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"CREATION, THE CREATOR, THE CREATOR'S PLAN."

A SERMON

PREACHED IN ST. MATTHEW'S CHURCH, WALSALL,

*On Friday, August 18th, 1854,*

Before the Provincial Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Staffordshire,

BY BROTHER THE

REV. WILLIAM H. WRIGHT, B.A.,

Incumbent of St. Luke's, Hanley.

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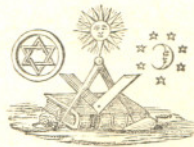
PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPLAIN.

S.W. MENTORIA LODGE AND CHAPLAIN TO THE ETRUSCAN AND PORTLAND LODGES.

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1854.

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL LIEUTENANT COLONEL VERNON, Provincial  
Grand Master, THE MOST WORSHIPFUL THOMAS WARD, D.P.G. Master,  
and the WORSHIPFUL MASTERS of the St. Matthew's, MENTURIA, ETRUSCAN  
and PORTLAND LODGES, this SERMON is affectionately dedicated.

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## PREFACE.

The former Sermon which I had the honor to preach before the P. O. Lodge was addressed to Master Masons, the present is intended for Fellow Crafts.

It suggests some explanations or hints as to the hidden meaning of certain portions of our mysteries, and may perchance lead them to investigate the same more fully, and thus elucidate a considerable amount of valuable thought and reflection upon their part.

Our ancient and beautiful system has been attacked by an Infidel Writer, who places it in the same category with Judaism and Christianity. The supposed stigma which he would cast upon us turns of course to the great praise of our order.

In the present discourse it has been my endeavour to assign to the second degree its proper place in the argument against Infidelity.

W. H. W.

“CREATION, THE CREATOR, THE  
CREATOR’S PLAN.”

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*“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”—Ps. LXXiii, 3 and 4 v.*

It is the misfortune of our situation that our views in all things become too narrow and circumscribed; and when we *do* look around us we think it too great a labour to take a grand and expansive view of all that is to be beheld. We are contented to see all things from our own “molehill” our own limited and unexpanded sphere of personal observation; and this is the reason why we insensibly conform and bow in opinion to the world, to society, to some eminent personage, to those around us, until at last our minds become shaped and moulded in conformity with the sentiments of our next door neighbour. And the immediate effect of this must necessarily be to degrade the man and to lower his estimate of God.

Now the Psalm before us is an example of that more wholesome and salutary state of mind which is better adapted to the existence of one who is created for a lofty and ennobling destiny. The Psalmist rapt in the all absorbing feeling of extatic devotion calls science to his aid, and taking us through the fields of space, far, far away, in the almost immeasurable distance, and showing there the displays of creative power, which to an inconceivable extent yield up their tribute of attestation to the Creator's might and skill, he humbles us with the overwhelming perception of the greatness of God and the nothingness of man; and then returning from those far off radiant orbs to this planet, the earth, man's dwelling place, to this solitary unit, amidst the innumerable glorious multitude, and pointing to the bounty of God which strews its fields, the tree yielding fruit, the herb growing from the soil, and the ears of corn bending in their rich weight to the brink of the very waters whose inundations fertilize the land, pointing, we say, to that bounty which stores it mines, which fills its waters as all so many witnesses of the Creator's regard, he generalizes upon the idea, and thus peoples, and thus furnishes, and thus supplies every planet which rolls in systems far distant, round many and many a distant sun, and searching through the chambers of this world for the varied manifestations of the Creator's bounty—those chambers wherein the name of God's goodness is fully emblazoned amidst the plentiful provision which he has laid up to be the wages of man's toil—he is so overpowered by their diverse and unceasing display, that humbled with the attributes of God's power *as beheld afar*, and exalted with the abundant indications of his rich love *as manifested so nigh*, he utters the attestation in which gratitude

so richly blends with adoring admiration: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Lord what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

In this selfsame spirit our ancient brethren always regarded learning as the handmaiden of religion. The gentle nurse pointing the child of God to the hidden and the far off glories of his heavenly Father's dominion. Modern science sometimes searches vainly with inquisitive gaze, if that it may find one solitary spot where God does not dwell; they on the contrary stood upon a fixed and decided principle of morality, making the liberal arts and sciences their study, in order that they might discover additional inducements to the performance of what I may be allowed to term their duty as Freeasons, and estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty Creator.

God's ancient people were shepherds, or for the most part led a pastoral life, and wandering over trackless wilds in search of pasture for their flocks, they were obliged to cultivate geometry, the mathematical studies, and especially the science of astronomy, in order to shape their course over untravelled regions; and moreover they preserved in their families those primeval records, and those moral instructions which had been handed down to them from Adam the first parent of the human race. And thus the most ancient learning consisted not as in our times, in the knowledge of languages living or dead, not in mere outward accomplishments, but in the knowledge and practice of moral truth and science: this is the most useful kind

of learning, and we rejoice that modern education is returning again to this its ancient and most useful channel.

Now they had no letters, no means of recording that which they thus communicated, and therefore they incorporated morality and religion with science. Thus for example, a single point represented a duty. A line being a flowing point represented a line of conduct. A surface being a flowing line represented a continued system of action, and a solid being a flowing surface represented the whole series of systems of conduct which make up the deeds of a lifetime, and the form and density and magnitude of the solid itself would represent that decree of the great Judge of all who would be determined by these qualities; whether as a lively stone the character would be fitted to fill a place in the heavenly temple above. As for their knowledge of the earth and the heavens, as mathematical science enabled them with accuracy to decipher the characters upon the skies, the sacred traditions which they possessed served as a key to interpret their mysterious revelations, and the lesson which was written everywhere in stars and systems was thus interpreted by these shepherd sages—"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." Thus our ancient brethren discovered the sacred symbol, and were led to exclaim "Thou O God has set thy glory above the heavens."

If the heavens were considered merely for science sake, if merely from motives of curiosity, as an assemblage of so many pieces of mechanism, the beholder might as well consider the relative brilliancy of so many lights, the relative distances of so



many lamps, the relative time of so many clocks, but if he would behold them with profit to himself he must consider them with reference to the Creator's attributes, his wisdom and skill, his power and goodness, his strength and beauty.

Let us dwell a little upon the sublime doctrine set forth in the text, which displays (I) God's glory; (II) his goodness, and let us supplicate the Lord of the universe to shed the rays of heavenly influence upon us, to enlighten us in the paths of virtue and science.

I.—God's glory in the heavens. Observe 1st—the heavens display a peopled vastness inconceivable. The universe a collection of suns and planets. Consider our own system alone. Here we have revolving round the sun no less than seventeen planets, many of these accompanied by their attendant moons which serve to illuminate their night. These planets trace their circuit around the sun in periods which vary according to their magnitude, their density and their distance, ranging from 3 months to 104 years. And what think you is the distance from the sun of the remotest planet in our system? No less than three thousand millions of miles.

We are so accustomed to enumerate by thousands, we scarcely understand millions, far less thousands of millions. To bring that number within our accustomed scope—if anything could pass from the sun to Neptune, the farthest planet in our system, and perform the transit without let or hindrance at the regular speed of 40 miles an hour, it would take no less than 85,000

years to perform the journey. We have no idea of the greatness even of our own system. But when we go beyond our system even imagination is distanced with the stupendous display of the vastness of God's works. What is the distance of the nearest fixed star? Why to take a familiar illustration—*sound*, which moves at the rate of 13 miles in a single minute, to pass from this earth to the nearest star would take more than a million of years. Now remember that that star is equally remote from other stars, and that there are others beyond that again equally distant, which even the telescope can scarcely track, and you have an idea, however bewildering, of the vastness of Jehovah's temple, the amplitude of that immensity which he alone governs and directs. Who can count the number of those clustering orbs? each star a sun, each sun the centre of a system of worlds like our own. And yet these stars are so innumerable that amidst the "star dust" with which the vault of heaven is fretted, even the telescope fails to single out the individual units which make up the splendid galaxy. O yield we our attestation to the glory of that great being "who telleth the number of the stars and calleth them all by their names." Observe 2ndly—in what harmony and order the heavenly bodies revolve in their cycles. The motion of one body must of necessity tend to displace all the rest, so that without the nicest adjustment of opposite forces, the nicest counterpoise for every displacement, the nicest admeasurement whereby force is expanded and diminished in the distance of space, star would conflict with star in its rolling, and every such conflict would tend to the disruption or the order of heaven's harmony. Who set them their appointed bounds? who laid down the chart for their mysterious journey? what

glorious being taught the star to walk in beauty through the mazy fields of night ?

“These are *thy* glorious works parent of good  
 Almighty ! Thine this universal frame,  
 Thus wondrous fair : Thyself how wondrous then !  
 Unspeakable ; Whose sit’st above these heav’ns  
 To us invisible or dimly seen  
 In these thy lowest works ; yet these declare  
 Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.”

3rdly—Strange it is that the very fixity of the heavenly bodies which awoke the admiring gratitude of David—“They continue thus day according to thine ordinance for all things serve thee,” should be perverted into an argument supporting the supposition that all creation is eternal, and therefore creation is God. Howbeit God has not left himself without witness. Temporary stars have been beheld now and then sufficient in number to demonstrate that the work of creative power is still going on. The language of infidelity is contrary to fact, that “since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the foundation of the world.” This world itself has undergone a succession of new creations, new orders of creatures have arisen and in time disappeared, before man or beast were created, as the geologist can clearly prove ; new stars have been discovered in heaven, and these temporary stars also appearing and disappearing, if they answer no other end, at any rate demonstrate that the skill of the Creator who formed all suns and systems is unchanged, that still “he can create and he destroy.” Nay, we

have it recorded in history, and confirmed in tradition wide spread as the world itself, that the God of grace has again, and again, demonstrated that he is also the same God who created all things, for interrupting the order of nature he made a way through the Red Sea waves for his redeemed to pass over; nay, he changed the very course of the stars at the prayer of his servant Joshua, continuing the light of day until he had completed the overthrow of his enemies; causing the sun to stay his course when Joshua spake with authority in his name—"Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon." To deny this is to falsify all recorded history. This fact proves that the God of the Bible is also the creator and governor of the universe, and thus we join in the triumphant exhortation of the Psalmist "Ascribe ye glory to the God of Israel, his worship and strength is in the clouds." They are God's heavens, the work of his fingers. Well may the Psalmist exclaim "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

II.—But in the 2nd place we learn from hence God's goodness: "Lord what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" What is man? In the original it is *Enosh* or man the wretched, man the incurably sick, to denote his miserable state owing to the fall, and his own apostasy and sin. When I consider thy heavens "studded with stars unutterably bright;" each star the centre of so many worlds whose sinless tenantry resound thy praises far and wide;

What is sinful man that thou shouldest spare his life, that thou shouldest prolong his days, that thou shouldest load him with favours, and crown him with glory and honour? What is man that thou favourest him in his fallen estate? What is man that thou visitest him with thy salvation?

Brethren you and I, if we examine our own hearts before the God of grace and creation, must perceive how often we have rebelled against him in thought, word, and deed, by violating the sanctity of every physical law, by stifling every warning of conscience when its still small voice spoke prophet-like from God, by neglecting the many alarms which his Providence has given us, trifling with that amount of revelation which we have almost unconsciously acquired, and by neglecting to become acquainted with those fuller revelations of himself which he has vouchsafed, of his mind and will, his purposes, requirements, and promises in the volume of the sacred law, remembering this, let us enquire what is man, and answer the interrogation according as we discover man to be in our own identity and experience. What is man? A wretched sinner from the womb, having no beauty to recommend him to God, no help, no hope without God's free grace, and only able to utter in astonishment and gratitude "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Man is cared for by God, but God is not in his thoughts; he is amply endowed by supreme love with every blessing which gives comfort to life, and yet he makes no return to the author and giver of all. Such is man by nature. Now with what is man visited? visited with salvation, visited by the Son of God who put off his glory, and came in lowliness to

endure man's sorrow and to die his death, visited by the sanctifying spirit, and made a new creation, with new desires and affections, new pursuits, and ends, and objects; I say, that to create a new creature, a creature who shall increase in holiness and attain to full stature in the Redeemer, and that too out of such hopeless, nay, such negative and antagonistic materials is a work which brings even more honour to God than originally to have created the universe, and to have formed unfallen man from the earth which sin had not yet defiled. Great as was the glory which he derived from the heavens the work of his fingers, the moon and the stars which he has ordained, that glory was eclipsed in his work of redemption, God may be said to have emptied himself in order that that work might be complete, and it is so complete in those who are born again to its sanctifying influences, and its justifying and saving and glorifying end, that it shall come to pass that in another state of existence Redeemed man shall rise to so high and exalted a rank amongst created intelligences that an apostle who has gazed upon heaven's glories can exclaim "Shall we not judge angels?"

Brethren, if there be some, who, possessed of the wonderful intelligence which astronomy imparts, are yet unwilling to bow in lowly adoration to the universal God, let us not treat them as loathed and despised beings, but pity them that they have not found God in the Bible where we ourselves discovered him. The heavens alone do not reveal a covenant God, but only confirm that knowledge which we all receive from tradition or from the volume of the Sacred Law. No it is only the grace of God in Christ Jesus which can enlighten the mind and fill the soul with

the conviction which love only can produce. "In Christ only is light, and in him alone is the life of man." His grace must do all for man, or nothing. Behold even the moon by night! It has no power to emit light although it shineth and lights the heavens above and the land and sea beneath: yet the moon in itself cannot emit a single ray of light, cannot give forth a single spark to illuminate our darkness, any more than yonder stone could do. The truth is, although it seem a paradox, that the sun shines at night by reflection upon earth's attendant moon, and without the sun's rays it would be by night but a black spot in the heavens, a blot in creation. So man by nature has not a ray of light within his soul, unless it be reflected from the grace of Christ the Sun of righteousness. How is this? hear the language of the book of Job:—"How then can man be justified with God, or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? behold even to the moon and it shineth not, yea the stars are not pure in his sight, how much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man that is a worm?" Apart from the Redeemer whom they reject, how shall therefore fallen man shine in righteousness? they are *here* a little space and then gone, and belonging to no organised system, and rejecting the guidance of Almighty God, to what shall we compare them? to Wandering stars to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

Brethren, the sentiments which I have uttered are I believe in accordance with the volume of the Sacred Law, and there is not one of your number who has made any progress in Freemasonry who will not at once recognize them as echoing the

sentiments which are inculcated in the Lodge. Masonry is a grand parable, and he that hath eyes may see its interpretation. I would not cherish Masonry, I would not take part in the details of Lodge business, unless I were persuaded that amidst the many who offer their tribute to the Redeemer of the world, Masonry however retiring, however unobtrusive in its character, is yet ready with its attestations. And as the wise men from the east presented to the new born Saviour their offerings of gold and frankincense and myrrh, so Masonry brings forth from its store of ancient tradition its votive gift to lay at the Redeemer's feet. Masonry if it be as ancient as it appears is in my judgement prophetic; and even if it be less ancient, it is orthodox in its tendencies. It is almost the only common platform on which all the worshippers of Jehovah can meet and act upon a moral basis, and whilst it promotes peace and good will, whilst it promotes a system of friendship and fraternity founded upon principles the most moral in their tendency, and the most sacred in their obligation, it exercises its beneficial influence upon society at large, by inculcating obedience to moral convictions, and by diminishing the acerbity of feeling which even religious controversy engenders, so that oftentimes I have witnessed that the soft answer which turneth away wrath, and the liberality of sentiment which judges without bias, and deliberates without prejudice, has been nothing more or less than a voice from the Lodge. And I must say that they who employ its assemblies for the purposes of mere hilarity and excess are guilty of degrading Masonry, and acting in direct violation of its precepts. Masonry interferes not with our creeds, it does not bias our opinions, it sets forth the volume of the Sacred Law



as the unerring standard of truth and justice, it puts no false glosses or interpretations upon its sentiments, but charges a man to seek for the light and to act up to the light that is in him, it sets up no specious philosophy to invalidate the testimony of God's word, but only prizes learning as far as it promotes the knowledge and service of God, and in short *as* I do believe that the gospel contains the truth, the only truth and nothing but the truth; so I do believe that deep and genuine Freemasonry prepares the way for its reception, by encouraging a desire and love of the principle of truth itself.

In conclusion, brethren, let me exhort you that whatever knowledge of God you have acquired, whatever grace of his Spirit you have experienced, may lead you on to seek to know him more, and having your soul athirst for God, yes for the living God, to enquire earnestly of your heart and spirit "When shall I come to appear before God?"

You bear in your nature a splendid jewel, an immortal soul; encourage its heavenly aspirings, encourage its sacred powers. The rough diamond may be precious, but unless it be cut and prepared, unless its surface be nicely polished and its facets most accurately adjusted, it cannot reflect the light, so that precious jewel, the soul, must be prepared for its everlasting destiny, and the "preparation of the heart is from above," from the grace-imparted Spirit of the Eternal. This alone can prepare it as a gem in the diadem of the Redeemer in the day when he "maketh up his jewels."

God in creation has formed his work in us in strength, giving us those lofty faculties which cannot be satisfied with the boundaries of time. God in grace is willing to establish this work in us by sanctifying those faculties, and thus to give stability to the fabric of man's nature and character, fitting and preparing him to be a temple for his Spirit's indwelling.

*Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.*

