

Freemasonry —

Its Meaning and Purpose.

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INITIATION - ITS MEANING AND PURPOSE

I introduce this address with a quotation.

"When we undertake to make a man a Mason and incidentally take his initiation fee and his Lodge subscription we enter into a definite and very solemn Contract. That contract cannot be fulfilled by the mere performance of three successive ceremonies. The whole of our Ritual implies that real teaching shall be given."

This is an abstract from an address delivered by a former Pro. Grand Master, the late Lord Amphil and it was in the course of this same address that he publicised the famous dictum "What is needed is more Masonry in Men, not more men in Masonry." But alas! there are many Lodges whose time is so fully occupied making members that they fail to find time to impart instruction in order to make masons.

A knowledge of the Ritual is essential for the perpetuation of our Masonic Ceremonies but of far greater importance is an understanding of its meaning since this ensures that Freemasonry itself shall not only survive as a Moral Force but shall take its rightful place, and play its part, in the ethics of the world.

Throughout Life the shadow is oftentimes mistaken for the substance; a church service mistaken for Religion, Masonic Ritual for Freemasonry. Outward forms and ceremonies are, in themselves of importance but it is the Lesson they impart, their guidance to Morality - their deep and hidden meanings which are of real importance.

A man may render a "match box" performance of our Ritual, may be well versed in Masonic lore, may have received high Masonic honours and yet be as far from being a Mason as he was before his Initiation. Let us frankly admit that there are many such in the World.

and so I plead

In a previous address I ~~pleaded~~ for "More Masonry in Man" and ~~developed the theme~~ that a more rational approach and a better realization of his duties by the Sponsor to his Candidate and likewise an appreciation of the obligation a Lodge owes to its Initiates would go far to achieve the object we all have in view and thus hasten the day when Freemasonry would make its impact upon the Morality of the World.

~~And now, in the belief that Knowledge begets understanding I offer this further treatise on Initiation - its meaning and purpose in the hope of helping the Initiate to become a Mason.~~

When is a man a Mason? - In the words of Fort Newton, when he can look out over the rivers, the hills and the far horizon with a profound sense of his own littleness in the vast scheme of things, and yet have faith, hope and courage.

When he knows that down in his heart every man is as noble, as vile, as divine, as diabolic, and as lonely as himself, and seeks to know, to forgive and to love his fellow man.

When he knows how to sympathise with men in their sorrows, yes, even in their sins - knowing that each man fights a hard fight against many odds.

When he can look into the wayside puddle and see something beyond mud and into the face of the most forlorn fellow mortal and see something beyond sin.

When he has kept faith with himself, with his fellow man, with his God; in his hand a Sword for Evil, in his heart a bit of a song.

Glad to live but not afraid to die. Such a man has found the real secret of Masonry, and the one which it is trying to give to all the World.

Accepting this, as indeed we must, it has to be admitted that the Ceremony of Initiation never has, nor ever will make a man a mason. - It confers upon a Candidate the priceless privilege of being a member of our great Order and provides him with the opportunity - with the Key which, if used wisely, will open the door of Knowledge. The mere possession of the Key achieves nothing, but if the Novitiate can but use that Key, then we will have achieved our purpose, we will have made a man a mason.

Before, however, developing this theme, I remind you that Freemasonry is a peculiar system of Morality. Examined closely we learn that Freemasonry, in an especial manner not common to others, is a system of Ethics, of Morality.

But it is veiled in allegory, concealed from view by words which have meanings other than the apparent; and illustrated by Symbols. Picture language is employed to convey these meanings.

Many erudite masons, both by the spoken and the written word dedicate their lives to the advancement of our Masonic Education, but Brethren, I venture to assert that nowhere will such profound wealth of knowledge be obtained as that which can be found concealed in our Ritual.

This, our Ritual becomes a casket, beautiful in itself and demanding great and loving care.

Within this Casket are Treasures - priceless and beyond compare. These are available to all who have eyes to see, a heart to feel and ears to hear and it is to these that the Key of Initiation is given.

A Candidate initiated according to the Scottish rite is addressed in the following words by the Wor. Master:

"My particular object in thus addressing you is to prevent you leaving the Lodge with any of the false impressions and mistaken ideas frequently entertained by newly made Masons.

We would not have you go away with the idea that you have been fooled, or that any single portion of the Ceremony is meaningless or introduced for the mere purpose of mystification. Freemasonry is truly a system of Morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols and the most apparently trivial incident, both in your preparation and initiation, has its deep and hidden meaning."

Admirable as this is, it cannot claim to solve the mystification of the Candidate or to advance his Masonic knowledge. Indeed, it could not be otherwise since this inlightenment is the duty of the Master, a duty which, sad to relate, is honoured all too often more in the breach than in the observance.

Without elucidation, the preparation for, and even the Ceremony of Initiation itself, loses much of its especial quality - but an explanation fails in its objective if it ignores the emblematical with its symbolism, since symbolism is the very soul of Freemasonry.

But an understanding can only be gained through an appreciation of Freemasonry - an appreciation which can only be obtained from a study of the History of Freemasonry from its earliest days, and the conditions then existant.

The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man is the fundamental principle of all religions and has existed from time immemorial. This doctrine being the Grand Principle of Masonry it can justly be claimed that Freemasonry also has existed from Time Immemorial. Thus, the origin of Freemasonry, and the time of its birth are shrouded in mystery.

The History of Freemasonry is an interesting and absorbing subject. Was the first Grand Master of Freemasonry King Solomon or as some claim, did we originate some 600,000 years ago?

Whatever may be dim in our history, and in the very nature of things much must remain hidden, this much can be said with certainty. ~~Much of our Ceremonial can be recognised in the rites of Australian aborigines, in those of the D'huses and of African natives and in others.~~

Masonic symbols are found in all quarters of the Globe - in Egypt, which is accepted by many as the Cradle of our Birth, in Babylon and in Mexico, to mention but a few.

We find Masonic Philosophy, from remote ages, in many lands.

Extracts from the Chinese classics show plainly that the working tools of the speculative Mason were used to inculcate Moral Truths. ^{FOR EXAMPLE} It was Confucious who expounded the moral code which forms one of the basic principles of Freemasonry.

"Do unto others as you would have them do to you."

This, then, can be stated with confidence, whatever may be doubtful in our origin, however dim is our history, all eras are recognisable and all periods have influenced both our Mode of Preparation and our Ceremonial.

Upon examination two constructions can be placed upon the Preparation of a Candidate for his Initiation. Firstly, the Historical or Traditional. Originally these had also practical purpose. It is true that no longer are these applicable to present day conditions but they are pertinent to our consideration and are jealously guarded as evidence of our antiquity.

And so we come to the preparation of a Candidate, D -- of M --. We are told that the building of the Temple inspired such awe and reverence that no m -- was employed in its construction, lest any jarring noise should disturb its sanctity. Our forbears erected a Sacred Edifice, we are engaged upon the task of building a spiritual Temple and we, emulating the operative Masons, divest the Candidate of m --.

Now, M -- s are divided into two groups - the base and the rare. The base could be, indeed they were, used as weapons of offence so that, in the days of old, it can readily be conceded that it was a wise precaution to deprive a candidate of m -- . The rare are of intrinsic value and could be used as Currency. But an initiate is also deprived of m -- y. This was explained in the course of the ceremony when, poor and penniless, a candidate was made to realize that the most important use of m -- y is in the cause of others. The objective therefore, is to impress upon the Initiate what has been described as the distinguishing characteristic of a Freemason's heart - charity. But, let there be no misunderstanding, Masonic charity does not consist of merely the doling out of alms. Masonic Charity requires an unselfish frame of mind, the Spirit which induces the act of Benevolence must actuate all relationships between men, and is of more importance than the Act and if it emanates from the heart then, indeed, it can be said with Truth that it blesses him who gives.

Masonic Charity forgives - and judges not the failures and shortcomings of others, ever remembering that, as we judge so shall we be judged.

The H -- W -- . The practical purpose of this will be readily appreciated if it be remembered that Freemasonry is restricted to the selected few, to those whose morality we believe to be built on the solid foundation of Belief in the G.A.O.T.U. - to those who, being influenced by its lofty ideals see in Freemasonry an opportunity of service to their fellow men. This necessarily demands that he is a free man, that there are no bonds, whether domestic, social or Religious which bind him or restrict his freedom.

He is in a state of d --- with respect to the Secrets of Masonry, so does he remain, in a physical state until he has taken a S.O. undertaking to keep secret and inviolate whatever may be imparted to him.

But, had he found himself unable to do so, or had he some ulterior motive in view, he could have been led from

the Lodge Room and no very great harm would have been done.

The symbolism of the H -- W -- is of great importance, ~~but is more appropriate to the Ceremony of Initiation and it is in that section of this address I will elaborate upon its significance.~~ **AND I WILL DEAL THAT ON SOME FUTURE OCCASION.**

A Candidate's R - a - is made b ---. In medieval times the b -- a - was evidence of peaceful intention, shewing, as it did, that no weapon was concealed. Even today a gentleman removes his glove before performing that act of friendship - shaking hands.

As also a Candidate's R -- h -- and forearm rests upon the V.S.L. whilst taking his O. it must of necessity, be b --- d.

Be it also noted that the very first action of the Master is to grasp the b --- d h -- d of the Candidate with his own b --- h --- in token of Brotherhood.

The b ---- d b ---- t. This proves the absence of chain mail or protective of any kind and is further evidence of his peaceful intention. It is a relic of ancient practice. Likewise it satisfies the brethren that the Candidate is of male sex.

But to accept this as the entire explanation is to ignore the symbolism of the C ---- s, pointed directly to the h ---- t. Brethren, I regard this as amongst the brightest of the gems to be found in our ~~Gasket.~~ **RITUAL**

The initiate declares that it is in his heart he first desired to become a mason. It is through the heart we pray that henceforth he will act towards all men, and all men towards each other, so that the World may be transformed into a Temple of Peace. It is by his heart that a mason should be guided in his Conduct towards his fellow man so that "Man's inhumanity to man" may no longer be a reproach.

It is upon the heart we desire to impress the Principle of Freemasonry - Brotherly Love and Charity.

In the Seventh Section of the Lectures it is stated that "A true man of honour will not content himself with a literal discharge of the duties of a man and a Citizen; he raises and dignifies them to magnanimity; he gives, when he may with propriety refuse; and forgives when he may with justice resent. The whole of his Conduct is guided by the noblest sentiments of his own unvitiated heart."

Brethren, the b --- b --- t may with justification be considered the kernel of the Preparation of a Candidate for Initiation.

The Allegory is completed by the fact that it is the C ---- s the Candidate holds in his hand, one p --- t presented to his n -- l -- breast, the secret chamber of his heart, the Dwelling of the Divine Spirit, and the Circle which is circumscribed by the C ----- s is all embracing, being without beginning or end. But here we are entering the realm of the Esoteric.

B --- d K ---. By the bended K ---, at the altar, the Initiate portrays the humility with which he invokes the Help and Support of the G.A.O.T.U.

By the act of kneeling, in an attitude of reverence before God, spiritually naked, the candidate asks for aid to erect, within himself, a great Temple - a Temple of Love and Peace.

~~In the lectures we are told that the first point in Freemasonry is the left k --- b --- d and b -- t.~~

R. H. S --- d. The Candidate is standing upon ground consecrated to Holy Purpose and taking a Solemn Obligation. Even today shoes are removed by all who enter

a Mosque or a sacred Edifice of the East, also it was the custom of the ancient Hebrew to seal a bargain by removing a shoe. This is a further example of antiquity in Freemasonry.

C --- T. In addition to the reason given during the Ceremony we are informed that in former days the C. T. placed about the neck was a sign of subjection and obedience. History books relate that when Calais was captured by the English a number of leading Citizens were surrendered with halters about their necks in token of submission. In the operative lodges of medieval times the apprentice had a C. T. about his neck during the whole seven years of his apprenticeship - this was emblematical of his status. It also served to remind him to keep within hailing distance and to give his attention to his duties when summoned to do so.

Before proceeding to the next part of this address may I express the hope that I have satisfied you that far from being archaic and meaningless the Preparation of a candidate is not only intelligible, but logical, and has a definite purpose.

INITIATION - ITS MEANING AND PURPOSEPART TWO

The Ceremony.

"Seek and ye shall find
 Ask and ye shall receive
 Knock and it shall be opened unto you."

Initiation into Freemasonry by an Elaborate Ritual is evidence of the seriousness of our purpose and is, in itself of Prime Importance. Our Ritual, as at present practiced was adopted by G. L. in the year 1813. Why, it may be asked is admission into Freemasonry by an elaborate Ritual?

In the Prestonian Lecture of 1956 a Ritual is defined as a set of fixed ceremonies which address themselves to the human spirit, solely through the imagination. It remains true today, as it ever has been, that it is best through his imagination that a deep and lasting impression can be made upon man.

The Philosophy, which Masonry teaches, is in signs and symbols; in Pictures and Parables.

Our Ceremonies are ^{Really} "Morality Plays". From time immemorial it has been customary to portray Moral Truths by this means. Indeed, of this, Holy Writ is a great example.

The origin of Freemasonry is shrouded in mystery, so likewise is that of our Lodges.

Traces of well defined ancestry have been found in the Roman Collegia, the Comacines and the Guilds of Medieval England.

As at present constituted our Lodges date back

little more than 200 years and are the successors of operative Guilds formed by masons engaged in building castles and abbeys. These men were, in the main, illiterates, and developed a system of signs, tokens, and words, which they jealously guarded, since it was by these that they recognised each other, and protected their Craft.

These operative Masons were builders in stone; the speculative or accepted were builders in character, in Morality, in Spirit. And now I quote Fort Newton: "Why did soldiers, scholars, antiquarians, clergymen, lawyers and even members of the nobility ask to be accepted as members of the order of Free Masons. Wherefore their interest in the order. What attracted them as far back as the year 1600 and earlier. There can be only one explanation; that these men saw in Masonry a deposit of the high and simple Wisdom of old, preserved in tradition and taught in Symbols - and this it was that they sought to bring to light, turning history into allegory, and legend into drama, making it a teacher of wise and beautiful Truth."

Initiation into Freemasonry is of serious import. In some rites a Candidate is clothed in sack cloth and isolated in a darkened room for a period, for meditation and prayer. Thus he attunes his spirit to accord with the Obligation he is about to undertake. And his prayer - prayer to his God for His Blessing upon what he is about to do - praying humbly that he may be granted the wit to understand - that it may be given to him to become a Brother to others who will be brothers to him - a good Mason.

Based as it is, upon the V.S.L., Freemasonry, although not a religion, is deeply religious. This is exemplified by the very large and important part prayer plays in our proceedings. Each degree, each ceremony has its own especial prayer.

It is of significance that our first action upon the admission of a Candidate is to invoke the Blessing of Heaven upon our proceedings. Particularly be it noted that

it is we who pray - pray that he may become a true and faithful Brother.

Admission by the I. G. is in response to t -- K ---s and a declaration that the Candidate relies upon the help of God, being Free and of good Report.

The J. W. and the S. W. are represented as being the Guardians of our inner Conclave, and figuratively are situated at the Entrance and the Summit of the Winding Staircase. They also demand assurances as did the I. G. His admission into a world in which he is to learn and practice Morality and Charity - into this New Life Freemasonry in a state of D ---- is emblematical of his birth into this world and impresses upon him two of our basic principles, the Equality of Man - all are equal but all are equally dependent upon each other; rich and poor, high and low - men of diverse creeds, parties, interests and occupations - meet in mutual respect and real regard - titles, ranks and riches are forgotten - the humblest brother is held in regard equal to the brother who has attained the highest rung of the ladder of fortune. "We meet upon the level and part upon the square."

A man is received into Masonry in d --- helpless but not hopeless: for the helping hand of a brother is at his side, ready to guide, direct and comfort him. Better than any definition this action of Deacons exemplifies the meaning of Freemasonry - ever to be at the service of a brother, anxious and willing to comfort and succour him - or his - should the need arise.

from S or N

Every step taken whether of ~~S. N.~~, approach or perambulation begins with the L. foot. In ancient Mythology the Preserver is usually depicted as trampling with his L. foot on the Serpent of Evil or some other monster, symbolising sin or ignorance.

Advancement from W. to E. was by irregular s --- s, irregular from the circumstance of not knowing whither he was going; the implication being that up to this moment his

wanderings had been vicarious. Be it noted that as he approaches the Altar, his steps lengthen, his approach hastens.

Now the O. is taken and sealed upon the V.S.L. and the H --- W --- are removed. Physical L --- is now granted him, symbolising as it does the Light of Knowledge replacing the Darkness of Ignorance.

And the first sight is that of the V.S.I. and the S. and C. - the three great Emblematical Lights in Freemasonry which henceforth should be the guide of all his actions.

The S --- T --- and W --- of this degree were then fully explained. These are means of recognition and are merely incidental.

The proceedings in the N. E. Corner are of fundamental importance, ~~indeed, so important are they, that I repeat the explanation I gave in a former address "More Masonry in Men".~~

During the ceremony of Initiation we are reminded that it is customary at the erection of stately and superb edifices to lay a foundation stone and it is upon this basis that the whole structure rests. It requires but little imagination to visualise the care and attention operative masons devoted to ensure that the material selected should be perfect in its character, solid and sound in texture, and yet yielding to the influence of the working tools wielded by the expert workman, until finally, well-tried, trued, and squared, it becomes perfect in its parts. Just as the stability of the whole structure will ultimately be dependant upon the quality of that one foundation stone - and the care that has been taken in preparing it - so will the ultimate future of the Lodge depend upon the character of its candidates.

Indeed the hope is expressed that the Candidate may prove to be of such character that he will raise a super-structure of equal or superior merit for the Free and Accepted Masons; that by his efforts a symbolical edifice, allegorical

to the operative structure, shall be raised with lasting benefit to the world at large, and his Masonic Brethren in particular.

Likewise a Mason is exhorted ever to remember the moment he is received into Masonry, poor and penniless, and cheerfully embrace the opportunity of affording help to those in need. But there is a further implication - never be profligate, whether it be with Money, Time, or Effort, lest in so doing the ultimate effect may be to the detriment of himself or Connections.

There is much more that needs explanation but I must content myself with a brief reference to the Apron. From the earliest times an apron has been used in connection with religious Ceremonial. It is made of lambskin - a symbol of sacrifice, an emblem of Purity, and a badge of Dedication.

And now, a word of caution and of advice. Often will a young mason feel sad and disappointed that in the world there are so many who have pledged allegiance to Freemasonry but fail to put into practice its Principles and Tenets.

Even within ones own ^{LODGE} ~~LODGE~~ one meets men who fail to live up to our teachings. Let him, however, remember that Freemasonry is a human institution. Human beings are frail creatures - human nature very complex.

Man is unpredictable - his reactions impossible to fore-tell.

Two men through prison bars looked.

One saw mud, the other stars.

INITIATION - ITS MEANING AND PURPOSE.PART THREE

- (a) Secrecy.
- (b) The Reward of a Mason.

Secrecy.

There is much confusion of thought as to whether Freemasonry is a secret society - our Ceremonials, our forms, our P.W. and Gs are secret. The times and places of our meetings, and even our Ritual is published, and certainly our Purpose is well known; indeed at his installation the Master is exhorted to "charge them (his brethren) to practise out of the Lodge those duties they have been taught in it, and by virtuous, amiable, and discreet conduct to prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our ancient institution.

Secrecy divides and separates but Freemasonry would unite the whole World into one happy Family.

The charge after Initiation, which portrays in language unequalled for its beauty, the duties we owe to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves, would be a travesty in a secret society.

In Section vi of Lecture 1 it is stated:

"By the exercise of Brotherly Love, we are taught to regard the whole human species as one family, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, created by one Almighty Being, and sent into the world for the aid, support, and protection of each other. On this principle Masonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion, and by its dictates conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance."

Although a Ritual can be obtainable by a non-mason,

it is only given to a Freemason to understand its deep and hidden meanings. - I have already likened our Ritual to a Casket, beautiful in itself and demanding great and loving care.

Now, our Ritual has recurring references to Reward and Punishment. I therefore sum up this address with my interpretation of the Reward of a Mason. I do this the more readily since this is a phase of Freemasonry which has never received the consideration its importance demands, and which I trust will help the young mason to appreciate the meaning and purpose of the Organisation of which he has been privileged to become a member.

Our forebears, the operative masons, were builders in stone - 'they laboured to erect those magnificent edifices which aided man in his quest for God'. They erected sacred edifices according to the plans and designs of architects from whom they duly received their wages. Now, we are told that they entered the Middle Chamber to receive their wages. But, Brethren, it is utterly inconceivable that operative masons would ever be allowed to enter ^{APART FROM THE FACT THAT THERE WERE NO ONE} the Middle Chamber, nor is it believable that the Holy of Holies would be defiled by being put to such usage. Indeed, elsewhere we are informed that none but the High Priest was allowed to enter this Sacred Chamber.

We Speculative Masons are builders in Character, in Morality, and in Spirit. 'The site of our labours is the world itself, in its entire length and breadth. Our purpose is to construct a universe which shall rebound to the glory of God, and the happiness of man'. We are indeed engaged upon the task of building a Spiritual Temple. We work under the direction of the Great Architect of the Universe, and our Ritual informs us that He will Reward or Punish us as we have obeyed or disregarded His Divine Commands.

But the Principles and Tenets of Freemasonry teach us to do good because it is good, and eschew evil because it is evil.

Thus the doctrine of Reward and Punishment is one to which a Freemason cannot subscribe.

Another apparent anomaly. Quite out of context Joshua is immortalised by our Ritual. He, we are told, fought the battles of the Lord, and prayed fervently to the Almighty to continue the Light of day that he might complete the overthrow of His enemies.

But, Brethren, FORCE is absolutely foreign to the Principles and Teachings of Freemasonry.

Upon examination, however, far from being contradictory, these apparent anomalies prove to be complementary. Associated with the Winding Staircase, which, I remind you, was the means of access to the Inner Chamber, they are Allegorical; indeed, they may justly be claimed to be amongst the most Priceless Treasures to be found in our Casket.

A winding staircase is one in which the summit is never seen - and until the end of the journey the goal is hidden from our view. And as we continue on our way we know not what will be the reward for our labour and toil.

Is the summit near or far? - And what awaits us upon our arrival.

Brethren, what a perfect analogy to Life itself. The past is behind us - irrevocably past.

The future - the wisest of us knows not when our journey is ordained to end.

Only the present is ours - hence the exhortation to "perform your allotted task whilst it is yet day."

What is our allotted task?

It is the task for which Joshua prayed for time

to complete. To overcome his enemies - which are likewise ours, and indeed those of all Mankind.

The evil that in all men do dwell - our own baser selves which would prevent fulfilment of the duties we owe to God, to our neighbour and to ourselves.

Thus, buoyed with Hope, fortified by Faith, with a heart purified from every baneful and malignant passion; by the practice of Brotherly Love and Charity do we continue upon our journey. So, emulating Joshua of old, we pray fervently to the Almighty for His Aid; pray that we may be allowed to reach our goal - the summit where, in the fulness of Time we ultimately receive our Reward; in the Grand Lodge above where the World's Great Architect lives and reigns for ever.

I sum up the purpose of initiation by the words of the following verse.

If I can stop one heart from breaking
 I shall not have lived in vain;
 If I can ease one life the aching
 or cool one pain;
 Or help one fainting robin
 into his nest again
 I shall not have lived in vain.
