

"THROUGH THE VOICE OF A HAROD? BRO GRAHAM REVEALS GREAT MYSTERIES AT THE BIRTH OF FREEMASONRY "

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So far today you have had the pleasure of hearing the thoughts and interpretations of a wide range of Masonic speakers on aspects of teachings of the Craft with a historical or spiritual flavour. Masonic lectures are normally like this. They are enlightening or intriguing but they are essentially at one remove from the material. We hear what the speaker thinks we should hear. We hear his thoughts and his interpretations.

What would be the effect of hearing the masons of old in their own voices, speaking to us directly? Occasionally presentations are made, sometimes in costume, of old-style ceremonies. But these are often cobbled together and highly imaginative: again, they are interpretations. They are, for instance, written and performed so as to make us laugh. In this sense they are demeaning.

I wish to correct such distortions as best I may by offering to you, as faithfully as possible, the actual words of an actual freemason, as written down on 24th October 1726. They will be brought to life by being spoken through the voices of several brethren, for this is what the manuscript implies. Essentially, however, the manuscript itself will speak.

As we are nearly into Advent, and approaching Christmas, the season of nativity plays, I have called the presentation: Through the voice of a Harod? Bro Graham reveals great mysteries at the birth of Freemasonry.

The manuscript, the so-called Graham manuscript, is one of the fullest and most exciting evidences we have of early freemasonry. Bro Graham, Bro Thomas Graham, who puts his name to the work, is merely (in my opinion) the working scribe who copied it down. We do not know who the author actually was. Why did he write it down? We can perhaps surmise from the last lines on the document that he was a travelling Master, who went round to lodges in the region surrounding York, teaching them the ritual and meaning of Freemasonry. This is also the essential meaning of a northern Harod, I believe, though the expert on this subject, Bro Neville Cryer, is among us today. Thomas Graham I suspect, anyway, of being a Harod, a teacher. His own final words on the document are addressed to his pupils... "to all or any of our fraternity that intends to learn by this". They are therefore, just as they were then, equally now addressed to "any, or all" of us.

I must make one more short statement before we hear the piece. When the Graham manuscript was brought to light, almost by chance, as recently as 1936, it caused a great stir. It was unlike any previous document found in several striking respects. You must be prepared to hear many references to the Christian religion. You will hear parts which relate to the Craft freemasonry, parts which relate to what we now know as the Royal Arch, parts which relate to what we now know as Mark masonry, and parts which relate to what we now know as Royal Ark Mariner masonry. You will be receiving a composite of early freemasonic traditions. Be shocked, be surprised, be enthralled. Above all, think. What does this document mean? How will it affect your attitude to Freemasonry? It is our, common, treasure. The Graham manuscript contains powerful microchips to enhance our understanding, not just of the past, but of the present.

THE WHOLE INSTITUTIONS OF FREE MASONRY OPENED AND PROVED BY THE BEST OF TRADITION AND STILL SOME REFERENCE TO SCRIPTURE

Leader First observe that all our signs is taken from the square according to every subject in handling. This is proved by the 9th verse of the 6th chapter of the first Book of Kings. The salutation is as follows:

Bro 2 From whence came you?

Bro 3 I came from a right worshipful Lodge of Masters and Fellows belonging to God and holy Saint John, who doth greet all true and perfect brothers of our holy secrets. So do I you if I find you to be one.

Bro 2 I greet you well, brother, craving your name.

Leader Answer J, and the other is to say his is B.

The examination is as follows:

Bro 2 How shall I know you are a free mason?

Bro 3 By true words, signs and tokens from my entering.

Bro 2 How were you made a free mason?

Bro 3 By a true and a perfect Lodge.

Bro 2 What is a perfect Lodge?

Bro 3 The centre of a true heart.

Bro 2 But how many masons is so called?

Bro 3 Any odd number from 3 to 13.

Bro 2 Why so much ado and still having odd numbers?

Bro 3 Still in reference to the blessed Trinity, to the coming of Christ with his 12 apostles.

Bro 2 What was the first step towards your entering?

Bro 3 A willing desire to know the secrets of free masonry.

Bro 2 Why was it called free masonry?

Bro 3 First, because a free gift of God to the children of men;
Secondly, free from the interruption of infernal spirits;
Thirdly, a free union among the brothers of that holy secret to remain for ever.

Bro 2 How came you into the Lodge?

Bro 3 Poor and penniless, blind, and ignorant of our secrets.

Bro 2 Some reason for that?

Bro 3 In regard, our Saviour became poor for our redemption; so I became poor at that time for the knowledge of God contracted in the square.

Bro 2 What did you see in the Lodge when you did see?

Bro 3 I saw truth....the world.....and justice....and brotherly love.

Bro 2 Where?

Bro 3 Before me.

Bro 2 What was behind you?

Bro 3 Perjury...and hatred of the brotherhood for ever if I discover our secrets without the consent of a Lodge...except (they) that have obtained a trible voice by being entered, passed and raised and conformed by 3 several Lodges...and not so except I take the party sworn to be true to our articles.

Bro 2 How stood your Lodge at your entering?

Bro 3 East, west and south.

Bro 2 Why not north also?

Bro 3 In regard we dwell at the north part of the world, we bury no dead at the north side of our churches, so we carry a vacancy at the north side of our Lodges.

Bro 2 Why east and west?

Bro 3 Because churches stand east and west, and porches to the south.

Bro 2 Why doth churches stand east and west?

Bro 3 In four references.

Bro 2 What are they?

Bro 3 First, our parents was placed eastwards in Eden;
Secondly, the east wind dried up the sea before the children of Israel, so was the temple of the Lord to be builded;
Thirdly, these who dwell near the equinoxial, the sun riseth east and setteth west on them;
Fourthly, the star appeared in the east that advertised both the shepherds and wise men that our Saviour was come in the flesh.

Bro 2 Who conducted you into the Lodge?

Bro 3 The warden and [the] oldest Fellow Craft.

Bro 2 Why not the youngest Fellow Craft?

Bro 3 In regard our Saviour exhorted the chief to serve at the table, that being an exhortation to humility to be observed by us for ever.

Bro 2 What posture did you pass your oath in?

Bro 3 I was neither sitting, standing, going, running, riding, hanging nor flying, naked nor clothed, shod nor barefoot.

Bro 2 A reason for such posture?

Bro 3 In regard one God/one man makes a very Christ, so one object being half naked, half clothed, half shod, half barefoot, half kneeling, half standing.... being half of all was none of the whole.... This sheweth a humble and obedient heart for to be a faithful follower of that Just Jesus.

Bro 2 What were you sworn to?

Bro 3 For to hale and conceal our secrets.

Bro 2 What other tenors did your oath carry?

Bro 3 My second was to obey God and all true squares made or sent from a brother;
My third was never to steal lest I should offend God and shame the square;
My fourth was never to commit adultery with a brother's wife nor tell him a wilful lie;
My fifth was to desire no unjust revenge of a brother but love and relieve him when it's in my power,
it not hurting myself too far.

Bro 2 I pass you have been in a Lodge, yet I demand how many lights there are?

Bro 3 I answer 12.

Bro 2 What are they?

Bro 3 The first three jewels is: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;
Sun, Moon, Master Mason;
Square, Rule, Plumb;
Line, Mall, and Chisel.

Bro 2 Prove all these proper.

Bro 3 As for the Blessed Trinity, they afford reason;
As for the Sun, he renders light;
As for the Moon, she is a dark body of water and doth receive her light from the Sun, and is also the Queen of Waters, which is the best of levels;
As for the Master Mason, he teaches the trade and ought to have a trible voice in teaching of our secrets if he be a bright man, because we believe in a super-orritory power, for although the 70 had great power yet the 11 had more, for they choosed Matthias in place of Judas;
As for Square, Rule, Plumb, Line, Maul, and Chisel, they are six tools that no mason can perform true work without the major part of them.

Bro 2 What reference can be pressed on these 12 Lights?

Bro 3 We draw reference from the 12 Patriarchs, and also from the 12 oxen we read of at the 7th chapter of First Kings, that carried up the molten sea of brass, which was types of the 12 disciples [that] was to be taught by Christ.

Bro 2 I pass you entered, yet I demand if you were raised?

Bro 3 I was raised into knowledge of our primitive, both by tradition and scripture.

Bro 2 What is your foundation words at the laying of a building where you expect some infernal squandering spirit hath haunted and possibly may shake your handiwork?

Bro 3 "O Come ...", "Let us ...", and "You shall have ..."

Bro 2 To whom do you speak?

Bro 3 To the Blessed Trinity in prayer.

Bro 2 How do you administer these words?

Bro 3 Kneeling, bare-headed, facing towards the east.

Bro 2 What mean you by the expression thereof?

Bro 3 We mean that we forsake self-righteousness, and [difference ourselves] from those Babylonians who presumed to build to Heaven. But *we pray* the Blessed trinity *to let us* build true, high, and square, and *they shall have* the praise to whom it is due.

Bro 2 When was these words made, or what need was for them?

Bro 3 I answer into the primitive: before the Gospel spread, the world being encumbered with infernal squandering spirits, except that men did build by faith and prayer their works were oft assaulted.

Bro 2 But how came that the works of the Babylonians stood before all this, or [before] yet the brightness of the Gospel?

Bro 3 I yet by your own question answer you. Because the presumption of the Babylonians aforesaid had vexed the Godhead, insomuch the language was confounded for their sake...so that no mankind for ever was to do the like again without a divine licence, which could not be had without faith and prayer.

Bro 2 Tradition that.

Bro 3 We have it by tradition, and still some reference to scripture...[for it caused] Shem, Ham and Japheth to go to their father Noah's grave for to try if they could find anything about him for to lead them to the vertuable secret which this famous preacher had...

Bro 4 (acting as a spiritual commentator) For I hope all will allow that all things needful for the new world was in the Ark with Noah.

Bro 5 Now these 3 men has already agreed that if they did not find the very thing itself, that the first thing that they found was to be to them as a secret...

Bro 4 They not doubting, but did most firmly believe that God was able and would also prove willing, through their faith, prayer and obedience, for to cause what they did find for to prove as vertuable to them as if they had received the secret at first from God himself at its headspring.

Bro 5 ...so came to the grave, finding nothing save the dead body almost consumed away. Taking a grip at a finger, it came away...so from joint to joint...so to the wrist...so to the elbow...so they reared up the dead body...and supported it...setting foot to foot...knee to knee...breast to breast...cheek to cheek...and hand to back...and cried out "Help, Oh Father"...

Bro 4 ...As if they had said "Oh Father of Heaven, help us now, for our earthly father cannot"...

Bro 5 ...so laid down the dead body again and not knowing what to do...

Leader ...so one said:

Bro 2 "Here is yet marrow in this bone".

Leader ...and the second said:

Bro 3 "But a dry bone".

Leader ...and the third said:

Bro 4 "It stinketh".

Bro 5 So they agreed to give it a name as is known to free masonry to this day...so went to their undertakings, and afterwards works stood.

Leader ...Yet it is to be believed, and also understood, that the virtue did not proceed from what they had found, or how it was called, but from faith and prayer...so thus it continued...they will pass for the deed.

Leader. We have now arrived at the mid-point of the Graham manuscript. We have entered the strange world inhabited by the "infernally squandering spirits". "Squandering" is a old dialect word, chiefly found from Lincolnshire, across Yorkshire, to Cumbria. It simply means 'wandering, or spreading around'. The modern meaning of 'squander' is derived from it, scattering money or time about carelessly. You will note that these infernal wandering spirits are deemed likely to be responsible for the accidents common on building sites. Ritual processes are thought suitable to ward off these dangers, for such secrets are 'vertuable', they possess inherent virtues, like the sap in a flower stem which Chaucer says "of swich virtue engendred is the rose". The commentator voice is careful to stress more than once the importance of faith and prayer... "the virtue did not proceed from what they had found, or how it was called, but from faith and prayer".

We are now steadied to proceed to the second half of the manuscript. This has a different style. Dialogue of question and answer is replaced by a series of, as it were, historical lectures, linking biblical characters into Masonic fables. The fables each have relevance and moral/spiritual/cultural meaning, of course. Seemingly of much greater antiquity than 1726, and with points emerging which we may not be familiar with, it is for each of us to work out what is really being said from way back, in the antiquity of Freemasonry.

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Bro 6 While the reign of King Alboyne (i.e. during the reign of King Alban), then was born Bezalliell, who was so called by God before [he was] conceived in the [womb], and this holy man knew by inspiration that the secret titles and primitive parleys of the Godhead was preservative, and he builded on them in so much as no infernal squandering spirit durst presume to shake his handiwork. So his works became famous, while the two younger brothers of the foresaid King Alban desired for to be instructed by him [in] his noble science by which he wrought. To which he agreed conditionally: they were not to discover it without another to themselves to make a tribble voice. So they entered oath. And he taught them the theoretic and the practick part of masonry, and they did work.

Then was masons' wages called up in that realm.

Then was masons numbered with kings and princes.

Yet, near to the death of Bezalliell, he desired to be buried in the valley of Jehosephat, and have cut over him, according to his deserving...which was performed by these two princes. And this was cut as follows:

Here lies the flower of masonry
Superior to any other;

Bro 5 Companion to a King
And to two princes a brother.

Bro 6 Here lies the heart all secrets could conceal:

Bro 5 Here lies the tongue that never did reveal.

Bro 6 Now, after his death, the inhabitants thereabout did think the secrets of Masonry had been totally lost because they were no more heard of. For none knew the secrets thereof save those two princes and they were sworn at their entering not to discover it without another to make a triple voice.

Leader Yet it is to be believed, and also understood, that such a holy secret could never be lost while any good servant of God remained alive on the earth.

Bro 4 For every good servant of God had, hath, and always will have, a great part of that holy secret although they know it not themselves, nor by what means to make use thereof.

Leader For it happened with the world at that time, as it did with the Samaritan church about Christ, they were seeking for what they did not want.

Bro 4 But their deep ignorance could not discern it.

Leader So all this continued dark and obscure in the meanwhile.

Bro 6 “And it came to pass in the four hundred and four-score of years after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel”, that Solomon began to build the House of the Lord, which his father David should have builded, but was not admitted to perform it...

Leader Because his hands were guilty of blood...

Bro 4 Wars being on every side.

Bro 6 So all reverted while the days of Solomon his son (during Solomon’s days), that **he** began to build the House of the Lord.

Leader Now I hope all men will give for granted that all things needful for carrying on of that Holy Erection was not holden from that wise king.

Bro 4 To this we must all allow, else we must charge God with injustice, which no frail mortal dare presume to charge God with.

Leader Neither can his Divine Goodness be guilty of.

Bro 6 Now we read at the 13th verse of the 7th chapter of First Book of Kings that: “Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. He was a widow’s son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to King Solomon and wrought all his work” for him.

Leader The explanation of these verses is as follows. The word ‘cunning’ renders ‘ingenuity’. As for ‘wisdom’ and ‘understanding’, when they are both found in one person he can want nothing.

Bro 4 So by this present scripture [it] must be allowed that the widow’s son, whose name was Hiram, had a holy inspiration...

Leader As well as the wise King Solomon...

Bro 6 Or yet the holy Bazallieil.

Bro 5 Now it is holden forth by tradition that there was a tumult at this Erection which [...] happened betwixt the labourers and masons about wages, and to calm all and to make all things easy, the wise king should have said:

“Be all of you contented, for you shall be paid all alike.”
Yet he said, “ Give a sign to the masons, not known to the labourers”,
And who could make that sign at the paying place was to be paid as masons.
The labourers, not knowing thereof, was paid as aforesaid.

Leader This might have been.....yet if it was so we are to judge very mercifully on the words of the wise King Solomon... for it is understood, and also believed, that the wise king meant ‘according to every man’s deserving’.

Bro 5 Yet the 7th verse of the 6th chapter of First Book of Kings reads me still better, where it is said:
“The House, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither, so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, heard in the house when it was in building”.

Bro 6 From whence may be gathered that all things was fitted aforehand...

Leader Yet not possible to be carried on without a motion...(sign)...and when all things were sought, from the horizon of the heavens...(sign)... to the platform of the earth...(sign)..., there could be nothing found more becoming than the square for to be their sign...(sign again)...for to signify what they should have each other to do.

Bro 5 So the work went on and prospered...

Bro 6 Which could not well go amiss, being that they wrought for so good a Master, and had the wisest man on earth for to be their Overseer.

Bro 4 Therefore in some parts by merit, yet much more by free grace, Masonry obtained a name and a new command:

Bro 3 Their name doth signify ‘strength’...

Bro 2 And their answer ‘beauty’...

Leader And their command ‘Love’.

Bro 5 For proof hereof read the 7 and 6 of [the] First Book of Kings, where you will find the wonderful works of Hiram at the building of the House of the Lord.

Leader So all being finished, then was the secrets of Free Masonry ordered aright as is now...

Bro 2 And will be to the end of the world...

Bro 3 For such as do rightly understand it.

Bro 4 In 3 parts in reference to the Blessed Trinity who made all things...

Bro 5 Yet in 13 branches in reference to Christ and his 12 apostles...

Leader Which is as follows:

Bro 2 A word for the divine...

Bro 3 Six for the clergy...

Bro 4 And six for the Fellow Craft.

Bro 5 And at the full and total agreement thereof, to follow with five points of Free Masons' fellowship, which is: foot to foot; knee to knee; breast to breast; cheek to cheek; and hand to back.

Bro 6 Which five points hath reference to the five chief signs, which is: head, foot, body, hand, and heart.

Bro 2 And also to the five points of architecture...

Bro 3 And also to the five Orders of Masonry...

Bro 4 Yet takes their strength from five primitive: one divine and 4 temporal, which is as follows:

Bro 2 First...Christ, the Chief and Cornerstone...

Bro 3 Secondly, Peter, called Cephas...

Bro 4 Thirdly, Moses, who cut the Commands...

Bro 5 Fourthly, Bezallieil, the best of Masons...

Bro 6 Fifthly, Hiram, who was filled with wisdom and understanding.

Leader Here ends our presentation of the words contained in the Graham manuscript.

We hope you have found this text to be thought-provoking. To me, it sheds a different light on our origins, and the primitive (which means 'original') meaning of a great part of what we do. But it is no part of our present purpose to influence you by a given interpretation. We have left it to our Harod, Bro Thomas Graham, to have revealed to us all, each and every one of us, great mysteries at the birth of Freemasonry. Brethren, on his behalf, and ours, we thank you for the way you have received them.