

A perspective on the Entered Apprentice Lecture.
by Donald Mumby – March 2013 Templum Fidelis Agape presentation

*The usages and customs of Masons
Have ever corresponded with those
Of the Egyptian philosophers to which
They bear a near affinity.*

How many times have we heard those familiar words? How many times have we recited them? And how many times, while hearing or saying them, have you, like me, silently asked yourself, “what usages” and “what customs”?

These two questions remained dormant in the back of my mind only to become more acute when my wife and I visited Egypt this past year. And there, amidst the splendors of an ancient and at one time, all pervasive civilization, they again took center stage.

And how could they not when one first viewed the oldest and most glorious of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, The Great Pyramid at Giza, or marveled at the magnificent Temple of Karnack that took 1200 years to complete, or trod deep into the tombs within the Valley of Kings where Pharaohs were entombed in unmarked graves, without realizing that the laws and practice of geometry, the very foundation stone of our Fraternity, were central to their construction. But it is not just the geometric precision that I wish to comment upon today, fascinating as that is, but other customs that were brought to my attention that are somewhat more obscure.

But first, permit me to digress a bit by stating that the early Egyptians have been recognized as forming the first great civilization for two primary reasons: first, because they took food production to a new level – no longer did individuals simply grow food to feed themselves and their immediate families, but they realized that they could grow an abundance of food to feed others which meant that some had time to perform duties not merely related to mere subsistence. From this emerged a class of philosophers, teachers, rulers and administrators. And it was from this class that rudimentary forms of religion, philosophy, civics and government emerged.

Secondly, the early Egyptians were the first to record and leave a permanent record of their history and all one had to do was walk throughout the Temples and Tombs to see a rich history presented in hieroglyphics that were inscribed on walls and pillars.

So from this digression, perhaps, come the first two similarities: first, that Freemasonry is instructive in that it teaches us not only to labor diligently, but to work equally hard at becoming good and productive citizens, learned in the Arts, appreciative of the Natural Sciences, tolerant and knowledgeable of religion and well intended towards our fellow citizens. Secondly, we have learned to record our history, either through our mental faculties and the spoken word, or through the medium of the written word. Hence, for example, we make use of the memorized Ritual, Minute Books and Annual Proceedings.

But the first great custom that draws a parallel between the Priesthood or Philosophers of Ancient Egypt and Freemasonry is that both were initiatory bodies. We are all very familiar with our Rites of Initiation but it is interesting to note that Herodotus, the Ancient Greek Historian, writing in the 5th Century BC, spoke of the secret institution of Isis, the Egyptian Goddess of Motherhood, Magic and Fertility, wife of Osiris and mother of Horus, with its wonderful mysteries and imposing ceremonies. This institution, according to Herodotus, came about simultaneously with the organization of Egyptian society and the birth of Egyptian civilization. The ceremony of Initiation in this institution was a progress through gloom and terror, and all possible mortal horrors, to scenes of indescribable beauty and glory. Every candidate for admittance had to provide proof of a pure and moral life as evidence that he was fitted for entry into this society. When these requirements were met he had to spend a week in solitude and meditation, abstain from all unchaste acts, confine himself to a light diet and cleanse his body by frequent ablutions and severe mortifications of the flesh. Being thus prepared the candidate was ordered to enter a pyramid in the dead of night where he had to descend on hands and knees through a narrow passage without steps until he reached a cave like opening through which he had to crawl. As he followed another subterranean passage he could feel inscriptions on the walls which stated, *"The mortal who shall travel over this road alone, without hesitating or looking behind, shall be purified by fire, by water and by air and if he can surmount the fear of death, shall emerge from the bosom of this earth and claim the right of preparing his soul for the reception of the mysteries of the great Goddess Isis."* At the same time three priests disguised in masks resembling the

heads of jackals, and armed with swords, sought to frighten him, first by their appearance and noise and afterwards by enumerating the dangers that awaited him on his journey.

Now before I go further, let's take a moment to draw parallels between what I have just described and between our rites and ceremonies as we practice them today. First, every candidate for admission must be of good repute, true and trusty. In this lodge, as in every Traditional Observance lodge, the candidate spends some time in solitude and meditation where certain objects direct his mind to a thoughtful consideration of his life, actions and motives. Then, having unknowingly faced the possibility of death through stabbing and strangling, each candidate travels a path in darkness, encountering three (the Worshipful Master, the Junior Warden and the Senior Warden) who challenge his motives and desires. In other ritualistic traditions, principally those associated with what is commonly referred to as the York Rite, the three are represented as Jubela, Jubelo and Jubelum, the three ruffians who play a key role in the Hiram legend. What is key here is the fact that three were placed so as to interrupt the candidates's safe and peaceful passage.

As the candidate proceeded further he was exposed to the action of four elements – Earth, Fire, Water and Air. Eventually he was permitted to enter a room where he was confronted with a representation of Osiris, who by that time, had been raised from the dead. Here, he was made to kneel before an altar, and required to pronounce the following solemn obligation: "I swear never to reveal to an uninitiated person the things that I have seen in this sanctuary, nor any of the mysteries which have been or shall be communicated to me. I call on all the deities of earth, of heaven, and of the infernal regions, to be witnesses of this oath; and I trust that their vengeance will fall on my head should I ever become a villain so base and perjured." Again, the similarities to Masonic practices are so similar, additional comment is unwarranted.

The next area I would like to comment upon is that of Sacred Geometry. The Ancient Egyptians are generally credited with formulating the principles upon which Sacred Geometry is based and one need only look at Egyptian works, whether large or small, to see they are proportionally harmonious and as such appeal to our inner as well as outer feelings. This harmonic design is commonly known as Sacred Geometry which had, as its fundamental basis, the relationship that it drew between natural progression or growth and proportion. Harmonic

growth and progression are the essence of the created universe and is consistent with nature around us.

The ancient sacred geometry system consists of a progressive series popularized in the West as the "*Fibonacci Series*". Since this series was in existence before Fibonacci was born in 1179 C.E. it should not bear his name. The system consists of a progressive series initiated by the first two numbers of the ancient Egyptian numerical system, two and three. The total of these numbers was added to the next number and the series continued in this manner (2,3,5,8,13,21,34,55,89,144 etc). Hence, to understand it in a simple way you can assume each number to be the total sum of the two numbers preceding it.

What made this series unique was the fact that similar patterns can be seen reflected in many different elements of nature around us – the manner in which pine cones are arranged, the petals of a flower, the way in which a nautilus shell grows and the number of seeds found in a sunflower.

Archaeologists have been able to find a considerable amount of evidence to indicate that the ancient Egyptians were well versed with this summation series. It is evident in the many architectural plans for many of the ancient temples and tombs that have been built over the ages. These plans clearly show how the series has been incorporated on the longitudinal axis and transversely, dimensions in cubits of 1.72" giving in clear consecutive terms the summation series of these buildings. Perhaps this is best shown in the Temple of Khafra situated near the great Pyramid of Giza (Cheops) where the essential points of the temple comply with the summation series which reaches the figure of 233 cubits in total length as measured from the pyramid with ten consecutive numbers of the series (3-5-8-13-21-34-55-89-144-233).

The summation series was the origin of Ancient Egyptian harmonic design. It offers the true pulsation of natural growth. As an example, the ratio between each group of two consecutive numbers follows the human heartbeat pulsation; sudden increases, a small dip, a rise again, and then even progression, until the next heartbeat. So, as the series progresses the ratio between successive numbers tends towards the Golden Proportion, to which Western Academia assigned a Greek alphabet number even though it was used long before the Greeks. The Golden Proportion can be obtained graphically in several ways, which were all common to the Egyptian buildings throughout its dynastic history.

The Circle Index is the functional representation of the circle. It is the ratio between the circumference of the circle to its diameter and is popularized by Western academia by the Greek Letter π and given a value of 3.1415927. The early Egyptians manifested their knowledge of the circle properties and other curves, as early as their surviving records. A 3rd Dynasty (2630BCE) record shows the definition of the curve of a roof, in Sakkara (an ancient burial ground and site of one of the earliest and most imperfect, pyramid) by a system of coordinates. This proved that their knowledge of the circle was complete and enabled them to calculate the coordinates along a vertical curve. Interestingly enough, the construction workers must have followed precise dimensions in their executed circular curves, for within the tomb at Sakkara, one can see precise domes. Remember, this application was evident in Egypt at least 2,000 years before Archimedes walked this earth.

Now I would like to digress for a moment and provide a couple of examples of geometric precision that made a particular impact upon me and made me realize how intelligent and sophisticated the ancient Egyptian artisans truly were. The first centered around the tombs in the Valley of the Kings.

These tombs, built as resting places for Pharaohs, are situated in a forlorn desert area in the general area of Luxor and are dated around 5600 BCE. The area is all sand, sand stone and granite and is most inhospitable. The entrance to each tomb was well hidden, camouflaged by sand dunes and occasional acacia bushes, and facing towards the East. From the opening, a tunnel, approximately 7 feet high and 7 or 8 feet wide descended at a perfect angle of 30 degrees for approximately 300 yards into the earth. What made this all the more remarkable, is that the tunnel was mined through solid stone, most of which was granite. The walls of the tunnel were smooth, almost as though they had been plastered and yet they were solid rock. At intervals along the tunnel, small chambers or rooms were carved into the walls so they could hold those items that the Pharaoh would need on his journey to the nether world – food, clothing, weaponry, furniture, food etc. The walls were carved with hieroglyphics telling the story of the Pharaoh and his accomplishments (some of the world's earliest recorded history) and in some cases, the walls were dyed with colors that were still visible today – reds, blues and yellows. The tunnel led into the tomb area itself – a cavernous room, oval in shape with a circular vaulted ceiling that may run 30 yards at its widest and 20 feet at its narrowest. In the middle was situated a solid granite bier that stood about 12 feet tall. On top of the bier was a solid granite casket, large enough to

hold the 2 or 3 caskets within which the Pharaoh was buried. Once the caskets had been placed within the granite casket, a solid granite lid was placed on top. Now just imagine, this casket lid would be about 8 feet long and perhaps one foot thick and would have to be put in place on top of a 12 foot bier and a 5 or 6 foot tall casket. While the burial room was large I do not think it would have been large enough to build a ramp, there were no ropes and pulleys and the early Egyptians were very small in stature. How would they get it there? Now we have to remember, all of this was done 5600 years BCE with tools that would be rudimentary at best and with no common architectural tools to measure with.

The second geometrical wonder – at least for me – was situated within the Temple at Karnack, a structure that took over 1300 years to complete and contained many examples of sacred geometry. This Temple, which has no roof but spreads over a vast territory had many fascinating concepts – pillars and columns which predated Roman-Greco use of pillars, arches and doorways that conformed to harmonic analysis in that the vertical plane was a double square and the opening width was based on a square inscribed within a semi circle which was the ancient Egyptian way of proportioning a root five rectangle. But in one area two huge obelisks were placed. The first had been erected by the Pharaoh Tuthmisis and the second by his daughter Pharaoh Hatsheput. Each obelisk was made of solid granite and each had been quarried in Aswan which was about 50 miles upstream on the Nile. The height of these obelisks would be about 25 meters and they were placed in such a fashion that when the sun was reaching its meridian, the shadows cast by the obelisks intersected and made a perfect equilateral triangle. Some may say their placement was mere coincidence but I feel there was more to it than that.

There were so many other themes that I encountered that bear close resemblance to commonplace themes today. For instance, as Christians, we believe in the Holy Trinity and the early Egyptians worshipped a Trinity of Osiris, Isis and Horus.

Osiris was killed in a barbaric and torturous fashion by his contemporaries, as was Jesus of Nazareth. Osiris, like Jesus was raised from the dead and thereafter, reigned over his kingdom. When Osiris was killed he was buried in a grave that was marked by, what else, an Acacia Tree. The Egyptian Pharaohs believed that after death their spirit would rise and be as one with the Sun Gods; Christians believe that after death their spirit will rise and be with the Son of God.

As an infant, Osiris was placed in a basket and hidden in a bed of reeds on the shore of the river Nile. Years later the same fate was suffered by that great Jewish leader, Moses.

As a young man, Horus, son of Osiris got into a fight with his Uncle who had been responsible for the death of Osiris, and was badly beaten. During the course of the battle, the right eye of Horus was ripped from its socket and cast upon the ground where the Uncle stepped on it and smashed it. Isis, mother of Horus, put the eye together and replaced it in the socket, however, thereafter the eye lid could not close and the legend of the all seeing eye was born. That all seeing eye was to search for justice, right and truth and has since become a symbol for the Grand Master to wear in his jewel of office.

But perhaps the greatest similarity is the continual quest for education and learning. At the ancient site of Quam Obo stands a Temple erected about 5000 B.C. in honor of the God, Horus. On the back wall stands a carved motif that would measure approximately 15 feet by 10 feet depicting Horus being attended by one of his court Physicians. Carved into the solid stone are depictions of many of the medical tools used in those days, most of which are recognizable as being in use today – a scalpel, a drill for making holes in the skull to relieve pressure, ear cups, nose cups and a chest retractor. Vilas of potions and Pills are situated under a stylized and sweeping “R” with the bottom portion of the short leg of the sweeping “R” being intersected by a line forming the well known symbol that is on top of all medical prescriptions orders today.

In another Temple at Dendera we witnessed an astrological sign carved into the ceiling that closely resembled that commonly used today in which the 12 signs of the Zodiac are displayed.

The quest for a better life on earth and a better life in the hereafter was all pervasive. While formalized learning was limited to a very few, the quest for knowledge within the Priestly/Philosopher class was all pervasive. Like Freemasons, they sought to improve the individual, to make him a better self and by so doing, they hoped to improve society as a whole.

So, ere closing, I must admit that I have only touched the very surface of this interesting area. And, I must also admit that you have seen this particular subject matter through my eyes and my eyes alone. This was not intended to be definitive

in any way, but solely my reflection upon an area I find totally fascinating. Thank you for honouring me with your time and attention.