

WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

Book Review - May 2021

Myth, Magick, and Masonry: Occult Perspectives In Freemasonry

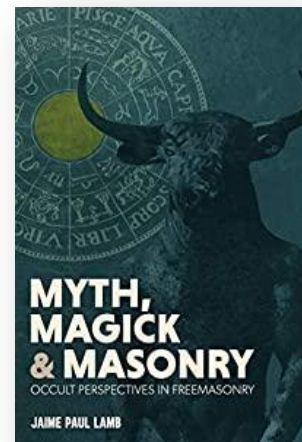
By Jaime Paul Lamb
The Laudable Pursuit Press 2018

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What is the first image that comes to your mind when you hear the word “occult?” A bearded and robed individual reading from dusty tomes in a hearth-lit room? A wizard or witch seated in a magic circle summoning dark spirits? Linda Blair in the Exorcist? Certainly, the depictions of the occult in our films, novels, and music have perpetuated these negative stereotypes. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the word occult is defined as secret, mysterious, or concealed. It is to these adjectives that Brother Jaimie Paul Lamb is referring in this informative volume. Throughout the text, he sets out to reinforce that the institution of Freemasonry is a living repository of the knowledge of the Ancient Mystery Schools and that the Western Esoteric Tradition and Freemasonry are not mutually exclusive, but are, in fact, strange co-dependent bedfellows. As an active Freemason and practicing ceremonial magician, the author is positioned to bring to light the commonalities between these traditions.

The book is organized into four distinct sections, describing the relationships between Freemasonry and ceremonial magic, astrology, mythology, and Mithraism. In the introduction, it is stated that these were essays written over a five-year period for primarily Masonic audiences, and Lamb has organized them into a surprisingly cohesive single work.

In the chapter covering ceremonial magic, Lamb begins by carefully defining Freemasonry and ceremonial “magick,” the latter spelled in this manner to distinguish the ceremonial and ritual magic from that of the illusionists and stage magicians. He then explains that modern ceremonial magick (commonly represented by the Hermetic Order of the



Golden Dawn) borrows much of its ritual and structure from the time-honored fraternity of Freemasonry (the founders – William Robert Woodman, William Wynn Wescott, and Samuel Liddell Mathers - were Freemasons), while Freemasonry borrows many of its esoteric symbols and lessons from the ancient mystery traditions. The chapter includes a comprehensive analysis of the similarities of the signs, tokens, ceremonies, and words between the two Orders without revealing the secrets to the non-Masonic audience.

Clearly inspired by Brown's *Stellar Theology and Masonic Astronomy*, Lamb reminds us of the importance of the apparent circuits of the sun to the lives of the ancients, as solar motions were integral to sleep-wake cycles, agriculture, religion, and even the existence of life itself. Knowledge of astronomy, and the ability to use this knowledge to accurately predict the changing of seasons and celestial events such as eclipses allowed those who were privy to these secrets to wield significant power over the uninitiated. The Mystery Schools were the reputed repositories of this knowledge, which, according to tradition, was then transmitted through the ages, even unto the modern fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons. This section also includes an exceptional introduction to the zodiac and its recognizable and more obscure influences upon the symbology and ceremonies of Craft Masonry and The Holy Royal Arch.

Finally, we are guided through an examination of the vast contributions of mythology, in particular the Greek and Roman pantheons, to our current practices in Freemasonry. Special attention is given to Mithraism and its solar allegories. Mithraism was a mystery religion descended from Zoroastrianism and favored by Roman soldiers and was a major competitor to early Christianity. Lamb nicely elucidates the universality of the principles and precepts taught and perpetuated by the ancient mythologic traditions, many of which are taught in our modern religious and philosophical practices. Particularly captivating are the correlations between mythologic figures and our lodge arrangement, jewels, and modes of recognition. As the mystery schools were initiatic orders based on various mythologic systems, it is unsurprising that we find a multitude of correspondences between these mythologic traditions and the Masonic degrees.

Although this work is not an exhaustive compendium of arcane knowledge, nor does it claim to be one, its 156 pages contain a highly digestible introduction to the juxtaposition of magic, mythology, astronomy, and Freemasonry. Lamb meticulously cites his sources; therefore, this book and its impressive bibliography can act as a powerful springboard for further Masonic and esoteric study. *Myth, Magic, and Masonry: Occult Perspectives in Freemasonry* is a welcome addition to a growing body of work dedicated to those Masons interested in the “spooky” aspects of Masonry. I recommend this book to all students of Masonic esotericism or to anyone who simply desires to dive beneath the surface of the Masonic rituals of William Preston, Thomas Smith Webb, and Jeremy Cross to gaze upon the hidden, or occult, influences upon our beloved institution.

Myth, Magick, and Masonry: Occult Perspectives in Freemasonry by Jaime Paul Lamb is available on amazon.com and other on-line book sellers.