

TRUTH

Throughout the century preceding the founding of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, a favourable atmosphere was gradually unfolding for the development of Freemasonry; out of the Renaissance and the Reformation had come a new spirit of enquiry; men no longer accepted old traditional beliefs inherited from the Middle Ages about the physical universe around them and about religion, but were boldly striking out on new avenues of thought.

This was a period of great scientific discovery; men like Galileo, Kepler and Napeir were drawing back the curtains of ignorance to reveal nature's marvelous laws.

Historians see a close resemblance between our time of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his United Grand Lodge of England, had this to say:

"We are at a stage in our culture not unlike that of three centuries ago; the world has struck its tents and is on the march; changes are taking place in public opinion as violent as nuclear reactions. Vast regions will soon be as unified as present day towns; races, long uncivilized will have turned into industrial nations.

"The great words in which the Ritual proclaims the message of Freemasonry call for re-examination; justice is no longer fair dealing between individual men but equal access to the material goods of the universe; other abstract words like fidelity, benevolence, and equality are all due for servicing.

"Two hundred and fifty years ago men were thinking hard about things; we, their successors, need to do the same."

If we accept the fact of the mutability of language, that the meaning of words varies in the course of time, then another honoured word of our ritual that I would select for re-examination or, more correctly, for clarification, is TRUTH.

Nearly every brother at his initiation is so overwhelmed with the mass of material presented to him that seldom is his mind capable of absorbing it all or even of remembering more than a few words of it; the lines that most impressed me were that the fundamental principles of Freemasonry are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth; on mentally analysing these grand principles at the time I had no difficulty with the first two, Brotherly Love and Relief, but what is meant by Truth?

English literature is full of references to truth; Keats said with striking effect that beauty is truth and truth beauty. Sir Isaac Newton disparagingly termed his own scientific discoveries as merely picking up the odd pretty pebble on the beach "while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."

A modern poet, John Masefield, writes, "For death takes toll of beauty, courage, youth, of all but truth."

On being arraigned before him, Pontius Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" but did not wait for a reply; however, Jesus had already left an imperishable record that very adequately answered the question.

Masonic writers believe that the truth referred to in the lecture of the first degree is synonymous with sincerity, truthfulness and straight-forward dealing; it is interesting to note that James Anderson in his Charges to a Freemason published in 1723 mentions only two fundamental principles, Brotherly Love and Charity and it required the concentrated thought of some of the great Masonic scholars of a later part of the eighteenth century to stimulate the speculative and symbolic aspects of Freemasonry and add Truth to the fundamental principles.

As we all know, the real object of Freemasonry is the search for this divine Truth, indeed, to employ a modern popular phrase: that is what it is all about.

We must turn to the Volume of the Sacred Law, the rule and guide of our faith, for assistance and understanding.

In Deuteronomy we read, "He is the Rock, His work is perfect, a God of truth"; to me one of the most important and revealing statements in that great Book is that God is Spirit and as it also states that man is created in God's image and likeness, therefore, man must be essentially spiritual and potentially perfect. Is this not part of the great truth which we must know and which shall make us free, free from the dominion of the material body and from the illusion of the material world.

The great men who developed our Craft called it Speculative Masonry because, to them, speculation was not gambling on the stock market but had the dictionary meaning of mental or spiritual vision, the mental action of pondering and reasoning about matters not physical.

We will do well to heed the advice of our English brother and think hard about many things.

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