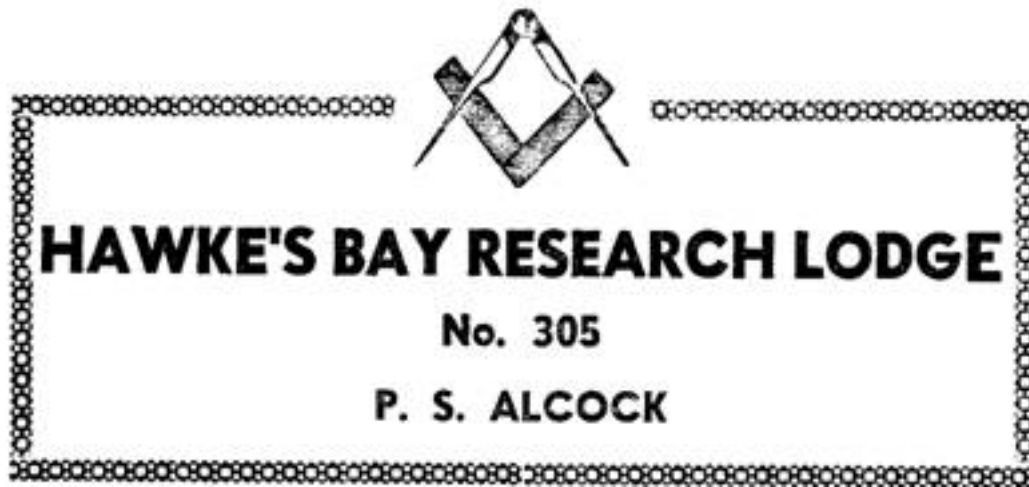


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Some observations on the symbolism of Pillars and Columns in a Freemasons Lodge.

The subject I have chosen has been difficult to express in words. The Pillars and Columns are prominent in every Lodge Room, yet their meaning, though obviously there, is very hard to define.

But as we are speculative, rather than operative Masons, perhaps I may then, be permitted to speculate, and possibly, what I have to say will be of interest to the Brethren.

Though you may not agree with all the ideas I put forward, nevertheless I hope they will stimulate thought and discussion.

It has been said we are speculative, rather than operative Masons, but that, I think is not altogether true, because should we not, all of us be operative builders, busily engaged in erecting those spiritual temples through which the most high can express himself, and through which his light can shine.

The words pillar and column are identical in basic meaning; tall slender, cylindrical structures, used to support a roof.

We see them in many buildings serving both a decorative and useful purpose.

The medieval mason used them of necessity in his churches, mighty edifices erected to the greater glory of God.

The arts and skills used in their construction by the master craftsman stemmed from a knowledge of Geometry and clearly defined principals. That, they in turn had learnt from masters of the craft who had gone before them.

It is recognised that Free Masons acquired their skills, in part from the Saracens and Persians and the Moorish invasions of Spain, brought back by the crusading armies to Western Europe, and in part, from a knowledge of proportion, number and geometry which had its origins in the Rabbinical

schools of Biblical times.

Many modern historians also believe that much of the science of building was acquired by the knights Templar during their stay in the Holy Land, and they in turn with, and through the Cistercian Monks employed and protected skilled workman to erect their abbeys and other great churches in the Gothic style.

It may be of interest to note here, the comment by a French archeologist that the rebuilding of churches and church towers in Normandy after the Allied invasion was the responsibility of "The Companions of Duty," descendants of the French Medieval Masons, who, even today prefer to remain in relative obscurity, and still only apply their skills to buildings used for civil and peaceful purposes.

The west front of many great Medieval Churches were, and of course still are flanked by twin towers. In the practical sense they formed an anchor for the structure, they, by reason of their great weight added strength and stability to the whole.

Were these builders consciously emulating the builders of King Solomons Temple? Some believe they were.

The pillared naves of these great churches were built to carefully calculated proportions.

The weight, the width and the length of the nave and chancel were all skillfully proportioned to form an harmonious whole.

The concept being, that, when one entered such a building, ones eyes were drawn down the length of the nave, between the pillars, through the Chancel and Quire to the High Altar: to the East, the source of Light, and the Spiritual Life Force.

At the same time the great pillars reaching to the ogives and stone vaulting of the roof drew men upwards so that no matter how small, wretched and insignificant he felt in the world outside, inside God's house he felt tall and worthwhile, standing between those towering pillars reaching and pointing heavenwards.

If we look back briefly to ancient times we see that the Egyptians used great columns, at Luxor, to support the roof of their temple, now one the archeological wonders of that country.

The columns were a representation in stone of the Papyrus Reed, so important to them in their sacred writings and as part of their economy.

The ancient Greeks too, used columns in the construction of their most important buildings. They were beautifully designed and decorated, and of course we know from the historical books of the volume of the sacred law, that two magnificent pillars stood at the porch or entrance of King Solomon's Temple.

Neither the Greeks or Hebrews used the laws of design, or formal decoration as artistic embellishments, it was done in honour of the Deity, but in such a way that the pillars as in the stone churches of the middle ages conveyed a symbolic meaning, to the people who entered and worshipped there.

Let us consider the two great pillars that stood at the entrance of King Solomons Temple, and whose symbolic replicas are the most prominent furnishings of our Lodges.

We know, after being passed to the Second Degree, that they were named after two of the important patriarchs of Israel, and that they represented strength and stability, that they were decorated with lily work, pomegranates and representational signs of the twelve tribes of Israel, as well as net work over

the capitals.

Many interpretations may be put on the symbolism displayed on these pillars; of their names and their decorations. I propose to offer only a few.

Boaz and Jachin, were the pillars of anointing. They stood in the porch or entrance of King Solomons Temple.

The Kings of Israel were anointing beside that one named after Boaz, in strength, from whom they were descended.

The High Priests, beside that, named after the future High Priest, who officiated at its dedication. Its quality was stability.

As we can be certain, that everything within the temple was of symbolic significance, and that the whole structure was a microcosm of the universe, we can then, reasonably conclude that the columns of the portico too, had a symbolic significance.

The symbolic meaning of Boaz is "in strength", and indicates intellectual energy and activity.

That of Jachin, "stability." - Establishment or stability is the intellectual capacity to produce a passive state.

Wise activity, 'Boaz', must be balanced by equally wise passivity, 'Jachin' if one is to become established in immortal, strength, and to stand firm, spiritually consolidated and perfect in all ones parts. For it has been said "By wisdom, God creates, and by understanding establishes."

The two pillars are opposites as; Man and Woman; Reason, Faith; Infinite Justice, Infinite Mercy; Absolute Power and Strength to do even that which is most unjust or unwise.

And absolute wisdom, that makes it impossible to do it. The one counter balances the other.

Right and Duty; the strength of right, the stability of duty. Conjoined the establishment of God's house, of which our physical bodies are but the framing. For a great teacher of the Christian era wrote, " .. and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a Holy Priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God."

They are the columns of the intellectual and moral world, neither of these is complete without the other.

Morning and evening unite to form the complete day.

Man is proverbially incomplete without his "better half", woman. The two marry to impart strength to each other and establish their common house.

Every drop of healthy blood in our bodies is a combination of red and white corpuscles, by the due balance of which we are established in health and strength, whilst lack of balance is attendant by disaster.

The pillars therefore in one of their aspects are symbolic of perfect integrity of body and soul, such as are essential to achieving spiritual perfection.

As for the symbolic appearance of the pillars themselves, the lily work suggests the light, purity and beauty which emanates from the most high and should physically show in man, in harmony with his creator.

The pomegranites, by the quantity of its seed, the uncountable gifts bestowed on righteous and upright man, by God, while the net-work is unity: man, the world in which he lives, the universe, at one with God.

The signs of the Zodiac allude to the twelve tribes of Israel, for there is an astonishing coincidence 'between the characteristics assigned by Jacob to his sons and those characteristics assigned to the signs of the zodiac, by which each son is represented.

For example Mars, chief of the celestial soldiery is situated in the constellation of the Ram, which is chief of the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and is the device of Gad, whom Jacob names as a warrior, and chief of his army.

The lion is the device of Judah and Jacob compares him to this animal, for he declares in the 49th chapter of Genesis: "Judah is a lion's whelp, from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down, he crouched as a lion, and as an old lion, who dares to rouse him up."

I mention but two. My reference is Genesis, Ch. 49 vs. 9-27. Morals and dogma Pce 461-2 and Castells Masonic Writings.

Finally the columns which stand on or beside the pedestals of the three principal officers of the Lodge.

They are the doric symbolizing wisdom which stands before the worshipful master.

The Ionic, symbolizing strength, and stands before the Senior Warden and the Corinthian symbolizing beauty which stands before the Junior Warden.

They are usually made of wood, but should be made of stone.

The Worshipful Masters Doric Column in free stone which is aqueous or sedimentary rock and because of the easily worked and beautiful nature of the stone, can be likened to the stabilizing influence of Jachin, which is wisdom, and which is supported by the strength of the Ionic Column which stands on the Senior Wardens pedestal and should be made of granite an igneous or plutonic rock, suggesting activity and creativity.

These two columns symbolize wisdom and strength, and as with Boaz and Jachan one counter balances the other, while the Junior Wardens Corinthian Column in marble which is a metamorphic rock, a soft and gentle material suggesting beauty.

The three columns are emblematic of the complete harmony which should characterize every Freemasons Lodge.

So we may see the three columns as Wisdom supported by Strength, and adorned with beauty to bring harmony to the whole.

Much more could be said concerning the two great pillars that stand at the entrance to the Lodge, and to the three that support it. Of their many and varied aspects and implied meaning, but to do so would require a book and someone more scholarly than me to write it.