

The Lost Keys of Freemasonry: Or, The Secret of Hiram Abiff, by Manly P. Hall
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The Lost Keys of Freemasonry, by Manly P. Hall seeks to tie the modern Masonic Initiations to the Ancient Mysteries of the Egyptians, Persians and other ancient civilizations. According to Mr. Hall, Freemasonry is the continuation of the Ancient Mysteries. It is esoteric in nature; the exoteric only serves to point us towards the esoteric. All of the world's great religions of the past (and present) have had Mystery Schools in which certain deserving individuals gained deeper knowledge and insight to their specific creed. Hall tells us that these are all interrelated and point to the same Light; the one true God, The Creator and Builder.

To bring a little light to the subject; Exoteric refers to knowledge that is outside of, and independent from, a person's experience and is capable of being ascertained by anyone. Esoteric, on the other hand, refers to knowledge that is understood by, or meant for, only the select few who have special knowledge or interest, intended to be revealed only to the initiates of a group. Within Freemasonry, we are already a select few, those that have chosen, and been accepted into our ancient order, removed from the "profane" the non-initiated. But we can go farther, most Freemasons never get past the Exoteric meaning of our symbols and rituals. Hall describes how we can go beyond the surface to break free of the prison of our own making and discover the true transcendent nature of the Craft. The true Initiate (candidate) should be one who realizes that there is life and liberty available through reason and logic and the application of true thought turned toward that light that dimly shines within his self. Many of us may never delve into the esoteric meanings of our ritual, for those that do not this may be, as Hall says, "To the rest of their brethren within or without the lodge their sacred rituals must remain, as Shakespeare might have said, 'Words, words, words.'" (Hall 2006, 66)

The basis of this study is that the spirit of life in Man is killed by three ruffians; thought, desire and action (perverted thought, uncurbed emotions, and destructive action.) When perverted they form a prison, when purified, they are the most glorious powers for good in the world. "These three form the Flaming Triangle which glorifies every living Mason, but when crystallized and perverted they form a triangular prison through which the light cannot shine and the Life is forced to languish in the dim darkness of despair, until man himself through his higher understanding liberates the energies and powers which are indeed the builders and glorifiers of his Father's House." (Hall 2006, 38)

I found this book very interesting and compelling. Hall's writing moves easily through very complex ideas and theory of the basis of modern Freemasonry. Hall takes us through the deeper meanings of the legend of Hiram Abiff and ties it into the Ancient Mysteries that have captured Man's attention for all of recorded history. His graduated steps from the Candidate to the Qualifications of a True Mason are rife with great examples of how we should conduct ourselves as men and Freemasons. Even if you do not buy into the transcendent nature of our ritual, there are lessons to be learned. In one of our lectures we mention "light added to the coming light;" The Lost Keys of Freemasonry by Manly P. Hall is definitely light added to the light already received. I recommend this book to anyone that wants to get a glimpse of what Freemasonry can be if we open our minds, spirits and consciences to the Light.

"Truth is not lost, yet it must be sought for and found." (Hall 2006, 14)

Our reviewer, Brian C. Coffey, is a thirty-year Mason, Past Master and Master of two Lodges of Research. A retired Army Officer, he has worked as a Region Manager of defense contracts supporting our Army. He is a member of three Masonic Lodges and two Masonic Lodges of Research in Georgia as well as the Southern California Research Lodge. He is a 32° KCCH Mason in the Valley of Savannah Scottish Rite.

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