



Thomas Lodge "FREEMASONRY" Newsletter

RHETORIC: a word we frequently utilize in Freemasonry without giving much thought to its etymological root, proper application or meaning, and sometimes even use incorrectly to add color to whatever we happen to be talking about. We feel that perhaps a little history might help to better understand this frequently misunderstood term.

The 1927 edition of The Winston Reference defines rhetoric as of Greek origin, signifying orator and the art of speaking. As a definition: the branch of knowledge that deals with the correct, forceful and elegant use of spoken or written language. Also: as a fine speech, without conviction or feeling. And last but not least: figuratively, the power of charming and influencing.

So now you ask yourself, why does it prominently appear in the FC degree as one of the seven liberal arts and sciences? (those that we must embrace?) As Freemasonry becomes "known" to the written word in the early 1700's, turbulent times when education was reserved for the privileged, royal or ecclesiastic, it became necessary to instruct the brethren in topics that would provide a more rounded and complete education, one with which they may be able to mix at higher levels of society, business and industry (commerce) and allow them to improve their standard of living at times when only money, social standing or power could provide formal instruction. Thus the need for the middle chamber recommendation.

RHETORIC is one of the three original liberal arts which together with dialectic and grammar, form the "trivium" of western culture. In ancient and medieval times grammar concerned itself with correct, accurate pleasing and effective language use through the study and criticism of literary models. Dialectic concerned itself with the testing and invention of new knowledge through a process of questions and answers. And our favorite, RHETORIC, concerned itself with persuasion in public and political settings such as assemblies and courts of law. (It will flourish in open and democratic societies with rights of free speech, free assembly and political enfranchisement for some portion of the population.)

The concept of RHETORIC has shifted widely during its 2500 year history. RHETORIC today is described more broadly as the art or practice of persuasion through any symbolic system, but especially language. Also used today as in a pejorative or dismissive sense, when someone wants to distinguish between "empty" words and actions, or between true and accurate information and misinformation, propaganda or "spin". Another application is to denigrate specific forms of verbal reasoning as spurious. Nonetheless, RHETORIC as the art of persuasion continues to play an important function in contemporary public life, we all in some measure take advantage of its most distinguished peculiarities, some with grace and smoothness, some with cunning and incisiveness, while others might make their point with blunt maul-like verbal swings.

TEST YOUR MASONIC AND HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE:

- * From what was the Ark of the Covenant made ?
- * With what was the Philosopher's Stone associated?
- * What was the primary subject of Hermetic Alchemy ?
- * What did the Queen of Sheeba bring to King Solomon ?
- * What was King Solomon said to have in abundance ?
- * What was the subject of Newton's treatise entitled "manna" ?

The answer to all these questions is the same - gold. Now, some easy ones:

- * What did Melchizedek present to Abraham ?
- * How is "manna" described in the Old Testament ?
- * What was King Solomon's dynasty called ?
- * What was placed on the sacred table of Solomon's Temple ?
- * With what did Solomon pay King Hiram for sending him gold ?
- * To what did Jesus liken the divinity of his body ?

Again, the answer to these questions is the same - bread.

King Solomon's dynasty was called the "House of Bread", in these respects bread seems to be as significant as gold, even to the extent that Solomon received gold from the Phoenician King, and paid him for it with bread.

FEBRUARY NOTABLES:

- 1723 Died. Bro. Sir Christopher Wren. Architect of many of England's famous buildings (St. Paul's, etc)
- 1779 Killed. Bro. James Cook, discoverer of Australia, during argument over a stolen boat, in Hawaii.
- 1846 Born. Bro Buffalo Bill Cody, of ol' west fame.
- 1895 First opening of Bro. Oscar Wilde's play "The importance of being Ernest"
- 1945 Bros. Roosevelt and Churchill, together with Joseph Stalin, signed the Yalta agreement (WWII)
- 1962 40 yr. old Bro. John Glenn orbit's the Earth.
- 1965 Died. Bro. Nat King Cole, entertainer and popular singer, at age 45.