

New Year's Greetings to Everyone

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Grand Lodge Bulletin

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THE MASONIC ALTAR

One evening, recently, I was sitting in Lodge while a degree was being worked. As often happens, my thoughts turned to the inner meaning of our ceremonies. As the candidates were being obligated I began to think about the altar and what it signifies.

Why do we speak of that piece of furniture as an altar, and to what does it draw our attention? When our forefathers in Masonry drew up our ritual why did they call it an altar, rather than just a table? If its purpose was just to hold the Three Great Lights wouldn't "Table" do as well? Why decide upon "Altar"? There must have been a reason for it.

As far back as records go an altar was always set up on a place that was considered sacred or holy. Our ritual refers to this when "Jacob's Ladder" is referred to. We are told on the occasion referred to that when Jacob awakened out of sleep he took a stone that was there and built an altar there, worshipped God, and made a vow. He also poured oil on it. Why? He was travelling light in a hurry, and that oil was part of what little food he could take along with him. In other words he made a sacrifice.

All through history of ancient times an altar was always a place where sacrifices were made. Our Christian altars are to remind us of the sacrifice of the Son of Man.

So the first thing our altars point out to us is that sacrifice is at the centre of our science. We are reminded that we must make sacrifices—of our time, our talents, and our means. Do we not have to give of our time, even to attend meetings of our Lodge? Do we not have to give of our talents to make our Masonic work worthwhile and attractive? Does the lecture in the northeast teach us to sacrifice of our means to help a brother? Our Masonic fellowship, if it means anything has to go outside our Lodge Room. We visit the sick and distressed. This takes time. We have to attempt to raise the general level of humanity. This takes talent. We should be prepared to offer help wherever it is needed. This involves our

means. The threefold sign with the accompanying words surely emphasizes this fact of sacrifice.

Again, going back to the Temple of King Solomon, we find that in the Holy of Holies the altar there contained the Tables of the Law, Aaron's rod and the pot of Manna, all reminders of the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage, and the Divine Law which had been given to them.

So our altars are not bare. They serve to hold the Three Great Lights, which are always in open view in the Lodge for the brethren to meditate upon. What do we think about when we view them? Do we, as we sit in Lodge remember first of all that the Volume of the Sacred Law is to remind us of our duty to God? There we find all that is necessary for us if we want to do our duty. There we find our help in time of need. There we find that in spite of all our failures and mistakes we, like the men of old, can still be kept within the Covenant. When we fail we can still go on if we repent as David and Solomon did, even if we have to carry with us the scars of our failures. There, too, we learn of our duty to our fellow men, and we are reminded that our life should be such that each one of us is doing his part to make the world a better place to live.

Surely thoughts like these must have been in the minds of our forefathers when they place an altar in our Lodge with the Volume of the Sacred Law upon it. But all this, as important and vital as it is, is common to all the Church everywhere. The founders of our order wanted to begin an organization of worthy men who would be more zealous in carrying out these tenets in a world that had become very careless and lax in ordinary morality. So to help them in this work they pointed to the ordinary tools of a craftsman. This was to emphasize that a Mason had work to do, using just what he had to hand. (In passing it might be mentioned that Masonic work is not just putting on the various degrees.) Work to do in remaking society. How was the member of this new Order to apply the principles he had learned in the V.S.L.

So, I suggest, that the founders had in mind to use the common tools of the mason, which all knew, to teach what they had in mind. Everyone knew the square, which is essential in all building. It was realized that it was necessary to build character if the general tone of society was to be raised. Then the square was to remind the Speculative Mason that he was to act so that his actions would square with all mankind. He had to consider others in all his actions, and make his "ashlar" such that it would fit in its place with others, and so help to make a perfect building. Isn't this the teaching of the two ashlar? We are to use the second to see if our own particular square is accurate.

The compasses, which are not used just to draw circles with, but also as a tool to get accurate measurements and designs, taught him to measure his actions carefully, and also to remind him of his fellow men. They taught him, too, how to live with his fellow men. He had to keep in due bounds with all mankind. In other words he could not be selfish.

These are just some suggestions as to how we should meditate and moralize as we sit in lodge and look at our Altars. These are some of the thoughts that were possibly in the minds of our founders in placing the Three Great Lights where they are. They tried to impress our brethren in the eighteenth century with the need to carry out of the Lodge the only tenets that would raise the general tone of society at large, and turn men's thoughts to higher things.

They did their work well those men who founded Freemasonry. They did their part in bringing Light into dark places. How well they did it is shown by the fact that what they did has lasted for two and a half centuries. Only what is good lasts long.

So we today are the heirs of this heritage. The Great Lights are still on our Altars in our Lodges for us to meditate upon. We are still taught to use the tools that are placed in our hands to develop our lives and characters. We too, as our founders, have the task of raising the general moral level of the society in which we live. We too must understand that only as we make ourselves fit to square with others and keep in due bounds with all mankind are we really helping to raise a building that will last.

What is suggested as a thought for the New Year is that we all should do more meditating and moralizing in our Lodges. That is why we have Lodges. It is always easier to do things with others than trying to do them alone.

We must always remember that the making of Masons is not the conferring of the three degrees. That is only the beginning. That is only laying a foundation. That is only to set a man's feet on the right road, and to show him that he is not alone in his quest, but that in company with his brethren he can continue until he can rise to shine like the stars for ever and ever.

R.W. Bro. REV. CANON W. H. MORGAN,
Grand Chaplain, G.L. Alberta.

PUNCTUALITY IN LODGE MEETINGS

One of the most requisite qualities in the conduct of Lodge meetings is punctuality. The state or quality of being punctual is indispensable to the success of every meeting of which due notice has been given. It is to be deplored that many Lodges fail to adhere to the stated time of attendance and for tyling the Lodge. In too many instances the Worshipful Master and his officers display an attitude of careless indifference to the importance of conducting meetings with a scrupulous regard to time.

Punctuality in Lodge practice begins with the Worshipful Master, who should set a high example to be observed by members. By a strict observance of his duty to attend early and see the Lodge tyled at the stated time, a Master may win for himself a lasting reputation as a ruler remarkable for his punctuality. One who arrives late at the Temple, and thereby delays punctual tyling of the Lodge, is guilty of a breach of Masonic engagement. Such action is likely to have the effect of dampening the enthusiasm of members for the responsibility they should feel about the punctual and efficient performance of their several parts in the night's proceedings. A punctual beginning always augurs well for a successful meeting.

There is a bad tendency noticeable in some Lodges to delay the admission of visitors. This is a definite act of discourtesy on the part of any Lodge, though many Worshipful Masters fail to see their shortcomings in this light. The delay is often traceable to a lack of observance of punctuality in tyling the Lodge. There is a recognized proper time for the admission of visitors, and it is unfair to Brethren who desire to honour the Worshipful Master and his Lodge by their presence to delay their reception. Primarily, the question of admission of visitors at the proper time is a matter for the Worshipful Master and Secretary of the Lodge. It is regrettable that it is a not unusual experience in Lodge to hear complaints from visiting Brethren about the late hour of their admission.

Concerning the non-observance in our Lodges of punctuality, an important consideration is the bad impression likely to be made upon candidates for admission to the Order. A candidate is nearly always in a condition of nervous tension, and for this reason alone any avoidable delay in beginning proceedings is not conducive to a successful ceremony, and is, therefore, inexcusable.

Failure to observe in detail arrangements made with invited Official Lecturers is too often experienced in Lodges. These Brethren, whose services are gratuitous, when accepting an invitation to lecture before a Lodge, invariably state for the information of the Worshipful Master and Secretary such details as time of beginning the lecture and its duration, as well as other relative conditions. Common courtesy demands that such arrangements be punctiliously adhered to. Masonic lectures are not merely reached from shelves after the manner of a pound of tea, rather does their preparation entail long hours of careful and often tedious research. A Lodge having requested the

services of an Official Lecturer, its Worshipful Master and Secretary should take particular care not to allow the business paper for the meeting to be packed with items promoting discussion that so often encroaches upon the time agreed to be devoted to the lecture.

In short, the Worshipful Master and Secretary in every Lodge should be Brethren with some experience in organization and a proper regard for the importance of punctuality.

—Courtesy New South Wales Freemason.

FREEMASONRY'S PLACE

The universe is a vast place, but how small our knowledge of it. There are two sources from which our grasp of its wonder and magnitude reaches us—first from religion, and second, from science. There is no conflict, as was often thought, between these two. Science reveals the facts as yet known, but religion aspires with awe, majesty and fascination. Between the two stands Freemasonry, helping us to evaluate both and thus enabling us to live together more sociably because of the contribution of each.

—South Australian Freemason.

THE GATES OF THE TEMPLE

The Masonic ritual depicts the Temple of Solomon as having a gate on the east, west, and south sides. Actually, such a representation is wholly incorrect. In walls of the Temple proper no provision for entrance was made except at the entrance porch on the east end which gave admission to the building. The surrounding courts, however, had entrance gates at every point of the compass. Masonically, the Temple is entirely symbolic. The Temple to the Speculative Mason is not a symbol of an historical building and the gates referred to are imaginary and symbolic. They are, first, symbols of the progress of the sun which in its daily course rises in the east, ascends to the meridian observed from the south, and descends to close the day in the west. In the allegory of life, which the third degree illustrates, they represent the three principal stages of development; youth, manhood, and old age, or, more properly, birth, life, and death.

—Selected

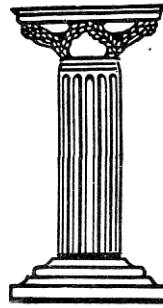
A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one's heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.

—Arabian Proverb.

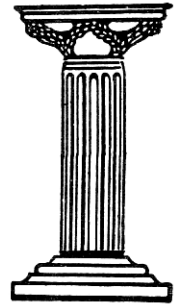
Compare not thy condition with the few above thee, but, to secure thy content, look upon those thousands with whom thou wouldst not, for any interest, change thy fortune and condition.

Those who trust to chance must abide by the results of chance. They have no legitimate complaint against anyone but themselves.

—Calvin Coolidge.



Between the Pillars



A MASONIC LODGE IS NOT A SERVICE CLUB

Not having been assigned to any particular subject, I have chosen one which may be hard to discuss and put across the real import of the subject. However, it is one which I am sure we have all heard of in some form or another. Masonic lodges are being criticized for their failure to take part in a large number of public activities and programs and leads me immediately to the very blunt title of my subject which is: "A Masonic Lodge Is Not a Service Club."

The first half of this century will be noted for many world shaking events. They have followed each other so rapidly as to over-shadow many of the trends and movements in our social order which have accompanied them. The number of organizations for the relief of humanity has been particularly noticeable. It would seem as if men (and women too), since World War I, have become intensely conscious of the import of the Master's words when He said: "Not every one who saith Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father, shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven," hence the urge to be up and doing.

Many of these organizations, whose names are common and whose activities are widely publicized, have great achievement to their credit. Vast sums of money have been collected and dedicated to human betterment. Much time and effort has been contributed by members toward the advancement of various projects. These are truly noble endeavors to translate principles into practice, ideas into realities, and faith into works, through the effort of doing. The worthwhile accomplishments of these organizations and the favorable publicity associated therewith have been disturbing factors in the life of Freemasonry during the same period.

In discussions concerning the Craft and comparisons with these other institutions, members have, from time to time, advocated a similar program. In some instances officers and lodges have endeavored to implement their ideas along these lines.

Sincere brethren sometimes give expression to their feelings of disappointment at what they term the failure of the craft to put its principles into practice. They feel a sense of frustration like those in the parable who stood idly in the market place, because no man had hired them, though there was much work to be done in the Master's vineyard.

They are waiting for a call to active service in some great cause or project.

It is claimed that Freemasonry is suffering by comparison with these other organizations, that it is losing to them many of its keen young members, who are attracted by the more colorful activities associated with their operation, and that its influence for good must decline if it continues to remain within its tyled walls.

These trends of prevailing thought among members present a very definite challenge to the Craft and particularly to those in positions of responsibility for the guidance of the Craft. The question remains as to whether our Grand Lodge, or any group of its constituent lodges in a city or district, should foster some project directed towards public welfare? The search for the right answer involves some consideration of what Freemasonry really is. What are its fundamental principles, its doctrines and teachings as well as the purpose or objective toward which the whole organization is directed? In the Masonic design the major effort is directed toward the development of character in the individual man, who is mentally and morally qualified to benefit from its teaching, and who has desire to learn and improve.

By a peculiar system of ritual and ceremonies, great principles of morality and virtue are inculcated which help to build him into a better man and citizen. By keeping the great principles of truth, honor, charity and justice strong in the lives of individuals, Freemasonry believes that goodness and honor in society must result from the presence of men in it who are actuated by these high principles.

Other organizations may find opportunities for service in seeking to improve the suffering and hardship which result from maladjustment of the social system, the result of wrong and evil in society, but Masonry seeks to apply its age old, tried and proven philosophy to the cause the source from which most evil comes. It deals in principles rather than in projects, in the dissemination of ideals rather than in programs of self advertisement.

Men can agree on principles and ideals without agreeing on the particular method by which they may be applied to some specific problem. Rivalries and contentions over the merits of various projects to be undertaken could sow the seeds of dissension in the lodge, while it is the very essence of Masonry that unity and harmony shall prevail.

A Masonic lodge may be likened to a school or university, where men, who are qualified, go through a course of study in science or art. Its graduates having learned that Freemasonry is a way of life to be lived, day by day, go out into the world and give practical effect to the principles and ideals which they have acquired in their training as Craftsmen.

In a college or university the student is taught the principles of engineering, agriculture, law, medicine and various other subjects, then having

graduated, he goes forth to apply his knowledge in the world of commerce, etc. But no one puts forth the suggestion that the school itself should enter the field of engineering or set up a factory for the manufacture of articles designed to carry into practical effect the principles which it has taught its students. No one expects this nor could the school do so without detriment to its usefulness as an institution of learning.

Why then expect the college of Freemasonry to sponsor projects or embark upon adventure outside the scope of its organization or beyond the design of its peculiar system? Why should its glory as an institution, dedicated to the teaching of moral principles, be tarnished by the influence of petty rivalries among contending claimants for its sponsorship of their particular projects, whether political, civil or religious? The principal task of Freemasonry is still the making of Masons—building a temple of living stones.

As the university graduate carries his skill into the world of commerce and industry, so the Masonic graduate carries his skill and the honor of the ancient craft into the world of thought and ideas, of life and conduct, where men may see his good works and be inspired by his example. Thus Masonic ideals and principles overflow into the life of the community in which we live. If our community and national life does not reflect that quality of higher idealism, then our task is to improve the quality of our lodge membership, rather than to dissipate our energies following a Will-o-the-Wisp of temporary schemes and projects.

Institutions which are organized for service activities owe much of their success to the presence in their ranks of men who received their training in Masonic lodges and adopt his method of putting their ideals into practice. There is no direct competition between these bodies and our ancient institution.

A fitting conclusion to this subject might be a quotation from a distinguished Past Grand Master of the Craft, His Majesty King George the VI, when he said: "Freemasonry has behind it the experience of nearly two and one-half centuries of steadfast adherence to fundamental principles, and I believe that a determination to maintain the values which have been the rock upon which the Masonic structure has stood firm against the storms of the past, is the only policy that should be pursued in the future."

—From North Dakota Grand Lodge Bulletin.

The glory of Masonry is not found in its symbolism, in its grips, tokens, and passwords, but in its development of character, and in its assistance toward an augmented system of righteousness.

A man is poor not because he has nothing, but because he does nothing. The way to have nothing to give is to give nothing.

—Sunshine Magazine.