MASONIC CHARITY PART 2

March 6, 2006

My Brothers,

Tonight we will return to the philosophy of Masonic Charity for another look. In a previous session, we spent some time discussing charity and discovered that its ministrations are connected with the principles of Divine Love. The point was made that beyond material support to the needy there is a larger, spiritual support that makes up Masonic Charity. Now, for many Masons, performing charitable work and administering Earthly comfort is essential to their feelings of fulfillment in Masonry. Our discussion of Masonic Charity is not meant to demean those efforts. On the contrary, it is meant to support those efforts by augmenting them with enlightened knowledge of Masonic Charity's spiritual aspects. In learning to embrace this spiritual component of Masonic Charity it is hoped, Nay, it is expected!, that our good works will continue and be found to grow in spirit!

There is a moment when the dual nature of Masonic Charity is subtly revealed, a time when the Mason receives an important lesson. He is asked if he is willing to deposit something of a metallic or mineral substance to be put up in the archives of the Lodge, and then he is given the opportunity to do so. OK. Why is this lesson considered to be so important?

First, it is an object lesson demonstrating the terrible uncertainty and pain of destitution. Most of us are far removed from any experiences of this nature. But, if we have ever been impoverished, ever been truly hungry, ever been alone and lost, if our soul has ever cried out from the wilderness of deprivation and received no answer, then we know that we cannot overlook it in others. We are caused to symbolically experience this feeling and then we are most sternly admonished to assist others, especially worthy Brother Masons, in similar conditions. This first and powerful lesson must never be lost in the Mason and is considered to be so important that its principles are echoed in our most profound Masonic teachings. It is the Mason's duty to be both aware of need in mankind, and especially his Brothers, and to be willing to relieve the misfortunes to the extent that he can do so without serious harm to himself.

Through contemplation, this first lesson reveals a deeper meaning by symbolically demonstrating our spiritual destitution and impoverishment. Being asked to place something of a mineral or metallic substance ‘to be put up in the archives of the Lodge’ is symbolic of making offerings to the Divine. But, we must remember that throughout the Holy Writings, mineral and metallic offerings were deemed abhorrent to the Divine. To the ancients, placing metal or mineral on an altar was an act of utmost defilement. With this in mind, the hidden message in this request is that, having nothing physical to give, our spiritual development is the offering that we owe to the Divine. The conceptual leap that we must now make is that the dual aspects of Masonic Charity apply as much for our own benefit as they do for the benefit of others.

Charity, through Divine Love, is what we are asked to give, and in spirit with that giving, it is what we receive from the Divine. The idea of receiving something in return for charitable giving may seem morally wrong, that it somehow voids the act of giving. We are taught not to seek acclaim or benefit from performing charity, and this is appropriate; modesty in performing our charitable works is a becoming trait among us. But, it is ultimately unnecessary before the Divine, who knows our true selves and motives. It is the Divine who has offered this spiritual pact to His Brethren. We are given the opportunity to develop our spirit through charitable, loving acts and have been challenged to do so; we are answering His call when we comfort the sufferings of others. Our acts of material and spiritual Charity, not suppressed by false modesty or fear of disapproval from others, but performed openly and honestly under the Divine, is the coin of that realm above. This lesson teaches us to practice charity in both its aspects without shame or fear of censure. It is an admonition to us that, guided by “that great book of revelation and nature" on our altar, and represented in part by the charitable works of aid, support, and protection on behalf of our Brothers and mankind, our spiritual development is the spiritual coin spent beyond the grave, through the boundless realm of eternity.

Standing destitute and alone before an empty bowl, we learn that we stand similarly destitute in spirit before the Divine, but never far from His support and comfort; for, by our essential beliefs, we are counted among the Divine's Brethren. In our symbolic destitution, we are symbolically offered the Divine's pact of mutual love, and in return, we are admonished to take this lesson to heart and make it a part of ourselves for the benefit of our Brothers, mankind, and ultimately, our own spiritual development.

That is an important lesson in Masonic Charity!

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