

## THE MEANING, PURPOSE AND SYMBOLISM OF FREEMASONRY

PART ONE and PART TWO

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I am going to commence my address to you this evening by reading to you part of the Introductory Address to the First of Fifteen Sections of the Lectures in Craft Masonry.

Now, it is quite likely, that many of you have never heard these lectures read, indeed, I doubt not that some of you have never heard of them. Such is the measure of the neglect which the Craft in general gives to the education of its members and it is the purpose of my talk tonight to try in some small measure to remedy this deficiency and arouse in your minds an interest which will encourage those among you who have the urge for masonic education to seek out the means by which this education can be obtained and also to persuade those who have the arrangement of Lodge programmes to see that some time is devoted to this much neglected subject.

Now for the quotation:

"Brethren, Masonry, according to the general acceptance of the term, is an Art founded on the principles of Geometry, and directed to the service and convenience of mankind. But Freemasonry embracing a wider range, and having a more noble object in view, namely, the cultivation and improvement of the human mind, may, with more propriety, be called a Science, although its lessons for the most part are veiled in Allegory and illustrated by Symbols, inasmuch as, veiling itself under the terms of the former, it inculcates principles of the purest morality .

To draw aside this veil therefore, or more properly speaking to penetrate through its mysteries, is the object of our Masonic Lectures.. "

And such, my brethren, is the object of this talk to you this evening.

The first thing to note is that in the quotation a distinction is drawn between Masonry and Freemasonry.

It is therefore very necessary that we should have clearly in our minds a proper understanding of what we mean by Freemasonry and therefore the first question that we have to ask ourselves is "What is Freemasonry?"

Before, however, trying to deal with this question it is essential that I should make it quite clear to you that I have no intention of falling into the error which is so easy for anyone in a position such as I am of being dogmatic in my remarks.

In any field of human endeavour it is usually those holding strong views on any particular subject who have the courage to stand up and address their fellows. It is therefore very easy for such a person so to express himself as to give the impression that what he says is not only the truth but also the only truth, and if he is

dealing with an explanation of symbolism that his interpretation is the only interpretation.

Brethren, such is not my intention at all. I shall give you my ideas, my interpretations, my explanations. I shall also wherever possible give you the thoughts of other writers who have expressed their ideas of Freemasonry, but you will be left entirely to formulate your own opinions and all that I hope is that what I say will be used as something to stimulate you into giving the matter more consideration than you would otherwise have done

To return, then to our question What is Freemasonry?

In its own ritual Freemasonry describes itself as "a peculiar system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." This is all very well as far as it goes but I do not think that it goes far enough neither is it sufficiently explicit particularly for those newly admitted to the Craft or those trying to make a study of Freemasonry.

Freemasonry has been defined as a body of men banded together to preserve and propagate by means of a ceremonial certain basic truths which are the property of the whole human race but which man normally tends to put into the background of his consciousness. These basic truths are concerned with man in his relationship with Deity and man in his relationship with his fellow man. Thus its primary teachings are Brotherly Love, Relief, Truth and Spiritual and Moral Virtue. It teaches Man's dependence upon God Who is referred to as The Great Architect of the Universe, and also Man's obligations to assist his fellow man (Am I my brother's keeper undoubtedly, yes). From this it follows that Freemasons should assist all men - not merely their brethren of the Craft.

In a little booklet issued by the Grand Lodge of Michigan, U.S.A. to its candidates, Freemasonry is described as:

"A fellowship of men of like minds in their search for Truth each working to aid the other in his efforts to attain perfection within himself and in every phase of his personal environment."

Again, in the book entitled "The Freemasons" by Eugen Lennhoff, the author quotes from the "General Handbook of Freemasonry" which is stated to be the standard work of German Freemasonry as follows:

"Freemasonry is the activity of closely associated men, who, employing symbolical forms mainly borrowed from the Masonic Craft and Architecture, work for the welfare of mankind, seeking to ennoble themselves, and others, in order thereby to bring into being a universal Brotherhood of Humanity, which they aim to represent in miniature amongst themselves."

Thus, we see, that to define Freemasonry properly we have to adopt a much broader outlook than that which is contained in the official definition.

But let us return to the official definition and see what it really means.

First of all then, I think it is necessary to state that at all times in the known history of man on this earth, systems of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols have existed, all with the same object in view, namely to study man's relationship with his God. The religions of the world and the literature of the world are all full of such examples. The trouble is that so often man has observed the surface explanation and missed entirely the more important secrets which are hidden beneath the surface. It is therefore very important and very necessary that we should go thoroughly into what we mean by a system of morality and also what we mean by allegory and symbolism.

Morality is not to be confused with morals and the word here has no reference to morals as we normally understand the word neither to any matter of ethics. It must be obvious that if we were merely dealing with a system of morals there would be no necessity for veils of secrecy, neither would there be any necessity for such an elaborate system of ceremonial as we have in our Craft Degrees. The definition of the word as given by Wilmshurst is that "the word is derived from the word 'MORES" i.e. customs and practices of some distinctive cult of religious or philosophical devotees. "

For the Freemason the study of symbolism is imperative. A symbol can be defined as a visible representation of some object or thing which may be real or imagined, employed to convey a certain idea. Symbols are one of the oldest forms of writing known to the human race for the ancient Egyptians used a form of hieroglyphics in order to convey their thoughts to succeeding generations. It is by means of this symbolism that most of our knowledge of the ancient world and its wisdom has come down to us. The ancient form of symbolic writing has passed from current usage, but Freemasonry, to some extent, is employing symbols to record her precepts and to impress the minds of the brethren who come amongst us. Therefore the Freemason who knows nothing of symbolism can know but little of Freemasonry itself. To quote the words of Albert Pike, that great American writer on Freemasonry:

"The symbolism of Masonry is the soul of Masonry. Every symbol of a Lodge is a religious teacher, the mute teacher also of morals and philosophy. It is in the ancient symbols and in the knowledge of their true meaning that the preeminence of Freemasonry over all others consists. "

To quote the words of another great writer R. F. Gould:

"The symbolism of Masonry, or at all events, a material part of it, is of great antiquity, and in substance the system of Masonry which we now possess, including the three degrees of the Craft, has come down to us in all its essentials from times remote to our own."

We thus begin to appreciate the importance of symbolism in Freemasonry, but let us carry our thoughts a stage further.

The Oxford Dictionary defines a symbol as: "Thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in

fact or thought."

And Brother S. T. Klein in his book entitled "The Way of Attainment" states:

"The human race is steadily progressing towards the goal to which the scheme of creation is carrying us; but it is yet in its infancy, as is shown by the fact that we still require symbolism to help us to maintain and carry forward abstract thoughts to higher levels, even as children require picture books for that purpose."

Symbolism is as old as man himself. It began with the first communication of ideas among men. It is the outward sign of an inner concept a word, an image or a gesture which tells to the one who is of the inner circle the story of a secret, a hidden or of an esoteric association.

In his book entitled "Symbolism or Mystic Masonry," Brother J. D. Buck, states:

"In its ritualism and monitorial lessons Masonry teaches nothing in morals, in science, in religion, or in any other department of human knowledge or human interest, not taught elsewhere in current forms of thought, or by the sages of the past. In these directions it has no secrets of any kind. It is in the ancient symbols of Freemasonry that its real secrets lie concealed, and these are as densely veiled to the Mason as to any other, unless he has studied the science of symbolism in general and masonic symbolism in particular. The most profound secrets of Masonry are not revealed in the Lodge at all. They belong only to the few."

And as a last quotation on this particular aspect of symbolism I quote the words of Brother F. V. Mataralay in his book entitled "The Masonic Way.": "The way of Masonry is largely inculcated by symbols. It has been found in all ages that emblems and symbols expressing great truths by a few simple strokes, appeal to the mind more strongly and are better remembered than words. To make the most of them it is necessary to grasp the meaning underlying them, and to carry the mind along with them."

It is therefore our duty as Freemasons to learn to interpret the symbolism of our Craft for only thus can we become Freemasons in fact instead of only Freemasons in word. This is our daily advancement in masonic knowledge. Far too many members of the Order make no attempt to draw aside the veil by which the allegory of the Craft is hidden and are perfectly content to accept the symbols at their face value rather than to make any serious attempt to solve their mystery.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the primary purpose of symbolism is to conceal, for in all ages where esoteric truths have been taught by means of symbols, the reason is not only because mere words are inadequate to impart the message which it is intended to convey but also because it has been, and is still is, necessary to veil certain truths from the profane and from those who are not yet entitled i.e. properly prepared to understand them. Each of us, therefore, must interpret the symbols of

Freemasonry according to his own capacity. It follows, therefore, that in a particular symbol we shall each see something different. This does not mean that either of us is wrong. We are each permitted to see so much of Truth as we are entitled to know.

There have been, and still are, however, critics who question the interpretation of masonic symbolism for as one writer puts it:

"When we become launched into its stream, we are often caught up in the torrent and carried out into the open sea of imagination without the chart of reality and proof to guide us on our journey.

Again, it has been contended by some writers that one is not justified in ascribing to any particular symbol any meaning other than that given in the ritual, for surely, it is held, the compilers thereof, with specific design, gave to each of the Operative tools, for instance, or other emblems, the meaning best suited to convey an important and instructive lesson. However, we are enjoined to speculate on the meaning of the various symbols and each of us according to our own ideas gives to the particular symbol the meaning which most appeals to his own individuality. Moreover, there must be some meaning other than that contained in the ritual otherwise the whole idea of veiling with allegory and illustrating by symbol falls to the ground. We are told that veiling is necessary in order to safeguard our secrets from the profane and if veiling is necessary at all it must be to hide something which is not for the world at large. We therefore come to the conclusion that veiling is necessary in order, first that we should learn to think for ourselves, and secondly that the secrets which by means of this thinking can become known to us are only for those who are properly prepared to receive them.

In his book entitled "Freemasons Guide and Compendium," W.Bro. Bernard E. Jones states: "It is unfortunate that masonic symbolism lends itself to the fertile invention of hosts of writers, who, as W. H. Rylands puts it, 'guided by no sort of system and ruled only by their own sweet will, love to allow their fancies and imagination to run wild'."

Whilst as I have stated before, all are entitled to hold their own opinions I must differ from Brother Bernard Jones and Brother Rylands as quoted here. I feel that these are the remarks of one who is unable to discern anything beyond the obvious. Maybe I am biased in favour of the mystic rather than the materialist, but in my view these brethren are unable to appreciate that the purpose of symbolism and masonic symbolism in particular is primarily to encourage the imagination. To encourage contemplation and meditation. The small voice of intuition which resides within each one of us should be given more scope than is usually afforded, for remember, brethren, the words of the poet Browning:

"Truth is within ourselves. It takes no rise From outward things, whatso'er you may believe, There is an inward centre within ourselves Where truth abides in fulness, and to know Rather consists in finding out a way Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape Than by effecting entrance for a light Supposed to be without."

And are we not told in our own ritual that we hope to find our secrets "With the centre."

I would like to give you a quotation from a book entitled "The Meaning of Masonry" written by W.Bro. W. L. Wilmshurst:

"Our teaching is purposely veiled in allegory and symbol and its deeper import does not appear on the surface of the ritual itself. This is partly in correspondence with human life itself and the world we live in, which are themselves but allegories and symbols of another life and the veils of another world; and partly also, so that only those who have reverent and understanding minds may penetrate into the more hidden meaning of the doctrine of the Craft. The deeper secrets in Masonry, like the deeper secrets of life, are heavily veiled; are closely hidden. They exist concealed beneath a great reservation; but whoso knows anything of them knows also that they are "many and valuable," and that they are disclosed only to those who act upon the hint given in our Lectures, "Seek and ye shall find; ask and ye shall have; knock and it shall be opened unto you." The search may be long and difficult but great things are not acquired without effort and search; but it may be affirmed that to the candidate who is "properly prepared" (in a much fuller sense than we conventionally attach to that expression) there are doors leading from the Craft that, when knocked, will assuredly open and admit him to places and to knowledge he recks at present little of."

In the Prestonian Lecture for 1953 the late W.Brother G. S. Shepherd-Jones quotes Dr. Sayce, the Professor of Assyriology as follows:

"We can understand the spiritual and the abstract only by the help of the material and we cannot convey that understanding to others or even to ourselves, without recourse to parables, symbols and allegory."

Also Clemens Alexandrinus once stated:

"All sacred truth is enfolded in enigmatical legends, fables and allegories."

After considering all that I have said regarding symbols and symbolism I would now like to define a symbol as an outer, visible and tangible sign of an inner spiritual reality. It is my belief that there must be some hiddenness in Freemasonry for, if it is not so then surely we are wasting our time in memorising ritual and performing ceremonies just to learn something of a few ethical virtues which can be just as easily learned without all this ritual and ceremonial.

One is sometimes asked why it is that Freemasonry employs a ritual and an elaborate ceremonial. Could not it be asked -- the lessons of Freemasonry, of Brotherly Love, of Charity and of Benevolence, be taught without all this ceremonial without all this learning of ritual and, bearing in mind particularly the Third Degree, all this drama.

The answer, of course, is that Freemasonry, as properly understood sets out to be something more than a society to improve and teach the living of a moral life. It is a Spiritual Science and at all times lessons of Truth and lessons of the Spirit, have of necessity always been taught in this way. By its very ritual Freemasonry is said to be veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols. So are all forms of religion and spiritual teaching. Many there are who believe that the Bible itself is composed entirely of allegory and symbol. Most, I believe, will agree that at least part of it is so written. Why is this?

Spiritual Truth can only be taught in this way. Firstly because when teaching people of all stages of spiritual development it is the only means available by which understanding can be conveyed to them. Children are taught by means of fairy stories and picture books. Secondly you cannot use an entirely material means to teach spiritual truths. And thirdly spiritual truth must always be taught in such a way that only those properly prepared shall be able to understand. It is the explanation of what the Bible calls casting pearls before swine.

Therefore, I can now answer our original question as to what is Freemasonry by saying that in my opinion:

"Freemasonry is a spiritual science which teaches of man's relationship to his fellow man but more particularly of man's relationship to God. It seeks to explain by means of allegory and symbolism the How, Whence and Whither of life but purposely veils its instruction so that only those who are worthy by being properly prepared or properly instructed shall be able to avail themselves of its teachings."

Having now, I hope, established the fact that Freemasonry, when properly understood, is something more than just a Brotherhood with Charitable and Moral objects, I would like to explain what to my mind is the interpretation of the Three degrees of the Craft with perhaps a few brief words of a general nature on the Royal Arch ceremony bearing in mind the fact that perhaps not all here are members of the Holy Royal Arch.

The Ceremony of Initiation is intended to portray that search for Truth and Light which is inherent in all of us. Therefore we come in that state of darkness which illustrates that state of ignorance in which we all commence our earthly pilgrimage.

The candidate enters, poor and penniless, for man brings nothing material with him into this life. Hence he is deprived of all monies and metals before he enters the Lodge. He knocks on the portals of this life to gain admittance where he hopes to obtain knowledge of Truth because it is only in this life that he can make spiritual advancement (in a later degree we say be careful to perform your allotted task whilst it is yet day). In this connection it is my opinion that care should be taken that it is the candidate himself who does the knocking, for no one can make spiritual advancement for another. Each must labour for it himself for himself and by himself. Having entered, he travels wearily

(slipshod) and not properly clothed because this is not his natural home (man is really a spiritual being condemned to work out his salvation on this earth) being a spiritual being he has not even got the proper clothing to live in a material world.

His journey round the Lodge (i.e. through life) is illustrated by stepping over the chequered floorcloth with its squares of black and white, emblematic of the joys and sorrows, the good and the bad, the pain and the pleasure and all those other pairs of opposites which go to make up this life. At certain stages in his journey he is tested as to his worthiness to proceed and each of us will remember times in our lives when such testings have literally been made and it is only the affirmation which we made when we first entered the Lodge that it was in God in Who we put our trust that gives us the necessary courage to proceed on the journey.

The candidate is next presented to the Master symbolic of the Master Principle within each one of us which enables us to recognise the truth when eventually presented to us. The nearer the candidate advances, the bolder become his steps. It should be realised that all this time he has been in a state of darkness and in this state of ignorance the things which he would wish to know and see are all around him thus symbolising the fact that until one's eyes are opened one's faculties are not attuned to enable us to appreciate them.

Finally, having taken the obligation he is restored to light (note the importance and the implications of that word "restored") and is thus symbolically deemed to have attained the first stage in his real spiritual development. His eyes are opened to learn the real meaning of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. When seen through the eyes of the Spirit the material things of this world seem-very different.

In the Second Degree the advance to the East is of considerable interest. In the First Degree the movement was all on one plane but now there is an ascent from one level of consciousness to a higher one. Thus in ascending the Winding Staircase the candidate raises his consciousness from the level of the senses to the more hidden byways of the mind. He is later told that in the Second Degree he is to pursue his researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science and this can only be done on a level of consciousness higher than the sense level of the material world. The spiral staircase is the symbol of evolution ever onwards and ever upwards. All life is cyclic. So with man. His evolution is cyclic but when he receives assistance from higher powers and when he himself consciously assists in the work, the cyclic motion becomes spiral.

In this degree the importance of the heart is emphasised. The heart is where our preparation first began where that inward urge to tread the pathway of Initiation first commenced. Therefore now, the heart becomes the repository of our secrets in fact it could indicate that those secrets were known inwardly to us all along and that now we have merely rediscovered them have now realised that the truth resides within us all along if only we were not so blind as to realise this.

The candidate is now expected to extend his researches from moral truth to the hidden mysteries of nature and science but it should be remembered that no one should be permitted to extend his researches in this way until he has properly made himself acquainted with the principles of moral truth and virtue. We can understand this by saying that the candidate should properly understand the teachings of the First Degree before seeking to be Passed to the Second.

Thus, to sum up the teachings of the Second Degree, it impresses upon us the necessity of exercising our intellectual faculties which will thus enable us to get a better understanding of man's relationship with God.

We now come to the climax of the Craft Degrees. The nature of the steps to the East which are taken in the Third Degree are particularly distinctive and full of meaning. If you wish you can consider them from the obvious point of view that in taking them the candidate is demonstrating his willingness to overcome the terrors of the grave. It has been said, however, that these steps were responsible for the idea being spread outside the Craft that Freemasonry was anti-Christian because the claim was made that Freemasons trampled upon the cross. True, the manner of making the steps is similar to the actions used in making the sign of the cross, but if it is true that we do trample upon a cross it is not because of the Christian associations with that symbol but because the cross demonstrates the power of death and Freemasons demonstrate by their actions that they are prepared to overcome this evil, believing thereby - as the Christian also believes-- that in this way immortality can be achieved. That as St. Paul says mortality becomes swallowed up immortality. The cross also signifies all those earthly, material things, which hold back all those who truly seek to tread the pathway that leads to the spiritual life. And in this respect Freemasonry is referring to a symbolism of the cross which is far older than Christianity, although even in Christian symbolism the cross has the same meaning. Thus we can say that the steps in the Third Degree indicate that we trample our bodily nature underfoot so that our spiritual nature may arise.

The procedure relating to the actual raising is of interest because it shows quite clearly that neither the teachings of the First Degree, nor the teachings of the Second Degree are of themselves sufficient. In other words the First Degree with its preparation, its purification and its lessons of morality prove a slip as do the intellectual pursuits, the cultivation of the intellectual faculties of the Second Degree. At-one-ment and the raising from the tomb of transgression (our physical bodies) can only be achieved by means of the firm grip of Faith, a complete abandonment of all that is material and by a complete sense of brotherhood as exemplified by the F.P.O.F. -- and that means brotherhood in its widest sense of love for all mankind perhaps of all living creatures. Nevertheless the earlier stages are essential as preparation for the supreme test.

Thus, the symbolism of the Third Degree may be considered as indicating physical death and subsequent resurrection and

immortality or it can be considered as a mystical death of the lower nature and the raising to a higher life, which henceforward ought to be guided by our spiritual nature. The words "reunion with the companions of our former toil" can be equally applicable in either case. However, the idea of a mystical death and a raising to higher things is merely a symbolic representation of actual physical death and a resurrection to a higher life, for all mystical writings including the scriptures tell us that death is a necessary step to higher things.

Let us not forget, however, that pure ancient Freemasonry consists of Three Degrees, namely, the Entered Apprentice, the Fellowcraft and the Master Mason, including the Holy Royal Arch of Jerusalem. It is necessary, therefore, that we should consider the message of the Royal Arch before completing our survey of what Freemasonry is intended to teach.

We are told that Holy Royal Arch is the completion of the Third Degree but I believe that it cannot be properly understood without the knowledge of the Installation Ceremony. Perhaps, indeed, probably, this was the reason why at one time candidates for the H.R.A. had to be Installed Masters. indeed some authorities suggest that the ceremony of the H.R.A. was conferred upon Masters at the termination of their year of office and even today in some Constitutions Mastership is a necessary qualification for the Royal Arch.

In the Craft Degrees we have been dealing with the building of the First Temple preparing ourselves, shaping ourselves to be stones fit for its structure building a superstructure. Then a tragedy occurs and the temple is unfinished incomplete. In the Installation of the Master, however, we learn that the temple was completed for its relates happenings which occurred at its completion. This would seem to bring the Temple tradition into line with what is recorded in the V.S.L. for in that Book we learn that the Temple was completed but we have no reference to the death of the Builder.

One other fact of importance is that Installed Masters will realise that in the Installation Ceremony we are given no secrets which replace the substituted ones communicated in the Third Degree.

The H.R.A. ceremony shows us that the former temple is in ruins, that the rubble must be cleared away and a new Temple must be built on the same foundation. This, to me, clearly means the building of a spiritual or celestial body on the foundation of the physical, for the physical was only able to provide us with substituted secrets we still have to find the genuine which are ultimately communicated to us in the Chapter ceremony although still under veils of allegory and symbolism.

Thus to sum up the teachings of our Craft system, we first pass through the stage of preparation and purification, next the cultivation of the intellectual faculties followed by the learning of spiritual truth and the mystical death. But again and again having reached this stage we slip back and our temple lies in ruins we are unable to sustain ourselves on this level of spirituality.

This may happen many times in a lifetime or perhaps indeed in many lifetimes, but hidden deep within ourselves is that spark of the Divine and ultimately our better self discovers this and breaking away the stones of the vault which have so far prevented it from coming to the surface we achieve the end and aim of all our endeavours, we discover the genuine secrets and are rewarded with seats among the Princes and Rulers those who have already achieved, and then as St. Paul says there is no more going out.

Thus our Masonic Journey gives us some knowledge of the purpose for which we come into incarnation on this earth and some indication of what we can hope for in the future. We can see the importance of the message which it has for all of us. It attempts to answer so many of those questions which so many people are asking at the present time. We also see how important it is that the brethren of the Craft should be properly educated and instructed. Left to the individual Lodges little of this information would become available. Lodges are so occupied in working the Three Degrees and then not always as fully as they should that no time is left over for instructional talks. The Lodges of Instruction are usually merely Lodges of Rehearsal and with certain exceptions have little time for the instruction which I have tried to show is so essential not only to a proper understanding of the real Freemasonry but also a proper understanding of life itself.

In my opinion, and in the opinion of those who are like minded, it is essential that all those who are members of the Craft should have the opportunity of receiving instruction and being given the information about the Craft which is their right. What use they make of it is entirely their own affair, but apart from it being of assistance to them in their own spiritual development let us not forget the promise which we, each one of us, made at the time of our Initiation. We stated that our wish to become a member of the Craft was because of "a general desire for knowledge and a sincere wish to render ourselves more extensively serviceable to our fellow creatures."

We, who are privileged to be members of the Craft have a responsibility to our fellow human beings. By reason of what we learn from the Craft we should understand the meaning of life and the part it has to play in the spiritual development of everyone. They are our brethren, whether they are actually members of the Craft or not, and it is our responsibility to pass this knowledge on and to lend a helping hand to those less fortunate ones who are on a lower rung of the ladder of evolution.

So many people today have a code which would say what can I sell you, or what can I persuade you to buy or even what can I trick you into buying Brethren, not what can I sell you but how can I serve you should be our motto. After all, brethren, true greatness comes in service to others. Today service seems to have been changed into self-service. Selfishness and the I'm all right, Jack, attitude is far too prevalent.

Therefore, I would urge all those who have anything to do with the organization and arrangement of meetings whether in the capacity of Master, Principal, Preceptor, Secretary or member of a Standing

Committee to try and give serious considerations to the question of the education of our members. And to all I recommend the services of the various Study Groups which exist in various parts of the country.

Within the Craft as it exists today there are numerous bodies which endeavour to give some instruction to their members. At the moment I am thinking only of those which operate in this country and under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England. It would be invidious of me to classify and name them individually and therefore I only refer to them as falling within certain specified groups.

Firstly, there are those whose Transactions, Lectures or Papers are purely of an historical nature. They probably deal as much with ancient Operative Masonry as they do with Modern Speculative Freemasonry. They seek at all times to be completely factual.

Secondly, there are those, who still historical and factual, concentrate their attention on Lodge histories and the like.

Thirdly, there are those, who recognising that material, historical facts although all very well in their way ignore the teachings of the Craft, and therefore they concentrate their efforts on talking of the moral and ethical lessons which our ritual has to teach.

Finally, there are those that believe that underlying the ritual and ceremonial of the Craft is a hidden, an esoteric teaching which is of far greater importance than any information which may be obtained from archaeological or historical discoveries. This group is often accused by the others of letting its imagination run away with it but seeing that we are called not without good reason Speculative Freemasons, we should, at least, spend some part of our time in speculation.

There is thus among all those who have the interests of Freemasonry at heart something within the Study Groups of importance to all brethren whether their particular interest should be in connection with the history or the archaeology of Freemasonry or whether their interest is for the interpretation of the symbolism or the study of its mysticism.

Of this last group the Dormer Masonic Study Circle is in many ways unique. It has set up for itself a standard of Transactions and Lectures which is without parallel in the Craft and it is our greatest ambition to be able to maintain this standard. It seeks to make known to the Craft in general what it believes to be the real purpose of Freemasonry and in pursuance of that object it has held this meeting here today.

It acknowledges the inspiration which it derives from that great Masonic teacher the late W. Brother Walter Leslie Wilmshurst the founder of the Lodge of Living Stones indeed there are several members of that Lodge here today including the present Master W. Brother J. H. Marshall. Therefore I make no apologies for quoting from the words of Brother Wilmshurst words which were used by him at the dedication of the Temple at Leeds used by the Lodge of

Living Stones:

"So many brethren unfortunately regard our system as confined to the familiar Three Craft Degrees and to the formal making of Masons. They are unaware, or they do not reflect, that those three ceremonies are merely personal to the candidates for Masonry; they are but rites of admission to the Craft, rites defining the candidate's status in it; they are details within the much larger scheme which constitutes the Crafts' real field of work and which every Mason is called to promote according to his capacity as Apprentice, Fellowcraft or Master. That larger field of work, as you know, is impersonal, cosmic, wide as humanity, for it has to do with the re building of the temple of the whole of humanity. "

I hope that if the ideas that I have expressed are new to you, you will not just dismiss them out of hand, but give them the consideration which I believe they deserve. If, on the other hand, you are of those who already have made some study of Freemasonry we hope that you will agree with at least some of the ideas which have been put forward. As I stated early in my talk I am anxious not to be dogmatic and would not expect that everyone would agree with everything which I have said. I shall be quite satisfied if I have at least aroused your interest and if you require more information or you feel that the Circle can be of interest to you there is literature available at the Secretary's table.

But let me say finally, that whatever your particular interest in Freemasonry may be, you will not receive the maximum benefit from it unless you take positive steps to seek to find out all about it. Seek and ye shall find, Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Brethren, you have all knocked at the door of Freemasonry and the door has been opened to you but it is up to you to seek for the treasures which Freemasonry has within its powers to offer you.

#### THE MEANING, PURPOSE AND SYMBOLISM OF FREEMASONRY PART TWO

Those of us who give any thought to the more hidden things of this life and believe that there is something more to our being on this earth than the effort to obtain more material possessions than our neighbour cannot but be concerned at the way that things are shaping themselves when we look around and see all the turmoil, the bad feeling, the terror, the cruelty and the utter selfishness which is besetting so much of life on this earth today. The various forms of news media do nothing to allay our fears but seem to do all that they can to make everybody more aware of what is going on around us. And in so doing pay far more attention to the bad, the evil and the unpleasant. Bad news is the only news as far as the press is concerned. The good things of life are seldom reported.

Under these conditions is it not to be wondered at that those of us who give our minds to such things are deeply concerned as to what is to happen within the next 50 years or so. I have no children of my own to worry about but I do concern myself with all the young people that are growing up in the world under these conditions and fear for what may be their lot by the time that they have reached my age. People talk of the bad old days of the past but were they any worse than the bad old days of the present?

Oh yes, you may say, but is not society more affluent and better able to enjoy the pleasures of this world today than it was fifty years ago. More affluent, may be, in some directions, but is it really any happier. What are the so called pleasures of this life but mere effervescence to be dissipated in a moment. True happiness can only come from a mind that is at peace. One that can shut itself off from the world at will. To be able to do this, however, one must have certain fundamental beliefs and the most important of these is that one can put one's trust in a Supreme Being. We in Freemasonry have averred that we have such a belief but thousands, perhaps millions of our contemporaries these days are without such a belief or at best one which is not strong enough to be of much help to them and consequently they are like a ship without a rudder tossed hither and thither by the winds.

Most members of the Craft have been brought up with the idea that they must not talk about Freemasonry outside their Lodges or in association with those they know who are not members of the Order. Maybe there is some safeguard in this but it is not entirely true. Freemasonry has certain spiritual truths to teach and there is nothing to prevent members of the Craft from talking about the message without talking of the source. Truth is universal. It is not the sole property of Freemasonry. The essential qualification for Freemasonry is a belief in a Supreme Being and the essential qualification for a happy life on this earth is a similar belief.

People seem afraid one with the other to talk of Religion and Freemasons are said to be banned from discussing it within their Lodges. This is not so really. Freemasons are banned from discussing Sectarian Religion but true Religion that basis of belief on which all agree is the common property of us all.

Freemasons are instructed to be good to all. Therefore it is the duty of all members of the Craft to be of service to all men not only those who are members of our order. And how better to be of service than to help them to discover within themselves that same basis of spiritual understanding which we endeavour to foster in those we accept for membership of the Order.

The future may be in the hands of those who today are members of the Craft. Do not run away from the responsibility, brethren, but meet it as you should and take up the challenge to be of service to your fellow men.

If Freemasonry means anything at all it is something more than meeting periodically to Initiate, Pass and Raise men to become members of our Order. Brethren, our duty as Freemasons is not discharged by merely attending Lodge Meetings. There is much more to learn from it than memorising ritual. Much more than meeting periodically for social intercourse, much more than subscribing to our Masonic Charities, laudable as these objects may be. Freemasonry is a life to be lived and in the living we are expected to help others to live in the same way be they members of our Order or not. First, therefore, brethren, each one should endeavour to learn what Freemasonry is all about and having learned try and apply that knowledge in your daily living and finally endeavour to

pass on that message to all men. who knows what the effect of this may be on our fellow human beings.

The trouble is that so many who are nominal members of the Craft are perfectly content just to accept all that the Craft has to offer in the way of sociability and of charity without giving any consideration to the deeper implications of our Craft System. On the other hand the official organisation of the Craft does little to inform the brethren that there is any other purpose. It is left to a few brethren who accept their responsibilities more seriously, and to a few Study Groups and Research Lodges who endeavour to make known the vast field of enquiry which is available to Freemasons who hope to find something more than just a succession of formal ceremonies which unless they are properly understood are little more than a charade performed with regularity at successive meetings of brethren of the Craft.

It is difficult to know just where to draw the line. Freemasonry does not proselytise for members. It does not advertise what it has to offer to humanity

- and I would not have it otherwise. It acts upon the belief that to those who are truly seeking to find something more in life than is just apparent on the surface. their steps will be led to make contact with those who are able to help them. The Eastern saying that when the pupil is ready, the master will appear is undoubtedly true.

All men (which, of course, really includes all women as well for although our organization is purely masculine and can therefore offer no help to those of the female sex, such women have their own organisation from which they must obtain their knowledge), all people, then, are on differing steps of the ladder of evolution. Such evolution is based on the idea that Man has at some stage fallen from the high estate of Union with Deity as it would seem is indicated in the story of Adam and Eve as explained in the V.S.L. and that he has been forced to work through a long period of evolution to try and get back to that state of union again, at-one-ment with Deity. This being so, it would appear that our life (or as I believe lives) on this earth or even perhaps on some other sphere are devoted to this process of evolution. This could explain why it is that we are not all at the same stage of evolution.

To appreciate the problem properly we also have to understand and appreciate (although not necessarily to accept) the theory of Re-incarnation and of Karma. Re-incarnation would imply that many lives are necessary to achieve the proper state of being which makes a man worthy of union with Deity. Karma carries with it the idea that in each of these successive life-times we incur certain debits and credits according to the manner in which we have faced up to the various trials and testings which we have experienced in those lives. These debits and credits are carried forward from one life experience to the next until all the debits have been wiped out and all the credits have mounted to such a figure as make us worthy of achievement. Then as St. Paul says "there is no more going out. " There is much more to these ideas involving a possible

explanation of the many difficulties which face all of us during our sojourn on this earth but I will say no more about it now because I do not wish to emphasise an idea which may not be acceptable to some of you.

However, to come back to where I was just now. I believe that when an individual has fairly placed his feet upon the road that eventually leads to at-one-ment he is led into paths which will hasten his evolution. Such a pathway, I believe, is Freemasonry. The Craft is the Master who will lead the candidate to fresh fields and hasten his evolution. It is the Master which appears when the pupil is ready.

But the message from the V.S.L. is ever Seek and ye shall find; Knock and it shall be opened unto you. So having sought and been led to the Craft, the candidate must knock which indeed he does when he comes for his Initiation and the door will be opened for him to continue his search.

The Initiate must, however, continue to search and again, if he is genuine and sincere in his desire to learn, he will be led to where he can obtain the answers to the questions which are uppermost in his mind.

As I said just now, Grand Lodge makes little or no effort to afford instruction. The only official lectures which are given the Prestonian Lectures reach only a minority of the Craft and, as a rule, the subject matter is usually more a matter of historical research than an effort to explain to the brethren of the Craft the interpretation of the symbolism which our ritual uses to give its message. They are factual rather than "speculative," forgetting perhaps that we are all Speculative Freemasons.

It is perfectly true that there can be no "official" explanation of a given piece of symbolism. Each must accept for himself the interpretation which most appeals to him, but unless the alternatives are put to him and the possibilities explained one who is unused to the uses of symbolism will be unaware of what the ritual and the ceremonial are trying to say.

Therefore, to me, the message is clear, Grand Lodge (and, of course, that includes Provincial Grand Lodges) should, in my opinion, do all that they can to encourage Lodges to devote some time at each of its meetings to short talks, or alternatively devote some of its meetings to lectures. Incidentally, far greater use can be made of the meetings of the Lodges of Instruction for this purpose. Not only will this encourage the masonic education of the brethren but it will also add interest to those brethren who from time to time complain that they are tired of the endless chain of meetings which merely repeat in a monotonous succession the First, Second and Third Degree ceremonies. Lodges of Instruction, or more properly Lodges of Rehearsal serve an extremely useful purpose, but real masonic instruction is equally important and in my opinion more consideration should be given to this matter by the Masters of Lodges on whom rests the real responsibility for is not the Master told every time the Lodge is opened that it is his duty to employ and instruct the brethren in Freemasonry.

If then, there is a difference between the learning of ritual and the learning which I have referred to as masonic knowledge or masonic instruction, what is it that we have to teach our brethren.

To my mind, much of the chaos, the ill-feeling, the selfishness, the materiality and lack of spirituality, the permissiveness, the fact that so many individuals are imbued with the thought "I am the only one that matters I must have freedom to do as I wish and the devil take everybody else" to my mind all this is due to the breakdown in moral values and the failing in the minds of most people to have any real thought for the meaning of life itself.

It has been said that consideration for others and a measure of self control provide the signs whereby we may discern true gentlemen. One might almost paraphrase this in accordance with our ritual and say that such qualifications are also true and proper signs by which to know one who has eternity in view and becomes possessed of a temperament which enables him to take all things in his stride. He realises the truth of immortality and is therefore able to take a more balanced view of life, for, those who are eternity minded are more stabilised because they realise that nothing really disastrous can happen to them, that the ups and downs of life have a more fundamental basis and that real progress is ever onwards and ever upwards.

So many of the young people of to-day are not satisfied with the teachings of orthodox religion but yet they seem to have nothing to put in its place and without a sheet anchor of any kind one tends to lose all consideration of the difference between right and wrong, between yours, mine and ours. Many of them turn to drugs in the hope that they will provide them with the palliative they desire and will allow them to live the kind of life which they feel is their right usually, it seems, a life where everything is provided for them and where they cannot believe that they have any obligation to society.

The taking of drugs is the attempt to take a short cut, so that knowledge of higher things can be obtained more readily. This reminds us of the Garden of Eden story. At that stage of his evolution man was not entitled to the knowledge which he sought and therefore he was forbidden to eat of the "fruit" of the tree of knowledge. Having thus tried to take a short cut to knowledge and so disobeyed he was punished accordingly. So with the use of drugs. If punishment does not follow immediately it will surely follow eventually and the disillusionment and degradation is plain to see on those who become habitual addicts.

So much for the young at least some of them. People in the middle age groups are all so much concerned in making a place for themselves in society and gathering around themselves the trappings of materialism which they believe will give them happiness things which are really of no use to them in terms of eternity they have no time to stop and think of anything of a religious or philosophical nature. They seem to find no happiness except in incessant activity and endless excitement.

Older people are so concerned in their efforts to survive in this fast moving, fast living and financially affluent society, that they can only stand aghast when viewing what is going on around them. Amidst all this Freemasonry stands as a refuge to all those who are able to put their trust in its teachings, but even among the ranks of the Craft there are those who are still finding it necessary to ask questions.

What seems to be missing in the world today is some scheme of adult education which will teach men and women the true objects of life, man's place in the scheme of things, what is really worth doing in the world and what is believed to be the future after death. These were the real teachings of the Ancient Mystery Systems and when properly understood I believe that Freemasonry can find the answers to many of these questions.

Freemasonry has been defined as:

"A body of men banded together to preserve and propagate by means of a ceremonial, certain basic truths which are the property of the whole human race but which man normally tends to put into the background of his consciousness. These basic truths are concerned with the Man in his relationship with Deity and man in relationship with his fellow man. Thus its primary teachings are Brotherly Love, Relief, Truth and Spiritual and Moral Virtue. It teaches man's dependence upon God Who is referred to as the Great Architect of the Universe and also man's obligation to assist his fellow man."

With regard to the last remark it is important to remember that the answer to the question "Am I my brother's keeper" is undoubtedly "Yes."

No man can live to himself alone and as the ritual states "He that is placed on the lowest spoke of fortune's wheel is equally entitled to our regard" and in this respect the lowest spoke is not necessarily occupied by those who are poor in a financial sense. No one else can be you but there are many who can help you. Conversely, there are always many who would welcome your help and remember that even the most humble can offer and be of some help because even, for example, the brilliance of the surgeon is of little avail unless it is supplemented by the humbler ministrations of the nurse.

But Freemasonry does not make all its teachings obvious. Much of its ritual and ceremonial consists of teaching which is veiled so that only those who are properly prepared are able to understand its meaning. Indeed, by its own definition, it states that it is veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbol.

Hence it follows that not all those who are members of the Craft are properly able to understand the full meaning of its teachings and perhaps it can be considered as a criticism of the Craft that it makes very little effort, officially, to draw aside the veil presumably from the opinion that those who truly seek will find and that as each must search for himself he will in due course find the answer to that for which he is seeking.

In my experience, more and more brethren today are seeking and asking questions and it is a pressing problem of the day for the Craft to find from among its ranks those who are able to help and those who are able to provide answers to the questions.

Among the members of the Craft there are those who complain that they have no time to learn the ritual who say that their business commitments will not permit them to go on. These are the ones who are not yet spiritually prepared to proceed on the Masonic Path. They are not yet properly prepared. The man who is ready and anxious to proceed will find the time.

On the other hand there are the enthusiasts who are anxious to learn, who are anxious to take office and are willing to be taught by those who have more experience. These are the ones who ask the questions, the ones who are anxious to know the meaning and purpose of our Masonic system.

I believe that Freemasonry is a spiritual science based upon man's religious ideas which have existed from all time. It is a true descendent of the Ancient Mystery Systems and as such can be said to be an Order which has survived because enshrined within it is Truth. In one of our ceremonies we are told that God has never left himself without a living witness among men and Freemasonry when properly understood is, in my opinion, such a witness although obviously not the only one.

Freemasonry, however, is not of itself a religion and is therefore not to be numbered among the great religions of the world, yet it contains the fundamental truths which are common to all of them. Religion, in its many aspects, has been likened to the different facets of a single diamond. There is no reason why this should not be so but in my opinion, Freemasonry can be likened to the diamond itself and I believe that it is time that someone started to draw attention to the diamond as a whole. Doubtless this is why we are forbidden to discuss sectarian religion within our Lodges.

In the Charges of a Freemason as printed in the Book of Constitutions we read under the title "Concerning God and Religion:"

"Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may he is not excluded from the Order, provided he believe in the glorious Architect of heaven and earth and practice the sacred duties of morality."

Seeing, therefore, that men of all religions can accept Masonry and Masonic principles does it not follow that basically all religions are the same and it is only the dogmas adopted by the different religions which prevents them from becoming one world religion. Perhaps sometime in the future Freemasonry may be able to be the force which will bring them all together.

I hope, therefore, that my words may make you begin to appreciate the full significance of Freemasonry in the Modern World and the latent power perhaps influence would be a better word seeing that the word "power" seems to have a sinister meaning these days a

latent influence for the future welfare of the world and the people in it.

Unfortunately, there are so many people in the world today who seem to have no fundamental religious belief at all, and there are many who although nominally calling themselves Christians, when questioned are quite unable to explain the basis of their belief. The poet has said somewhere -- "God is in His Heaven and all is right with the world." How much better it would be if we could say: "God is in the hearts of all men." It would certainly be all right with the world then.

Freemasonry, then, has to be understood as a philosophy of life and to those who rightly interpret its symbolism it enables them to understand and appreciate the meaning and purpose of life itself, and provides us with some sort of explanation of the trials and tribulations which some seem to suffer in this life.

As was written by one masonic writer whose name unfortunately I have omitted to record: '-Behind the more elementary and obvious symbolism of Freemasonry, behind its counsels to virtue and conventual morality, there exists the framework of a scheme of initiation into that higher path of life where alone the secrets and mysteries of our being are to be learned."

Having now, I hope, made out a case in which I have endeavoured to show how important I regard the function of Freemasonry to each one of us as individuals, let us for a few moments try and get some sort of idea as to how our Modern Speculative Freemasonry came into being and endeavour to see what might have been in the minds of those who may have been responsible.

Many writers have written on Masonic origins have sought to suggest how our Modern Speculative Freemasonry came into being and to name those who were responsible for its early ritual and ceremonial. There are those who have written of Anderson, of Desaguliers and there are those who have sought for documentary proof of the names of our Founders. But no one yet, it seems, has been able to find this conclusive evidence.

Is this not strange? Those who are desirous of forming a new group especially of one which apparently had such high ideals as that of Modern Speculative Freemasonry usually gather together a few enthusiasts and their thoughts and aspirations are usually recorded so that at least they serve as a basis for the future conduct of the Body which they hope to bring into being. But in the case of Freemasonry no such record seems to exist. We therefore have to speculate upon the identity of our Unknown Founders.

To quote some words written by Bro. Lt.Col. Eric Ward in the Prestonian Lecture of 1971, "In the beginning was the Word," was the title of the lecture:

"To me the way in which Speculative Masons have drawn upon material from former times, from the Freestone Masons, the Bible and from ancient sources unconnected with either, is little short of amazing."

Indeed, it is amazing and in my opinion it proves that those who were responsible must have been men of great intelligence and a high degree of spirituality.

At this point, I would like to quote from a Paper which I had the pleasure of reading to some of my brethren of the Hadrian Lodge about two years ago.

"To those who have made any study at all of the recorded history of Freemasonry, the hundred years prior to the formation of the First Grand Lodge in 1717 forms one of the most interesting and intriguing periods in the whole of our masonic history. It is, at the same time, a period over which much controversy rages as to what actually did happen during those years when we are told that Masonry changed from Operative to Speculative. Students such as you and I are only able to form our own opinions by reading what others have already written. Unless we have had the opportunity of seeing for ourselves such documentary evidence as is available. Seeing that I was not present in London in 1717 as far as I am aware or was I? some say we pass this way but once, others many times. However, in my present awareness I have no recollection and therefore I am unable to speak of these things first hand. I can therefore only form opinions from what I have read, and as Dr. Boswell is reputed to have said to Dr. Johnson "the greatest part of a writers time is spent in reading in order to write."

Obviously, therefore, specific proof of any particular theory is not available and each must fall back on his own ideas and hold to that theory which most appeals to him. Masonic writers have produced many books and the cold light of reason has proved many theories groundless at least to the satisfaction of the writers concerned. For my part, I believe, that most of them have considered Masonry as something which has existed as Masonry from time immemorial and have sought to trace its progress through the ages. Others have regarded the Operative Craft as the fore-runner of Speculative Freemasonry and have thought that the latter developed out of the former. Of course, I may be wrong, but in my opinion, Modern Speculative Freemasonry has no connection with the Operative Craft except that for purposes best known to those responsible it became grafted on to the Operative Rite some time during the 17th century. I believe that a process of infiltration took place during those years culminating with the formation of the Grand Lodge of 1717. Some writers have referred to this as Operative Lodges taking in "honorary members." In my opinion, it was a deliberate attempt to infiltrate the Operative Lodges with a definite purpose in mind.

In my view, therefore, I discard all theories which suggest that Speculative Masonry was a development" out of Operative Masonry. I believe that Modern Freemasonry was intended to be a purely mystical and spiritual science and that those who sought to bring this about wrote their rituals and grafted these teachings on to the Operative Rite during the 17th century.

In this sense Speculative Freemasonry is a direct descendent of the Ancient Mystery Systems and it is in this sense that Freemasonry

has existed from Time Immemorial. From earliest times man has always sought for that which he has lost his divinity and the quest which goes on during his efforts to effect a return from whence he came is the story of Freemasonry.

H. H. Schultz in the foreword to that excellent book entitled "Freemasonry Its Hidden Meaning" by G. H. Steinmetz says:

"it must not be forgotten that although the Grand Lodge system dates from 1717 Masonry, or that thing called Masonry, has existed from the beginning of man."

Again, S. M. Mills in one of his Five Minute talks on Freemasonry writes:

"It seems to be suggested that because there was no operative masonry to keep the masons employed they became Speculatives. Such, I think, is an entirely incorrect assumption. Speculative Masonry was the name given to a more modern version of the Ancient Mysteries. A version more in keeping with the times of the eighteenth century and which only now is becoming recognised for what it really is."

If one examines the period of English history immediately before 1717 shall we say one hundred years 1600-1700 -- one finds that it was a very dark period both morally and spiritually and I believe that certain men of learning and discernment and possessing a high degree of spirituality seeing that masonry offered a fruitful field in which to foster the spiritual growth of the people, grafted on to the ritual and symbolism of the Operative Craft a Speculative system which has now become our Modern Speculative Freemasonry.

These unknown founders fully realised that with such a foundation the Craft must, even if it took many years, eventually achieve the purpose which they had in mind, namely, the spiritual enlightenment of humanity. I will not go so far as to say that such spiritual enlightenment could not have been obtained by any other means, but I do suggest that these unknown founders, being as I have already suggested men of great discernment, realised that symbolism based on the building craft represented one of the finest possible methods of teaching these particular truths. One of these days I hope indeed, I am sure that we shall learn who these unknown founders really were. Those of whom we read in our masonic histories such as Dr. Anderson and the Rev. J. T. Desaguliers, were, I believe, only the instruments. To use a modern expression, the backroom boys, who were really responsible had far greater minds and were men far more spiritually advanced.

I would, however, like to draw your attention to the name of Sir Francis Bacon, who, in his great work "New Atlantis" a name which in itself gives great cause for careful contemplation planned the formation of The Royal Society for the Advancement of Learning. Sir Francis Bacon died in 1626 but the seed had been sown and we are told that a meeting was held in the rooms of Sir Christopher Wren at Gresham College in November 1660 at which plans were put into operation for the formation of the Society. It was finally chartered 15th July 1662 and its first President was Sir Robert

Moray.

I believe that there is a great link between the formation of the Royal Society and the formation of Speculative Freemasonry the one concerned with the advancement of material science and the other with spiritual science.

The view has been expressed by many masonic writers that Elias Ashmole was the first Speculative Freemason but it has also been recorded that Sir Robert Moray was made a mason five years before Elias Ashmole. It could not, I think, be suggested that Sir Robert Moray would be an operative mason and therefore we must assume that he was made a Speculative and he, as was mentioned just now, was the first President of the Royal Society.

There is thus, to my mind, a tangled web which is of absorbing interest to these with the time and opportunity to try and unravel. Within that web are the names of

Sir Francis Bacon Sir Robert Moray Elias Ashmole The Rosicrucians of whom we are told that Sir Francis Bacon was a member The Invisible Society The Royal Society for the Advancement of Learning

Whether, therefore, our Modern Speculative Freemasonry is descended directly from The Rosicrucians or from those who are usually referred to as The Cabalists or whether it was due to the personal ideas of those whom I have named I will not go further into on this occasion.

So just what the real explanation of it all is I cannot say but the thought which I wish to leave with you is that Freemasonry has something far more fundamental in its origin than a mere development from an Operative Rite and that its true purpose is the spiritual advancement of humanity just as the Royal Society was formed for the furtherance and advancement of scientific knowledge.

In order to achieve this, however, it was necessary for the Craft to be able to build itself up into a world-wide organisation with a worldwide influence and this it has now done. In the same way, however, as the transition from Operative to Speculative took, as I have suggested, some fifty years or so to become effective, so now the period when the true knowledge and purpose of the Craft can be learned and understood by all members of the Craft must also take perhaps a similar period of time. The Craft has the organisation, it now awaits the knowledge and instruction.

Those brethren who were present at the corresponding meeting last year will remember that my talk on that occasion centred around the interpretation of masonic symbolism. I pointed out that although one must not be dogmatic it was necessary that brethren should have put before them something in the nature of guide lines to enable them to exercise their own ideas and thus to formulate an interpretation which was satisfying to them. In this connection I set out what I believe to be the meaning of the ritual and ceremonial relating to the three ceremonies of Craft Masonry together with the ceremony of the Holy Royal Arch.

I shall not therefore repeat to you what I said on that occasion if you desire you may at the close of this meeting obtain copies of that particular talk out in order to round off my talk today and also in order to adhere to the practice which we adopt in the Study Circle of always bringing in something relating to the interpretation of symbolism in our talks I want to take just one episode of our Initiation ceremony and show how it bears on what I have been trying to tell you today. I refer to what is the climax of the ceremony - the restoration to light, and I want to quote from one of my papers delivered to the Dormer Masonic Study Circle some time ago.

"Light is the first principle of all created life without which there can be no growth or development. The restoration to light is the climax of the ceremony and is symbolic of the acquisition of the spiritual enlightenment that acquisition of knowledge and truth which is the goal of all those who tread the chequered floorwork of this mortal life whether the search is conducted consciously or unconsciously. Note particularly that it is always described as a "restoration" to light, implying that at some previous time light was present. Those who are satisfied with the material explanation see only the obvious in this, but to those who seek to explain the symbolism it emphasizes man's fall and his subsequent struggle his journey back whence he came.

The hoodwink itself is merely symbolic of the darkness which in our early years clouds the understanding of us all. Thus, its purpose is not so much to hide from the candidate what is going on around him but to remind him that until the Lodge grants him light he is still walking in masonic darkness and that means not a darkness of bodily vision but an unilluminated state of the mind. In all the kingdoms of nature from mineral to man there is a gradual dawning of consciousness and in the stage which we believe to be super-human Truth becomes known in all its fulness. In the words of the well known Pastern prayer:

From the unreal lead me to the Real From darkness lead me to light  
From the mortal bring me to Immortality.

The "fire" at this point of the ceremony is of some importance as signifying that "moment of vision," that moment of transition from darkness to light, and a breaking of the tension which up to this point should have held all those who are witnesses of the ceremony. The point is sometimes raised that if the restoration to light is representative or symbolic of the awakening to truth and knowledge it should not be sudden because unfoldment comes gradually. This would suggest that the snatching away of the H.W. is wrong. Against this we have the idea of a sudden flash of inspiration. Inspiration usually becomes revealed suddenly. Remember, God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light. This suggests a single and instantaneous action. In any case at this point the ceremony has worked up to a climax and the action of the H.W. together with the fire given at this point emphasises a symbolic act. Perhaps in order to reconcile both ideas we can think of the following episodes as the gradual unfoldment but the actual restoration as that flash of knowledge wherein we know that we stand on the very brink of true knowledge be still and know.

Remember also what the V.S.L. has to say about the conversion of Saul and the important part played by light in this episode. Indeed, symbolically, Saul is in precisely the same position as our candidate in the Initiation ceremony.

The candidate's reaction to the restoration to light is dependent on the candidate himself. Such an experience will have a psychological effect rather than an actual physical effect and in any case the effect will not be visible immediately. As previously stated Freemasonry is a spiritual science and its effects are spiritual. It will therefore depend upon the candidate's spiritual development as to the effect which this part of the ceremony has upon him."

That is the end of the quotation and the point that I particularly want to make is that in our ceremony we are emphasising the nature of light and referring it symbolically to the acquisition of spiritual knowledge. In all that I have said to you this afternoon I have expressed the view that what is needed in the world today is a similar awakening on the part of all people. I feel, and I feel strongly, that Freemasonry has a great part to play in this spiritual awakening. It does not mean that you and I must go around telling men that they must join Freemasonry in order to participate in this great movement. That would be entirely wrong, but it does mean that you and I must take every opportunity among our fellows to talk to them of the more fundamental things of life. But in order to do this we must have a thorough understanding of the meaning and purpose of the Freemasonry to which we belong and this cannot be achieved unless we are prepared to give some of our time to the study of our ritual and ceremonial over and above what we do in order to perform our ceremonies adequately in our Lodges. If we do this, not only shall we individually make ourselves more aware of the real purpose of life and in so doing achieve a better balance in our thoughts and be able to view the happenings of this life with a feeling of equanimity, but by our own actions we shall also be able to exert a better influence on our fellows.

It therefore becomes necessary that we should consider one or two things:

1. Take every opportunity in our Lodges and Chapters of having short talks explanatory of the real meaning and purpose of Freemasonry. This afternoon for obvious reasons I have limited my remarks to Craft Masonry.
2. That we should join some study group which is devoted to the object of achieving this end. Dormer is one such group, but there are others.
3. We should, among ourselves form a group of our own where we can meet and discuss and endeavour to solve the problems which we meet with in our study.

I therefore end my talk to you this afternoon with a promise that if any of you require assistance either for yourselves or in the formation of a group, all of us in the Dormer Masonic Study Circle will be ready and anxious to give you all the help that we can.

