Dear Masonic Student,

On reflection I can see that the question we had this week could have been easily confused with another [similar] question. This became evident when answers came in about the Ornaments of a Lodge.

The lead in to the question may have contributed to the confusion, because I 1st mentioned the Ornaments of a Lodge, here is what I wrote:

“All Freemasons know what the Ornaments of a Lodge are, but the answer to this week’s question may not be so well known – here’s the question: What are the ornaments of a Freemason?”

We did get some responses to the question but they were about the ornaments of a Lodge, not of a Freemason. When you see the answer you’ll say “I knew that,” and of course you do, the thing is we don’t refer to them as ornaments, or adornments.

Before I show you the answer I have for the question I want to publish an answer I got from our good brother W.B. Dennis LacQuay of North Star Lodge #23, in St. Cloud, MN about the Ornaments of the Lodge; it’s quite good, and I think you’ll like it.

This is what I found to answer your questions, “What is the ornaments of Masonry”?

The ornaments of a Lodge are the Mosaic Pavement, the indented Tessel and the Blazing Star. The Mosaic Pavement is a representation of the ground floor of King Solomon's temple; the indented tessel that beautiful tesselated border, or skirting, which surrounds it; and the blazing star in the centre is commemorative of the Star which appeared to guide the wise men of the East to the place of our savior's nativity. The Mosaic pavement is emblematical of human life, chequered with good and evil; the beautiful border which surrounds it, those manifold blessings and comforts which surround us, and which we hope to enjoy by a faithful reliance on Divine Providence which is hieroglyphically represented by the Blazing Star in the centre.

Then I found this explanation:

The ornaments of the first degree lodge are the mosaic pavement, the blazing star and the indented or tesselated border. The mosaic pavement, as we know, is the black and white squared flooring, therefore known also as the square pavement. The word “mosaic” in this context has a double meaning mosaic is produced by cementing together small pieces of stone or glass of various colours to produce a picture or pattern. But it also refers to Moses, the lawgiver of the ancient Hebrews, hence the term mosaic law. In the case of our lodge flooring, there are only two colours employed white and black, and hence the allegory is one of stark contrast. The lecture tells us why mosaic work was introduced into Freemasonry:

As the steps of man are trod in the various and uncertain incidents of life, and his days are variegated and chequered by a strange contrariety of events, his passage through this existence, though sometimes attended by prosperous circumstances, is often beset by a multitude of evils; hence is our lodge furnished with mosaic work, to point out the uncertainty of all things here on earth. Today we may travel in prosperity; tomorrow we may totter on the uneven paths of weakness, temptation and adversity then, while such
emblems are before us we are morally instructed to walk uprightly and with humility before God, there being no station in life on which pride can, with stability, be founded; for though some are born to more elevated situations than others, yet, when in the grave, we are all on the level, death destroying all distinctions; and while our feet tread on this mosaic work, let our ideas recur to the original whence we copy; let us as good men and as Masons, act as the dictates of reason prompt us, to practise charity, maintain harmony, and endeavour to live in unity and brotherly love.

The second of the ornaments is the blazing star, or glory in the centre of the lodge. On all first degree tracing boards there are three light sources the sun, the moon and the blazing star. On tracing boards used in England, the blazing star is the brightest of these three, and positioned at or near the top of Jacob's ladder, indicating that the presence of the Great Architect dispenses a greater light and power than any light source in the universe. John Browne, in his Master Key published in the eighteenth century, says that the blazing star reminds us of

the omnipresence of the Almighty, overshadowing us with His divine love and dispensing His blessings amongst us; and by being placed in the centre [of the lodge] it ought to remind us that, wherever or however assembled, God, the overseeing eye of providence is always in the midst of us, overseeing all our actions and observing the secret intents and movements of our hearts.

The third ornament is the indented or tesselated border. One explanation is that this feature is allegorical of the planets which

in their various revolutions form a beautiful border or skirtwork round that Grand Luminary, the sun, as the other does round that of a Freemason's lodge.

Information obtained From: UNDERSTANDING FREEMASONRY by R. A. WELLS - Chapter 4.

Here is the answer I have for this week’s question, and you’ll know it right off the bat under a different term ‘Jewels.’ I however like the term Ornaments because, when we think of jewels vs. ornaments, or adornments we may think of the 3 jewels as something that applies to being in Lodge convened. But if we were to think of our selves being adorned with ornaments those ornaments are something we have with us all day, every day. Maybe it’s just my mind that works that way; here is the answer I have: It comes from Masonry Defined, which are compiled writings of Brother Albert Pike.

“The Freemason’s ornaments are three jewels, the square, the level, and the plumb-rule. Those who are entrusted with them must possess great talents, and whether they can be cautious and worthy guardians of them must be ascertained from their previous conduct.”

To everyone who participated – Thank you – without you this Masonic Monday Question stuff would be a whole lot less enjoyable. Please remember it’s the learning that is the important thing; it’s not simply finding the answer to the question asked – that’s nice, but as one very good friend of mine and terrific Mason [W.B. Harley Johnson, of Koochiching Lodge in International Falls, MN] said so long ago; “Here’s something I learned while I was looking-up something else.” Brother Harley tells all of us with that statement; ‘it’s what you learn along the way that does the most good.’

Have a good time with the question for next week.
Fraternal regards,
Ed

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