let me give two examples. In Preston's day, there was a general need, from which Preston had suffered, of popular education - of providing the means whereby the common man could acquire knowledge in general. Today there is no less general need of a special kind of knowledge. Society is divided sharply into classes that understand each other none too well and hence are getting wholly out of sympathy. What nobler Masonic lecture could there be than one which took up the fundamenta of social science and undertook to spread a sound knowledge of it among all Masons? Suppose such a lecture was composed, as Preston's lectures were, was tried on by delivery in lodge after lodge, as his were, and after criticism and recasting as a result of years of labor, was taught to all our masters. Would not our lodges diffuse a real light in the community and take a great step forward in their work of making for human perfection?

Again, in spite of what is happening for the moment upon the Continent, this is an era of universality and internationality. The thinking world is tending strongly to insist upon breaking over narrow local boundaries and upon looking at things from a world-wide point of view. Art, science, economics, labor and fraternal organizations, and even sport are tending to become international. The growing frequency of international congresses and conferences upon all manner of subjects emphasizes this breaking of local political bonds. The sociological movement, the world over, is causing men to take a broader and more humane view, is causing them to think more of society and hence more of the world-society, is causing them to focus their vision

less upon the individual, and hence less upon the individual locality.

In this world-wide movement toward universality Masons ought to take the lead. But how much does the busy Mason know, much less think, of the movement for internationality or even the pacifist movement which has been going forward all about him ? Yet every Mason ought to know these things and ought to take them to heart. Every lodge ought to be a center of light from which men go forth filled with new ideas of social justice, cosmopolitan justice and internationality.

Preston of course was wrong--knowledge is not the sole end of Masonry. But in another way Preston was right. Knowledge is one end -- at least one proximate end--and it is not the least of those by which human perfection shall be attained. Preston's mistakes were the mistakes of his century--the mistake of faith in the finality of what was known to that era, and the mistake of regarding correct formal presentation as the one sound method of instruction. But what shall be said of the greater mistake we make today, when we go on reciting his lectures--shorn and abridged till they mean nothing to the hearer--and gravely presenting them as a system of Masonic knowledge ? Bear in mind, he thought of them as presenting a general scheme of knowledge, not as a system of purely Masonic information. If we were governed by his spirit, understood the root idea of his philosophy and had but half his zeal and diligence, surely we could make our lectures and through them our lodges a real force in society. Here indeed, we should encounter the precisians and formalists of whom lodges have always been full, and should be charged with innovation. But Preston was called an innovator. And he was one in the sense that he put new lectures in the place of the old reading of the Gothic

constitutions. Preston encountered the same precisians and the same formalists and wrote our lectures in their despite. I hate to think that all initiative is gone from our order and that no new Preston will arise to take up his conception of Knowledge as an end of the fraternity and present to the Masons of today the knowledge which they ought to possess.

By the author of "Poems of The Temple."

When I was a king and
a mason--
A mason proved and
skilled,
I cleared me ground
for a palace
Such as a king should
build.
I decreed and dug
down to my levels--
Presently, under the
silt,
I came on the wreck
of a palace
Such as a king had
built.
- Kipling.

A part of a builder's
profession
Is digging in ruins of
old,
And his findings, in
rapid succession,
Equip him with
merits untold,
For the builder who
never uncovers
The work of the
centuries past
Is the builder who
never discovers
Construction most
certain to last.

Far back before
history's pages
Did ever their stories
relate
Or the sayings of
eminent sages
Their quota of
learning donate,
We find over lands
without number
Where human
achievements were
felt,
Their ruins profusely
encumber
The sites where the
race had long dwelt.

And the study of
long hidden symbols
Induces the mind to
concede
That their mystical
system resembles
Our own very closely
indeed.
And the builders of
old, laid foundations
Of ethical value so
rare
That their teaching
of mystic creations
With Masonry closely
compare.

And we find them in
cities long buried
When civilization's
decay
O'er the work of the
builder fast hurried
With ruthless
demolishing sway.
In the temples of
Indian ages
And far on the banks

of the Nile
Where the work and
the study of sages
Their wonderful
stories compile.

And remote from all
eastern persuasions
Of all known
connection devoid,
In old Mexico's
ancient creations
They find the same
symbols employed.
'Tis the soul of the
Master revolving
All lands in the
universe through,
With His children of
nature evolving
From light of the old
to the new.

-- Lewis A.
McConnell.