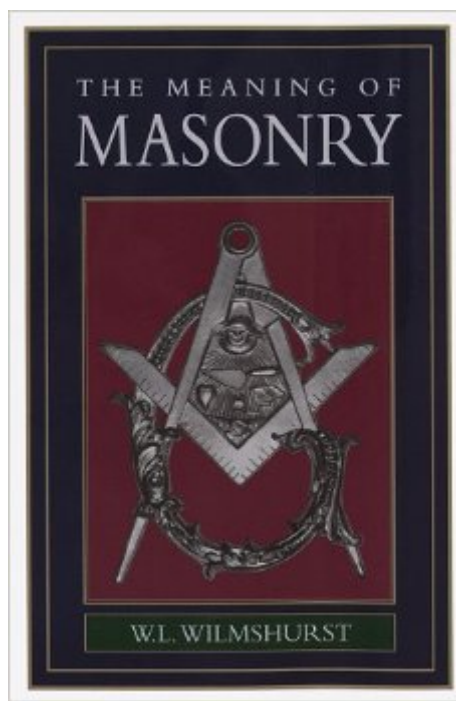


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# The Meaning Of Masonry



## Synopsis

Although the Freemasons number over six million members worldwide, they are a very secretive organization. The general public today thinks of them as a social fraternity like the Rotary Club, but that is hardly the whole truth. By mysterious coincidence, it seems, many Masons have been major figures in modern history. Many of the Founding Fathers of the United States—including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Paul Revere—were Freemasons.

Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Italian freedom fighter, was also one, as were the composers Franz Joseph Haydn and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and writers François Marie Arouet de Voltaire and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. *The Meaning of Masonry* explores the beliefs behind the order, its cryptic rites and symbols, and uncovers its ultimate purpose.

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## Customer Reviews

Originally published nearly a hundred years ago, Wilmhurst's "The Meaning of Masonry" is a collection of essays intended to shed light on a subject often misunderstood -- or altogether unrecognized -- even by Freemasons. As the sharp polarization in Customer Reviews attests, you will either love or hate this slender volume. Where you fall on this spectrum will very much depend on your own preconceived notions regarding the natures of God and Man, and the relationship between the two. The religiously orthodox - of whatever persuasion - will have a tough, tough time with this book. Wilmhurst himself makes it abundantly clear that his target audience is probably quite small and makes no attempt to persuade the incredulous. The main thrust of Wilmhurst's

argument is that Freemasonry is, if not a direct linear descendant, at least a modern (i.e., post 16th century) revival of the ancient Orders of Initiation, also known as the Mystery Schools. Interpreted in this light, the Craft is neither a social club nor a philanthropic organization but, rather, a path to personal spiritual enlightenment. Though he doesn't specifically draw the parallel, Wilmhurst's understanding of Masonry is, in many respects, reminiscent of the ancient Chinese concept of Tao (the Way). In Wilmhurst's view, the modern Masonic rituals that new members are routinely ushered through in the course of a few months (or, worse still, during the infamous "One Day Class") are but a dim recollection of the arduous, but necessary, trials undertaken by those determined to achieve a richer, fuller understanding of life, the universe, and everything. Think "Mysteries-Lite". However, many in 20th (and now, 21st) century Europe and America are openly embarrassed by people and institutions that speak of the Infinite, the Eternal or the True (except in the most banal or hypothetical terms), and, for these folks, even the faint echoes of awe that remain in Masonic ritual are too much. Hence, the Craft's current inordinate emphasis upon philanthropy and good fellowship at the expense of spirituality. In nearly all jurisdictions, Mystic principles and practices are simply glossed over, if addressed at all. Today, many Masons advance through the three degrees in utter ignorance of the rituals' true significance as a transformative experience. As a consequence, many are admitted to the fraternity who are spiritually unprepared and those who are prepared are, more often than not, shortchanged. Wilmhurst's book is a call for Masons to reclaim their Mystic heritage. To those who have made the Royal Art their life's work, Wilmhurst's arguments are self-evident, and become all the more so with each reading. Although it is a short work (only 224 pages) it will provide you with enough material to contemplate for many years to come. The book is, however, not without its shortcomings. First, Wilmhurst is most definitely a man of his Time and Place. It is imperative to keep in mind that this book was first published in 1922 and that most of the material was penned well before that. Wilmhurst's text is written in the upper class dialect of "British" English spoken in the Edwardian Era. Modern American readers will find themselves frequently reaching for the dictionary to decipher unfamiliar spellings and arcane usages. Second, Wilmhurst assumes that the reader has more than a passing familiarity with the ancient Mystery Schools of both the Eastern and Western traditions. It is not necessary that you become an expert in these subjects, but a working knowledge of the major schools and players will aid you tremendously in understanding where Wilmhurst is coming from and what he is proposing. Third, there is little here for the non-Mason. With the few exceptional passages in which he discusses those bits of ritual work peculiar to "British" Masonry, any Mason who has paid even minimal attention during the degree rituals will instantly recognize what Wilmhurst alludes to. However, the non-Mason is largely

out of luck. On the upside, if there is little in this book for the non-Mason, there is still less for the New World Order/Illuminati/Bilderbergers/Council on Foreign Relations/Anti-Christ/UFOs/Black Helicopters conspiracy theorist. Dogmatic Christians may be put off by Wilmhurst's interpretation of Christianity-as-Mystery-School. Non-Christians won't care much for his unquestioned acceptance of Christ as the Word Incarnate. This book is not an easy read and it is definitely not for everyone. But, for the Freemason of a questioning nature, "The Meaning of Masonry" is the Mother Lode - perhaps the most lucid exposition on the subject in print today.

People are always saying that masons don't believe in God & Christ ... that it is a Pagan Group. This Book shows & tells how the masonic order & Christianity feed off each other. The search for "light" in masonry is nothing but the search for light in Christianity. He shows how the two are similar as in when Hiram Abiff died between two thieves as they beat him and afterwards the Temple he started was finished ... Christ died between two thieves & afterwards his Temple (or church) was finished. Also that the ritual of the 3rd degree is a reference to death & rebirth, just as Christ died & was reborn. He makes many references like this. I always knew there had to be more to masonry than just a few stories/parables ... Mr. Wilmhurst being worried of what Masonry was turning into ( a social club), wrote this book for those of us who want to know the truth & not just to read another flashy opinion/interpretation someone has. Most Masons can't tell you what Masonry really is! This is a book you will keep & read over and over and over. Did you know that the apron of an EA with its 5 points represents the 5 wounds of Christ & the 5 points of fellowship? ... PLUS some other really interesting stuff. Again, best book I have read in years.

No more veiled allusions to a Deeper Meaning of Masonry. No more Hints and Insinuations. No more references to obscure books, that can only be found through unfamiliar publishers. No more "I know more than you, but I cannot tell you about it." No more pre-1717 cover-up. Here it is: everything you ever wanted to know about Masonry, but were afraid to ask.... Or, wanted to ask--but, couldn't get anyone to talk about it. This is the book you have been Searching for & the book that will revitalize The Craft. Wilmhurst tells it like it is, after giving many Lectures amongst Masons of the world. He offers us some Gold, instead-of a Treasure Map. If all the other Masonic books left you feeling unsatiated and thirsty for more Knowledge, this book will quench your thirst and provide ample revitalization in the future. Wilmhurst believes a man should enter The Craft with no blinders or misgivings about his Work. He believes in offering the Truths he has discovered to all those seeking The Light. Anyone contemplating the idea of petitioning The Lodge should read

this book...and, everyone within The Lodge should give Wilmshurst's message a respectful perusal during a quiet afternoon.

Written in the 1920's, the writer interprets Masonic ritual and mythology in a deeply mystical light, positing the Craft as a spiritual system. Its style can appear dated and overly tinged with the theosophical influences of its era, but it rewards in the end. For those masons who prefer not to see the Craft in such a way, this book can be startling, but for those who are truly "speculative" it provides a sane and informed perspective. If you view Masonry simply as an ethical dining club, this is not for you! Otherwise, an important classic of its type.

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