



BOROSLEY

ABIEY

CHAPTER

No.

4495.

- ORATION -

DELIVERED ON THE OCCASION

OF THE

CONSECRATION

OF

BORDESLEY ABBEY CHAPTER

NO. 4495.

BY

EXC. COMP. RALPH BENNETT, P.Prov. G. Treas.

CONSECRATING J.

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KING'S HEATH MASONIC TEMPLE

MAY 7th 1951.

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Companions,

The form of Masonic procedure which governs the Consecration of a Holy Royal Arch Chapter, dictates that at this point there shall be delivered by the Consecrating Third Principal, an Oration on the Nature and Purposes of the Institution. In attempting in all humility to carry out my duty therefore, I would ask you forthwith to adjust your minds to what I conceive to be the interpretation of the term "Oration" which is appropriate to the occasion. I do not aspire to any outstanding degree of rhetoric, or fluency of phrasing, and as I endeavour to engage your attention for a short space - while our thoughts concentrate on what is being done here this day - I would commend to your consideration that the definition of the word "Oration" for us is in the nature of an act of prayer or entreaty. In such a frame of heart and mind then, let us proceed.

In any attempt to assess the "nature and purposes of our Order" we are inevitably and immediately brought face to face with the very opening words of the VSL which lies open before us in all our Ceremonies:-

"In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth,  
And the earth was without form, and void,  
And darkness was on the face of the deep,  
And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters,  
And God said: Let there be Light. And there was Light."

These words of deep awe and significance - these strikingly dominant phrases - are familiar to each one of us, not only as the first words of our precious record of God's revealed will and word, but as marking a climax in the dramatic sequence of events which we experience in the unfolding of every Ceremony of Exaltation in which we take part. They are, indeed, the fundamental expression of the belief which each one of us has affirmed, prior to our reception into the Body of Freemasonry.

In the absence of such belief, our desire to participate in the joys and privileges of the Craft could never have been fulfilled.

Let us, for a few moments, take our minds back to that peculiar moment when we were received into Freemasonry. It was, in a sense, a rebirth. We were, so to speak, recalled to that point of our existence where we were devoid of material value; innocent; defenceless; and with unformed but receptive minds. Of one thing alone were we sure - of our belief in the existence of God Almighty, a God ever ready to show his love for the human race, and constantly at our side to preserve us from danger whenever His Name is invoked. We learned, early after our entry into the Order, that Freemasons adopt a "peculiar system of morality", implying at once a duty to our God, our neighbour, and ourselves. We were instructed as to the great virtues of Charity and Brotherhood; of Secrecy; of fidelity to all our undertakings; of loyalty to our King and Country.

At our passing to the Second Degree, under circumstances more serene, we are enabled to pursue our advancement in Masonic Knowledge. We contemplate the blessing of intellect with which God has endowed us, and in a spirit of gratitude we resolve to further our researches into the Hidden Mysteries of Nature and Science, which God will reveal to us. We learn, and re-inforce in our minds that the just and upright intentions of a Freemason are a pattern to all mankind; that he deals squarely with all people; and that however exalted may be his station in life, he will never forget that we are all sprung from the same stock, and will ultimately share the same hope when the Grand Leveller of the Universe assesses our actions through life, and sees fit to call us forward.

On being raised to the S.D.M.M, we are again reminded, (if such were necessary) of the paramount importance to the Freemason of fidelity and secrecy. Our ritual assumes a more historical and dramatic character, and points out, with

particular emphasis on the central figure in the scene, that the just and virtuous man would rather suffer death than betray the noble principles which have up to now inspired him. Indeed, we are brought, in symbolical manner, to the closing hour of our existence on this earth. We are told that, having been conducted through the intricate windings of this mortal life, we are now instructed how to die.

Companions: If we reflect carefully on this context, we shall perceive that the whole teaching is an emphasis of the characteristics which ought to possess and govern us while we live, - justice, truth, fidelity, honour, and virtue; that our lives, thus schooled, are merely a phase which is the stepping-stone into the next stage of our eternal existence. Let us then rather feel that the Third Degree in Freemasonry indicates the manner in which we all should strive to live, so that in the good time of the Great Architect, we may in quiet, firm, and unshakeable faith and confidence approach our last moment here below.

Even so, we Masons in our onward and upward course, are constantly seeking further revelation. We have thus far been immersed in the study and knowledge of ourselves, assisted by divine principles and teachings. Henceforward, in the completion of the Master Mason's degree, we become participators in that culmination which we denominate the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem. We now concentrate on a mysticism and symbolism which leads us to a fuller knowledge of the nature and essence of God Almighty. The sensations we have hitherto experienced are to recede into insignificance as we gain a closer appreciation of Him who is the Great I Am, who was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall remain - The Eternal Creator - all creatures being subject to His mighty will and power.

"In the beginning - " ... ..

Mankind has ever speculated on the process by which

the Universe and this Earth of ours evolved. In the remote distance of past countless millions of years, a picture arises of a flaming, gaseous mass, gradually subsiding and solidifying, until the stage is reached where life as we know it becomes possible. For further countless centuries, this life was to evolve slowly through the vegetable and animal stages. And none can deny that the All-seeing Eye of the Most High sought and determined the moment when the development of our early forbears was ripe for the gift of intellect, and that by the expressed essence of creation, man became a living soul. If, within the limits of our finite minds, we are perplexed in reconciling such a process with the creative act, let us recall, that time as we mortals assess it, is no factor of consideration for One whose existence is eternal, and that the progress of this world and its inhabitants from its most remote origin is in fact the developed creative act and intention of the Almighty, to whom these countless millions of years are but as an instant. In such belief do we ~~men~~ and Masons today acknowledge that God created the earth, and that he has ordered man to dwell upon it.

From that far away moment when man first became possessed of intellect, he has retained a fundamental recognition of his subjection to an over-riding power which rules and guides his destiny. In remote times, he expressed this in the worship of the elements, of idols, and in many and varied conceptions of the form of God. Civilisations have risen and decayed, but throughout, there has been the accepted necessity for the recognition and worship of the higher power. We believe that the Sacred Volume, on which we found our Order, hands down to us and our posterity the record of the holy will and word of the Almighty as revealed in these later ages. We learn and perceive that God is continually and increasingly revealing Himself and His purpose, and we are plainly aware of a constantly advancing pattern of existence and worship of God Almighty which we endeavour in our Supreme Order to foster and promote.

It is, Companions, in this culmination of our Masonic experience, The Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch, that we enter upon what we may contemplate as our Holy of Holies. At once, we find ourselves in a sphere of sanctity which is inevitable as we reflect on a nearer approach to knowledge of the Almighty. We are reminded of God's Divine guidance of His chosen people. Of His revelation of Himself, of His awful power, yet of His readiness to forgive notwithstanding constant falling from grace. We reflect on the fortunes and misfortunes of ancient civilisations, on the splendours of ancient courts; on the return of God's chosen people from their periods of captivity; on their construction of the magnificent temples to the honour and glory of the Most High. And in our Chapters today, we incorporate a resemblance of the Holy Altar of those temples, whereupon in all humility we may receive that Sacred and Mystic Name which none may dare lightly to pronounce.

Where we have previously moralised on the symbolism of the level and perpendicular, we now gaze for the first time upon the Circle and Triangle, and in due time we aspire to imprint on our hearts the lesson they convey.

Companions, as each one of us endeavours to assess the nature and purpose of our Order, let us return to a spirit of entreaty and prayer. Let us anchor our thoughts to the Circle which is the emblem of Eternity. Let us reflect upon the Sacred Triangle, and let us reverence the name of the Great I Am. Let us ever bear in mind those characters at the angles of the Triangle, whose interpretation is of such exceeding importance. May we never forget that we are the beloved children of our FATHER LORD; that our creation and continued existence are essentially the express purpose of Him, who was from the beginning, WED LORD; and that by diligent application of the tenets and principles which our order promulgates, we may recognise in ourselves the ineffable essence SPIRIT LORD.

As Craft Masons, we are required to make a daily advancement in Masonic Knowledge, which is indeed, and in fact, a conscious knowledge of ourselves, and of those virtues which render us acceptable to our Divine Creator.

As Royal Arch Masons, we are permitted to advance further in the fuller intimacy of the holiness and eternal essence of God. So let the guiding thought of each Royal Arch Mason be one of unending progress towards that perfection which appertains to God alone.

Forward to love, wisdom, beauty, strength, awe,  
 worship, and reverence,

Forward to a closer at-onement with God Almighty,

Forward; ever forward, into the Light.

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