HOPE. Part 4.

“Cum luce salutem.”

My first paper stated the view that Faith, Hope and Charity are essential to the process of alchemical transformation and are the fundamental purpose of Freemasonry. As we have discussed Faith, I want to look a little closer at Hope.

“God shall be my hope, my stay, my guide and lantern to my feet.” Shakespeare: Henry VI

 “…the fire gave light to the Israelites during their escape from their Egyptian bondage, while the cloud proved darkness to Pharaoh and his followers, when they attempted to overtake them.”

These two cited quotations: the first from Shakespeare Henry VI the second from our 2nd Degree, relate the idea that light, divine light is the source of all hope.

It’s my opinion that Hope is the theme of the 2nd Degree. In the working tools lecture in the 2nd degree there are two references to Hope, both references are associated with a level which will become more significant later.

Bro. Timothy Hogan in “The alchemical keys to Masonic Ritual,” states “In a nutshell, alchemy can be defined as the process of taking something of a lower or lesser valued nature and transmuting it into something of a greater or more valuable nature.” It seems clear to me that there is a correspondence between the description of Alchemy by Bro. Hogan and the Hermetic maxim, “as above, so below.” Alchemy like Freemasonry tells of a truth that promises the craftsman a perfect conclusion to his labours. Freemasonry like alchemy is hope.

Hermes Trismegistus the ancient Egyptian philosopher and Alchemist is said to have authored the Emerald Tablet.

“Tis true without lying, certain and most true. That which is below is like that which is above & that which is above is like that which is below to do ye miracles of one only thing.” Is a translation of the “Emerald Tablet of Hermes,” by Sir Isaac Newton circa 1680.

The Hermetic precept “As above, so below,” comes from the Emerald tablet and symbolizes a great truth that humanity and our earth are a microcosm of the heavenly macrocosm. Hope spills profusely from the aphorism. The adage is an invitation to discover, examine and conclude. As Bro. Rudyard Kipling once wrote;

“I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew); Theirs names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who.”

It necessarily follows then that the seven liberal arts and sciences were the philosophical devices required to discover the meaning of “As above, so below.” As Walter Wilmshurst points out in “The meaning of Masonry.”

“Grammar, Logic and Rhetoric with the Ancients were disciplines of moral nature, by which the irrational tendencies of a human being were purged away…” “Geometry and Arithmetic were sciences…, God has “made everything by measure, number and weight.” “Astronomy for them required no telescopes; it dealt not with the stars of the sky but was the science of metaphysics…” “Music (or Harmony) was for them not of the vocal or instrumental kind; it meant the living practice of philosophy.”

It was Socrates that said; “True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us.”

An examination of “The Shadow of Solomon,” by Laurence Gardner, “The liberal Arts were not so much taught as a means of preparing students to gain a livelihood, but to increase their awareness in the philosophical sciences.” Gardiner goes on” The liberal Arts were, in effect, perceived as routes towards personal enlightenment in the finer things that were the keys to harmony and justice.” Harmony and justice are both qualities of hope and Freemason’s we cherish and value as they in an orderly alchemical action transform ourselves and society.

Gardner continues; “…it emerged that geometry and numerology were at the hub of all alchemical learning.”

In “The Meaning of Masonry,” W. L. Wilmshurst writes “We know from the Bible that Moses was an initiate of the Egyptian mysteries and became learned in all it’s wisdom, while Philo tells us that Moses there became “skilled in music, geometry, arithmetic hieroglyphics and the whole circle of arts and sciences.” Moses was the definition of Hope.

Wilmshurst continues; “The “arts and sciences,” were called “liberal” because they tended to liberate the soul from the defects and illusions normally enslaving it.”

St Paul wrote;” the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.”

The architectural pillars or columns of the 2nd degree that connect the above to the below are the essential conclusion of the Master of Arts and sciences, the masters of Freemasonry. The five noble orders of architecture, the 5 pillars, crafted, centered and squared to stand on level ground and reach up to heaven. They were the mason’s metaphor for light, our inner and perfected light reaching for Arcadia. The pillars are a technological marvel evocative of columns of divine light shining down and were the constant Landmark as Wilmshurst describes of, “every intellectual and physical interest,” that “was made subservient to one idea of separating the soul from material bondage.”

Wilmshurst goes on to say;” The idealism of Greek architecture and sculpture was entirely due to the same motive and with a view to elevating the imagination beyond the visible level and fitting the mind for the apprehension of ultra-physical form and beauty.”

We can conclude light like pillars unites the geometric and architectural upper with the lower, combines the greater with the lesser. Thus, its the inherent principle of the light of Freemasonry when appropriately practised to discover the source of our light. The hope in all subjects and all matters is finding our soul in the depths our darkness.

As the great alchemist Fulcanelli wrote in “Les Mystere des Cathedrales;” What unsuspected marvels we should find, if we knew how to dissect words, to strip them of their bark and liberate the spirit, the divine light which is within!”

The Latin idiom Cum luce salutem, is translated as “with light, salvation.” With our salvation comes Hope, and;

“He who hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as He is pure.” 1 John3:3

Nicolas Poussin was a French Baroque painter. He was born in 1594 and died in 1665. He painted “The Shepherds of Arcadia.” “Les bergers d’Arcadie.” The painting depicts 3 shepherds standing and kneeling beside a tomb on which is written the know famous inscription. “Et in Arcadia Ego.” Which translates from the Latin as “I too was in Arcadia.”

John Dee was born in 1527 and was an advisor to Queen Elizabeth 1. He was a lifelong alchemist, mathematician, and devoted his life to Hermetic Philosophy, he wrote; “There is (gentle reader) nothing (the works of God only set apart) which so much beautifies and adorns the soul and mind of man as does knowledge of the good arts and sciences.” The Mathematical Preface to Elements of Geometry of Euclid of Megara (1570)

 As our Christian Master once said;” The kingdom of heaven is within you.”

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