

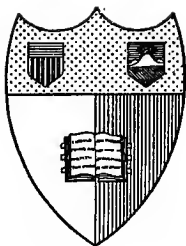
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FREEMASONRY;

WHAT IT IS NOT,

AND

WHAT IT IS:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A LECTURE, DELIVERED
BEFORE THE PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF DORSET,
HELD AT LYME REGIS, AUGUST 10, 1871.

BY

BRO. REV. P. H. NEWNHAM, M.A., M.A.I., F.M.S.

(Rector of Frome Vauchurch, Dorchester.)

W.M. 195; P.P.G. Chaplain, Dorset; P.G. Chaplain, Hants; and I.W.

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To be had direct from the Author; or of Bro. H. LING, Dorchester;
Bro. SPENCER, London.

DORCHESTER:
BRO. HENRY LING, PRINTER, COUNTY HOUSE.

So runs my dream : but what am I ?

 An infant, crying in the Night !

 An infant, crying for the Light,

And with no language but a cry !

Tennyson's In Memoriam.

1.

I trust that I shall give no pain or offence to any of my Brethren, if, in the thoughts which I propose to lay before you to-day, I appear to diverge, to a greater or less extent, from the somewhat beaten path which is usually trodden by Brethren of my profession, when called upon to address an assemblage of that Craft to which it is our pride to belong. It seems natural, no doubt, that on such occasions a Clergyman should look at Freemasonry from what I may call its exclusively moral stand-point. At any rate, it is easy for him to descant upon the beauties of Virtue, or the excellencies of that "peculiar system of morality, which is veiled in Allegory, and illustrated by Symbols." It is easy, too, for his auditors,—(and not unpleasant, either,)—to listen to such remarks; inasmuch as the practical conclusion to be drawn from them generally results in some form or other of the trite, but, (as I venture to think,) somewhat pointless aphorism, that "a good Mason cannot help being a good man": and so, as on the occasion of these gatherings, when many of us travel for a considerable distance, and subject ourselves to some expense and inconvenience, out of pure devotion to our Craft, thereby proving ourselves to be undoubtedly "good Masons," it is, of course, very gratifying to our personal feelings, if we are encouraged, on good authority, to follow out to its legitimate conclusion the aphorism to which I have alluded.

Nevertheless, on the present occasion, I shall ask your attention, while I endeavour to pursue a line of thought which may not be so easy, or so pleasant, as that of which I have spoken; but which, as I firmly believe, is of far deeper interest, and of far higher importance.

The subject which I wish to discuss, as briefly as possible, is this :

What is the *true* position of Freemasonry, with regard to modern thought and science ?

Or to word the same idea in a somewhat different manner:—

What is the *true* foundation of the claim which Freemasonry puts forward, to be considered a great Social Institution ?

It is a common observation that we live in an “utilitarian” age. The invariable question, “Cui bono?” “What is the use of it?” indicates the practical test to which every new invention, and every fresh theory, must expect to be rigorously subjected, before it can stand a chance of “surviving,” in the great Social “Struggle for Existence.” I think, therefore, that we may safely lay it down, as an axiom to start from, that no institution or system can hope permanently to recommend itself to the notice of thinking and unprejudiced men, unless it can substantiate a claim to possess some special characteristics, or to confer some special advantages, which are peculiarly its own; that is to say, characteristics which are not equally appropriate to, and advantages which are not to be equally obtained under, any other institution or system.

Now, the question which I desire most earnestly to recommend to your consideration, is this:—How can Freemasonry satisfy such a test as that which I have described? It is most important that we, as Freemasons, should be able “to give a reason for the hope that is in us.” And this

reason, you will observe, must be one that shall not merely be good enough to satisfy *ourselves*, (who have already made up our minds on the subject,) but it must be one which shall be sufficient to satisfy the enquiries of those who as yet prefer not to join our body. For there are many around us,—thoughtful, candid, men,—who ask, in no unfriendly spirit, “What is the real *use* of Freemasonry?”—and who say, (as I have had it said to myself, again and again,) that they would be willing to join our ranks, at once, if they were only persuaded that we were capable of offering them any *real*, (not imaginary, or fictitious) advantages, beyond those of which they are already in possession.

It is not enough to make answer to an enquirer of this sort, that Freemasonry is a System which is “founded upon the purest principles of Piety and Virtue”; or that it “depicts Virtue” to its votaries “in the most beautiful colours.” The answer is at once ready to hand, that it is no doubt very commendable in Freemasonry to be and to do this; but that it can establish no claim to the exclusive, or even to the pre-eminent, possession of these characteristics. The moral duties and virtues are already fully set forth to all men, be they Masons or not, in that Volume of God’s Word, which is the common possession of all: and, moreover, they are also fully illustrated and explained in the appointed teaching of that system or profession of religious faith, to which each one of us respectively belongs; and we really need no further and extraneous exponent thereof, in order to commend them to our hearts and consciences.

Now this answer I, for one, must admit to be a perfectly reasonable one; and, further, I feel strongly that we, as Masons, ought fairly to face the truth, that the motives for religious sentiment, which are presented to us by our System

of Teaching, are far less high and pure than those which even an exalted and refined Monotheism,—(to say nothing of Christianity,)—is capable of aspiring to ; inasmuch as Freemasonry only points us to a Great Architect, Whose Strength we may venerate, Whose Wisdom and unerring Justice we must respect and submit to, and the Beauty of Whose Works we must admire ; but it is utterly incapable of shewing to us the love of God, as a Personal Father ; and it never breathes one word which can teach us that a personal love to Him, as “Our Father,” is the only true motive for all religious faith and worship.

Again ;—I do not think that we can fairly expect to satisfy our enquirer, if we point to the bond of world-wide Brotherhood, which unites the members of our institution, as being the realization of a peculiarly Masonic idea. He will at once reply that he is already a member of a Grand Universal Brotherhood, based upon a far broader and safer foundation than the mere possession of certain reputed “Secrets.” He will remind us that, as children of one common Father, we are brothers already ; and that we need no artificial bonds or ties to bear witness to this—the true theory of Fraternity, which is not only far above and beyond, but must ever continue to exist independent of, anything that can be created by the wit of man ; inasmuch as it is the common birthright of all men alike, whether they choose to acknowledge it or not. He may ask, too, whether we are not bound, by God’s law, to shew justice, mercy, and truth, equally to all men ? He may even ask whether it is morally right to aid a distressed fellow-creature, who can make a certain sign as we pass by, while we should leave him in his misery, if he failed to attract our attention in this peculiar manner ; thus recognizing the law of an artificial Fraternity as being more

binding upon us than that of the natural Brotherhood? No doubt he will fully recognize the fact that the possession of Masonic secrets may oftentimes be found convenient, when in positions of difficulty and danger; and pleasant, as a species of passport or introduction, among friendly strangers; but he will be inclined to assert that the true value of Freemasonry ends here; and he will assuredly deny that the mere possession of such secrets can entitle those who know them to arrogate to themselves any claim to be a great Social Institution, bound together by ties of Brotherhood which are a whit more stringent than those which are already morally binding upon us, as between man and man.

Here, again, I think we must admit that there is much truth in our enquirer's statement of his case. I think that Masons must be prepared candidly to allow that the theory of an universal Brotherhood is not one which is in any way the peculiar property of the Masonic System; and that there are other systems, and other institutions, which involve a higher and a purer fraternity than that into which Freemasonry admits us. Still, however, there is one strong point, upon which we may fairly insist,—and which our enquirer must necessarily be ignorant of. This point I believe to be of the highest importance; and I would gladly dilate upon it, did not the necessary limits of my present undertaking forbid me to attempt more than merely to indicate it in brief outline. I consider that we are fairly entitled to claim for Freemasonry that, in its practical working, it provides a peculiar and invaluable machinery for carrying out that Ideal of true Brotherhood which it inculcates in common with other systems. Theoretically, of course, we fully acknowledge that all men are our Brothers; but, as a matter of practical experience, do we not find that there are certain differences

in social rank and standing,—differences in social habits and customs of living,—differences about political matters,—above all, differences about religious matters,—which interpose almost insurmountable obstacles to our meeting upon any common ground? And even when we have overcome our prejudices so far as thus to meet,—even while we are complimenting each other, and congratulating ourselves, upon our willingness to unite for the purpose of carrying out some common object of general importance;—still we cannot, in the bottom of our hearts, bring ourselves to allow that we meet upon *an equal footing*, and that those who differ from us have just as much right to cherish their opinions, as we have to hold fast by our own. Consequently, when men of opposite parties, or associations, meet together, they do so with a certain amount of mental reservation, and hence they never heartily amalgamate. Now, I unhesitatingly assert that this common ground, and this common level, are to be met with in every Freemason's Lodge that is properly worked; and that, outside of Freemasonry, there is no organization whatever, in the present state of society, which is equally capable of bringing together, and of keeping together, men of widely differing stations, habits, and opinions; and of compelling them, for the time at least, to merge their jarring individualities into one harmonious whole. And I cannot but believe that an organization which is capable of accomplishing this, must ultimately effect much solid practical good, by promoting the fraternal interchange of common ideas, and the habit of frequent and amicable mutual friction, (if I may use such an expression,) among those who can find no common platform, broad enough to meet upon on an equal footing, in any of the transactions of ordinary life.

There is yet one other reputed characteristic of Freemasonry, which I must just glance at for a moment.

The general public often expresses an opinion that our meetings are only intended to be a plausible excuse for more or less of social enjoyment and conviviality. Now, it is true that when we have concluded the "Work" which calls us together, we generally prefer to take our ordinary refreshment in company, rather than alone. It is also, *most unfortunately*, true that some Lodges, and some brethren, treat this refreshment as though it were the main part of a Mason's duty. It is also true, I fear, that this forms the chief inducement which leads some to join our Order. Therefore let me distinctly say, once and for all, that such notions are utterly unmasonic; that such men are not Masons in anything but the name; and that, although conviviality and Masonic meetings do generally go together, (and I own that it would be better if they were less frequently connected,) yet such conviviality, even in its most moderate and innocent shape, forms no part of the System of Freemasonry itself, but is merely an extraneous appendage thereto; though, even were it otherwise, I conceive that no brother would claim any peculiar merit or importance for our Craft, on such confessedly low grounds as all must acknowledge this to be.

From the thoughts which I have thus endeavoured to put before you, I am forced to come to the conclusion that Freemasonry has no *locus standi* whatever, so long as she claims to be a special exponent, either of Morality, or of universal Brotherhood; inasmuch as, in this character, she does not conform to the conditions of our proposed test; that is to say, she confers no substantial advantages, which cannot be equally obtained by those who are outside of her pale, as by those within it. But, while we acknowledge thus much, we

may at the same time fairly claim that, as a *practical* engine for fusing and welding together the discordant atoms of social life, the present organization of Freemasonry pre-eminently merits the most serious consideration of every thinking man.

II.

There is, however, one point, in regard to which I am strongly of opinion that Freemasonry *will* bear the most rigorous application of our proposed "utilitarian" test; although I grieve to say that this point is one which is not generally understood, or properly appreciated, by the Craft at large. It is, therefore, my intention to give special prominence to this thought, on the present occasion; even at the risk of appearing to some of my brethren to dwell upon it too exclusively. And I think that I shall best succeed in giving you a true idea of this, which I claim as *the* specially distinguishing characteristic of Freemasonry, if I have recourse to a couple of illustrations, which shall be drawn from as many well-known and familiar branches of science, the general outlines of which have, of late years, been rendered so far popular, that all my hearers will be able to appreciate the parallelism of the cases which I shall exhibit.

The first of these illustrations is very naturally suggested to us by the place at which we hold the meeting of to-day. Probably there are few of us but are aware that the name of Lyme Regis will ever be famous in the annals of Natural Science, in connexion with the early history and progress of Geology in England. Many of you know that I do not exaggerate, when I say that it is impossible to take many steps together along the sea shore of this locality, without

coming across the fossil relics of some of those strange forms of animal life, with which land and sea were peopled, more ages back than fancy dares to conjecture. It is here that there have been accumulated the abundant materials, upon which our knowledge of a considerable portion of the by-gone history of one phase of our earth's existence is based. It was hither that there came the students and collectors of half-a-century ago, many of whose names are "household words" among us, and whose memory will ever be dear to posterity, as having been the pioneers of one of the most important sections of the knowledge of God's Laws, as set forth in His Physical World. It was here that they searched and studied the pages of the "Great Stone-Book of Nature;" here that they tested and verified the truth of that great Law of the mutual "Correlation of Parts," in accordance with which the frame of every animal is built up; so that from one or two characteristic fragments of bone it is often possible,—(not by a permissible stretch of scientific fancy, but as a matter of almost mathematical certainty,)—to indicate the form of the strange and hitherto unknown monster, of which the fossil relic is now the sole representative. Thus it is here, (and I specially ask your attention to this thought, for a reason which will be presently understood,)—it is here that we are peculiarly reminded of *the value of detached fragments*; inasmuch as out of scattered bone and shell it has been possible, not only to reconstruct the frames of each long-lost creature, but also to indicate the part which it was appointed to play in God's grand Scheme of Creation, which commenced in Chaos, and has, so far, culminated in Man.

Now, I am strongly convinced, and the thought and study of every passing year only serves to deepen my conviction, that, just as it is the highest and truest result of modern

science to shew us that God has proceeded upon one definite plan, or system of laws, in the building up both of the stony frame of this earth, and of the bodily frames of the living inhabitants thereof, so He has also proceeded, from the earliest ages, upon a certain definite plan, or system of education, in developing the moral and religious element in the constitution of His intelligent creatures. And I believe that Freemasonry occupies a position, with regard to the early history of the Spiritual element in creation, exactly parallel to that which is occupied by geology, with regard to that of the Physical portion thereof.

I trust that no one will misunderstand the words which I make use of, when I express myself thus strongly. I am not among those who claim a fabulous, or even a very great antiquity, for the present system and organization of Freemasonry, as expressed in the Degrees and Ceremonies which are now familiar to us. I think that it may fairly be taken as proven, that what I may call the existing arrangement of the "fossils" of Freemasonry is of comparatively very recent fabrication. But the present system, and the present arrangement, do not constitute Freemasonry. The relation of this system to that which is the real essence of Masonry, is precisely that which the arrangement of fossils upon the shelves of a museum bears to the fossils themselves. Such arrangement may differ in different museums. It may depend upon the amount of knowledge possessed by the collector; or upon certain personal ideas of his own; or it may even be dictated by considerations of taste, or of convenience: but this does not affect the work of the student, who is mainly concerned with the history and the mutual relationship of the fossils themselves, the genuineness and the antiquity of which remains perfectly unaffected by their accidental juxtaposition.

Just so, when I speak of the antiquity of Freemasonry, I speak not of the peculiar arrangement of its fossil relics which we accept in our present "Work;" but *of the fossils themselves*. And these "fossils;"—these Symbols which surround us in our Lodges;—the "All-seeing eye;"—the pentacle or five-pointed star;—the double triangle;—the inverted Tau on the apron of the W.M. (which we mistakenly call a "level;")—the Apron itself;—the "seven stars;"—the "point within a circle;"—and a host of other emblems which my limits do not permit me to enumerate, much less to explain:—these ceremonies and observances, which have been incorporated into the Ritual of our various Degrees, and particularly into that of the Third Degree:—*—these old words, such as "hele," "tile," "cowan," and many others, which have long since ceased to be used in ordinary conversation:—*these*, I say, are not things of yesterday, however much their present relationship to particular portions of our Ritual may be.

And it is of these, the fossil fragments of Freemasonry, of which I speak: fragments, every one of which tells us a clear and unmistakeable tale concerning the religious notions of those who first adopted their originals. Whence come they, these fossils? What is their true age? What is the geographical range to which they belong? What is the mental or spiritual stratum which they characterize? What is the relation which they bear to each other? What is the relationship in which they stand to other and very similar fossils, found under similar circumstances, but in totally different regions

* In speaking of the Ceremony of the Third Degree, I must be understood to refer *only* to the significant position in which the Candidate for that Degree is ultimately placed. This, alone, is ancient and genuine. The childish and self-contradictory Legend, which diverts the attention from the true design of the Degree, probably took its rise, or at all events was tacked on to the true ideal of the ceremony, only about a century-and-a-half ago.

of the world? These are the problems which it is the special province of Freemasonry to attempt to solve; aye, and these are problems, which I doubt whether any student will successfully attack, unless he be a Freemason; inasmuch as I hold that it is Freemasonry alone, which has not only preserved to us in close juxtaposition, but which at the same time furnishes us with the key whereby we may best understand the original meaning, and mutual relationship, of these truly primitive "fossils"; these fragments of the past, which carry us back to a time when God was shaping out the hearts, the faiths, and the earliest divine aspirations of mankind; and was leading them through the childhood of Symbolism and Nature Worship, onwards and upwards to the true Manhood of the hereafter; nearer and nearer to the true knowledge of His own true Self.

And now let me pass on to the second illustration which I promised to bring forward; an illustration which will conduct us to the same general conclusion as that to which we have already felt ourselves led; and, as I think by an equally clear and forcible line of analogy.

Many of you, I doubt not, are acquainted with a fascinating little work, "On the Study of Words," which was published some twenty years ago by the present Archbishop of Dublin, then the Rev. R. C. Trench. In the course of his argument, the author brings forward an idea which you will at once recognize as being in perfect harmony with that thought which it is now my chief aim to impress upon you. He tells us that Words are "Fossil History"; and, in illustration of this assertion, he takes, among other things, "the relation in which the Saxon and Norman occupants of this

land stood to one another," some seven or eight centuries ago; and he shews very skilfully how, by an analysis of our present language, it would be perfectly practicable, even "supposing all other records to have perished, to work out and reconstitute the history by these aids" alone. Nor is this assertion a whit too strong. For we ought distinctly to understand that Words are not called into existence by the mere "fortuitous concourse" of consonant and vowel "atoms;" but that each word possesses an individual meaning, inherent to itself; a meaning which was originally stamped upon it, either by the instinctive emotion, or by the intelligent thought, of the mind which first felt the need of using a vocal sound to express some definite notion or sentiment. This meaning, therefore, when carefully traced out, (not merely guessed at, or punned upon,) will give us a sure and definite representation of the habits of life, and modes of thought, of the tribe or nation among whom the particular word first became current. And thus, just as from single fragments of bone we can reconstruct the entire frame, and gain an insight into the habits of life, of the long-lost animal, so, by the study of single words, (as I would once more remind you, not as a mere fancy, but as a scientific truth,) we can call up before our minds the manners and customs, whether domestic, religious, or political, of the long-past and long-forgotten centuries.

But Words can teach us even more than this. When from the study of the words of one nation, we pass to that of the words of another and quite distinct nation, we are at once struck with the fact that these two different peoples, when they wish to indicate certain objects, or to express certain emotions, make use of words to express those objects or emotions, which, if not absolutely identical, still have a strong

family resemblance to each other. When we study the languages a little more minutely, we shall find that there are numberless other instances in which such words as we have spoken of appear to differ widely in their spelling, and in their local pronunciation ; but nevertheless possess certain elements in common. We shall even find that the mutual differences which do exist between such words, are not merely accidental variations, because they tend to be regulated by a great universal law. To these common elements of words we give the name of "Roots"; and we shall find, after due study, that languages, which are apparently the most dissimilar, nevertheless have by far the greater number of these Roots in common. Thus we are able to shew that the greater part of the languages spoken throughout Europe, as well as those which exist over large portions of Asia, are undoubtedly connected with each other by some common law of Unity in Variety ; and that, amidst all their individual differences, they possess resemblances so strong as to make it certain, either that they have all been developed in conformity with some general Law which regulates the power of human utterance ; or, (which is the more generally received conclusion,) that they have all been derived from some common and long extinct original stock : a stock from which it is at least *possible* that the totally distinct languages spoken by other great Races of the Human Species may have diverged, at a period in the earliest history of mankind, when the notions of grammatical construction were as yet very imperfectly developed.

It is, then, impossible to exaggerate either the interest or the importance of the "Study of Words"; inasmuch as the words of any individual language will furnish us with a key to the history and antiquities of the individual nation speak-

ing that language ; while the further study of the kindred Roots of corresponding words, which are common to two or more allied languages, opens up to us long vistas of thought and discovery, which conduct us back to a period in the infancy of mankind, of which we know absolutely nothing from other sources ; whereas, by the help of these Roots, we are enabled to draw tolerably accurate pictures of the habits and feelings of our earliest progenitors ; men who lived before history was possible ; men whose very existence would have ever remained unknown to us, if it were not for these dim voices, echoing from out the storied Past.

Now, just as I have already compared the truly ancient Symbols, which are preserved among us Freemasons, to the fossil relics of extinct creatures, so here I would once more compare them to the radical elements of primæval language ; and I would desire expressly to record my strongly-formed conviction, that the true light in which we ought to regard these Symbols is, that they are, so to speak, the original Root-Words of that one grand universal Heart-Language of aspiration, adoration, and worship, which God seems to have implanted, as a necessary instinct, in the bosom of Man, His last and highest Work.

Thus, then, I have endeavoured to indicate what I conceive to be the reply which may fairly be given, when we are met with questions as to what are those distinguishing characteristics of Freemasonry, which entitle it to the respectful consideration of thoughtful men. I speak my own personal experience, as well as the conclusions forced upon me by the perusal of many works, most admirable in their learning and research, when I assert that the student may be thoroughly

familiar, *so far as he knows*, with the history and origin of what I have called the "fossil" symbols of bygone ages; but that, so long as he is not a Freemason, so long will he only be able to study them as isolated curiosities, or as detached fragments, the mutual relationship or connexion of which he will feel it to be hopeless for him to attempt to determine. But, on the other hand, when once he is able to view these fragments as portions of an harmonious and connected Whole, then, and not till then, will he be enabled to rise to a true conception of their significance, or of their importance. And I strongly doubt whether any scholar or antiquarian, however learned he may be, will ever be able to take a thoroughly comprehensive view of this grand, this fascinating subject, unless his researches are illuminated by the "Light," which Freemasonry alone is capable of shedding upon them.

And surely I need hardly insist upon the interest and the importance of the line of research to which I now allude; for, if it be true, as the poet tells us, that

"The proper study of mankind is man,"

then, most certainly, the highest and most necessary branch of that study is that which brings before us human nature from its highest possible standpoint, which contemplates man as a spiritual being, whose heart can never be satisfied without that which it was created to obtain, and after which it has ever been struggling and craving,—namely, the true knowledge of the true God.

Thus, then, I distinctly claim for Freemasonry the position of a Science. I believe that it is just as much entitled to the name of a branch of science, as are Archæology, Comparative Philology, or any other of the recognized divisions of human

learning, when viewed as component parts of that great study of Anthropology, or the Science of Man, which has been so prominently brought before the public mind, in one way or another, during the last ten years.

III.

But, if Freemasonry really be what I claim for it that it is, then it is high time that its loyal sons should recognize it in its true colours. It is time that we should recognize the fact that, if Freemasonry be a science, it must be studied scientifically; that is, according to the methods of research and induction which are prescribed in all scientific investigation. The immense antiquity of our symbols and rites, *in some form or other*, is indubitable. The first great question which we, as Freemasons, have to solve is,—How long have these Symbols been used, and these Rites practised, in this country, in anything like their present mutual connexion, by any secret Society or Societies whatever? Hitherto, too much has been taken for granted by some, (and too much has been flatly denied by others,) in this matter. Hitherto our Masonic Students have too often done harm to the Craft which they really love, because they have been content with accepting mere legend and tradition, and have allowed many fabulous and even silly tales to be presented to the public, as well as to the brethren, in the shape of legends which will not stand the slightest test of criticism, and traditions which could only be repeated by the grossest ignorance or folly. Now, if we wish Freemasonry to stand well before the world, we must abandon this course. We must set ourselves steadily to work, seeking after

facts, and carefully sifting evidence, with a stern determination honestly to reject everything that will not stand a *fair* pressure of criticism. I do not say that we should reject all tradition. Far from it. The true man of science will not, on the one hand, blindly adopt or defend tradition; but neither, on the other hand, will he blindly reject or ridicule it. Such a student will bear in mind the old saying, that where there is smoke, there is fire; and, therefore, he will be ready to believe that even the most childish tradition may be as the smoke which rises from the smouldering embers of Truth: and, just as the traveller, wandering in a region covered with wild and trackless forest, will seek some eminence, and gaze eagerly around, in hopes of discerning a thin blue line of vapour ascending amidst the trees; and as he prizes the sight of that smoke above all things, because, though worthless in itself, it indicates the spot where he may obtain help, guidance, perhaps even the means of preserving life itself,—just so the true student, who is trying to explore the tangled wastes of prehistoric lore, will never superciliously ignore even the most apparently worthless tradition, but will rather prize it, not for its own sake, but because it gives him a clue to the direction which he must take, if he hopes to find that Truth which is the object of his research.

Brethren! I ask you to believe that this is the true “Work” in which a Freemason should be employed. I know, of course, that all of us have not the opportunity of prosecuting such researches for ourselves; but we can recognize their importance; we can manifest an interest in their pursuit; we can encourage, in many different ways, the discussion and ventilation of such topics, at our Lodge Meetings. And this, I am sure, is the only way in which we can convince the outer world that Freemasonry really is something more than a

Society of men, which is devoted to purposes that are doubtless innocent, and is founded upon principles which, at all events, *profess* to aid the cause of pure morality ; but, at the same time, is incapable of teaching us one truth, or of conferring one solid benefit, which those outside of its circle cannot attain to, or procure, just as well as the Initiated.

I repeat it, if we would only *thus* have faith in our Craft, then, indeed, should we be true and worthy Masons, in the best sense of the word. For, I count not that Brother as a true Mason at heart, who professes to admire our Institution because it is the *peculiar* exponent of Morality. If he cannot learn morality out of Freemasonry, I suspect that he will never learn it at all ! I count him as no true Mason, who parades it as the special attribute of Freemasonry, that it creates a fresh bond of Brotherhood between man and man. If he cannot find the principles of "Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth," without the help of Freemasonry, I very much fear that he never will find them ! Still less do I count him a true Mason, who looks upon our Lodge Meetings as mere occasions for amusement and convivial enjoyment ; forgetting that our Lodges have been solemnly consecrated to the Name and the service of God ; forgetting that the blessing of God is invoked, whenever we meet or part ; forgetting, too, that God's special assistance was implored, at every step that he has ever taken in Freemasonry ! No, nor even is he a true Mason, who is content with the mere parrot-like acquisition of our Ritual, however artificially fluent and impressive may be his manner and delivery in the rehearsal and performance of our ceremonies ! But he is the true Mason *at heart* who attends his Lodge *as a duty* ; who comports himself, when in Lodge, as one who is discharging a duty, and who is assisting in the carrying on of a great Work : and who, when the

matter is brought before him, is ready to believe, and to rejoice in the belief, that this our Institution is an heirloom of God's handiwork in the hearts of our forefathers; that it embodies a summary of His Scheme for the moral education of the world; that it has preserved, in a peculiar manner, the Archives of the growth of Religious Thought in the Human Species.

Brethren! if we could only grasp these Truths; if we would only set ourselves to act them out;—then our Masonic “Work” would speedily lead us to far better, higher, purer, and holier notions of God, than can ever be conceived by those who fail to think of Him and of His Work from this point of view. For it is the Light of Freemasonry rightly studied, which brings out into high relief the truth which is contained in His revealed Word, (though we often fail to see it *there*;)—the grand truth that He is the Educating Father of all Flesh; the One God, eternally the same, Whose holy inspiration it was that guided the hearts of His heathen children of old, who were feeling after Him, * groping after Him, craving after Him, in the darkness of those past ages, which, as the Apostle Paul told the Athenians on Mars' hill, “God winked at”;—that God and Father, “of Whom and through Whom” have been all things, from the beginning of Creation, and “to Whom” all true study of His Works and of His Laws, must ultimately tend to conduct us.

* Acts xvii. 27—30.

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