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HASTINGS

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Lecture delivered by V. Wor. Bro. Rev. G. Knowles-Smith,

THE ESOTERIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW ZEALAND MASTER MASON CERTIFICATE.

Many and varied undoubtedly are the reasons which actuate the candidates for admission into the Craft, and probably many such candidates even on the night of their initiation would find it difficult to give expression to their hopes and expectations. It is fitting therefore that on the very threshold of his career a brother is called upon to place Altruism in the very forefront by the declaration that he believes Masonry will prove a guide to greater service to his fellow men. To the brother who make this declaration the ideal of his subsequent masonic career, the lodge room will become a laboratory and the symbols and furnishings therein the material from which he will endeavour to extract the pure teaching wherewith to build a worthy masonic character and become a companion to the wise, a rebuke to the evil doer, and a support to the weak. Masonry thus becomes indeed to such an one a peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols, and the fascination of the study increases with every step of his enfoldment. Such unfoldment to be effective and practical must of necessity be complete at every stage and herein there seems to be a weakness in the conduct of most of our present day lodges. From time immemorial the novitiate has been told that each degree held secrets and symbols peculiar to that advancement. That such could not be easily obtained but that merit and ability alone secured them. In ancient times when each degree was worked in a separate room this teaching was rigidly enforced and no brother could hope to be passed or raised much less secure appointment to even one of the minor offices of his lodge without demonstrating in a very practical manner his knowledge and understanding of the degree through which he had just passed. The door of each degree room was most carefully and rigidly guarded, indeed we are told that many brethren were not only months but even years before they received their third degree. Nowadays the advancement after initiation seems to be considered the inalienable right of each initiate and any test of merit save the very meagre examination conducted purely formally and often with replies prompted by the deacons is considered unnecessary. Each month a further degree is conferred and many of our present day masons have passed all stages of their career in three months or thereabouts. With what result? We do not wish to appear critical or censorious, but is it not a fact that such rapid progress results in many of the symbols of each degree being valueless. Their teaching is rarely given and many a master mason qualifies to become an office bearer in his lodge and eventually a ruler in the Craft but remains ignorant of the meaning and purpose of much he sees and handles in his lodge room. Herein we venture to suggest lies the cause of the mechanical manner of much modern degree working, and the parrot like repetition of what one feels to be unmeaning ritual. You cannot impart to others that which you have not assimilated yourself, and only by much labour and steady research in each of the degrees is it possible to discover the great and solemn truths which lies hidden in the Jewel strongroom of that degree and finally piece them altogether into a robe of character worth to distinguish a Master Mason.

The New Zealand Master Mason however who is desirous of making his masonic career worthy of the name is indeed fortunate, for he possesses in his Master Mason's Certificate a text book of masonic knowledge. It is not too much to claim, indeed the claim has been granted by many masonic celebrities in all parts of the world that this certificate is the most complete and educational certificate issued by any Grand Lodge reflecting the greatest credit upon Rt. Wor. Bro. Hawcridge, P.G.M., Otago, 1918-1919, and Director of the Dunedin School of Art. It was my privilege to have several years of intimate intercourse with this worthy brother, being both members of Lodge Maori No. 105, and to know of his great ambition to produce for the

acceptance of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand a certificate worthy alike of the teachings of the Craft, the Grand Lodge of which he was a member and the Art which he adorned. The more study you give to your copy of this certificate (if you are fortunate enough to have entered the Craft since its adoption) the more will you realise how magnificently he has fulfilled his purpose and as he himself felt, crowned his masonic career with this lasting memorial to his zeal and industry.

The general scheme of the design is a symbolic lodge as viewed from West to East and embodies most of the emblems of the three degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry often called Blue or Symbolic Masonry. At the threshold of the Lodge a Maori storehouse is placed imparting a distinctly N.Z. character and suggesting the intention of the certificate as a keeping place of Masonic lore. Interwoven with the Pataka are the N.Z. Arms, the motto of which is "Onward." Beneath the store-house, orpaepakaiawha, is a circular space reserved for the seal of the N.Z. Grand Lodge, surmounted by two shields. One shield bears the Arms of the United Grand Lodge of England, the mother Grand Lodge of the World and to which may be traced all Freemasonry as practised to-day. The other shield bears the Arms of the Grand Lodge of N.Z. and between the two are fronds of fern, and a Maori koruru or parata thus symbolizing the linking of the two Grand Lodges. At the lower edge of the circle are entwined the rose, Shamrock and Thistles symbolical of the three Constitutions under which the New Zealand Lodges worked prior to the formation of our own Grand Lodge.

At the Apex of the roof and over all are the Royal arms denoting Masonic Loyalty.

At the entrance in the West stand the two pillars which play such a significant part in our ritual and which as you well know have been the centre of very much argument as to design and purpose.

On the certificate we have Rt. Wor. Bro. Hawkrigde's conception of them and in Lodge Maori when he was W.M. our brother set up two of this design. So far as the detailed account of them is concerned you are all too familiar with the accounts in the Books of Kings, Chronicles and Jeremiah, as well as the explanation of Mackay that we need not discuss it further. Indeed to-night we are more interested in the hidden meaning. Many suggestions have been made in addition to those given in the Ritual with which you are also familiar. The one I suggest for your consideration is that . . . represents Worship Charity. A life lived with these two ideals prominent thus becomes -
A Complete Life as symbolized by the Network.

A Fragrant Life as symbolized by the Lily Work,.

An abundant life of service bearing rich fruit as symbolized by the Pomegranites ; so as we pass between the pillars or contemplate their very beautiful illustration on the certificate we are called to a scrutiny of our life and work, in short to examine ourselves.

Accepting the ritual interpretation of the Mosaic Pavement as pointing out the varied experiences of prosperity and adversity in a human life, our distinguished brother followed a very old tradition by making it a circular pavement rather than as usually seen in our lodges square or oblong. The circle has from most ancient days been emblematic of Eternity so we have our. Human Life within the circle of Eternity. This in our judgement is one of the finest conceptions of the whole design, though possibly unnoticed by a majority of brethren. It is a recognition of the fact that Masonry discountenances alike the material-ism of our age and the creedal limitations imposed by some sects.

On the pavement a little to the South is a Rough Ashlar. An Ashlar, according to Bailey, is Freestone as it comes out of the quarry. This in Freemasonry is said to depict man in his natural state rude and uncultivated. We confess that this definition has never appealed to us. Even the words used in the Tracing Board Lecture. The mind of man in his infant, primitive or savage state, rough and unpolished as that stone is not a correct interpretation. To neither a child or a savage can these definitions justly apply. A child is sweet innocence, whilst a savage in many instances is one of nature's gentlemen. We suggest that the real interpretation of an Ashlar in its rough condition as taken from the Quarry is that it is an emblem of Hidden Possibilities. Placed in the hands of a sculptor it may become a messenger of purity or vice, a stone of constructive usefulness or destructive service. Given the artist of high ideals and the perfect ashlar will result, and the stone be polished and ready for the temple building so man in his infancy or savagery is capable if influenced by such teachings as Freemasonry stands for to become a character, perfect and beautiful, or otherwise influenced a

creature of vice and degradation. So the rough and perfect ashlar should ever call the true mason to the great and wonderful possibilities in his life and character; and bid him choose wisely the influences that govern his life.

The perfect Ashlar is here depicted as suspended from a tripod and the cramp and pulleys by which it is raised are very clearly shown. The Masonic interpretation of the Lewis and the privileges attached thereto are too well-known to you to need fuller explanation.

Resting against one of the pillars you will see a Tracing Board on which is drawn the 47th problem of the first book of Euclid. This was called by Dr. Anderson, "The Foundation of all Masonry, sacred, civil and military. For this famous proposition the Craft is indebted to Pythagoras, the Grecian philosopher, who was born at Samos 568 B.C. He is reputed to have received his knowledge of Hebrew sacred writings through either Ezekiel or Daniel whom he met in Babylon during the captivity of the Jews there. He ranks as the teacher of the purest heathen philosophy. Reverence for the Deity and love for their fellow men seem to have been the principles which formed the foundation of his teaching. Charity seems also to have been a prominent virtue practised by Pythagorean disciples. This problem has been adopted as the distinguishing badge of a Past Installed Master, though it is uncertain when or why? It is given a prominent position in the Frontespiece to the Constitution of 1723 (the earliest issue) but was not prescribed to be worn by a P.M. until the edition of 1816. The problem is a somewhat involved one and its esoteric implications have been variously interpreted. Probably in this is the reason so many even Past Rulers have not sought to understand the emblem they wear. We can however, note some very interesting suggestions in connection therewith. The problem stated is :— In any right angled triangle the square which is described upon the side subtending the right angle is equal to the squares described upon the sides containing the right angle.

Now let us remember

1. The triangle so indicated is what is known as the Egyptian triangle and was used by them as a symbol of Universal Life, the three sides represented Osiris, Isis and Horus the Egyptian Trinity.
2. Translating these as illustrative of Human Life we find Osiris representing the Physical, Isis the Mental and Horus the Spiritual.
3. A right angle is by Pythagoras used as the emblem of Justice and Morality, Justice being represented by the Osiris line, Morality by the Isis, so you have the two squares of a life based upon Justice and Morality.
4. Horus or the Sun was accepted as the emblem of Eternal Life which though it passed into the darkness of the Underworld still survived and rose again.
5. The Square is emblematic of the Divine Mind or Purpose working out in life.

Now can we summarise the occult teaching of this 47th Problem?

A life which follows the Divine Purpose and is based on Morality and Justice will find its spiritual or eternal expression to be the corresponding equality. In other words it reminds us whenever we consider its perfection of form that 'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap' and a life hereafter square in accord with the Divine Mind and fitted to enjoy the delights of the Eternal habitations must be founded upon those great principles of Morality and Justice.

There is yet another significant fact in connection with this emblem if you will set out to prove it; the lines you will find necessary will together make the form of a Cross, and a Cross has ever been emblematical of Sacrifice; so we may say that our Jewel of a Past Master should indicate that he who wears it has by a life of sacrifice and service prompted always by morality and justice, laid the foundation of an eternal inheritance of peace and joy. It is surely no mean thing to be a worthy Past Ruler in the Craft fitted to wear his jewel.

We now note the Two Great Parallels here represented by two accented tangential lines running from West to East and touching the basic circle of the Altar Steps. These, according to our Ritual have reference to Moses and Solomon, although prior to 1813 they were symbolical of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Divine. The reasons for the change are really matters of history, and therefore do not come within the scope of our present subject.

This brings us to what is perhaps the most unique and exceptional feature of the design, the Seven Steps to the Altar. These steps you will notice are utilized for the display of the Working Tools of each degree.

It was in this centrepiece that our Wor. Bro. desired to place the fullest details of Masonic Symbolism. The seven steps are the upward way from darkness to light. Inasmuch as they are the path in which are revealed the masonic virtues he supposed them to be the beginning rungs of Jacob's Ladder. Their division by the working Tools indicates

3 the number of Initiation and therefore the number of the First Degree.

5 the number of Manifestation, the number of the Second Degree;

7 the number of Perfection, the number of a Master Mason.

They also illustrate the 3 who form a lodge, the 5 who hold a lodge and the 7 who make it perfect.

Of the Working Tools here depicted you well know the symbolic use and I need not stay to do more than again emphasize the fact that a study of these tools and their purposes strengthen my contention that the three degrees do not represent youth, manhood and maturity, but rather the physical, the mental and the spiritual domains of a human life.

The 24in. Gauge, the Gavel and Chisel all speak of material or physical need ; the Square, Level and Plumb Line of mental or intellectual tests whilst the Line Pencil and Compasses clearly teach the Divine Will and our need for spiritual development.

At the top of the steps stands the altar on which is the open V.S.L. with square and compasses in proper position. On the front of the Altar is the Blazing Star. In olden days this star was said to commemorate the Star of the Wise Men, but later the Light from Above or Divine Providence. In the English ritual it is said to be the emblem of Prudence. One writer has said: It is placed here in front of the Altar so that every brother's eye may be upon it, to cleanse his heart and influence his actions, that his conscience may never accuse him of exceeding the bounds set by his Masonic obligations. The V.S.L., Square and Compasses here also symbolize the three great lights in Freemasonry, whilst the two candles on either side suggest the lesser lights, so well known in the lodge room. The Altar is here placed in the centre of the pavement to agree with the tracing board lecture of the first degree, as also to indicate by the V.S.L. resting thereon, the point within a circle. Here we suggest that our worthy designer is nearer to the true masonic meaning than is given in the usual explanation. Many speak of the Point as the Brother and the Circle as the boundary line of his duties as laid down by his masonic obligations. We suggest that the Point within a circle is in reality The First Great Cause, otherwise spoken of by us as God within, nay rather the centre of the circle of the Eternal. The V. of the S.L. being the revelation of Him as given to us, the V.S.L. is the Point within our Lodges symbolizing God and calling upon every mason to become so conversant with its Divine Teachings that he may not stray but travel steadily but surely toward even God Himself. Just above the altar you will see rays of light symbolizing the light which is there to guide our steps aright.

A striking feature of the design are the five pillars of the Ionic Doric, Corinthian, Tuscan and Composite Orders. The first three will be recognized as Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. With their teaching as to God. and to the three first illustrations ones and also to the W.M. and Wardens of a Lodge you are fully conversant. These three pillars support the entablature or archtrave, whilst the latter two the Tuscan and Composite, are represented as free, they having practically no place in Freemasonry, and were included doubtless just to complete the Five Noble Orders of Architecture.

Surmounting the entablature appear representations of Moses with the Tables of the Law and Solomon King of Israel. According to tradition, Moses was responsible for the connection of Masonry with the Ancient Mysteries of Egypt, whilst Solomon was the first Prince to excel in Masonry, and it is upon his building of the Temple that our rites and Ceremonies are chiefly based.

Above the entablature is a representation of the beautiful covering of the Lodge, the seven stars and crescent moon. The seven stars placed together not only signify the starry heavens, reminding us that our forefathers met under the canopy of heaven, that is, out of doors, but being seven they are the emblem of all that is perfect; two trinities held together at the centre, which is Reality, so teaching us that true reality will be found by us when we reach those etherial mansions which are also there depicted. In our ritual we are told that they are veiled from mortal sight, but our artist evidently desired to give some conception of them. Therein we may find Continuity. He pictures the future, not as a strange indefinable existance, shadowy and unreal, but a world as substantial as our present dwelling place, a land of WORSHIP AND SERVICE, this is symbolized by the minnarets for prayer and the figures of messengers ready to serve. It is a land of INCREASING KNOWLEDGE as symbolized by increasing light and above all is the ALL SEEING EYE, which reminds us of that all-seeing Providence who knows the secret thoughts of our hearts and who rewards us according to our merits.

At the side of the certificate is a space with the words Ne Varietur, which is so placed for the recipient to record his signature and the Latin phrase means, "Lest it should be changed," and indicates that the signature as thereon signed should always be used by the owner when signing an attendance book or indeed any signature required for masonic purposes, so that he can thereby be identified as the true and lawful brother of that name and certificate.

Now brethren, I have only vaguely, I fear, opened out to you the beauties of the N.Z.M.M. Certificate with its entrancing symbolism, but I trust that I have done sufficient to cause you to desire to still further study it, finding in it a groundwork of masonic knowledge, and enabling you to the more adequately equip yourself for your masonic duties, so that by the continuous practise of the virtues therein inculcated you may be able to say -

I know as my life grows older
And mine eyes have clearer sight
That under each rank wrong somewhere
There lies the root of right ;
That each sorrow has its purpose
By the sorrowing oft unguessed
That as sure as the sun brings morning
Whatever is, is best.
I know that each sinfui action
As sure as the night brings shade
Is somewhere, sometime punished
Though the hour be long delayed;
I know that the soul is aided,
Sometimes by the heart's unrest;
And to grow means oft to suffer,
But whatever is, is best.
I know that there are no errors
In the great eternal plan,
And that all things work together
For the final good of man;
And I know when my soul speeds onwards
In its grand eternal quest
I shall say as I look back earthward,
Whatever is. is best.

SO MOTE IT BE.