

Masonry And Its Symbols In The Light Of “Thinking And Destiny”

A review by

John Shroeder, PM

Presented to A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research, #1949

On

April 29, 2006

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Masonry And Its Symbols In The Light Of “Thinking And Destiny”

by Harold Waldwin Percival, © 1952 and 1980, 8th ed. 1995,

ISBN 0-911650-07-5, Taylor Publishing Co., Dallas, TX

A brief review by
John Shroeder, PM

Although this slim (67 pages) paperback was last printed posthumously in 1995 by The Word Foundation, Inc. which is dedicated to publishing Percival’s books, I found copies listed on www.abebooks.com, www.half.com, and www.barnesandnoble.com. This book was referenced in a footnote in the review of Albert Pike’s *Esoterika* published in the April issue of “The Working Tools”. That footnote quoted Percival’s statement of the meaning of the right point of the compasses — Rightness, of the left point — Reason and of the right line of the square — Feeling and of the left line — Desire. He says that by means of the square, horizontals can be united with perpendiculars so that feelings and desires are made straight.

It is, if anything, more esoteric and speculative than Pike’s book; some may even prefer the adjective, imaginative. The author says this book was originally to be a chapter in his 1018-page book, *Thinking and Destiny, Being the Science of Man*. In the preface of both books, Percival describes how, at the age of 24 while walking across a street in Chicago, he perceived a blinding flash of light and thereafter was able to understand the secrets of man, of the universe and of man’s place in the universe which he has expounded upon at length in *Thinking and Destiny*. Percival, who died in 1953, was a student of the teachings of Madame Blavatsky and of Theosophy but provides his personal insights in his books.

In this book, Percival discusses esoteric meanings of nearly all of the symbols of the Craft Lodge and the York Rite degrees, which he holds in the highest esteem. While the modern reader, steeped in the tradition of the school of realism, may smile at his theories of the origins of Freemasonry, one with an open mind about the significations of its symbols can gain broader insights into its principles as a result of his explanations. Those explanations include relating the craft symbols and Lodge officer stations to twelve points on a circle which, he says, are best indicated by the 12 points of the zodiac. Thus, in his discussion, the Worshipful Master sits in, the East at Capricorn.

He discusses the three Great Lights as symbols of the Triune Self by which he means, in his terms, a knower self, a thinker self, and a doer self. He says that the degrees of the craft Lodge are taken by the doer self or Entered Apprentice, the thinker self or Fellow Craft, and the knower self or Master Mason, which are finally united into one Triune Self upon exaltation in the Royal Arch Degree.

In reading this book, I was occasionally reminded of an instructor in a course in operations research techniques and gaming theory who once said in a lecture, “While I know of no examples of actual application of this technique to resolve a real-life problem, doesn’t it provide interesting insights?” Some readers may feel that way about this book. The fact that

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it has gone through eight printings, however, is testimony to its popularity among Masonic readers interested in esoteric interpretations of our symbols. The reader who wants to augment his understanding of our Fraternity and who finds fun in many varied facets of Masonic symbol explanations, will enjoy it and may want to read *Thinking and Destiny*. However, I find the latter book to be a difficult read which probably requires some background study in metaphysics.

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