

ANSWERS TO INTERESTING QUESTIONS

**A PRESENTATION BY RICHARD A SCARLOTT AND JAMES A PLETZ TO
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ABSTRACTED FROM THE FREEMASON AT WORK BY HARRY CARR

THE FREEMASON AT WORK

BY

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FOREWORD

BY RICHARD A SCARLOTT

SEVERAL MONTHS AGO CELEBRANT PLETZ AND I WERE DISCUSSING THE PAPERS WE WERE TO PRESENT TONIGHT. AT SOME POINT DURING THOSE DISCUSSIONS WE THOUGHT ABOUT PRESENTING A COMBINED PAPER. LATER THAT IDEA CHANGED TO A QUESTION AND ANSWER FORMAT AND THAT IS WHAT WE PROPOSE TO DO NOW.

SOME YEARS AGO EUREKA LODGE HOSTED HARRY CARR AS THE SPEAKER AT A SPECIAL EVENT. I WAS FORTUNATE TO HEAR HIM THAT NIGHT AND LATER OBTAINED THIS BOOK.

“THE FREEMASON AT WORK” WAS COMPILED AND WRITTEN BY HARRY CARR AND WAS PUBLISHED IN 1977. HE IS A PAST MASTER OF QUATOR CORONATI LODGE # 2076 IN LONDON AND WAS SECRETARY AND EDITOR FOR TWELVE YEARS.

THE BOOK CONTAINS 200 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AND WE WILL USE 10 OF THOSE THIS EVENING. THE QUESTIONS COME FROM MANY SOURCES BUT THE ANSWERS ARE HARRY CARR’S. WE WILL USE THOSE PORTIONS OF HIS ANSWERS THAT WE HOPE ARE INTERESTING TO YOU. WE WILL ALTERNATE ASKING AND ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

AFTER THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS YOUR COMMENTS WILL BE WELCOMED.

TO SET THE STAGE I WILL READ TWO PARAGRAPHS FROM THE INTRODUCTION.

In dealing with certain ritual and procedural matters, the reader’s attention is particularly directed to the fact that the articles in this volume quote from documents of the 14th—18th centuries, and that *the details that are described belong only to the dates that are assigned to them*. They take no account of the changes and standardization that took place in the 19th century, and it is emphasized that, except in a few innocuous cases, they do not describe— or attempt to describe—present-day practices.

Finally, the articles in this book were never intended to be the last word on those subjects. They are simply a collection of careful answers, at an elementary level (often only my own opinion) on the queries and problems that arise in the lodge room, from Brethren who are eager for a better understanding of the things that they say and do in the course of their Masonic duties. That explains the title, “The Freemason at Work”. It is hoped that the whole collection will furnish an ample choice of subjects for discussion in lodges and Study Groups, and bring new pleasures to Brethren who enjoy their Masonry.

QUATUOR CORONATI

1 Q. What does the name 'Quatuor Coronati' mean?

A. The Latin words mean 'the four crowned ones' and allude to the Christian Church's Festival of the Four Crowned Martyrs, which is celebrated on 8 November annually.

There are numerous versions of the legend of the *Sancti Quatuor Coronati*, all very much alike, though they differ considerably in important details such as their nationality, their number, and even their names.

The story, in brief outline, is that in A.D. 302 four stone-carvers and their apprentice were ordered by the Emperor Diocletian to carve a statue of Aesculapius, which, since they were secretly Christians, they evaded doing. For disobedience to the Emperor's commands they were put to death on 8 November. During the year 304 Diocletian ordered that all Roman soldiers should burn incense before a statue of the same god, when four who were Christians refused to do so, for which they were beaten to death. This was also said to have been on 8 November, though two years later than the stone-carvers.

Melchiades, who was Pope from A.D. 310 to 314, ordained that these two sets of four and five martyrs were to be commemorated on November 8, under the single name of *Quatuor Coronati*. The Sacramentary of Pope Gregory, two hundred years later, confirmed that date and Pope Honorius built a church in their honour in the seventh century. They are to be found to this day, depicted in sculpture and painting, in many mediaeval and later churches in Europe.

The Saints are referred to in the earliest known version of the *Old Charges*, the *Regius MS.*, which is dated c. 1390 and there is good evidence that they were venerated by English masons, notably in an ordinance of the London masons, dated 1481 and still preserved in the Guildhall archives, which prescribed that

every freeman of the Craft shall attend at Christ-Church [Aldgate] on the Feast of the Quatuor Coronati, to hear Mass, under a penalty of 12 pence.

The founders of our Lodge, nine in number, of whom four were soldiers, chose *Quatuor Coronati* as the name of the Lodge and November 8 has been the date of the annual Festival and Installation meeting since its foundation.

OFF OR FROM

2 Q. 'Will you be off or from?' Is this a test-question or a 'catch-question'? Please explain.

A. This is *not* a catch-question. It is a question in what is known, in Scottish working, as the 'short method' of passing or raising the Lodge from one degree to another. Let us assume that the Lodge is in the first degree and the next item of business is 'to pass Brother N. to the Second Degree'.

The Master orders the Lodge to be proved tyled in the usual manner, and the Brethren all stand to order 'while the Lodge is being passed'. The Master then asks the Senior Warden: 'Will you be off or from?' The S.W. replies: 'From' (if the Lodge is going *up* to the degree). The Master then says: 'From what to what?' The S.W. says: 'From the Degree of E.A. to that of Fellowcraft'. The Master then says: 'By virtue of the Authority vested in me as Master of this Lodge, I declare it closed in the E.A. Degree' (gives knocks of E.A. Degree) 'and opened in the Degree of Fellowcraft' (gives knocks of F.C. Degree). And that is that! Very simply and very quick—as opposed to all the usual questions about squares, etc. NOTE: If the Lodge is coming *down*, the S.W. will answer 'Off' instead of 'From'—to be followed, of course, by the Master asking: 'Off what to what?'

This method of getting the Lodge up and down from one degree to another is quite popular and is much used by the Scottish country Lodges. It is also used in all Lodges when coming down from M.M. at the end of a raising—unless there is no more Business, when the Lodge is closed *finally* on the third (by the Wardens giving the substituted secrets, etc.). The Scottish working also allows the Lodge being *finally* closed on the second.

PRESTONIAN LECTURES

3 Q. What are the 'Prestonian Lectures' and are they obtainable in print?

A. William Preston died in the year 1818, aged 76, after a lifetime of service to the Craft, devoted largely to the study and perfection of the Masonic Lectures. They were designed, primarily, to furnish instruction and explanation of the procedure and symbolism of the ceremonies, by means of Question and Answer, and Preston—perhaps more than any other single individual—may be credited with the best of the English language that is preserved in our present-day Ritual.

By his Will he left various legacies to Masonic charities, and an additional sum of £300 in Consols to the Grand

Lodge, with the direction that the income from it was to be applied as a fee

‘to some well-informed Mason to deliver annually a lecture on the First, Second or Third Degree of the Order of Masonry according to the system practised in the Lodge of Antiquity during his Mastership.’

In 1819 United Grand Lodge endorsed the opinion of the Grand Master that insistence on uniformity in regard to the Lectures was not desirable in the interests of Masonry, but Preston’s Lectures were delivered each year, with occasional intermissions, from 1820 until 1862, when they were discontinued. Until that time the Lectures were mainly in Question and Answer form, as Preston had designed them, but surviving records show that some of them were rearranged and delivered in narrative form.

In 1924 the Prestonian Lectureship was revived with substantial modifications to the original scheme, *the Lecturer now submitting a Masonic subject of his own selection*, and (with the exception of the years 1940—1946) regular appointments have been made annually since 1924 to the present day.

The foregoing notes may suffice to show the distinction between Preston’s Lectures and the Prestonian Lectures since 1924. Nowadays, the Prestonian Lecturer is chosen by a special committee of the Grand Lodge and he has to deliver three ‘Official’ Lectures to Lodges applying for that honour. The ‘Official’ deliveries are usually allocated to one selected Lodge in London and two in the provinces. In addition to these three, the Lecturer generally delivers the same lecture, unofficially, to other Lodges all over the country, and it is customary for printed copies of the Lecture to be sold—in vast numbers—for the benefit of one of the Masonic charities selected by the author.

The Prestonian Lectures have the unique distinction that they are the only Lectures given ‘with the authority of the Grand Lodge’. There are also two unusual financial aspects attaching to them. Firstly that the Lecturer is paid for his services, though the modest fee is not nearly so important as the honour of the appointment.

Secondly, the Lodges which are honoured with the Official deliveries of the Lectures are expected to take special measures for assembling a large audience and, for that reason, they are permitted—on that occasion only—to make a small nominal charge for admission.

Prints of the earlier ‘Prestonian Lectures’ are now very scarce, but the *Collected Prestonian Lectures, 1925—1960*, have been published by the Quatuor Coronati Lodge (twenty-seven Lectures in one volume) and that is available to members of the Q.C. Correspondence Circle.

DEACONS - MESSENGERS

4 Q. In the Opening of the Lodge in the first degree—and in the Investiture of the Deacons—we are told that their duties are, *inter alia*, ‘to carry messages and communications’ to the J.W., or ‘to bear messages and commands to the S.W.’. In fact, they never discharge any such duties. Why did those words come into the Ritual?

A. By long standing tradition, the Deacons are the ‘Messengers’ of the Lodge, and the earliest versions of the Deacon’s Jewel or Badge consisted of a ‘winged Mercury’, the messenger of the gods. (Incidentally there are some beautiful examples in the Grand Lodge Museum, and several of our old Lodges still use them, in place of the ‘dove’.)

It is certain that from c. 1760 onwards the Deacons—in English practice—actually performed some of these duties, i.e., there were certain portions of the ceremonies in which the W.M. sent a whispered message by the S.D. to the S.W., and the latter passed it on by the J.D. to the J.W. We have a perfect example of this in *Three Distinct Knocks*, an exposure of 1760, where the practice was in use for ‘Calling On’ and ‘Calling Off’. (It was subsequently repeated in the popular *J. & B.*)

The Master whispers to the senior Deacon at his Right-hand, and says, ‘tis my Will and Pleasure that this Lodge is called off from Work to Refreshment during Pleasure’; then the senior Deacon carries it to the senior Warden, and whispers the same Words in his Ear, and he whispers it in the Ear of the junior Deacon at his Right-hand, and he carries it to the junior Warden, and whispers the same to him, who declares it with a loud Voice,....

The words have survived in the ritual, though the practice has disappeared from the majority of our English workings. It is likely, however, that some relics of it have survived in Europe and in the U.S.A. The present New York opening in the third degree contains the same duties for S.D. and J.D., and when the W.M. asks the S.W. if all present are M.M.s, the S.W. answers:

‘I will ascertain *through my proper officer* and report.’

The S.W. then asks the J.D. the same question, a procedure which is clearly allied to the message-bearing duties.

DUE EXAMINATION

5 Q. Rule 125 of the *B. of C.* requires that visitors to a Lodge must be vouched for by one of the Brethren present. But if the visitor is unaccompanied, or if no Brother is able to vouch for him, the rule requires that 'he shall be well vouched for after due examination'. I cannot find a precise definition of 'due examination' and opinions on this point in our Lodge Committee vary considerably. Can you clarify the position for us?

A. The phrase 'due examination' has not been defined by Grand Lodge, and its interpretation is left to the discretion of the Brethren who conduct the examination. In the majority of Lodges visitors are vouched for by their hosts and, for that reason more than any other, examinations are extremely rare. Rule 125 says that 'He shall, *if required*, produce his Grand Lodge Certificate and proof of good standing in his Lodge'. The words, 'if required', indicate that the request is optional, implying that production of the G.L. Certificate is not essential. This may be taken as a useful guide to procedure, but I would urge that, in every case where there is the least doubt, 'due examination' must be strict.

Example: Bro. X, a Provincial Mason in London on business, is staying at the Right Royal Hotel where the notice board shows that a Lodge is meeting that evening. He presents himself, but without Grand Lodge Certificate or means of identification. The examining Officer would be fully entitled to refuse admission; but, assuming that he is willing to test the visitor, I would suggest the following:

1. Ask for the Signs, Tokens and Words of the three Degrees. The visitor may be hesitant, or not wholly correct in his answers. He may even be a non-Mason who has obtained his information from some irregular source. The examination should be extended to include one or two procedural questions relating to specific details *in the ceremonies*. But there is a useful additional check.
2. Ask the name and number of the visitors Lodge with the place and dates of Meetings. (All these can be instantly checked in the *Masonic Year Book*.)

The examination should cover adequately all the Craft degrees that the visitor claims to hold. If the result is not wholly satisfactory, admission should be refused.

SO MOTE IT BE

6 Q. What is the origin of the words 'So mote it be' which we use at the end of our Opening and Closing odes, etc.

A. From the Masonic point of view, they came into our usage in the 14th century, and our two earliest versions of the *Old Charges* both include the phrase in their closing words, which I render in modern spelling, as follows:

The *Regius MS.*, c. 1390, after a closing prayer adds 'Amen, amen, so mote it be
Say we so all, for charity'.
The *Cooke MS.*, c. 1410, has 'Amen so mote it be'.

The phrase means literally 'So be it' and it was used in the middle ages in England as a pious finale to prayers or blessings. It should be noted that the medieval formula began with the Hebrew word 'Amen', nowadays often omitted from Masonic usage. The word 'Amen' has a range of meanings all related to fidelity, constancy, sureness, trust, and when used at the end of Hebrew prayers and blessings it was a formula of acquiescence and confirmation, as though to say 'Truly, we believe that it is [or will be] so'.

Thus, although the 'Amen', and the 'So mote it be', do not have the same *original meanings*, they have virtually acquired the same meaning in the course of centuries, and that possibly explains the modern omission of the Amen. (Privately, I prefer to use the response 'Amen' to 'Grace' at table, and keep 'So mote it be' for use in Lodge.)

POINT WITHIN A CIRCLE

7 Q. How would you explain the symbolism of the 'Point within a Circle'?

A. The ideal symbolism is that which is simple and immediately obvious, so that the word or picture instantly conveys its own interpretation, e.g., the lily for purity, the lamb for innocence, the level for equality. In most cases—and especially for the 'working tools'—the ritual itself gives an explanation, which is all the more satisfying because it is usually simple and clear.

Occasionally, as in this question, the symbolism is obscure, or it may bear a wide range of meanings; often the accompanying ritual gives only a faint hint as to the interpretation. In all such cases it seems to me that the best symbolism is that which a Brother can work out for himself. When, in an incautious moment, I said this aloud in Masonic company, I was challenged with the question above and, as a penance, I must answer it now without reference to any of the numerous works on Masonic symbolism.

The relevant passages, from the explanation of the First Tracing Board, may vary in different 'workings' but they generally run roughly as follows:

The point within a circle is the centre, the point from which every part of the circumference is equidistant; it is the point from which a Master Mason cannot err...

The words in the second part of this passage indicate that the 'point' is an ethical one. It implies the specific foundation upon which the Mason should base his standard of conduct and, so long as he adheres to it, he 'cannot err'. To define that standard in simple Masonic terms, the words that come instantly to mind are from Dr. Anderson's First Charge, in 1723, '.... to be good Men and true, or Men of Honour and Honesty.....'

The first part of the passage under discussion is more difficult to interpret. It appears to be a plain statement of geometrical fact, but we may perhaps assume that a moral or symbolical lesson is embodied in it. The Prophet Isaiah, (Chap. 40, v. 22) used the circle to symbolize the world, and it has been similarly used ever since. If we visualize the 'point' at the centre as the individual Mason, and the world at large the circumference, where all are equidistant from him, this might be interpreted as a Masonic lesson in equality. There are two items in the ritual which, in my view, are directly related to this 'equidistant' theme. First, '... to keep in due bounds with all mankind....'; the other is more explicit:

Let no eminence of situation make us forget that we are Brothers, and he who is on the lowest spoke of fortune's wheel is equally entitled to our regard.

The 'point within a circle' has an immediate religious significance (which parallels the point, or 'Yod' within the equilateral triangle) as the symbol of the Deity. The 'point and circle' call to mind the many illustrations, in the early Bibles, of the Creator with the Compasses, so that we see the symbol as a clear emblem of the Great Architect of the Universe. The ideas and lessons to be drawn from this starting point are unlimited but the simple themes outlined here are very satisfying.

The 'point and circle' convey other lessons too. The point—without length or breadth—implies man's insignificance, and his dependence on his fellow man. The circle is, indeed, a symbol of perfection, a divine attribute; without beginning or end, it is the symbol of infinity and eternity. When we take these two ideas together, the helplessness of man in relation to the Infinite, or the Eternal, we approach a religious theme, the relation of man to God, and here we touch on mystery so obscure, or problems so difficult to answer in plain logic, that we find refuge, or understanding, in faith.

I am by no means adept in the subject of symbolism, but in my experience too many of the writers in this field tend to give explanations which are so devious and far-fetched that they confuse their readers instead of enlightening them. I hope to escape that accusation

MASTER MASON SCRIPTURE

8 Q. At a Lodge that I visited recently, the Chaplain—during the most solemn moment in the Third Degree—read verses from Ecclesiastes. Can you furnish a simple interpretation which would also explain their relationship to the ceremony?

A. Verses 1—7 of Ecclesiastes XII are used in many Lodges during the Third Degree, and some of them certainly need interpretation. Personally I greatly admire the revised version as given in *The Bible to be Read as Literature* (Heinemann, p. 769). Only a few words have been altered in it as compared, say, with the Authorized Version, but with excellent results.

As regards interpretation, we are much indebted to V.W. Bro. The Rev. Canon Richard Tydeman, M.A., P.G. Chaplain, for the following notes which he very kindly compiled in response to our request:

The Book called Ecclesiastes, popularly attributed to King Solomon, was probably written some five hundred years later, i.e., 200—300 B.C. The outlook of the Book is fatalistic rather than pessimistic. All is vanity, because what is to be will be and nothing man can do will change it. The author has much in common with Omar Khayam. Chapter XII, verses 1—7, sometimes read in lodges during the Third Degree, gives a picture of old age, the helplessness of senility, and death. It is written in highly picturesque and poetic language, the pictures mixing into one another with bewildering rapidity. Just as Omar Khayam speaks at one moment of flinging the stone of morning into the bowl of night, and the next minute catching the Sultan's turret in a noose of light, so in Ecclesiastes, as one commentator has said, 'the metaphors change and intermingle in accord with the richness of an oriental imagination'.

The passage could be roughly paraphrased thus:

Make the most of youth while the sun still shines, for as life advances there is less to look forward to. Arms ('keepers') and legs ('strong men') grow weak and weary; teeth ('grinders') are few and cease to work, eyes ('windows') grow dim. One by one the senses fail ('doors shut'); sleep is difficult and the old man wakes at the first sound of the dawn chorus ('voice of the bird') though he is deaf to other music. He becomes scared of heights and open places; his hair is white as almond-blossom, the lightest of insects would weigh him down, and he has lost all desires and interests. Man's departure to the grave ('his long home') is like the breaking of the golden lamp-bowl (see Zechariah ch. 4, v. 2) when the silver chain snaps and the flame is put out; it is like the spilling of water when the pitcher breaks, like the stillness that follows the breaking of a water-wheel. Body and soul thus part; for the body, dust to dust; for the spirit, a return to God who gave it.

The value of this passage to Masons, at that particular part of the Third Degree ceremony, is that it adds point and emphasis to the Charge which follows. The opening of the passage—'Let me now beg you to observe . . . in effect, is saying 'Be careful to perform your allotted task while it is yet day' and it continues by expressing 'that gloom which rests on the prospect of futurity . . . unless assisted by that Light which is from above'.

HEREBY AND HEREON

9 Q. In dictating the Obligations the Master uses the words 'do hereby and hereon' and at the same time he places his hand(s) on the hand(s) of the Candidate and on the V.S.L. Should the Master's hand be placed *first* on the V.S.L. or on that of the Candidate?

A. I would suggest—as a preliminary to the answer—that the 'hereby' is a direct allusion to the pledge which the Candidate makes with his r.h. on the V.S.L.; the 'hereon' refers, of course, to the V.S.L. itself (or whichever Sacred Writ is being used for that particular Candidate).

I have seen many Masters who obviously agree with this view, and first press the Candidate's hand(s) for the 'hereby', but touch the V.S.L. with their own hand for the 'hereon'. That would seem to be perfectly satisfactory procedure for the Obligations in the Second and Third Degrees, when the Candidate is able to observe the action. During an Initiation, however, the Candidate would not easily appreciate the significance of the 'hereon' movement.

As a Preceptor of many years' standing, I have always taught that the W.M. during the Initiation Ob. should rest his hand on the back of the Candidate's hand for the 'hereby' and press *again* for the 'hereon', thereby indicating that the Candidate is avowing the solemnity of his Obligation 'by' and 'on' the V.S.L.

FORTY AND TWO THOUSAND

10 Q. Following a lodge meeting at which we had heard an explanation of the Second Degree Tracing Board, a discussion arose as to the story of Jephtha's battle and the death of 'forty and two thousand' warriors. Some said the figure was 2,040 and others that it should be 42,000. Which is correct?

A. The King James 'Authorized Version' of the Bible (at Judges XII, 6) gives the number as 'forty and two thousand' and that is the source of some confusion, although *it is a precise translation from the original Hebrew*, with each word in its correct place. It is perhaps necessary to explain that it is not possible in Hebrew to say 'forty-two'; one could say 'two and forty' (as in German) or 'forty and two', but the 'and' must be there.

For the remainder of the argument, I quote from a recent Lodge News-letter by Bro. C. I. Holmes, Secretary of United Technical Lodge No. 8027:

The 1st Chapter of the Book of Numbers gives an unequivocal answer to this problem. The Lord commanded Moses to number each of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel 'every male from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war'. Verse 21 says: 'Those that were numbered of them even of the tribe of Reuben were forty and six thousand and five hundred.' Verse 46 gives the final figures of all the tribes 'So were all those that were numbered of the children of Israel, by the house of their fathers, from twenty years old and upward, all that were able to go forth to war in Israel. Even all they that were numbered were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty.'

The figures for each of the twelve tribes are given in verses 21 to 43, and the wording of the final total leaves no room for error, 603,550. That total can only be achieved when we calculate the census of the individual tribes by the same method as we use for the 42,000 in Jephtha's battle.

Finally, one hears a great deal of criticism, nowadays, of the *New English Bible* and it is only fair to add a word of praise. In its account of the slaughter of the Ephraimites (Judges XII, 6) it gives the figure in modern terms—'forty-two thousand'.