FAITH NULLIUS IN VERBA

Brother Albert Churchward was born in Devon, England in 1852 and died 1925. Brother Churchward was a trained medical practitioner and a world renown Geologist. His passion though was the study of the development of early religion. Amongst the many books he penned was “The Arcana of Freemasonry.”

He wrote “Freemasonry has existed for at least six hundred thousand years, but not under the name of Freemasonry. That term did not even exist.” Brother Churchward continues by writing, “ Freemasonry was the religion of the world; it existed not in this country only, but throughout Africa, Europe, Asia, America and many islands in the Pacific.” He continues, “it is that our Brotherhood originated with the old Mystery Teachers, or High Priests, in old Egypt.”

Can we be satisfied that Brother Churchward one hundred years ago had enough data to make such a claim. We must read these books and make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge or is a “leap of Faith,” required?

Because as Muhatma Gandhi said: “Faith must be enforced by reason... when faith becomes blind, it dies.”

Alchemy is the study of reason, or cause and effect. In my first Paper I stated that Faith, Hope and charity were fundamental to the alchemical mechanism of Freemasonry, and I presented the view that Faith is the theme of the First Degree.

Its Faith before Freemasonry, Faith before Alchemy. You cannot experience the mysteries and privileges unless you demonstrate that virtue.

W. L. Wilmshurst in his authoritative work, “The meaning of Masonry” writes;

“In the schools of the mysteries, when aspirants for the higher life were wont to quit the outer world and enter temples or sanctuaries of initiation, prolonged periods were allotted to the practical achievement of what is briefly summarized in our first degree.”

Wilmshurst continues, “We are told seven or more years was the normal period, though less sufficed in worthy cases. The most severe tests of discipline, of purity, of self balance were required before a neophyte was permitted to pass forward…”

As I read and re-read the first degree I see all kinds of references to Faith both implicit and explicit. It is the ancient initiation of the faithful.

“We initiate ourselves into the work, and the work initiates us to higher (and deeper) levels of consciousness.” Wrote Israel Regardie in “The philosopher’s Stone.”

As Wilmshurst points out, “the most severe tests of discipline, of purity, of self balance were required.” Without Faith one could not even hope to enter the “Higher life.” It was Faith that imbued the aspirant with the courage and resiliency to bare the pain, and fire of transformation.

Tim Hogan in the “The Alchemical Keys to Masonic Ritual,” wrote; “Alchemy first and foremost sought to join the physical with the spiritual. “That would be like joining each of us to Faith. Hogan goes on to say; “In alchemical symbolism, the physical world was represented by the Square, and the spiritual world by a circle-which had no beginning or end. The two tools used in making these symbols are the square and compasses.”

We can therefore establish Faith starts in the mind and with work moves to the heart. It is a place so to speak that one gets to. A place of perspective; on trust, courage and hope, a place of vision. But to get there and get there we must, we search for truth.

There are ingredients to Faith; courage, trust and hope, imagination and perseverance, as C. S. Lewis wrote; “regarding the debate about faith and works: it’s like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most important.” Faith is a commitment. A resolution. An obligation! A promise if you will that we will adhere to in the face of all testing, trouble, fear and failure. It’s the duty of truth to become Faith, that duty is the alchemy of Freemasonry!

The word Alchemy can be separated into two words Al which is the Arabic equivalent of “the,” in English. And “chemia,” meaning Egyptian Art, or the land of black earth. According to MacKey’s revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, “Alchemy has also been called the Hermetic Philosophy, because it is said to have been first taught in Egypt by Hermes Trismegistus. Mackey’s encyclopedia goes on to say. ”An Egyptian priest, Hermes Trismegistus, the thrice-greatest Hermes, was supposed to have lived about 2000 BC, & was one of the first to practice Alchemy.” On reading that extract from Mackey’s one should recall the JW’S lecture.

If magic is the art of making things happen and alchemy is the process of making specific things happen and Freemasonry is the specific process of spiritual transformation. Then Freemasonry is Alchemical magic. “And is founded on the purest principles of piety and virtue.”

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, authors of “The elixir and the Stone.” wrote; “The sacred magician or alchemist endeavours, in contrast, to become what the Renaissance magus maintained he must- the subject and object of his own experiment. He endeavours to immerse himself in it, to experience it, so to speak, from within – to let his experiment become a mirror for his own transformation, and his own transformation a mirror for his experiment.” An experiment in Faith!

“We take a good man and make him a better man.” And if you have faith in Brother Churchward we’ve been “making good men better men,” for six hundred thousand years. It may be correct to assume that there has existed an uninterrupted process running parallel with Humanity. Where the highest ideals of Humanity from ancient Egypt to the 21st Century have been cherished and prized, where truth reveals the gold of Faith. It stands to reason that the ancient edifice of Freemasonry is a monument to the cumulative work for truth and that while Humanity searches for the doors to Faith, Mason’s have always known where to find the key.

In closing, I would like to read an extract from, “The origin and Antiquity of Freemasonry,” by Albert Churchward “Our principle tenets are the same. We have a monument with mysterious secrets written in stone which dates back to remote antiquity, and yet remains to the present day, with writing as fresh and as clear as fifty centuries or more ago; and we Freemasons have practically the same signs and symbols in use now, as with the Egyptians who had the different degrees, with knowledge and secrets restricted to each, and before passing from one to another, questions and teachings had to begone through, as well as certain ordeals to prove the Faith of the brother, identical with our own.”

“Nullius in Verba!” TAKE NO ONE’S WORD FOR IT!