Faith Hope and Charity:

The poet William Butler Yeats wrote in “Rosa Alchemica,” “I had discovered, early in my researches, that their doctrine was no mere chemical fantasy, but a philosophy they applied to the world, to the elements, and to man himself.”

Brethren, I agree with this quotation. But first it requires the bricks be square and set in the correct order, or that the arithmetic of their dimension is correct.

Faith Hope and Charity is that arithmetic, they are principles of Freemasonry and are integral, or foundational to the mechanism of Freemasonry, without which the mechanism does not really work. I wonder if the shift away from faith, for example is a shift away from Freemasonry. You see if one of the pillars of the mechanism is missing how can the mechanism even work. I wanted to explore Faith, Hope and Charity as the fundamental starting point to the alchemical process.

To that end The Districts Board of Relief is sponsoring The Fall Divine Service at Ryerson United Church on October 27th and it will be themed on Faith, Hope and Charity. Hamilton District C has planned a Lodge of instruction on April 23rd where the theme is also Faith Hope and Charity. And I will also take the opportunity to explore this subject in all its complexities throughout my travels in the District exploring the nuances of Faith, Hope and Charity as key ingredients to the alchemical process. That of making a good man a better man.

Shakespeare said this of Faith; “There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.”

Shakespeare said this of Hope; “God shall be my hope, my stay, my guide and lantern to my feet.”

Shakespeare said this of Charity; “Charity itself fills the law. And who can sever love from charity.”

As I embark on this journey though Hamilton District C I wish to draw your attention to these words. “Faith, Hope and Charity.” And from those three words I wish to describe an alchemical process that if taken seriously will pass the initiate along a well traveled road that has existed, in my opinion since the very beginning.

You see it’s my view that Faith is represented by the first degree. That the first degree shines a light on all that Faith is and should be. It does then follow that Hope is the 2nd degree and that all the stories, lectures and charges are describing the concept of Hope. ***This maybe too simplistic but it is true to say that the intrinsic truth (the building, the temple) is built around the essence of truth. The holy of holies housing the spirit of God or the alchemist’s heart that houses faith and hope.*** Charity is many things but at its root or source is love. Love and the light of truth if followed through the stories, charges and lectures lights the path from faith to hope and then to Charity!

The first of Shakespeare’s quotes speaks to Faith and if I may repeat the quote to you;

” There are no tricks in plain and simple faith.”

JULIAS CAESER act 4 scene 2

The quote said that Faith is simple, “there are no tricks.” You either have it or you don’t. You either take the first step or you don’t. It makes it seem like Faith is black or white. Binary, Yes or no.

Let’s go back a little to the Jacobs Ladder, a ladder that gives aid to the seeker. We know where its place in the lodge is. The ladder is a binary instrument, a series of 1 and zeros or empty spaces. You need both the stave s or rounds to climb and as you do so you reach Faith. To have faith means that your faith will be tested but let’s be honest we are all tested, life is a test. Lodge or the ritual of lodge is a test. Do I have the fortitude, the temperance, the prudence and is it just? Can I accept the pain of my Faith being tested? It must be painful, because there can be no test without the pain, it incorporates all my faith and hope! Fore example from the JW lecture there was Abraham’s test of love and Faith. Then King David’s test of courage and Faith and subsequent piety. Lastly there was King Solomon’s offerings of Faith, built upon a history of Faith demonstrated by the Judaic Kings. By such noble examples we are shown that being faithful is an attitude or ingredient of being required to ascend the next round. It is a pillar of the mechanism of alchemy and integral to the process of alchemy.

A little further up the ladder is hope, and if I may bring your attention back to what Shakespeare said of hope;

“God shall be my hope, my staff, my guide and lantern to my feet.”

HENRY VI act 2

I contend that the 2nd degree describes how to find hope, it details where to look and in what manner, medium or discipline hope can be experienced. Hope is an active ingredient. I hope for. It describes will, there is a will, a motivation or drive in hope. There is an expectation in hope of a result or a conclusion. Hope describes the chance or promise of fulfillment. Indeed the 7 liberal arts and sciences are the instruments of hope.

It is true to say that from faith tested and survived builds the feeling or promise of hope and that hope invokes love. That is alchemy at work! That is the love that hope invokes. Love of nature, love of mankind, love of 1+2=3. Love of law, because it is the predictability in an unpredictable world that secures the greatest faith, hope and love which is handily described by the last quotation of Shakespeare;

 “Charity itself fills the law. And who can sever love from charity.”

 LOVES LABOURS LOST act lv

Is that not the law, a law like 1+2=3? “And who can sever love from charity.” Nobody can. It cannot be done and neither it should because it would violate the predictability of truth. It is true that charity informs us about faith and hope.

Freemasonry is a mechanism, it requires a vessel, a crucible if you will, you put in certain kinds of ingredients at certain temperatures under a variety of pressures and if you are patient and diligent you are changed. It happened to me. I have felt all that I have described to you. I have felt the pain and I have experienced the miracle of change. In fact, my wife has said that if it had not been for Freemasonry, I would not have changed at all.

Benjamin Franklin wrote in POOR RICHARD’S ALMANACK, in the 7TH OF July 1757 edition;” Get what you can, and what you get hold. ‘Tis the stone that will turn all your lead into gold.”

Tim Hogan wrote in THE ALCHEMICAL KEYS TO MASONIC RITUAL, “it’s related to the individual coming to a closer understanding and connection with their God, through right moral action, prayer and meditation during times of hardship.”

Faith, Hope and Charity stand as beacons to this art, craft and Institution. It is our legacy to discover, it is our resource to mine and we are that metal that is lead but that can be gold. Being a Freemason is being an alchemist. William Shakespeare said of that:

 “You are an alchemist, make gold of that.”

 TIMON OF ATHENS act l4

Thank you.