



**Internet Lodge 9659**  
**United Grand Lodge of England**  
**Province of East Lancashire**  
<http://internet.lodge.org.uk>

**Short Papers Competition 2007**

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**Paper 02/2007**

**Title**

**Smoke and Mirrors**

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We are familiar with the statement that Freemasonry is a science veiled in allegory and explained by symbols yet the average Freemason is unable to penetrate that veil and is unable to interpret these allegories.

Why are the lessons and teachings of Freemasonry explained by symbols when most Masons cannot name but few of them and even then are unable to explain those they actually **can** name?

Why do we not explain the allegories and symbols in simple English that all may read and understand? There are probably many explanations for this, but here are a few thoughts of my own.

Most of Freemasonry's secrets are contained in the symbols and allegories related in its rituals. We do of course also have passwords and signs. Many non-Masons may believe that they know most of these, but such knowledge is of little use or value other than enabling them to attempt to pass themselves off as Masons.

It would also be a strange if the profane had little or no idea of the contents of our rituals as such details and information have been broadcast to the world in thousands of publications and on thousands of websites.

Yet, despite our aims and purposes being revealed to the world in thousands of ways, I have yet to hear one of the profane, including Dan Brown, attempting to interpret our allegories and symbols.

Veiling our secrets in allegory and concealing them in symbols keeps them from the profane, somewhat like the magician's smoke and mirrors. Unfortunately however, this system also keeps them from the Masons who are, of course, entitled to know them.

This perhaps reveals one of Freemasonry's greatest secrets in that ***the secrets of Freemasonry are only meant for those who diligently search for them.*** This requires study of our allegories and symbols for that is the only method by which you may know their true meaning; the only method of penetrating the smoke and avoiding the reflective deceptions of the mirrors.

The new Mason may hesitate to interpret an allegory or a symbol, in case he errs in his interpretation, **but** he need not hesitate for he will have lots of company, even from the veteran Masons. In any event, who is there to say that his understanding or interpretation is wrong? There is no one single interpretation of any symbol that can be truly said to be the only correct one.

I venture to suggest that the only correct interpretation so far as an individual brother is concerned **is the one he himself finds.** This becomes to him one of the secrets of Freemasonry. None of the profane may discover that secret because it is locked away in the heart of the individual brother.

Masonic allegories and symbols present the fullest opportunity for serious reflection during a life-time of study. Such reflection and study are the only methods by which the real secrets of Freemasonry may come into the possession of anyone.

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