



No. 22

HASTINGS.

FEB. 6, 1939.

Lecture: THE PILLARS," by Wor. Bro. E. E. Bott, G. Lecturer

THE PILLARS

Pillars or Columns hold and always have held, a very definite and important place in our Masonic system, and not only in the Masonic Symbolism, but in the symbolism of all the mysteries of the past. The origin of the pillar is lost in the mists of time and the pillar is common to peoples in every part of the world. The Aztecs in South America. The peoples of India. The Phoenecians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and Romans. The people of Israel and even our Christian civilization have these pillars embodied in their architecture.

The Pillar or Column is undoubtedly Phallic in its origin, and its symbolic significance is no doubt derived in the first place from that Phallic connotation. This worship of the Pillar or that which it symbolised was almost universal in the time of the Hebrews, and the, Prophets were continually fulminating against the Children of Israel for their defection from the Temple worship of Jehovah to follow after the abomination of the surrounding nations.

In course of time the Pillar also had an additional significance or purpose. It was used for marking some great or important event in the life of an individual, or a people. You will remember that Jacob, when he left his home and had that wonderful vision of the ladder, "the top of which reached to the heavens," erected a Pillar and poured oil over it, for he said, surely God is in this place, and he called the place Bethel.

Again, Joshua when he had made a covenant between the Israelites and their God, erected a Pillar as a witness to the covenant and said, "for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us, it shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." Many other instances could be cited of the erection of a Pillar as a memorial of some important event or witnessing some agreement or covenant, the idea being that the God was manifested or represented in the Pillar, and therefore the covenant was established in the presence of the deity.

That Pillars have a definite significance in Maori tradition is undoubted. You are all familiar with the Posts or Columns at the entrance to the villages or meeting houses, usually covered with carvings of Symbolic figures. And in their meeting houses there are other Pillars which have a further significance than that of supporting the roof.

James Hastings in his Ethics and Religion has the following, "One of the oldest Babylonian inscriptions known, bears on one side, the picture of a man in a feathered head-dress who stands between two pillars or posts," "and no shrine was considered by the Assyrians to be complete without two Posts or Pillars," indeed whenever their armies purposed to cross a river in their march, they erected a temporary shrine to propitiate the river God and even this was considered incomplete without the two Pillars.

In his Great Masterpiece, "The Golden Bough," Fraser says that the early peoples set up stone Pillars before their huts, about their villages and over the graves of the dead. In some cases these were supposed to be Gods or Demons, or the abode of Gods or Demons. In these early days it was thought that a Spirit could dwell in a

Stone or Pillar and could be transplanted from place to place. He also states that in many-cases they were looked upon as symbols of sex.

Another writer speaks as follows, "Pillars of stone, when associated with worship, have been from time immemorial regarded as Symbols of the active and passive, the generating and fecundating principles.

The great Prehistoric temple in Britain known as Stonehenge is no doubt well known to most of you here, at least by repute. This temple is apparently the second to be erected at this particular spot. The former being considerably larger than the one, the remains of which are still to be seen. Built, if one can use that word in this connection, of unhewn Stones of Blue Syenite from North Wales, transported at enormous expenditure of labour and energy 145 miles to Salisbury Plains, and there used in the construction of this great temple of Worship. The second temple at Stonehenge was smaller, being some 36 yards across, compared with 100 for the former one, and this was constructed mostly of hewn local stone.

Within this circle, stones from the old temple were used in constructing two concentric circles, with the opening facing the entrance to the Outer circle. Inside these again are two half loops composed of huge Dolmens, that is two upright stones connected at the top by another stone. At some distance from this second temple, is an isolated stone or pillar, which is in alignment with the opening and the Altar stone. The Stone is called the Hele Stone (from Helan, a Saxon word meaning to hide or conceal), and as the sun rises on mid-summer morn the shadow of the Hele stone conceals the Altar Stone, it put it another way it covers the altar and whatever may be on it, the stone itself being transformed into a thing of living beauty as the sun gradually rises until it seems to rest on the very top of the stone. There it stands living, pulsing, glorious, Divine, a perfect Symbol to those antients of the Divine Creator and preserver of all life. As the shadow of the Hele Stone falls within the Temple it reminds us of the words of the great Hebrew King and Poet. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the Shadow of the Almighty.

So we see that Pillars are of very antient origin. The Rev. Won. Bro. Fort Newton tells us in his "Builders" that the Mayas and the Incas erected three pillars at the entrance to their temple of Earthy and Skyey and called them W. S. & B. Having then established the antiquity of the pillar's let us turn to those of the 1st and 2nd degree in F.M. In Egypt and more particularly in Thebes and Heliopolis there were many temples, and standing before most of them were two pillars or Obelisks. It is reported that Usertsen erected a pair of Obelisks before one of the temples at Heliopolis in 2435 B.C. The Cleopatra's Needle which stands on the Thames Embankment. London, is one of two Obelisks which stood before a temple in that same city, its fellow being taken across the Atlantic and erected in the U.S.A.

The Tat Pillar was pre-eminent in the Egyptian Religion, and the annual erection of one of these formed one of the most important of their festivals, that in which the fertility of the Land both for Man, Beast and plant was the central theme. In their religious teaching two Tat Pillars stood at the gateway to Amenta, the abode of the Dead. It was thought that it was through this gateway that the Sun passed to Osirus, at setting, and through this gateway also passed the souls of time departed on their way to the Judgement of the Maat. Here then, we see the reason why the Pillars were placed at the entrance to the Egyptian temples. The Mysteries of Egypt were concerned with the passage of the soul through Amenta and to a life, if found worthy with the Spirit world, and these pillars of Osirus were conceived as the entrance to that abode. The word Tat in antient Egyptian means Strength.

From Egypt the worship of the God connected with the pillars passed to Phoenecia, Syria and other parts, and there is a description by Josephus of the magnificent Temple of Malkarth at Tyre, whose worship was introduced to Israel by Jezebel. At the entrance to this temple were two such pillars, one of Gold and one of Smaragdus, and these, pillars were consecrated to the winds and fire. So it seems reasonable to suppose that the great Tyrian Architect or artifser Hiram should take these as a model for his great work at Jerusalem.

The account of the casting and erection is given in several places in the Vol. S.L., but perhaps the best description is given in 1 King's 7-13, while the account in the 2nd T.B. is concise and interesting. And he set up, the pillars in the Porch of the Temple and he set up the R. Pillar and called the name thereof J. and he set up the left pillar and called the name thereof B, and on the top of the pillars was lily work.

Every candidate for F.M. enters into the Mysteries between the Ps. In the 1st very little more than passing notice is given to them, although reference is made to the name of one of them. In the T.B. there is a reference to two parallel lines, one representing M. and the other K.S., or in other words the equilibrium or Stabilising principles of Wisdom and Law or understanding. In passing we may notice that these are the two Pillars of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. Chokma and Binah, Wisdom and Understanding. And while we keep these two great forces in equilibrium, we must travel aright. One of the great tragedies of the present time is that knowledge is out of balance with Wisdom. Men have knowledge of many things, but are without the Wisdom necessary to apply much of that knowledge for the real benefit of mankind.

It is in the second degree that the Pillars are dealt with in a more comprehensive manner, but it is of more than passing interest to reflect that after this degree no further reference is made to these pillars, either in the craft degree or in any of the higher. Does it not suggest that the candidate for the mysteries is in these Preliminary degrees brought up to the threshold of the Master grade or of the real Mysteries. In his preparation for the reception of the Light which is in the East, he has been taught that he must bring his whole being into subjection. The working tools of this degree will repay a good deal of time and meditation spent on them, and are an instruction to bring into one's life that equilibrium which is symbolised by the two Great Pillars. To subdue his Passions and Prejudices, to hold the scales of justice with equal poise, not to be an enthusiast (or fanatic) etc., but to walk justly and uprightly before God and Man. In other words it means that the F.C. standing between the G.P.s has attained the mastery over emotional outbreaks of all kinds, Poise under trying conditions, and renders kindness in the face of Unkindness.

He has attained the mastery of the animal energies, the curbing of Passion and desire and the control of the lower nature.

He has attained to the understanding and mastery of the creature forces, and has consecrated them to the unfolding of the Spiritual nature.

He has a proper understanding of their physical application, and he has sublimated the personal affection into an impersonal compassion to all. In fact is possessed of the 3rd and greatest of the Virtues, Charity, or Love in its most ample sense.

It is when the F.C. stands thus between the G.P. that he is prepared and ready to advance into the Greater Glories of the Mysteries.

It is unnecessary here to dwell on the wonderful and intricate work involved in the casting of these two pillars as this was brought out in the last lecture before this Lodge by Wor. Bros. Wray. Suffice it to say that their purpose was symbolic in every detail. We are told that the P. on the R. was called J., and that on the Left B. First of all let us determine which was right and which was left. The temple was built with the entrance facing the East. In looking from the temple towards the rising sun, on the right and to the South would be the pillar called J. It is said that the King at his coronation stood by the B. Pillar and the H.P. at his ordination stood by the J. Pillar. The pillars in the Lodge are usually placed the West and in looking towards the east or the Master the P., on the left is the one called B., the one on the right J.

The meaning of these is given as "In S. and to Establish and together Stability. Every character in the Antient Hebrew language had a very definite signification and without going very thoroughly into the meaning of the Hebrew letters which make up this word, Beth-ayin-Zayin, I may just say there are two root principles involved, one of which expresses every idea of precipitate, harsh, inordinate movement, that is BO or BH, while OZ expresses every idea of sentient material force, that which is strong etc. As an articule in grammar B. signifies in, by, with, and as a grammatical sign it signifies Virility and Paternity, interior and active action, so that when our Ritual tells us that this Pillar named B. means in Strength it is literally right and does carry this significance in every vital and material sense of the word. J on the other hand expresses the thought "He that is Jehovah" shall, or will make firm, or make to remain fast, or as our Ritual says "He shall establish." These two ideas naturally suggest stability when they are in conjunction. It is material force and Spiritual Power in Perfect Equilibrium, and while these two forces remain in this harmonious condition they are firm and unmovable.

There are several descriptions of the ornamentation of the chapters which were on the top of the Pillars and these differ somewhat in their details, but I think perhaps that these which you see in this room are as near a representation of the original as is possible, to-day. In Kings 7 it says, "the two bowls of the chapters which were on the tops of the Pillars." The Egyptians used this egg shaped object at the top of some of their columns to represent the egg the symbol of all life. On the other hand it may have been that the chapter represented the Lotus Lily with the bowl open and nestling in the leaves which ornamented the top of the Pillar. The Egyptian Lotus or Water Lily was to these people a sacred flower, and it is its white beauty that is alluded to when we are told that its whiteness denotes purity and peace. It is found all over the East and is represented everywhere in their architecture and statues. The petals of the Lotus flower are seven in number. Lily work denotes purity and peace, the purity and peace which is the result of that subjugation of our nature to our will, this being in perfect equilibrium because we have discovered that sacred symbol in the centre of the building.

Then there were the Pomegranates and we are told that because of the exuberance of their seeds they denote plenty. You may remember that when Naaman went to Elisha to be cured of his leprosy, he told the Prophet that it was his practice to accompany his master, the King of Syria, when he went to worship the God Rimmon. The word Rimmon is the Hebrew and the Syriac word for Pomegranate, Rimmon was the God of Fertility. The Pomegranates are used in India with the same symbolic meaning.

Network we are told denotes unity, and how necessary is this in a Masonic Lodge, as elsewhere where progress is looked for. Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity. The lesson then that we should learn from the Chapters is that of unity, peace and plenty. These three great blessings each should appropriate for himself and should endeavour to bring them into the lives of as many others as he is able. In these troublous days we may well pray for that unity of purpose to ensure peace and plenty for all.

And now in conclusion let us return to the Pillars. The two great factors or principles in the universe are the two opposites, in opposition and yet complimentary to each other and when in perfect Equilibrium working in perfect Harmony. There is light and darkness, White and Black, heat and cold, negative and positive, Male and Female, Spiritual and Material. The force that repels a planet from the sun is no more an evil force than that which attracts that planet towards the sun, but the two forces equalising each other results in the harmonious movement of the planet in its orbit, with unvarying accuracy. This law of balance is the great foundation of that profound philosophical teaching of the Jews, The Holy Kabbala, and this is the great lesson of the two great Pillars which stood at the entrance to the Temple. They teach of that Equilibrium, possible in ourselves, and which Masanry constantly demands of its members, between the Spiritual and Divine on the one hand, and material and human on the other. Between Intellect, Reason and Moral Sense, and the appetites and passions, and it is when we are able to bring these into harmony, that we have that well regulated life which not only commands the respect and admiration of our fellows, but opens up to our reborn nature the promise of those ecstatic experiences, which are the aim of all true mystics.

A knowledge of this Harmony or equilibrium teaches us above all to reverence ourselves. It teaches that which the Greeks enjoined upon their initials, "Man know thyself and thou shalt know God." It teaches us the meaning of the S.S. in the centre of the building. It teaches us to have respect and charity to others, who are, as we are partakers of the same nature and sharers in the same Hope, and capable as we are of progress upwards towards completion. As Masons then let us do our best to bring this balance into operation in our own lives. Wisdom and Knowledge, Justice and Mercy, Victory and Glory and these will produce that third Pillar, Benignity, or Perfect Love, and having attained this and being "Possessed of this virtue in its most ample sense we shall have attained the summit of our profession, an ethical Mansion not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.