

A DAILY ADVANCEMENT...
CANBERRA LODGE OF RESEARCH & INSTRUCTION
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from Wilmshurst's *The Meaning of Masonry*

OPENING AND CLOSING THE LODGE

FIRST OR ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE

If the Lodge with its appointments and officers be a sacramental figure of oneself and of the mechanism of personal consciousness, opening the Lodge in the successive Degrees implies ability to expand, open up and intensify that consciousness in three distinct stages surpassing the normal level applicable to ordinary mundane affairs.

This fact passes unrecognized in Masonic Lodges. The openings and closings are regarded as but so much casual formality devoid of interior purpose or meaning, whereas they are ceremonies of the highest instructiveness and rites with a distinctive purpose which should not be profaned by casual perfunctory performance or without understanding what they imply.

As a flower "opens its Lodge" when it unfolds its petals and displays its centre to the sun which vitalizes it, so the opening of a Masonic Lodge is sacramental of opening out the human mind and heart to God. It is a dramatized form of the psychological processes involved in so doing.

Three degrees or stages of such opening are postulated. First, one appropriate to the apprentice stage of development; a simple *Sursum corda !* or call to "lift up your hearts !" above the everyday level of external things. Second, a more advanced opening, adapted to those who are themselves more advanced in the science and capable of greater things than apprentices. This opening is proclaimed to be "upon the square," which the First Degree opening is not. By which is implied that it is one specially involving the use of the psychic and higher intellectual nature (denoted, as previously explained, by the Square or Water Triangle). Third, a still more advanced opening, declared to be "upon the centre," for those of Master Mason's rank, and pointing to an opening up of consciousness to the very centre and depths of one's being.

How far and to what degree any of us is able to open his personal Lodge determines our real position in Masonry and discloses whether we are in very fact Masters, Craftsmen or Apprentices, or only titularly such. Progress in this, as in other things, comes only with intelligent practice and sustained sincere effort. But what is quite overlooked and desirable to emphasize is the power, as an initiatory force, of an *assemblage* of individuals each sufficiently progressed and competent to "open his Lodge" in the sense described. Such an assembly, gathered in one place and acting with a common definite purpose, creates as it were a vortex in the mental and psychical atmosphere into which a newly initiated candidate is drawn. The tension created by their collective energy of thought and will--progressively intensifying as the Lodge is opened in each successive degree, and correspondingly relaxing as each Degree is closed--acts and leaves a permanent effect upon the candidate (assuming always that he is equally in earnest and "properly prepared" in an interior sense), inducing a favourable mental and spiritual *rapport* between him and those with whom he seeks to be elevated into organic spiritual membership; and, further, it both stimulates his perceptivity and causes his mentality to become charged and permeated with the ideas and uplifting influences projected upon him by his initiators.

The fact that a candidate is not admitted within the Lodge-portals without certain assurances, safeguards and tests, and that even then he is menaced by the sword of the I.G., is an indication that peril to the mental and spiritual organism is recognized as attending the presumptuous engaging in the things with which Initiation deals. As the flaming sword is described as keeping the way to the Tree of Life from those as yet unfitted to approach it, so does the secret law of the Spirit still avenge itself upon those who are unqualified to participate in the knowledge of its mysteries. Hence the commandment "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," that is by invoking Divine Energy for unworthy or vain purposes.

Here, and upon the general subject of the signs, tokens and words employed and communicated in Initiatory Rites, may usefully be quoted the following words by a well-informed Mason, who is of course speaking of them not as the merely perfunctory acts they are in ordinary Lodges, but as they are when intelligently employed by those fully instructed in spiritual science and able to use signs, tokens and words with dynamic power and real efficiency:-

"The symbols of the Mysteries embodied in the design of the Square and Circle constitute the eternal language of the gods, the same in all worlds, from all eternity. They have had neither beginning of years nor

end of days. They are contemporary with time and with eternity. They are the Word of God, the Divine Logos, articulate and expressed in forms of language. Each sign possesses a corresponding vocal expression, bodily gesture or mental intention. This fact is of great importance to the student of the Wisdom, for in it rests the main reason of the secrecy and the intense watchfulness and carefulness of the stewards of the Mysteries lest the secret doctrines find expression on the lips or through the action of unfit persons to possess the secrets. For the secret power of the Mysteries is within the signs. Any person attaining to natural and supernatural states by the process of development, if his heart be untuned and his mind withdrawn from the Divine to the human within him, that power becomes a power of evil instead of a power of good. An unfaithful initiate, in the degree of the Mysteries he has attained, is capable, by virtue of his antecedent preparations and processes, of diverting the power to unholy, demoniacal, astral and dangerous uses..... The use of the signs, the vocal sounds, physical acts and mental intentions, was absolutely prohibited except under rigorously tested conditions. For instance, the utterance of a symbolical sound, or a physical act, corresponding to a sign belonging to a given degree, in a congregation of an inferior degree, was fatal in its effects. In each degree no initiates who have not attained that degree are admitted to its congregations. Only initiates of that degree, and above it, are capable of sustaining the pressure of dynamic force generated in the spiritual atmosphere and concentrated in that degree. The actual mental ejaculation of a sign, under such circumstances, brought the immediate putting forth of an occult power corresponding to it. In all the congregations of the initiates an Inner Guard was stationed within the sanctuary, chancel or oratory at the door of entrance, with the drawn sword in his hand, to ward off unqualified trespassers and intruders. It was no mere formal or metaphorical performance. It was at the risk of the life of any man attempting to make an entrance if he succeeded in crossing the threshold. Secret signs and passwords and other tests were applied to all who knocked at the door, before admission was granted. The possession of the Mysteries, after initiation, and the use of the signs, either vocally, actionally or ejaculatorily, with "intention" in their use (not as mere mechanical repetition), were attended by occult powers directed to the subjects of their special intention, whether absent or present, or for purposes beneficial to the cause in contemplation." (H. E. Sampson's *Progressive Redemption*, pp. 171-174).

To "open the Lodge" of one's own being to the higher verities is no simple task for those who have closed and sealed it by their own habitual thought-modes, preconceptions and distrust of whatever is not sensibly demonstrable. Yet all these propensities must be eradicated or shut out and the Lodge close tyled against them; they have no part or place in the things of the inward man. Effort and practice also are needed to attain stability of mind, control of emotion and thought, and to acquire interior stillness and the harmony of all our parts. As the formal ceremony of Lodge-opening is achieved only by the organized co-operation of its constituent officers, so the due opening of our inner man to God can only be accomplished by the consensus of all our parts and faculties. Absence or failure of any part invalidates the whole. The W.M. alone cannot open the Lodge; he can only invite his brethren to assist him to do so by a concerted process and the unified wills of his subordinates. So too with opening the Lodge of man's soul. His spiritual will, as master-faculty, summons his other faculties to assist it; "sees that none but Masons are present" by taking care that his thoughts and motives in approaching God are pure; calls all these "brethren" to order to prove their due qualification for the work in hand; and only then, after seeing that the Lodge is properly formed, does he undertake the responsibility of invoking the descent of the Divine blessing and influx upon the unified and dedicated whole.

Of all which the Psalmist writes: "How good and joyful a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity..... It is like the precious ointment (anointing) which flows down unto the skirts of the clothing," implying that the Divine influx, when it descends in response to such an invocation, floods and illuminates the entire human organism even to its carnal sense-extremities (which are the "skirts of the clothing" of the soul). Compare also the Christian Master's words: "When thou prayest, enter into thy secret chamber (the Lodge of the soul) and when thou hast shut thy door (by tyling the mind to all outward concerns and thoughts), pray to the Father who seeth in secret, who shall reward thee openly" (by conscious communion).

The foregoing may help both to interpret the meaning and solemn purpose of the Opening in the First Degree, and to indicate the nature of the conditions and spiritual atmosphere that ought to exist when a Lodge is open for business in that Degree. If the Lodge-opening be a real opening in the sense here indicated and not a mere ceremonial form, if the conditions and atmosphere referred to were actually induced at a Masonic meeting, it will be at once apparent that they must needs react powerfully upon a candidate who enters them seeking initiation and spiritual advancement. If he be truly a worthy candidate, properly prepared in his heart and an earnest seeker for the light, the mere fact of his entering such an atmosphere

will so impress and awaken his dormant soul-faculties as in itself to constitute an initiation and an indelible memory, whilst the sensitive-plate of his mind thus stimulated will be readily receptive of the ideas projected into it by the assembled brethren who are initiating him and receiving him into spiritual communion with themselves. On the other hand if he be an unworthy or not properly prepared candidate, that atmosphere and those conditions will prove repellent to him and he will himself be the first to wish to withdraw and not to repeat the experience.

The Closing of the First Degree implies the reverse process of the Opening; the relaxing of the inward energies and the return of the mind to its former habitual level. Yet not without gratitude expressed for Divine favours and perceptions received during the period of openness, or without a counsel to keep closed the book of the heart and lay aside the use of its jewels until we are duly called to resume them; since silence and secrecy are essential to the gestation and growth of the inward man. "He who has seen God is dumb."

SECOND OR FELLOW-CRAFT DEGREE

The Opening of the Second Degree presupposes an ability to open up the inner nature and consciousness to a much more advanced stage than is possible to the beginner, who in theory is supposed to undergo a long period of discipline and apprenticeship in the elementary work of self-preparation and to be able to satisfy certain tests that he has done so before being qualified for advancement to the Fellow-craft stage of self-building.

Again that opening may be a personal work for the individual Mason or a collective work in an assembly of Fellow-crafts and superior Masons to pass an Apprentice to Fellow-craft rank.

The title admitting the qualified Apprentice to a Fellow-craft Lodge is one of great significance, which ordinarily passes without any observation or understanding of its propriety. It is said to denote "in plenty" and to be illustrated by an "ear of corn near to a fall of water" (which two objects are literally the meaning of the Hebrew word in question). It is desirable to observe that this is meant to be descriptive of the candidate himself, and of his own spiritual condition. It is he who is as an ear of corn planted near and nourished by a fall of water. His own spiritual growth, as achieved in the Apprentice stage, is typified by the ripening corn; the fertilizing cause of its growth being the down-pouring upon his inner nature of the vivifying dew of heaven as the result of his aspiration towards the light.

The work appropriated to the Apprentice Degree is that of gaining purity and control of his grosser nature, its appetites and affections. It is symbolized by working the rough ashlar, as dug from the quarry, into due shape for building purposes. The "quarry" is the undifferentiated raw material or group-soul of humanity from which he has issued into individuated existence in this world, where his function is to convert himself into a true die or square meet for the fabric of the Temple designed by the Great Architect to be built in the Jerusalem above out of perfected human souls.

The apprentice-work, which relates to the subdual of the sense-nature and its propensities, being achieved, the next stage is the development and control of the intellectual nature; the investigation of the "hidden paths of nature (*i.e.*, the human psychological nature) and science" (the *gnosis* of self-knowledge, which, pushed to its limit, the candidate is told "leads to the throne of God Himself" and reveals the ultimate secrets of his own nature and the basic principles of intellectual as distinct from moral truth). It should be noted that the candidate is told that he is now "*permitted* to extend his researches" into these hidden paths. There is peril to the mentality of the candidate if this work is undertaken before the purifications of the Apprentice stage have been accomplished. Hence the permission is not accorded until that preliminary task has been done and duly tested.

The work of the Second Degree is accordingly a purely philosophical work, involving deep psychological self-analysis, experience of unusual phenomena, as the psychic faculties of the soul begin to unfold themselves, and the apprehension of abstract Truth (formerly described as mathematics). This work is altogether beyond both the mental horizon and the capacity of the average modern Mason, though in the Mysteries of antiquity the *Mathesis* (or mental discipline) was an outstanding feature and produced the intellectual giants of Greek philosophy. Hence it is that to-day the Degree is found dull, unpicturesque and unattractive, since psychic experience and intellectual principles cannot be made spectacular and dramatic.

The Ritual runs that our ancient brethren of this Degree met in the porchway of King Solomon's Temple. This is a way of saying that natural philosophy is the porchway to the attainment of Divine Wisdom; that the study of man leads to knowledge of God, by revealing to man the ultimate divinity at the base of human nature. This study or self-analysis of human nature Plato called Geometry; earth-measuring; the probing, sounding and determining the limits, proportions and potentialities of our personal organism in its physical and psychical aspects. The ordinary natural consciousness is directed outwards; perceives only outward

objects; thinks only of an outward Deity separate and away from us. It can accordingly cognize only shadows, images and illusions. The science of the Mysteries directs that process must be reversed. It says: "Just as you have symbolically shut and close-tyled the door of your Lodge against all outsiders, so you must shut out all perception of outward images, all desire for external things and material welfare, and turn your consciousness and aspirations wholly inward. For the Vital and Immortal Principle-- the Kingdom of Heaven--is *within* you; it is not to be found outside you. Like the prodigal son in the parable you have wandered away from it into a far country and lost all consciousness of it. You have come down and down, as by a spiral motion or a winding staircase, into this lower world and imperfect form of existence; coiling around you as you came increasingly thickening vestures, culminating in your outermost dense body of flesh; whilst your mentality has woven about you veil after veil of illusory notions concerning your real nature and the nature of true Life. Now the time and the impulse have at last come for you to turn back to that inward world. Therefore reverse your steps. Look no longer outwards, but inwards. Go back up that same winding staircase. It will bring you to that Centre of Life and *Sanctum Sanctorum* from which you have wandered."

When the Psalmist writes "Who will go up the hill of the Lord ? Even he that hath clean hands and a pure heart," the meaning is identical with what is implied in the ascent of the inwardly "winding staircase" of the Second Degree. Preliminary purification of the mind is essential to its rising to purer realms of being and loftier conscious states than it has been accustomed to. If "the secrets of nature and the principles of intellectual truth" are to become revealed to its view, as the Degree intends and promises, the mentality must not be fettered by mundane interests or subject to disturbance by carnal passions. If it is to "contemplate its own intellectual faculties and trace them from their development" until they are found to "lead to the throne of God Himself" and to be rooted in Deity, it must discard all its former thought-habits, prejudices and preconceptions, and be prepared to receive humbly the illumination that will flood into it from the Light of Divine Wisdom.

For the determined student of the mental discipline implied by the Second Degree there may be recommended two most instructive sources of information and examples of personal experience. One is the Dialogues of Plato and the writings of Plotinus and other Neo-Platonists. The other is the records of the classical Christian contemplatives, such as Eckhart or Ruysbroeck or the "Interior Castle" of St. Theresa. The *Phaedrus* of Plato, in particular, is an important record by an initiate of the ancient Mysteries of the psychological experiences referred to in the Fellow-Craft Degree.

The subject is too lengthy for further exposition here beyond again indicating that it is in the illumined mental condition attained in this Degree that the discovery is made of the Divine Principle at the centre of our organism; and that the sign of the Degree is equivalent to a prayer that the sunlight of that exalted state may "stand still" and persist in us until we have effected the overthrow of all our "enemies" and eradicated all obstacles to our union with that Principle.

The reference to our ancient brethren receiving their wages at the porchway of the Temple of Wisdom is an allusion to an experience common to every one in the Fellow-Craft stage of development. He learns that old scores due by him to his fellowmen must be paid off and old wrongs righted, and receives the wages of past sins recorded upon his subconsciousness by that pencil that observes and there records all our thoughts, words and actions. The candidate leading the philosophic life realizes that he is justly entitled to those wages and receives them without scruple or diffidence, knowing himself to be justly entitled to them and only too glad to expiate and purge himself of old offences. For we are all debtors to some one or other for our present position in life, and must repay what we owe to humanity--perhaps with tears or adversity--before we straighten our account with that eternal Justice with which we aspire to become allied.

THIRD, OR MASTER-MASON'S DEGREE

Before dealing with the opening and closing of the Third Degree, it should be observed that in the Lodge symbolism the teaching of the First and Second Degrees is carried forward into the Third. The traditional Tracing-Board of the Third Degree exhibits in combination (1) the chequered floorwork, (2) the two pillars at the porchway of the Temple, (3) the winding staircase, and (4) a dormer window above the porchway. The brief explanation is given that the chequer-work is for the High Priest to walk upon and the dormer-window is that which gave light to it. The entire symbol is but one comprehensive glyph or pictorial diagram of the condition of a candidate aspiring to Master Mason's rank. As high priest of his own personal temple he must have his bodily nature and its varied desires under foot. He must have developed strength of will and character to "walk upon" this chequer-work and withstand its appeals. He must also be able to ascend the winding staircase of his inner nature, to educate and habituate his mentality to higher conscious states

and so establish it there that he will be unaffected by seductive or affrighting perceptions that there may meet him. By the cultivation of this “strength” and the ability to “establish” himself upon the loftier conscious levels he co-ordinates the two pillars at the porchway of his inmost sanctuary--namely, the physical and psychical supports of his organism--and acquires the “stability” involved in regeneration and requisite to him before passing on to “that last and greatest trial” which awaits him. “In strength will I establish My house that it may stand firm.” Man’s perfected organism is what is meant by “My house.” It was the same organism and the same stability that the Christian Master spoke of in saying “Upon this rock will I build my church and the gates of the underworld shall not prevail against it.”

During all the discipline and labour involved in attaining this stability there has shone light on the path from the first moment that his Apprentice’s vision was opened to larger truth; light from the science and philosophy of the Order itself which is proving his “porchway” to the ultimate sanctuary within; light from friendly helpers and instructors; above all, light from the sun in his own “heavens,” streaming through the “dormer-window” of his illumined intelligence and slowly but surely guiding his feet into the way of peace.

But now the last and greatest trial of his fortitude and fidelity, one imposing upon him a still more serious obligation of endurance, awaits him in the total withdrawal of this kindly light. Hitherto, although guided by that light, he has progressed in virtue of his own natural powers and efforts. Now the time has come when those props have to be removed, when all reliance upon natural abilities, self-will and the normal rational understanding, must be surrendered and the aspirant must abandon himself utterly to the transformative action of his Vital and Immortal Principle alone, passively suffering it to complete the work in entire independence of his lesser faculties. He must “lose his life to save it”; he must surrender all that he has hitherto felt to be his life in order to find life of an altogether higher order.

Hence the Third Degree is that of mystical death, of which bodily death is taken as figurative, just as bodily birth is taken in the First Degree as figurative of entrance upon the path of regeneration. In all the Mystery-systems of the past will be found this degree of mystical death as an outstanding and essential feature prior to the final stage of perfection or regeneration. As an illustration one has only to refer to a sectional diagram of the Great Pyramid of Egypt, which was so constructed as to be not merely a temple of initiation, but to record in permanent form the principles upon which regeneration is attainable. Its entrance passage extends for some distance into the building as a narrow ascending channel through which the postulant who desires to reach the centre must creep in no small discomfort and restrictedness. This was to emblemise the discipline and up-hill labour of self-purification requisite in the Apprentice Degree. At a certain point this restricted passage opens out into a long and lofty gallery, still upon a steeply rising gradient, up which the postulant had to pass, but in a condition of ease and liberty. This was to symbolize the condition of illumination and expanded intellectual liberty associated with the Fellow-craft Degree. It ended at a place where the candidate once more had to force his way on hands and knees through the smallest aperture of all, one that led to the central chamber in which stood and still stands the great sarcophagus in which he was placed and underwent the last supreme ordeal, and whence he was raised from the dead, initiated and perfected.

The title of admission communicated to the candidate for the Third Degree is noteworthy, as also the reason for it. It is a Hebrew name, said to be that of the first artificer in metals and to mean “in worldly possessions.” Now it will be obvious that the name of the first man who worked at metal-making in the ordinary sense can be of no possible interest or concern to us to-day, nor has the information the least bearing upon the subject of human regeneration. It is obviously a veil of allegory concealing some relevant truth. Such it will be found to be upon recognizing that Hebrew Biblical names represent not persons, but personifications of spiritual principles, and that Biblical history is not ordinary history of temporal events but a record of eternally true spiritual facts. The matter is, therefore, interpretable as follows: We know from the teaching of the Entered Apprentice Degree what “money and metals” are in the Masonic sense, and that they represent the attractive power of temporal possessions, and earthly belongings and affections of whatever description. We know too that from the attraction and seductiveness of these things, and even from the desire for them, it is essential to be absolutely free if one desires to attain that Light and those riches of Wisdom for which the candidate professes to long. Not that it is necessary for him to become literally and physically dispossessed of worldly possessions, but it is essential that he should be so utterly detached from them that he cares not whether he owns any or not and is content, if need be, to be divested of them entirely if they stand in the way of his finding “treasure in heaven”; for so long as he clings to them or they exercise control over him, so long will his initiation into anything better be deferred.

It follows then that it is the personal soul of the candidate himself which is the “artificer in metals” referred to, and which during the whole of its physical existence has been engaged in trafficking with “metals.” Desire for worldly possessions, for sensation and experience in this outward world of good and evil, brought the soul into this world. There it has woven around itself its present body of flesh, every desire and thought being an “artificer” adding something to or modifying its natural encasement. The Greek philosophers used to teach that souls secrete their bodies as a snail secretes his shell, and our own poet Spenser truly wrote:

“For of the soul the body form doth take,
And soul is form and doth the body make.”

If, then, desire for physical experience and material things brought the soul into material conditions (as is also indicated in the great parable of the Prodigal Son), the relinquishing of that desire is the first necessary step to ensure its return to the condition whence it first emanated. Satiation with and consequent disgust at the “husks” of things instigated the Prodigal Son to aspire to return home. Similar repletion and revolt drives many a man to lose all desire for external things and to seek for peace within himself and there redirect his energies in quest of possessions which are abiding and real. This is the moment of his true “conversion,” and the moment when he is ripe for initiation into the hidden Mysteries of his own being. The First and Second Degrees of Masonry imply that the candidate has undergone lengthy discipline in the renunciation of external things and the cultivation of desire for those that are within. But, notwithstanding that he has passed through all the discipline of those Degrees, he is represented at the end of them as being still not entirely purified and to be still “in worldly possessions” in the sense that a residue of attraction by them and reliance upon himself lingers in his heart; and it is these last subtle close-clinging elements of “base metal” in him that need to be eradicated if perfection is to be attained. The ingrained defects and tendencies of the soul as the result of all its past habits and experiences are not suddenly eliminated or easily subdued. Self-will and pride are very subtle in their nature and may continue to deceive their victim long after he has purged himself of grosser faults. As Cain was the murderer of Abel, so every taint of base metal in oneself debases the gold of the Vital and Immortal Principle. It must be renounced, died to and transmuted in the crucial process of the Third Degree. Hence it is that the candidate is entrusted with a name that designates himself at this stage and that indicates that he is still “in worldly possessions;” that is, that some residue of the spirit of this world yet lingers in him which it is necessary to eliminate from his nature before he can be raised to the sublime degree of Master.

Examination of the text of the opening and closing of the Lodge in the Third Degree discloses the whole of the philosophy upon which the Masonic system is reared. It indicates that the human soul has originated in the eternal East--that “East” being referable to the world of Spirit and not to any geographical direction--and that thence it has directed its course towards the “West”--the material world which is the antipodes of the spiritual and into which the soul has wandered. Its purpose in so journeying from spiritual to physical conditions is declared to be the quest and recovery of something it has lost, but which by its own industry and suitable instruction it hopes to find. From this it follows that the loss itself occurred prior to its descent into this world, otherwise that descent would not have been necessary. What it is that has been lost is not explicitly declared, but is implied and is stated to form “the genuine secrets of a Master Mason.” It is the loss of a word, or rather of The Word, the Divine Logos, or basic root and essence of our own being. In other words the soul of man has ceased to be God-conscious and has degenerated into the limited terrestrial consciousness of the ordinary human being. It is in the condition spoken of in the cosmic parable of Adam when extruded from Eden, an exile from the Divine Presence and condemned to toil and trouble. The quest after this lost Word is declared by the Wardens to have been so far abortive, and to have resulted in the discovery, not of that Reality, but of substitutional images of it. All which implies that, in the strength of merely his natural temporal intelligence, man can find and know nothing more in this world than shadows, images and phenomenal forms of realities which abide eternally and noumenally in the world of Spirit to which his temporal faculties are at present closed. Yet there remains a way of regaining consciousness of that higher world and life. It is by bringing into function a now dormant and submerged faculty resident at the depth and centre of his being. That dormant faculty is the Vital and Immortal Principle which exists as the central point of the circle of his individuality. As the outward Universe is the externalized projection of an indwelling immanent Deity, so is the outward individual man the externalization and diffusion of an inherent Divine germ, albeit perverted and distorted by personal self-will and desire which have dislocated and shut off his consciousness from his root of being. Recover contact with that central Divine Principle by a voluntary renunciation of the intervening obstructions and inharmonious elements in oneself, and man at

once ceases to be merely the rationalized animal he now is and becomes grafted upon a new and Divine life-principle, a sharer of Omniscience and a co-operator with Deity. He recovers the lost and genuine secrets of his own being and has for ever finished with substitutions, shadows and simulacra of Reality. He reaches a point and lives from a centre from which no Master Mason can ever err or will ever again desire to err, for it is the end, object and goal of his existence.

Meanwhile, until actual recovery of that lost secret, man must put up with its substitutions and regard these as sacramental of concealed realities, contact with which will be his great reward if he submits himself to the conditions upon which alone he may discover them. The existence of those realities and the regimen essential to their enjoyment are inculcated by Masonry as they have been by every other initiatory Order of the past, and it is for the fact that this knowledge is and always has been conserved in the world, so as to be ever available for earnest aspirants towards it, that gratitude is expressed to the Grand Master of all for having never left Himself, or the way of return to Him, without witness in this outer world.

As much has been said about the Ceremony of the Third Degree in other papers it is unnecessary here to expound it further. It may be stated, however, that it alone constitutes the Masonic Initiation. The First and Second Degrees are, strictly, but preparatory stages leading up to Initiation; they are not the Initiation itself; they but prescribe the purification of the bodily and mental nature necessary to qualify the candidate for the end which crowns the whole work. To those unacquainted with what is really involved in actual as distinct from merely ceremonial initiation, and who have no notion of what initiation meant in the old schools of Wisdom and still means for those who understand the theory of Regenerative Science, it is well nigh impossible to convey any idea of its process or its results. The modern Mason, however high in titular rank, is as little qualified to understand the subject as the man who has never entered a Lodge. "To become initiated (or perfected)," says an old authority, Plutarch, "involves dying"; not a physical death, but a moral way of dying in which the soul is loosened from the body and the sensitive life, and becoming temporarily detached therefrom is set free to enter the world of Eternal Light and Immortal Being. This, after most drastic preliminary disciplines, was achieved in a state of trance and under the supervision of duly qualified Masters and Adepts who intromitted the candidate's liberated soul into its own interior principles until it at last reached the Blazing Star or Glory at its own Centre, in the light of which it simultaneously knew itself and God, and realized their unity and the "points of fellowship" between them. Then it was that, from this at once awful and sublime experience, the initiated soul was brought back to its bodily encasement again and "reunited to the companions of its former toils," to resume its temporal life, but with conscious realization of Life Eternal superadded to its knowledge and its powers. Then only was it entitled to the name of Master Mason. Then only could it exclaim, in the words of another initiate (Empedocles), "Farewell, all earthly allies; henceforth am I no mortal wight, but an immortal angel, ascending up into Divinity and reflecting upon that likeness of it which I have found in myself."

The "secrets" of Freemasonry and of initiation are largely connected with this process of introversion of the soul to its own Centre, and beyond this brief reference to the subject it is inexpedient here to say more. But in confirmation of what has been indicated it may be useful to refer to the 23rd Psalm, in which the Hebrew Initiates speak of both the supreme experience of being passed through "the valley of the shadow of death" and the preliminary phases of mental preparation for that ordeal. Stripping that familiar psalm of the gorgeous metaphor given it in the beautiful Biblical translation, its real meaning may be paraphrased and explained for Masonic students as follows:-

"The Vital and Immortal Principle within me is my Initiator; and is all-sufficient to lead me to God.

It has made me lie down (in self-discipline and humiliation) in "green pastures" of meditation and mental sustenance.

It has led me beside "still waters" of contemplation (as distinct from the "rough sea of passion" of my natural self).

It is restoring my soul (reintegrating it out of chaos and disorder).

Even when I come to pass through the valley of deadly gloom (my own interior veils of darkness) I will fear no evil; for It is with me (as a guiding star); Its directions and disciplines will safeguard me.

It provides me with the means of overcoming my inner enemies and weaknesses; It anoints my intelligence with the oil of wisdom; the cup of my mind brims over with new light and consciousness.

The Divine Love and Truth, which I shall find face to face at my centre, will be a conscious presence to me all the days of my temporal life; and thereafter I shall dwell in a "house of the Lord (a glorified spiritual body) for ever."

The Third Degree is completed in, and can only be more fully expounded by reference to, the Holy Royal Arch Ceremony. A separate further paper will, therefore, be devoted to that Ceremony.

A DAILY ADVANCEMENT...

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RESTORING THE CENTER

Organizations that prosper find what they do best and focus on it.

By Wayne T. Adams, 33°

It is one of the axioms of life that the person who succeeds is the person who seeks and finds that which he or she does best and then does it. The same is also true for an organization. Those organizations that prosper find what they do best and then bring their focus to bear on that strength.

In Freemasonry today, we seem to have a great uncertainty about what we do best, where our true vocation lies.

There are those who believe that fellowship is the most important aspect of Masonry, and their primary focus is in spending time with other people in congenial and pleasing pursuits.

There are those who think that the most important aspect of Masonry is its outward expression in terms of community service and involvement in charitable activities. They readily point to successful lodges that are doing just that and having a good measure of success.

In spite of some notable successes in each of those areas, I believe our fraternity as an organization is adrift because it has lost sight of its primary purpose.

If a man is primarily interested in performing, there are community theatres where he or she can find great satisfaction. If a man is primarily interested in fellowship, there are many other organizations that can provide congenial social outlets. If a man is primarily interested in public service and community outreach, there are other organizations that are focused on that goal, have done it longer, and seem to do it better.

We need all those men and have to respect their particular interest, but an organization needs one fundamental focus. The particular interests of individual Masons cannot be allowed to warp the main focus of Freemasonry.

This of course brings us to the question: What is the unique quality of Masonry? What is its mission and unique vocation?

I believe that the purpose of Masonry is:

to show the path to self-knowledge,
to instill a philosophy, and
to offer a method or system for staying connected with and living by that philosophy.

When a person or an organization tries to do something that is not its true vocation, it fails. Let me offer an extreme example to illustrate the point. A school's vocation is to teach. It is organized to accomplish that purpose. It selects its leadership and establishes a decision-making process with that purpose in mind.

Suppose it then decides that it also wants to make textiles. The staff and faculty are bright people, and they can probably figure out that they have to buy some yarn or thread. They have to buy some weaving machines, and they have to develop a marketing plan to sell the product.

These teachers and administrators certainly are capable enough to figure out what has to be done, but for a school not really focused on that objective, not equipped to do that, and not organized to do that, the likelihood of being successful in making textiles is remote.

It won't be very successful in making textiles, and since it is trying to do something removed from its proper vocation, it won't do a very good job in attracting and educating students either.

Let us look at Masonry. If the purpose of Masonry is to instruct men in a philosophy and a system to enable them to make right decisions and to maintain good relationships and to give them some guidance in that direction, it is probably not going to be very successful if it shifts its focus to community service or to perfect ritual or to fellowship activities.

If any organization abandons its primary vocation, it is not going to succeed in attaining that vocation or any other vocation very well. And so it is with Masonry.

From my perspective, all Masonry is found at the local lodge level. It would

be an overstatement to say that Grand Lodges are a necessary evil, but they can be a detriment whenever the leadership does not resist the temptation to undertake tasks for which it has no effective organizational structure and for which it has no open participatory decision-making process.

If we are realistic, we have to admit that we have a 17th century philosophy (which we don't think about very much), embedded in 18th century ritual (which we perform almost by rote), entrusted to a 19th century organizational structure (with customs and priorities which got seriously out of step with contemporary society in the 20th century), as we enter the 21st century (with leadership that spends 95 percent of its time making ceremonial appearances).

This is hardly a remedy for success, and no one attempting to design a successful organization today would ever create such a structure.

So we have an organization that is uncertain of its focus and trying to do a lot of things it was not designed to do. The center has given way.

As one Grand Master has said, "We don't have a membership problem; we have a mission and vision problem." He is correct. Membership gain is not a goal; membership gain is the result of a goal achieved.

So what can we do that will make a difference? We clearly need to either recover the original focus of the fraternity or adopt some new focus. And we need to either tailor our organization to meet the needs of our traditional focus or re-tailor it to meet some new focus and purpose.

Of course I have my preference. I would like to see this fraternity become once again a thinking man's organization. I'm not saying that everyone needs to be a scholar. I am saying that we need to establish an intellectual center, a common Masonic culture that can:

restore direction to the fraternity,
give it the guidance it needs to function in the 21st century, and
create a common culture where those who seek more Light can find it.

By intellectual center I don't mean a place or organization. I mean a core of men who are knowledgeable about Masonry and acute observers of the world around them.

We have the capability to create such a center and to create a vibrant

Masonic culture. Bearing in mind that institutions tend to fossilize, I think we need several points of activity. Let me suggest a few points that could make up a lively and creative center.

A Masonic college is now in the advanced planning stages in Maine. The college is developing seminars and courses on the history of our ritual, the role of myth and symbolism in Masonic thought and teachings, explorations into the tenets and moral values of the craft, analysis of popular books that feature Masonic allusions, Masonic music, and the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and Masonry.

A second important element in creating a common Masonic culture and a common frame of reference would be a well designed and structured reading program.

The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania has an Academy of Masonic Knowledge offering a three-level reading program with works of increasing complexity.

A third important element to an active Masonic culture could be a lodge of research. American research lodges could make a greater contribution to re-energizing the Craft. I would like to see our lodges of research shift their focus from the past to the present, because I believe they can make a valuable stimulating contribution to the present.

A fourth element would be the establishment of new lodges having a special focus.

These four elements can be important parts of a creative, vibrant, intellectual center for Masonry.

There is nothing wrong with ceremony. There is nothing wrong with good public relations. There is nothing wrong with good community service. My point is that all these things have to be emanations of a common philosophy and belief system that is now, always has been, and always will be the product of study, reading, reflection, and discussion.

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