

PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF NORTH WALES

AN ORATION

Delivered by

E. Comp. Rev. E. Harries Jones, B.A. P.G.St.B.,

Third Provincial Grand Principal,

at the

CENTENARY CONVOCATION

of the

PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF

ROYAL ARCH MASONS OF NORTH WALES,

on the

29th NOVEMBER, 1989.

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The late Sir Clough Williams Ellis who designed the Portmeirion Mallanate Village had this to say about Architecture. "We must," he said, "cherish the past, adorn the present and construct the future."

And as we celebrate the centenary of the foundation of our Provincial Royal Arch Chapter, we can look back with pride on our noble heritage and cherish the past.

With the presence here today of the M.E. Pro First Grand Principal accompanied by so many distinguished guests from other Provinces, we feel that we are truly adorning the present.

And with a revised ritual at our disposal at the beginning of our second century, we are constructing the future on very firm foundations.

We know that we are constructing the future in the face of a great deal of opposition - an opposition based on groundless suspicion, extravagant innuendoes and not a little jealousy - for nobody kicks a dead horse!

"There was an old man of Moldavia  
Who hated masonic behaviour  
He concocted such a lot  
Of sheet Tommy-rot  
He must be obsessed with a mania"

But be it mania or not, it still constitutes an opposition - but some of us, M.E., thrive on opposition. The builders of the Second Temple on their return from Babylon faced opposition but they continued to build - with trowel in one hand and weapon in the other.

Listen to the account in the book of Nehemiah. "Everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon. For the builders, everyone had his sword girded by his side, and so builded".

And we shall continue to build in spite of hostile opposition but we must also be on our guard. All organisations fall short of their ideals and Freemasonry is no exception because we are building with the raw, unpredictable material of our human nature. My Sceptre reminds me that "perfection is not given to man - perfect holiness belongeth only to the Lord."

But with the aid of the T. & L.G.M.H., we shall continue to build the temple of humanity, cherishing the past, adorning the present and constructing the future on very firm foundations.

We welcome the changes in our ritual especially the major change, namely, that of restoring the Eternal Jehovah to his rightful place - in the very centre of our ceremonies, and if, in the very centre of our ceremonies, then in the very centre of our lives, too. And that was the discovery which the sojourners made and were anxious to convey to the Sanhedrim. They discovered that there can only be one God in the Universe, just as there can only be one centre to a circle. And that was a revolutionary discovery in the history of religion.

Before the Captivity in Babylon, the Hebrews believed that you could only worship Jehovah on Jehovah's territory. All gods were geographically limited. Other countries, other gods.

After the Captivity, Jehovah became the Universal God who was as real to them in Babylon as He had been in Jerusalem. So when they returned to Jerusalem after his Captivity, they came with the knowledge that as they set to work on the foundations of the Second Temple, they could declare - "it is found". The genuine secret of a Master Mason is found. The point within the circle from which every part of the circumference is equidistant is not only found, but named. The President of the Committee of the Board of General Purposes put it very aptly. I quote: "The essence of the Royal Arch is reverence for God dramatised by the discovery of His Sacred Name in the vault along with His Holy Will and Word symbolized by the scroll bearing the first words of the V.S.L."

I want to emphasise and underline the words 'dramatised' and 'symbolised'.

Remember that we are dealing all the time with symbolic masonry - a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.

What the ritual is trying to teach us very simply is reverence for the T. & L.G.M.H.

It is a commentary on the well-known phrase in the Lord's Prayer - "Hallowed by Thy Name".

If my oration sounds like a sermon I make no apology except that in a sermon the text is usually given at the beginning and not at the end. The text at the end of my oration is a verse from the Book of Proverbs - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". Reverence and respect for the Most High is the beginning and the end of our understanding of life's true meaning.

In the words of Tennyson.

"Let knowledge grow from more to more.  
But more of reverence in us dwell  
That mind and heart according well  
May make one music as before."