



## *The Overy Papers*

### **Number 18 - Our Ritual Stories?**

Tonight I want to try and explain the meaning of the various lectures in our degrees. This is mainly for our newest members who maybe don't know where they come from and us older members who have passed our sell by date of three score years and ten and may have forgotten. Plus answer a question from our new brothers.

I was assisted by the writings of V.Wor. Bro. Barry D. Thom P.M.  
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#### **Our Ritual Stories?**

Freemasonry is a system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.

Who first said that I don't know but it was possibly James Anderson who is known as the father of the Constitutions and Rituals of Speculative Freemasonry and who wrote them way back in the early 1700's.

But what does it mean?

Well we all know that we have a system of Morality, a system that sets out our rules and principals of conduct. It is what we as Freemasons, are all about.

An Allegory is a special story that is used to explain a concept and in our case, it explains our rules of life. It is this type of story that is used in our degree rituals as a tool that teaches us the goals of our Fraternity.

To be veiled in Allegory means that this story, in our case, explains the meaning of Freemasonry in a literal sense rather than an historical fact.

So we must remember that the stories in our degrees are veiled allegories and they are just that. They are stories that are used to teach us what freemasonry is all about and although they have an historical trend they are usually not historically correct.

But it is by using a veiled allegory and adding the use of our symbols that we illustrate the Masonic principles that are of prime importance to us as Freemasons.

Our symbols are used to add a pictorial aid to our stories. Some symbols are commonly used outside Freemasonry such as the acacia plant that is a symbol of the immortality of the soul and this meaning was determined many years ago.

The pillars at the entrance of King Solomon's Temple and the Winding Staircase are other examples and we must not forget the importance of the working tools at all three degrees.

Thinking of the last month, the story of Santa Clause is an Allegory and is a major part of the Christmas story. It is about the importance of giving and although it is very loosely connected to the story of Saint Nicholas who was the Bishop of Myra in Asia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and well known for his kindly gifts. Even the eight reindeer plus St Nicholas represent St Pauls, 9 fruits of the spirit - Love - Joy - Peace - Patience - Gentleness - Goodness - Kindness - Faith - and Self Control.

So there is very little that is an historical fact. For those that are still young at heart I am sorry to tell you but Santa isn't a real person however much V W Bro. Jack Stanley used to say Ho - Ho - Ho and looked like him in the back room of The Dickens Tea Rooms in Chillawack.

So to get back to what this is all about. Our rituals are such stories and the stories we use are ours and although other Lodges have very similar stories they are often just a little different.

There are going to be differences in other provinces and especially other countries. But what is important is not the historic fact but the story it passes on and the symbols might not be historically correct either but it is what they stand for that is important.

Having got that clear in our minds we will now look at our rituals and the things that are important to us

We use the same ritual that was introduced in our Lodge in 1912 and although I have just produced the 2016 edition of the ritual I used the same words and stories exactly as our 1912 edition but mine is an electronic copy and it even has a large print edition something beyond the dreams of WB "Daddy" Yates our first WM.

So if you feel that our ritual is a little incorrect, don't worry, as I said it is just a story or a parable if you like.

Originally James Anderson had the lodge set out with the Worshipful Master in the West, so he could see the rising sun just like the druids. That makes sense as does the Junior Warden being in the North looking after the hours of darkness. But things change and today it is set out as it was in 1912.

Even if someone tried to change it back there will be Brethren like VW Brothers Con Neudorf and Dick Savage saying "No Way".

Other historical inaccuracies that stand out are, the two brass pillars at entrance to the temple. Brass did not appear until about 30 BC in Egypt so they had possibly been made of Bronze. The two globes on the top that represent the world and the heavens, well back then they thought the world was flat and everything went round the earth.

In one ritual it tells how the masons advanced into the temple through a porch, then took a flight of winding stairs to the middle chamber to where he would receive his wages. Even the bible never came up with that one.

There were 80,000 masons working on the temple and it would have taken weeks to pass out the wine, oil and corn to the entered apprentices alone and to be honest, there was no winding staircase either.

Another interesting story is about Hiram Abith and this is possibly the most interesting. As Master Masons it is a well known story and those of you who are not there yet have that to look forward to.

The book "The Hiram Key" is one of the classics of miss interpretation even better than David Brown although he does admit his was a novel. They even have photos of possible dead members of our story.

It is thought James Anderson wrote this story when he was denied "The Word" of an operative mason so he decided the word was lost and wrote it into the story.

The historical facts are slightly different mind you. Hiram was the son of a widow who was sent by Hiram, King of Tyre, to oversee the building of King Solomon's Temple.

He was artificer of metals or a goldsmith not a Mason and when he had finished the temple he went home. That's all but then I think our story is better.

And now to the other issue. I have been asked by our new brothers why we say "So Mote it be" at the end of a prayer instead of Amen?

It is customary in contemporary English to end prayers with "Amen," a Latin word meaning "So be it." In official documents such as a will it is often said "In Deo Nomme, Amen" or "In the name of God, So be it".

So why "So mote it be"? Well the word "mote" is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "motan" meaning "to be allowed".

Bor. Ron Merk, Education Officer of Vancouver & Quadra Lodge #3 Victoria, BC Canada remarked:

To me, Amen seems to have become a word that suggests a passive acceptance of God's will. "Mote" on the other hand is an action verb and I believe that the use of an action verb is significant in the understanding of

why Masons prefer it, as it delivers an active agreement, of man, to God's purpose.

Masons using it are continuing the original intent to express a dynamic acceptance of this relationship with God.

But why do Masons end their prayers with 'So mote it be'?" Well the answer goes back to the the oldest known Masonic document the Regius Poem of 1390 AD. It is one of the Old Charges used by early operative masons to regulate their trade and to guide Masons in manners and moral conduct. The poem ends with this couplet:

Amen! Amen! So mote it be!

So say we all for charity.

And so we end our prayers the same way they did in 1390. So next time you're in lodge and say "So mote it be" after the chaplain finishes a prayer, remember that you are continuing a 600-year-old Masonic tradition.

And anyway to para phrase us older members, " we do it because we have always done it that way".

Thank you and whatever I say may we continue in peace and harmony.

Bro. Bill Overy

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