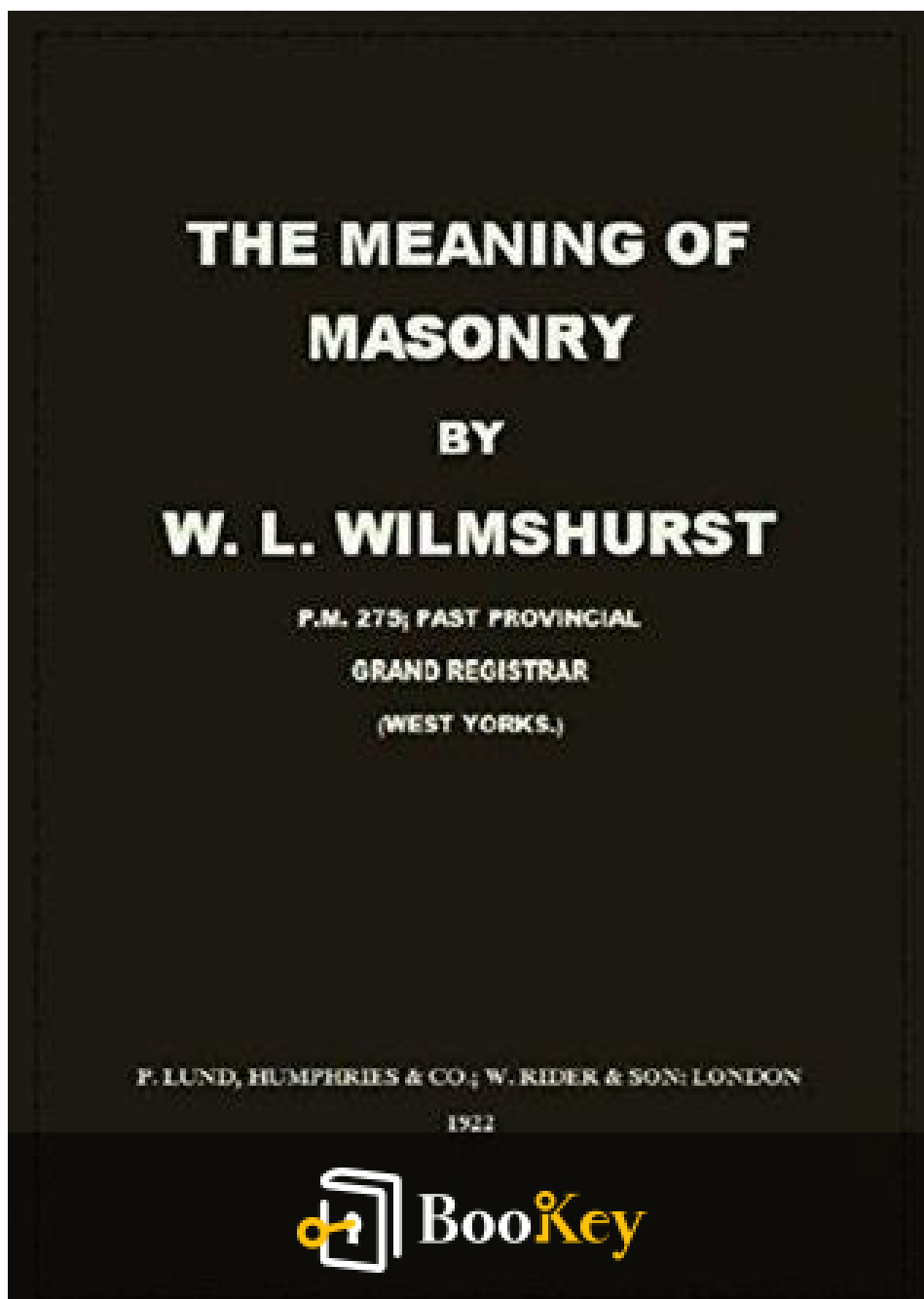


# The Meaning Of Masonry PDF (Limited Copy)

W.L. Wilmshurst



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# **The Meaning Of Masonry Summary**

Exploring the Hidden Depths of Freemasonry and Human Perfection.

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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## About the book

In "The Measure of My Strength," W.L. Wilmshurst embarks on a profound exploration of Freemasonry, presenting a collection of essays that delve into its esoteric dimensions. Central to Wilmshurst's thesis is the idea that Freemasonry represents a journey toward human perfection, reintegrating the wisdom of ancient mystery schools that sought to elevate human consciousness.

The essays navigate a wide spectrum of themes essential to understanding the Masonic Order. Wilmshurst illuminates the nature and potential of Freemasonry, portraying it as not merely a social organization but a transformative path aimed at engendering moral and spiritual growth among its members. He underscores the intricate symbolism that permeates Masonic rituals and teachings, suggesting that these symbols serve as vehicles for deeper philosophical insights and self-discovery.

Moreover, Wilmshurst examines the philosophical underpinnings of Masonic thought, tracing connections to ancient teachings that emphasize the quest for knowledge, virtue, and personal enlightenment. By linking contemporary Masonic practices to the enduring legacy of these teachings, he invites readers to understand the Order as a living embodiment of age-old wisdom.

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Throughout the essays, Wilmshurst effectively engages with complex ideas, urging readers to peel back layers of meaning within Masonic practices and beliefs. His work stands as a testament to the richness of the Masonic tradition, inviting not only Masons but all seekers of truth to engage with its profound lessons on strength, morality, and the pursuit of human excellence.

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## About the author

Walter Leslie Wilmshurst, born in Chichester, was an influential English author and Freemason recognized for his extensive contributions to the field of Freemasonry. His journey into Masonic tradition began in 1889 when he was initiated at the Huddersfield lodge. Over time, he became a prominent legal figure, serving as the president of the Huddersfield Law Society, which attests to his dedication to both his profession and the Masonic community.

Throughout his life, Wilmshurst authored four significant works on Freemasonry, adding to the rich tapestry of Masonic literature. His writings often delved into the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of the Masonic experience, reflecting a deep understanding of its history and principles. Additionally, he contributed articles to *\*The Occult Review\**, a publication known for engaging with the mystical and esoteric aspects of various traditions, including Freemasonry.

In his later years, Wilmshurst continued to serve the community in Huddersfield, where he ultimately passed away, leaving behind a legacy of intellectual exploration and commitment to Freemasonry. His contributions have significantly influenced the understanding of Masonic principles, making him a central figure in the study of this ancient tradition.

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# Chapter 1 Summary: The Deeper Symbolism Of Freemasonry

### Chapter 1 Summary: The Deeper Symbolism of Freemasonry

## Introduction to Freemasonry:

Freemasonry is often misinterpreted by new candidates, who typically perceive it as a mere moral framework adorned with allegories and symbols. While many join for social camaraderie or benefits, there's a crucial distinction: Freemasonry is not fundamentally a religious institution, despite some religious connections. Misunderstandings about its origins, often mistakenly linked to ancient Egyptian or Hebrew practices, demonstrate a lack of awareness about its true nature and contemporary significance.

## Ceremonial Practices and Their Intent:

Meetings of the Masonic lodge primarily focus on rituals and memorization, rather than exploring the deeper meanings embedded within Freemasonry. There exists a growing recognition among some members that Masonry is a pathway to profound understanding and personal growth. This chapter aims to illuminate the Craft's mysteries, encouraging members to embark on their own journeys of discovery, guided by their brethren. Freemasonry operates

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as a sacramental system, where outward ceremonies and symbols veil deeper intellectual and spiritual insights.

### **The Nature of Freemasonic Mysteries:**

Historically, secret societies dedicated to sharing esoteric knowledge have thrived across cultures, passing down wisdom concerning human existence and divine truths. Such teachings were traditionally shared discreetly, ensuring that only those prepared could grasp their significance. Esteemed figures, such as Pythagoras, were initiates in these ancient mysteries. Although the methods of transmission may have changed over time, the essential doctrines have consistently remained intact.

### **Purpose of the Masonic System:**

Freemasonry endeavors toward the spiritual and moral evolution of its members. Its ultimate goal transcends mere social ties, seeking to enlighten individuals about their inner lives. Understanding the unique propositions of Freemasonry, especially the significance of its three degrees, is crucial. These degrees represent transformative stages: initiation, purification, and the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment.

### **The Three Degrees of Masonry:**

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- **The First Degree (Enter Apprentice):** This stage symbolizes entry into the material world, likening candidates to newborns in their initial ignorance. It emphasizes the importance of purification and self-discipline, mirroring the teachings found in many religious sacramental systems.
- **The Second Degree (Fellow Craft):** The focus here shifts to intellectual and spiritual growth. Candidates are encouraged to introspect and investigate the nature of their existence, fostering a deeper understanding of their innate capabilities.
- **The Third Degree (Master Mason):** Often regarded as a metaphor for spiritual rebirth, this degree stresses self-sacrifice and moral integrity. Candidates engage in profound self-reflection, confronting their transformation into enlightened beings who can embody Masonic ideals in their everyday lives.

### **Conclusion: The Essence of Freemasonry:**

Ultimately, Freemasonry serves as a complex metaphor for the human journey, advocating for continual self-improvement and a greater understanding of one's divine potential. Its true mission lies in spiritual evolution and self-realization rather than superficial social accolades. This chapter reinforces the imperative for members to delve into the hidden profundities of their Craft, integrating its teachings into daily life to attain a

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higher state of being and a deeper connection to the essential truths that bind humanity.

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# Chapter 2 Summary: Masonry As A Philosophy

## Masonry as a Philosophy

### Awakening of Masonic Consciousness

As the awareness among Masons evolves, there is a growing recognition that the Craft extends far beyond mere moral teachings. Members are beginning to critically engage with Masonic symbols and doctrines, challenging themselves to delve deeper into their meanings instead of passively accepting them. This shift toward critical thinking marks a significant transformation in the Masonic community, encouraging a more profound exploration of its teachings.

### Depth of Masonic Understanding

Embarking on their Masonic journey, members start as "rough ashlar" stones, symbolizing their initial ignorance, with aspirations to refine themselves into "perfect cubes." This process, however, is gradual, and many individuals remain at a superficial level of understanding. They view Masonry primarily as a social organization rather than appreciating its deeper mission, which is to impart significant knowledge and facilitate genuine spiritual initiations.

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## **The Primary Purpose of Masonry**

The essence of Masonry lies in its role as a conduit for enlightenment, prompting essential existential reflections such as identity, origins, and destiny. While the social and charitable endeavors of the Craft are valuable, it is vital to remember that the spiritual journey should be at its heart. Masons are encouraged to look beyond community engagement and toward the personal quest for truth and understanding.

## **Philosophical and Religious Framework**

At its core, Masonry serves as both a philosophical and religious framework that explores the fundamental questions of human existence. Through its rich allegorical rituals, the Craft seeks to illuminate the lost essence of human nature and offer pathways for reclamation. This mirrors the broader concept of the spiritual "Fall of Man," wherein humanity has strayed from its original purity and must strive to return.

## **The Journey of Self-Discovery**

Advancing through the degrees of Masonry necessitates that candidates cultivate purity of thought and actively pursue self-knowledge. This introspective journey is pivotal, as it reveals their integral role in the

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metaphysical construction of humanity's "true temple," which remains unfinished due to widespread moral and spiritual degradation. The process emphasizes personal responsibility in the collective spiritual journey.

## **Symbolism in Rituals**

Masonic rituals and symbols, such as the two pillars, embody significant truths regarding duality and balance in human experience. Each person is tasked with the sacred duty of reconstructing their spiritual temple, reflecting the universal cosmic order. These symbols serve as constant reminders of the deeper truths that Masons strive to understand and apply in their lives.

## **Legacy of Initiation**

Modern Masonry is depicted as a continuation of ancient initiation traditions that emphasized spiritual enlightenment. Though it is a simplified expression of these rites, it functions as a gateway to profound understanding. To fully grasp the intricate meanings embedded within its teachings, members must commit themselves to the principles and practices of the Craft.

## **Final Reflections on Masonic Responsibility**

Masons are encouraged to recognize the significance of their role within the Craft and to appreciate Masonry as a vital framework for exploring life's

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profound mysteries. By moving past a focus on social interaction, they must embody the essence of Masonic teachings in their everyday lives, ultimately contributing to the collective spiritual architecture of humanity. This call to responsibility challenges each member to engage deeply with their journey, fostering a more enlightened and interconnected community.

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# Chapter 3 Summary: Further Notes On Craft Symbolism

## Chapter 3: Further Notes on Craft Symbolism

### Introduction

In this chapter, we delve into the rich symbolism inherent in Masonry, connecting concepts of knowledge, light, and self-discovery. These symbolic elements are not merely decorative; they form the philosophical backbone of Masonic teachings and the journey toward personal enlightenment.

### Geometry in Masonry

Central to Masonic thought is Geometry, which serves as a metaphor for self-discovery and understanding the human soul. It embodies the ancient wisdom of "Know thyself and thou shalt know the universe and God," encouraging members to explore their essence and connection to the universal truth.

### The Form of the Lodge

The Lodge itself is a powerful symbol, structured as a four-sided building. Each side represents one of the four classical elements: water (associated

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with emotion and intuition), air (linked to thought and intellect), fire (symbolizing will and action), and earth (representing the physical realm). The cardinal directions—East, West, South, and North—correspond to different modes of human consciousness, further enriching the Lodge's symbolism.

## **Symbolism of the Lodge's Elements**

Inside the Lodge, the chequered floor is emblematic of life's dualities, reflecting the coexistence of good and evil, joy and sorrow. The Covering above signifies the ethereal aspect of humanity, contrasting with our material existence. The Apron, worn by Masons, reflects the spiritual condition and personal development of the individual, morphing as one progresses through the Masonic ranks.

## **Positions of the Officers**

Seven Officers preside over the Lodge, each representing a distinct faculty of human consciousness essential for its harmonious operation. These roles range from the divine spirit embodied by the Master to the physical presence of the Outer Guard, illustrating the full spectrum of human nature.

## **Opening and Closing the Lodge**

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The act of opening the Lodge symbolizes the collective aspiration towards higher consciousness. Each degree's opening ritual signifies a step in the journey of understanding and spiritual growth, while closing the Lodge represents a return to ordinary consciousness, grounding members in their everyday lives.

## The Degrees of Masonry

The Masonic journey is divided into three degrees:

- **First Degree (Entered Apprentice):** This stage marks an awakening to higher truths, focusing on personal purification.
- **Second Degree (Fellow-Craft):** Here, members engage in intellectual development and psychological analysis, delving deeper into self-knowledge.
- **Third Degree (Master-Mason):** This final degree represents a symbolic death and a deep surrender to the Divine Principle, marking the completion of the initiation process and a profound entry into spiritual awareness.

## Masonic Apron

The significance of the Apron evolves as Masons advance through the degrees, symbolizing their spiritual condition and growth. Its design and imagery mirror the individual's journey toward spiritual maturation.

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## Conclusion

The chapter concludes with a prayer invoking divine protection and guidance, reinforcing Masonic values centered on the pursuit of enlightenment and the quest for unity with the divine. This ongoing journey emphasizes the importance of self-discovery and the understanding of one's true nature as fundamental aspects of the Masonic experience.

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# Chapter 4: The Holy Royal Arch Of Jerusalem

## Chapter 4 Summary: The Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem

### Overview of the Holy Royal Arch

The Holy Royal Arch stands as the pinnacle of Freemasonry within the English tradition, serving as a critical component of Masonic teachings and principles. It is essential to understand that while Freemasonry encompasses various additional degrees, the core insights are rooted in the foundational degrees that precede the Royal Arch. The higher degrees, while valuable, are often viewed as ancillary and may divert attention from the fundamental essence of the Craft.

### The Process of Regeneration

In the Royal Arch, candidates undergo a transformative process known as regeneration, encapsulated by the phrase "My people having obtained mercy." This phrase symbolizes the elevation of one's spiritual faculties to a higher state of consciousness. The process of regeneration is likened to a "squaring of the circle," illustrating the transition from a mundane existence to one imbued with renewal and purpose.

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## **Significance of the Degrees**

This chapter builds upon the teachings of the Third Degree, underscoring the necessity of experiencing mystical death and subsequent resurrection. The Royal Arch illustrates the candidate's journey to an elevated state of awareness, facilitating an encounter with the divine while still inhabiting a physical form. The initiation is designed to expand human consciousness through rigorous self-discipline and denial of base desires.

## **Mystical Death and Renewal**

A central theme of initiation involves a mystical death that transcends mere physicality, promoting a profound transformation within. This inner death allows individuals to rise above their primal instincts, fostering spiritual advancement and the development of a higher consciousness.

## **Symbolic Ceremonies of Exaltation**

The exaltation ceremony is shrouded in darkness, symbolizing the candidates' move into a new consciousness. During this transition, individuals must maintain a link to their physical existence while delving into their deeper self. The journey necessitates a stance of humility, recognizing that spiritual growth often arises from introspection and surrender.

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## **The Structure of the Chapter**

Entering the Royal Arch reveals a restructured ceremonial framework, emblematic of the internal transformations that candidates have undergone. The shift from "Lodge" to "Chapter" signifies an ascension in consciousness, reflecting a harmonious interplay between the various facets of the self.

## **Symbolism and Allegory**

The officers within the Chapter serve as symbols representing various elements of the inner quest for self-unification and spiritual ascent. The allegory of returning from Babylon highlights the internal turbulence experienced as one liberates themselves from the chaos of material existence, thereby reconstructing a higher self from past encounters and learnings.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Royal Arch Ceremony embodies essential spiritual truths vital for personal transformation. Achieving the state represented in the Royal Arch demands a disciplined journey through the foundational Craft Degrees, reiterating that genuine growth and construction take place not through external edifices but within the soul of the individual. The aspirant's

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path from the confusion of Babylon to the enlightenment of Jerusalem epitomizes the ultimate aim of Masonic initiation, highlighting the profound quest for self-discovery and spiritual awakening.

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# Chapter 5 Summary: Freemasonry In Relation To The Ancient Mysteries

## Chapter 5: Freemasonry in Relation to the Ancient Mysteries

This chapter delves into the historical roots of Freemasonry, highlighting its connections to ancient Mysteries and the spiritual lineage that informs its practices. Many Masons are curious about the Craft's origins, yet existing literature often lacks cohesion, focusing on trivial historical details rather than the deeper spiritual purpose behind these teachings.

Freemasonry, like a multitude of belief systems across various cultures, recognizes common threads in human spirituality. Despite the geographical and temporal separation, civilizations throughout history have embraced essential spiritual concepts originating from an ancient framework known as the Proto-Evangelium, which discusses the soul's relationship with the Divine.

Central to this exploration is the idea of a "fall" from grace that has distanced humanity from the Divine. This moral decline underscores an urgent need for restoration, attainable through disciplined practice and guided methods. Within Freemasonry, this concept of representation suggests that spirituality is intrinsically linked to the nature of humanity

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itself.

Initiation is a pivotal element in this context, serving as a crucial pathway for re-establishing a connection with the Divine and gaining insights into the spiritual essence of life. It transcends mere ritualistic practice, acting as a transformative experience that fosters wisdom through practical application and introspection.

The ancient Mysteries are categorized into Lesser and Greater degrees of initiation. Candidates progressed through these stages, which merged intellectual understanding with a philosophical lifestyle, ultimately seeking spiritual enlightenment. This journey often utilized myth-making as a teaching tool, with significant traditions like the Eleusinian Mysteries symbolizing the soul's journey. In Freemasonry, myths related to figures such as Solomon and Hiram Abiff deliver profound philosophical lessons about existence, morality, and the spiritual path.

Key Masonic symbols, represented by the three pillars—Solomon, Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff—encapsulate fundamental virtues of wisdom, strength, and beauty. These symbols reflect humanity's potential to reconstruct the spiritual temple of the soul.

Furthermore, Freemasonry is presented as a continuation of the wisdom inherent in the ancient Mysteries, which ultimately contributed to the

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foundation of Christianity. Both traditions highlight the significance of regeneration and moral integrity, suggesting that Christianity not only adopted but also further developed the universal truths established by earlier initiatory schools.

Concluding the chapter, there is a call to recognize the lasting legacy of the Mysteries within both Freemasonry and Christianity. Masons are encouraged to reclaim their rich heritage by delving into the deeper meanings embedded in their rituals. The chapter posits that the future of Freemasonry hinges on its members' ability to embrace the transformative teachings and divine legacy rooted in ancient wisdom.

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