

*The following lecture was delivered at the Barron Barnett Lodge of Research and Instruction U.G. L. Q. by Wor Bro. Peter Kemp at the March 2002 meeting :*

## THE MYTH OF MASONIC EQUALITY.

Worshipful Master and brethren, this evening I want to do something heretical. I want to plant in your minds some doubts as to Masonic Equality. Hopefully, when I have finished this brief talk, I will also have removed those doubts. If I fail, I run the risk of being excommunicated, cited or stoned to death, whichever comes first.

To strengthen some of my arguments, it will be necessary to quote from Rituals used by other Orders, other Constitutions and in other States. But I promise not to reveal any of those Secrets I have promised never to reveal:

Theoretical Communism and theoretical Freemasonry have one belief in common, based on the premise that all men are equal. We know the old saying from the anti-Communists "Sure, all men are equal; but some are more equal than others!" There is some truth in that trite remark. Under the Communist rule, the low-level workers wore cotton tunics, and lived many families to each house. The middle class wore gabardine clothing, and lived one family per house. But the upper echelon wore woollen tunics and lived in luxurious houses behind high walls. Surely no one would ever claim that some Freemasons are more equal than others or would they?

You heard the master announce me this evening as Wor. Bro. Peter Kemp, etc. A simple announcement, demonstrating that I am a Freemason, and that I have been installed into the Chair of King Solomon. However, on the walls encircling the Urn of Remembrance in the Ann Street Masonic Centre are photos of the present and past Grand Masters. Each carries the correct title of 'Most Worshipful Brother', but often includes civilian and/or military titles. For example one states that the photo is of "*M. W Bro His Excellency Colonel, the Rt. Honorable Sir Leslie Orme Wilson, PC GCSI GCMG GCIE DSO., GM 1934-1946, P.DistGM (Bombay), PGD (England).*"

And listen to the words of a Grand Director of Ceremonies, when an Earl was installed as a First Grand Principal of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland several years ago:

*"I hereby proclaim Most Excellent Companion Andrew Douglas Alexander Thomas BRUCE, Eleventh Earl of Elgin and Fifteenth Earl of Kilcardine, Baron Elgin of Elgin in the United Kingdom, Baron Bruce of Kinross and Tony, Honorary Colonel of the 153rd Regiment Royal Corps of Transport, Honorary Colonel of the Elgin Regiment of Canada, Deputy Lieutenant and in Her Majesty's Commission, Justice of the Peace for the Region of Fife, Doctor of Laws of the University of Dundee, Master of Arts of the University of Oxford upon whom the Cadet Forces Medal has been bestowed, Right Worshipful Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, duly installed as..... etc."* Are the Earl of Elgin and I 'equal in Freemasonry?' Why could I not have tacked onto the end of my name at my Installation, '*Scouter (ret'd).*', *Bush Fire Captain (ret'd).*, *Snr. Vice President, Jervis Bay Parents' and Citizens' Association (ret'd), etc.*

Commencing on the night we were admitted to Masonry, 'EQUALITY' was the catchword:

*"In a Freemason's Lodge, a man is not esteemed on account of his worldly wealth, for therein all are EQUAL."*

*"Your admission into Masonry, symbolically in a state of helplessness and indigence, inculcated the useful lessons of natural EQUALITY and dependence."*

*"Although you are the representative of a Prince, and exalted by Office above your Companions, yet you remain upon a LEVEL with them."*

*"Always be mindful that he who would be the greatest among us, must be the SERVANT of all."*

However, despite the beauty of the rituals just quoted, there are many outward signs of Masonic INEQUALITY As an E.A.F., we were confined to a seat in the NE. corner of the Lodge as a F.C.F., to the S.E. corner, and, as a M.M., to the floor of the Lodge. If we progressed to the Office of J.W., we found ourselves seated upon an elaborate Chair, one step higher than the Master Masons as a S.W., two steps

higher and, as a Master, three steps higher than the M.M.'s, and in a Chair that guaranteed that we would be higher than the brethren in the body of the Lodge and even, in some Centres, higher than the Past Masters in the East.

In Lodges in N.S.W., the Master is required to return a Sign of Salute offered to him, but he must first look at the rank of the Brother saluting him; if he is of lower rank, the Master returns the Salute while seated. If he is of equal or higher rank, the Master must stand to return the Salute.

Please recall the laid-down words used by a Grand Director of Ceremonies, announcing a Delegation led by a senior Freemason *is about to enter your Lodge.*" Not "seeks permission to enter...". After greeting the senior Freemason, the Master - although elected by the Brethren to rule and govern their Lodge - is required by protocol to surrender his Gavel of Office.

Have you noticed at installations that the Grand Team does not stand whilst the Masters and Brethren sing "Salute to the Master"? I asked a G. L. Officer why they did not stand, and he replied *"For the same reason that you Masters don't stand when they sing 'Salute to the Wardens'."* Masonic Equality?

Let's go back to some portions of the Rituals of the craft and other Orders:

*"You are now SUPERIOR to an E.A.F, but INFERIOR to that which it is hoped you will in due course attain".*

*"I invest you with the DISTINGUISHING Badge of a F.C.F."*

*"You are to recommend to INFERIORS, obedience and submission, to EQUALS, courtesy and affability, and to SUPERIORS, kindness and condescension."*

*"We place these rods in your hands as emblems of POWER and AUTHORITY"*

*"You are entitled to be respected and obeyed as Chief and Ruler; clothed with lawful "AUTHORITY"*

*"I now hand you the baton of this Sovereign Chapter, the emblem of your AUTHORITY."*

The question now arises what POWER, what AUTHORITY?

The Presiding Officer, be he a Master or a Principal or a Sovereign, is neither a Despot nor a Dictator. He has not achieved that Office by rigging a ballot, or by a military coup, or by the payment of large sums of money. He has been so elected by the members of his Lodge. *"No Master or Warden is chosen by seniority, but for his merit."*

He is as firmly bound by the Constitution and By-Laws as are the members of his Lodge. *"You will cause these (the Constitution and By-Laws) to be punctually obeyed in your chapter; and will not permit the slightest deviation from them"*. He cannot alter any By-Law without the consent of the members, and only then by following a laid-down procedure which calls for the full support of those members.

He cannot appoint officers on the ladder of progression, but is sometimes allowed the courtesy of nominating his Director of Ceremonies and his Secretary, but these nominations are still open to challenge from the Floor, and, if challenged, must be settled by ballot.

He cannot authorize the payment of any Lodge monies without the consent of its members, who have the right to query any account.

He cannot admit a person into our Craft unless that person has been properly proposed and seconded, interviewed and approved, and accepted by ballot. Nor can he advance a Candidate to a further Degree without the permission of the members. "Brethren, such is the usual course of examination. Are you satisfied with the, proficiency exhibited by the Candidate, and are you content that he be passed (or raised)?"

It must then be obvious that the words POWER and AUTHORITY, as used in our Rituals, do not apply in the normally accepted sense. So, to what do they refer?

In the Charge after Initiation, the E.A.F. is advised to *feel yourself called upon to make a daily advancement in Masonic Knowledge*'. In the Charge after Passing, the F.C.F. is told *'as a Craftsman, in our private assemblies, you may offer your sentiments and opinions on such subjects as are regularly introduced under the superintendence of the W.M., who will guard the Landmarks against encroachment'*.

Can we now reconsider any doubts we may have, and look for an association between the word POWER and the obligation to guard the Landmarks; and an association between the word AUTHORITY and the duty to

disseminate Masonic knowledge? If we can conceive such associations, let me now insert into some previous quotes, words and phrases that I deliberately omitted at the time.

*"I now invest you with the distinguishing Badge of a EC.F., to mark the progress you have made in the Craft"*

*"I now hand you the Baton of this Sovereign Chapter, the emblem of your authority, and as such, may you now begin your labours for the good of Humanity."*

Brethren, since Masonry is a 'progressive Science, consisting of different Degrees which permit a gradual advancement in the knowledge of its mysteries, then most surely, 'distinction in rank is necessary among men to preserve due order and authority, and as a reward of merit and ability'. Then and only then, can we justify the regalia, the collars and jewels, and the Chairs belonging to those whom we recognize as our teachers. In one of the Sectional lectures of the Craft, the question is asked, "What inducement have you to leave the West and go to the East?" and the answer given is "To seek a Master and from him to gain instruction" How do we recognize these Masters, capable of instructing us, unless they are set apart by some visible signs? Having recognized these signs, we note that their regalia "while it marks their own superiority, it calls on them to afford assistance and instruction to their brethren." Then our Master can live up to the Charge "You solemnly promise that you will promote the general good of our Order; and on all proper occasions be ready to give and receive instruction" Then we can assist in the fulfilment of the prayer "Enrich his mind with true and genuine knowledge, that he may be better enabled to enlighten the minds of his brethren"

Worshipful Master, I make no apologies if I have planted or resurrected some doubts about Masonic Equality in your mind, or in the minds of your brethren.

But I will be deeply upset if those doubts still remain. Each of us this evening, wears some external sign of the progress he has made in the Science. On behalf of those of us who are willing to submit and learn, Worshipful Master, I salute you, a Brother Mason who by wearing that Regalia and occupying that Chair, has accepted the awesome obligation to rule and to teach.

With your permission, I will now vacate my elevated position here at a Lectern in the East, and return to my lower position in a chair as your Steward.

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On conclusion of the address, **Wor.Bro..Fried** said that he was astounded when he first arrived in Queensland at the pomp surrounding our ceremonies and the advancement from the lower offices through to the Master's Chair. In Belgium at the Election of Officers, all positions are open and any brother can be nominated for any office, including that of Master. There is no progression of office.

**V.W.Bro.Campbell** said we are taught 'my brother and my equal', yet as Wor.Bro Kemp said, am I equal to an Earl, a Lord etc, what is equality?

**R.W.Bro.Wells** in moving a vote of thanks to Wor.Bro.Kemp for his contribution, reminded the brethren that in the animal kingdom there has to be a leader to prevent anarchy. We see it in wild and domestic animals, birds of the air etc, even our own families. The Wor.Master is the leader of this lodge and the Grand Master is leader of the U.G.L.Q.

**V.W.Bro.Jeffery** seconded the vote of thanks which was carried.

*The W.H.J.Mayers Lodge of Research invites all readers and members to submit their comments and discussions on the above paper. These could then be relayed to R.W.Bro. Wells, secretary of Barron Barnett.*

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