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THE SPIRITUAL FORCE OF FREEMASONRY

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The contest between the spiritual and the material in the life of man is as old as man himself. In all generations some have been ruled by the one, others by the other. In some generations the one has seemed to prevail while other generations have been dominated by its opposite. But never in the history of the world have the material forces been stronger than they are today, springing for the most part from the extraordinary discoveries and inventions of the last two centuries.

The Industrial Revolution which began in eighteenth-century England and is still in process has made possible stupendous fortunes for some and unhappily also insecurity and even abject poverty for others. As a result it has set up, as standards of success, power or wealth for the few, economic security for the **many**. These are not unworthy aims. A man must work and earn more wages, otherwise he will not be able properly to support himself and family and contribute to the relief of those less fortunate. Wealth honestly acquired through inventive genius or highly-trained skills is to be commended if properly used. Men must also be protected against insecurity and poverty arising from causes not of their own making. Wealth and security become vicious, however, when they are set up as standards, as goals to be achieved whatever the means and with no feeling of responsibility to virtue and the common welfare.

Men sometimes of apparent respectability who to make dishonest dollars cleverly violate the laws, condone, often take part in bribery, graft and other forms of corruption, even descending

to the level of personal and group violence and murder. Such men contributed to the downfall of Ancient Israel; to the downfall of Athenian democracy and the death of the Roman Republic.

Security seems indeed eminently desirable in this uncertain world and when honorably purchased through self-participating insurance or pension plans is right and honorable. But it is distressing to see people expect something for nothing from a paternalistic government, yield their democratic right to corrupt political machines in return for support, submit themselves to the tyranny of labor bosses or employers and some even pursue the will-of-the-wisp promises of atheistic and authoritarian communism.

The stupendous, awe-inspiring advance in science which has marked our modern era has likewise directed our thinking along materialistic lines, even though many of our most eminent scientists are deeply religious men. In the midst of this great scientific advance we must always be conscious of the fact that those concepts which have meant most to the human race are not susceptible to laboratory proof. Exact knowledge and human welfare are indeed greatly to be desired. But are they sufficient?

Nowhere was there more exact knowledge or better adjustment of material resources to human welfare by a paternalistic government than in the late unlamented German Empire. Knowledge and material welfare are not enough. We cannot put our trust in them alone.

Masons know I do not like the word believe; I say they know-that there is a Supreme Intelligence that pervades all nature and which is all powerful and immortal. "A survey of nature and a study of her beautiful proportions first encouraged men to imitate the divine plan and study symmetry and order." In symbolic and in rather grandiloquent language the authors of our ritual stated a sublime truth,

Throughout human history men have felt the power of something beyond themselves impelling them toward the good, the true, and the beautiful. Solomon's temple, so spacious and magnificent, the Parthenon, unsurpassed memorial to the love of the Athenians for their city and its goddess, the impressive structures of Imperial Rome and the inspiring cathedrals of the middle ages followed and the tale has not come to an end.

Many and varied were the explanations men gave of this experience, widely different the religions and the cults which developed as man sought for knowledge of the Divine. It was given, we believe, to an otherwise obscure people to catch a glimpse of

the one Everlasting and True God and to enshrine Him in their temple in Jerusalem and *after* great trials and many tribulations, in their hearts.

From these ancient peoples who saw and felt and knew its sublime truth it has come down to us. I believe that no serious-minded, thoughtful person can go through the ceremonies of our Fraternity without a knowledge of the reality of God and a sense of His presence in our midst. This is the fundamental basis of the spiritual force of Masonry, indeed, it is that spiritual force. Without it, there could be no Masonry.

Knowing that God is, and that we are His sons, we know that we are brothers. Masonry tells every brother that as a son of God he is an individual worthy of dignity and respect, entitled to his own religious and political views, his own thoughts, and his own occupation, provided those do not violate the laws of God or man and the canons of good taste. It is this insistence on the freedom and dignity of the individual which makes Masonry so dangerous to authoritarianism that dictators and despots, political and religious, hate our Fraternity and wish to destroy it.

This free individual, however, is not completely emancipated and able to follow his own selfish desires. No man can stand alone in this world and brotherhood carries obligations with it as well as privileges.

The ritual teaches us, "By the exercise of brotherly love we are taught to regard the whole human species-the high and low, the rich and poor as one family, who, as created by one Almighty parent, and inhabitants of the same planet, are to aid, support, and protect each other," Complete realization of this would bring that universal and lasting peace for which we all hope and pray. Is Masonry doing its part to bring this about?

Wherever Masons are, there is the circle of their brotherhood and strength. For myself as long as the circle *stands* I know there will be brethren ready and willing to help me with their services and their prayers, to keep my secrets, to strengthen me lest I fall, to give me good counsel and to warn me of danger. What greater security than this can I desire or find? But if I get angry or prejudiced or greedy and so break the circle I have but destroyed myself. I have lost both my dignity and my security and am nothing.

Masonry gives us thereby a standard of virtue and the symbolic implements with which to attain it the gavel to break off the vices and superfluities of life, the square of virtue wherewith to square our actions, the plumb to remind us to walk uprightly

before God and man, and the level to remind us that we should meet all men on the level.

Masonry thus gives a lofty answer to these spiritual needs of men. To put it more simply, it gives men something to live by and something to live for.

To the modern materialistic Masonry answers First that God is, has been, and ever will be, second, that neither money, power, nor position selfishly sought and dishonestly gained, nor security found at the sacrifice of individual dignity and freedom, will bring true happiness. The spiritual force Masonry has an answer to modern materialism.

It is very easy to stand here, criticize other, and extol the glories of Masonry, but it is a far different thing to live up to the principles we espouse.

The ruffians are abroad and the call is clear to all Masons to arise, to put aside the allurements of pleasure and ease and to be at work. If every Mason would work as an individual, with God's help, and if every Lodge as a group would work for the best interests of the community, spreading by precept and example the great principles of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, the spiritual force of Masonry, acting through us, would certainly triumph over the evil powers of that materialism which threatens our democratic way of life and strikes at the spiritual foundation of our civilization.

MASONIC SYMBOLS: THE CABLE TOW

Masonic symbols have been called the Silent Ritual. Being silent they convey to the mind of the observer a meaning which depends on his own interpretation. Thus, a symbol may convey a simple idea to some observers while to the others it may stand for a profound truth. For example, the cross may be merely a reminder of an instrument used in ancient times to liquidate malefactors, or it may signify a certain supreme sacrifice and thereby stand as a symbol of the Christian religion. Therefore, symbols, be they the written word or an object, usually have more than one meaning. So it is with Masonic symbols.

The Cable Tow is an expression rarely used outside of Masonic circles. It suggests a rope or line used for drawing or leading, called in German a "Kabeltau." Some authorities trace the words to the Hebrew "Khabel," meaning a rope attached to an anchor or to bind as with a pledge. Others find an origin in the Dutch word "*cabel*," a great rope, and "tow" a Saxon word meaning to hale or draw. Whatever the origin of the words Cable Tow the

use of such a device for controlling an animal or object goes back to the remote past.

How the Cable Tow came into use in Masonic ceremonies is unknown. It is probable that one time it was employed to lead or control the candidate at some stage in the ceremonies. This is suggested by *the fact* that in English lodges the Cable Tow is used only in the First Degree and is removed after the obligation. This is not the case in America where the Cable Tow usually is worn in all three degrees and in a manner indicative that it is a symbol.

In the First Degree the Cable Tow indicates quite clearly that the wearer is under restraint, that he is not his own master. Here the Cable Tow is a reminder of Masonry's mighty doctrine of mastership, of that self-control which is necessary if the passions are to be subdued. Figuratively speaking everyone wears a Cable Tow. It may be so long that it interferes with the law and the wearer linds himself under the control of law enforcement agents, or it may signify less offensive human frailties which none the less impair the freedom of self-direction. So "people of a low order must' be held fast' by external force, in proportion as men and women become advanced, external forces becomes increasingly unnecessary, so that in a truly civilized state, order rests on the inward character of men."

In all three Degrees the position of the Cable Tow is associated with either the due guard or the sign of the Degree and therefore with the obligation. In this connection the Cable Tow may be regarded as a symbol of the bond which unites a Mason with his Mother Lodge. This bond has been likened to the cord which unites a mother and her new-born babe. Although the cord is severed the knife has yet to be devised that can cut the spiritual bond between them. So it is with the bond that binds a Mason to his Mother Lodge. There may be a physical separation, yet there will exist that spiritual bond which gives one meaning to the expression "once a Mason always a Mason."

THE LADY FREEMASON

There was a time when a Lodge meeting could be held most anywhere at any time. If it had not been so it is unlikely that Elizabeth, the daughter of Lord Doneraile, would have become known as The Lady Freemason. Her initiation occurred around the year 1710 and although there are several accounts of the actual circumstances the following appears to be the most authentic.

It was the custom of Lord Doneraile of Doneraile Court, County Cork, Ireland, together with his sons and a few friends, to open a Lodge at Doneraile Court and carry on the ordinary ceremonies. The Lodge was held in a room separated from another by stud and brick-work. Elizabeth, a spirited young lady, resolved to satisfy a curiosity concerning what took place behind the tyled door of the Lodge room and made arrangements accordingly. She removed a portion of a brick from the wall and placed herself to command a full view of everything which occurred in the next room. So placed she witnessed the first and second degrees (probably all that was worked at that period). Then becoming aware that the brethren were about to separate she attempted to retire without being observed. In doing so she stumbled against and overthrew a piece of furniture. The crash was loud, whereupon the Tyler, stationed on the landing outside both doors, gave the alarm, burst open the door and with a light in one hand and a drawn sword in the other, confronted a terrified and fainting young lady. He was soon joined by the members of the Lodge present and but for the prompt action of her brother and other steady members she might have fallen a sacrifice to what was then esteemed her crime. After reviving the unfortunate lady and discovering what she had observed she was placed under guard of the Tyler in the room in which she was found, while in the next room the members deliberated as to what action should be taken. For over two long hours Elizabeth heard the angry discussion and her death deliberately proposed and seconded. At length the good sense of the majority succeeded in calming the angry and irritated feelings of the other members. It was resolved to give her the option of submitting to an initiation in the work witnessed and if she refused to consult again regarding the matter. Terrified by the storminess of the debate, yet with a secret pleasure, Elizabeth gladly accepted the offer. She was accordingly initiated. After her marriage a few years later to Richard Aldworth she seems to have kept up her connection with the Craft and her picture in Masonic clothing appears in Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry from which this account has been taken.

THE MASONIC DIGEST is published quarterly for the purpose of giving the *Craft* the essence of timely articles and addresses on Freemasonry. Distribution is made possible through the co-operation of Lodge Secretaries. Therefore if you receive a copy you are indebted to the Secretary of your Lodge for mailing it with the Lodge Notice of Meeting.