

Inner Quest Lodge #456

Essay: Bro. Steve Humes

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The Point within a Circle

Today we are going to examine one of the most misunderstood symbols in Freemasonry: The circumpunct, or point within a circle. Freemasonry has many, many symbols, all of which mean something within Freemasonry, and to Freemasons. Masonic symbolism evolved over the ages; borrowed from one society to the next, and not always meaning the same thing to the new users. In Freemasonry, this symbol is usually represented with two parallel lines on each side and in some cases a depiction of the volume of sacred law hovering over the top. We are taught from our cipher that this symbol, to include the parallel lines and volume of sacred law represents as follows: The Point representing an individual Brother, the Circle representing the boundary line of his duty to God and Man, beyond which he is never to suffer his passions, prejudices or interests to betray him on any occasion. The two perpendicular parallel lines representing St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, who were perfect parallels in Christianity as well as Masonry; and upon the vertex rests the Book of Holy Scriptures, which points out the whole duty of man. (Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry)

This sounds pretty clear cut and reasonable. However, I don't believe this was, or is, the intended meaning for this symbol. One thing Freemasonry has taught me is that we have not remained constant for over three hundred years. Our ritual, symbolic meanings, and floor work has, for whatever reason morphed, changed, deleted, reinstated, or just plain forgotten. Well intentioned Brethren have tried to add, change, and even strike portions of our symbolic meanings and ritual due to their own ignorance, and in some cases prejudices. One thing we must remember is that we do not own the rights to this symbol. This symbol is much older than

Freemasonry or Western civilization. Our current explanation is right out of Dr. Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, 1917 version, but earlier versions probably have the same explanation. Additionally, Dr. Mackey explains in great detail, over two pages, on what, and where this symbol is used. We are not going to go over the antiquity of this symbol from the Egyptians, Greeks, or Romans since this would take more time than we have tonight. However, is short, we find that it was first used to illustrate fertility, life, reproduction in the ancient rites. The circle being the basic form representing the universe, the point within, the sun. The symbol is also used in mathematical equations, locations on maps, and the corporate logo of Target stores. These are all interesting points, but what does this have to do with Freemasonry and why I don't think this is the correct interpretation for this symbol?

Let's look at the purpose of Freemasonry. Making good men better. We learn from our ritual in the first degree that we came here to learn, to subdue our passions, and improve ourselves in Masonry. We further learn from the interrogatories that Masonry consists of a course of hieroglyphical and moral instruction taught agreeably to ancient usage, by types, emblems and allegorical figures. I like that "ancient usage" part. We will come back to that. In order to make good men better there has to be a change in the candidate, or Brother to become better. We learn of the rough ashlar, and perfect ashlar and how we can speculatively break off the rough corners of ourselves to become better. We learn about working in the quarries of life and how to divide our time equally to follow the tenants of Freemasonry. Will this make good men better? Only if you know where to look and follow the path. What path, and where do you look? Let's try to illustrate these concepts by examining bees. The beehive, the masonic emblem of industry, look what we can accomplish when we work together! Ah, the bees are important, but it's not the bees themselves that are the point, it's what they produce: honey, pure everlasting honey. Honey, or liquid gold is so pure in its raw form that it needs no refrigeration and can last for centuries. Archeologists found honey still edible in Egyptian tombs

over a thousand years old. The bee produces the finest of the insect kingdom. Master Mason Bees! By now you are thoroughly confused as to where I am going with this. How did we start with the point within a circle and end up talking about bees? Bear with me just a little longer, and I promise you will not be disappointed. I said we would come back to that part about Ancient Usage, and now we will. We like that word ancient in Freemasonry, it makes us look like we really know what we are doing, because we have been doing it for a long time. Ancient times were simple, but difficult. Cultures knew only what was within the elements they could see and feel. Earth, Fire, Water, and Air. These elements represented the simplest ideas of man, and in turn shaped their understanding of the world. The most precious of these elements were those that were pure. Original in their natural state, precious stones, silver, gold, iron ore, foods from the earth, corn, wine, oil, etc. Pure commodities uncorrupted by impurities and defects.

These examples in their natural form are not isolated or sitting in the open for anyone to just grab and go. Diamonds are mined from deep in the earth. Men spend their lives searching for gold and silver to satisfy their lust. Fine wine takes years to produce. We learn from the Chamber of Reflection about the term VITRIOL, or visit the interior of the earth, and purifying it, you will find the hidden stone." This is another way of saying "look within yourself for the truth". We are also taught that it is the internal qualifications and not the external that Masonry regards.

So what does any of this have to do with the point within a circle? Very simple, the point within a circle is the ultimate goal and explanation of Freemasonry. More, much more than the square and compass could ever hope to represent. We as freemasons are trying to transform ourselves into better men, to take that rough ashlar, break off the rough corners, visit the interior of ourselves and transform ourselves into a pure element. That element my Brethren is Gold. We are reminded of this at every Tyler's Toast that Rank is but a Guinea Stamp; The man himself the GOLD! Now as for the explanation of Freemasonry, the brotherhood of man, under the fatherhood of god. The two holy Saints John, with the point within a circle represent the

Brotherhood of man, and the Volume of Sacred Law represents the fatherhood of god. Finally, the icing on the cake: What is the alchemical symbol for Gold? A point within a circle! We Brothers are the Gold! We are here to learn, to subdue our passions, and improve ourselves in Freemasonry in order to become a better man, a pure element free of corruption and defect. The Point within a circle is the end state of spiritual alchemy. We, the better man are that which was lost, which now I am in hopes to find with your assistance! Just like bees, we work together to produce men of Gold. Would it not be wonderful if every Freemason was worth his weight in gold and members of our communities referred to Freemasons as "good as gold"? Brethren, we must practice outside the Lodge those great duties inculcated within it to transform ourselves into men of living gold! Honor, integrity, and personal responsibility: The Freemasons of Inner Quest Lodge #456!