

THE GLOBES
Historical Anachronism – Significant Symbol

On Summer Visitors Night in August. Muskoka Lodge received a unique gift. Two beautifully crafted globes added to the ornamental pillars that flank the entrance to the lodge room. The globes unveiled on that occasion on the presence of the Grand Master and the Deputy Grand Master were hand carved from an ancient tree discovered on the farm of V.W. Bro. Max Beaumont, and considered by archaeologists to be more than 3,000 years old.

It is assumed that these pillars are symbolical of those cast in brass by Hiram, King Solomon's chief architect, that were placed at the porchway or entrance of the Temple, to which Masons attribute great ritual significance in our First and Second Degrees. However, even a casual review of the description of the pillars given in the First Book of Kings (chapter 7, verses 15-21) will show that 'globes' were not mentioned. It is suggested by some that the pillars may have been surmounted by bowls that functioned as huge torches - from which issued "fire by night, and a cloud of smoke by day." In this sense they are symbols of our dependence on the guidance of the Great Architect of the Universe.

The pillars of the earth are the Lord's and he hath set the world upon them.

1 Samsuel 2:8

The ancients thought that pillars supported the earth, and the Old Testament has many references to this notion. In the old religions, pillars were associated with stability, strength, and firmness. Pillars were revered as symbols of the power of the Deity. In the Book of Job, we read that God "*shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble.*"

Masonic ritual derives the allusions to the pillars of the Temple from this theological pseudo-science: "*in strength*", "*God will establish*" and "*stability*". In this sense the pillars are symbolic of the endurance and stability of the institution of Freemasonry.

Some Hebrew scholars suggest that the two chapters that adorned the pillars were 'pomels or globes' - the Hebrew word is *koteret* (keter – a crown). In the time of Solomon, 10th century BCE, it was thought that the world was flat. Harry Carr states, "*Whether they were really bowls or globes cannot now be determined, but it is quite certain that they were not maps, either celestial or terrestrial.*"¹ The concept of the round earth would come centuries later. Possibly the earliest global map was constructed by Crates, a Greek geographer, in the 2nd century BCE. The first in modern times is attributed to Martin Behaim and Leonardo de Vinci in the 15th Century.

So, where did the globes originate and what is the significance in Masonic tradition? Historians suggest that they were adopted in the second quarter of the 18th century, and reference to them was added to the ritual around 1745. Remember that most of the founding members of the Royal Society - the 'Invisible College' - were Freemasons: Sir Christopher Wren, Elias Ashmole, Robert Moray, et al. Masons inscribed maps of the earth and charts of the celestial constellations as ornaments on the spheres or globes surmounting the pillars in the lodge. The geographical and astronomical engraving alludes to the Great Architect, Creator of both heaven and earth.

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Masonry Universal

“... two spheres on which were delineated maps of the celestial and terrestrial .. globes pointing out Masonry Universal” - anywhere under heaven, anywhere in the earth, there is the home of Freemasonry!

So runs an old form of the Lecture given in the Second Degree. They were first set in stands on the floor of the lodge and are so depicted among the several symbols engraved on the Master Mason's certificate, two paired globes standing on tripod stands between the columns. Sometime later they were placed as the headpieces of the two great pillars on the Tracing Board used to illustrate this Lecture. The celestial globe symbolized the spiritual part of human nature and the terrestrial globe symbolized the material side. Can we deduce any moral interpretation from the position of the two globes – Celestial atop Boaz on the left and Terrestrial atop Jachin on the right?

The great English Masonic writer of the eighteenth century William Preston, in his The Illustrations of Masonry made lengthy and detailed reference to the celestial and terrestrial globes, with the spiritual and moral lessons to be learned from an interpretation of them.

“The professors of our art in latter periods of the world, ever having the instruction of their disciples and the good of mankind in view, have expended their improvements by delineating on these round balls, which decorated their columns; maps of the celestial and terrestrial globes. On one globe is represented the face of the heavens, the planetary revolutions, and other interesting figures of the ethereal concave. On the other is delineated the countries, seas, and various parts of the inhabited world.”

“What an august conception does this give of the works of the great Creator! ... While we are employed in contemplating these globes we must be inspired with the profoundest reverence for the Deity, and the most exalted admiration of his works.

*Thus from the rude covering of the two round balls, intended to grace the capitals of the two rude columns, which Solomon reared and consecrated, have been traced the origin of many important discoveries, which the study of the globes have produced; and the improvements of civilized society have enlarged, and extended for the benefit of mankind.”*²

*“The Globes belong to the subject matter of the philosophy of Masonry.”*³

RSJD 23 September 2008
Muskoka Lodge No. 380, Bracebridge, ON

¹ Carr, Harry. **The Freemason At Work**. Lewis Masonic, revised edition 1992. P. 261.

² Dyer, Colin. William Preston and his Work. P. 247

³ Haywood, H. L. Mackey's Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Supplement Volume 3, P. 1245