

National Treasure

By Barry Albin

In the Kansas Masonic ritual, the candidate is told at the door that the teachings of Freemasonry are clothed in allegory and metaphor. He is told that the design of the Masonic fraternity is a journey to a place where we make that last great change from time to eternity. Seldom do we hear in an orderly way that spiritual journey described in such a way as to touch our very heartstrings. National Treasure is a movie with a script that is both entertaining and filled with allegory. In fact the scriptwriter would have us believe that the fraternity holds as one of its secrets a great treasure, a national treasure, so great that it is worth everything to preserve it.

The movie opens with a door opening. The mysteries and treasure of the lodge likewise begins with a door opening. The movie opens in a confrontation first between the old man, the Master Mason and the young man, emblematic of the Entered Apprentice. The old man is trying to instill in the young man a sense of the mission of the Masonic fraternity, which is represented by the Gates family. Each of us has to enter through a gate to begin the journey.

The son of the old man, representative of the Fellowcraft, says that every clue leads to another clue. There is a journey that every Mason takes when he joins the lodge. Every clue on the path leads ever deeper to another clue but ultimately we cannot find the lost word until we are dead. Yes, the National Treasure is emblematic of the Lost Word or the Holy Grail. So the point of the journey is the journey. The clues are the virtues that we acquire along the way. The final person, the perfect ashlar, is the accumulated wisdom of the perfect Mason.

The boy Gates takes an oath to begin his journey. Likewise, every boy Mason, every Entered Apprentice, must take an oath as he begins his journey. The boy Gates wants to be a “knight”. Each of us becomes a knight in search of the Holy Grail.

The Charlotte is the first clue on the journey of Gates. The journey to find the Charlotte is the equivalent of the Entered Apprentice Degree. Without that degree, we can go no farther. We learn valuable lessons during that journey. We are able to discern who are fellow travelers and who are enemies on the Path. However, the journey to find the Charlotte only leads to new clues. But with the discovery of the pipe we learn of the Masonic connection to the Templars. The Pipe tells us the riddle that will lead to the next clue, and finally gives us the key to finding the treasure. The pipe is faith in G-d. Without faith in G-d, we cannot make the journey. Without faith in God, we will miss the next clue on the journey. Without faith in God, we cannot ultimately find the Lost Word.

The Declaration of Independence is the foundational document of our American freedom from tyranny. Not only in a real sense, but also in a mystical sense, that document defines the reason that Freemasonry has become so strong in the United States. The second degree starts the second section with an introduction to the Two Pillars. One pillar represents the celestial sphere and one pillar represents the terrestrial sphere. The principles taught on the winding stairway are foundational to life in the real world. They are foundational to our relationship with the outer world. But, likewise, the interpretation that Freemasonry places on architecture and the seven liberal arts, are foundational to making sense of the spiritual nature of this journey. We are taught in the movie to look underneath the actual words for deeper meanings. The two pillars allude to that which is grounded on the earth, the terrestrial sphere, and that which is spiritual, the celestial sphere. Freemasonry wants us to look deeper into the 15 steps or principles of the winding staircase to find the ultimate meaning of the journey.

In the movie, we learn that there is a cipher, an Ottendorf Cipher that gives us the key to understanding the meaning in the Silence Dogood Letters. In Freemasonry, we are taught that we cannot enter the Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple without a password. The story of the Password is itself a message. Likewise, Benjamin Franklin, the greatest of all Freemasons, a super genius, hid the next clue in symbolic letters that he wrote at 14 years of age. He hid the clue in letters sent by Silence Dogood, whose name reverses to be Do good in Silence. This is one of the most important lessons of the

Second Degree. The cipher leads us to the letters that in turn leads us to the clue. But like in Freemasonry, we must gain the inner chamber by a second password. The second password in the movie is Pass and Stowe. They were the ones who made the Liberty Bell. Likewise in order to finally enter the Middle Chamber we must get a pass and properly hide the first password, that is Stowe it.

Having now gained the secret of the Letters, we are directed to a place marked with a Masonic symbol where we obtain an ocular device created by Franklin, which will allow us to look at the Declaration in a completely new light. Likewise, the lectures of the First and Second Degree open up the meaning of the First and Second Degree in completely new ways so that we can see the foundational concepts as spiritual concepts as well as physical concepts.

The movie then starts the third degree allegory with a statement. It tells us that the treasure is real, not just in head or heart. It is the reversal of this statement that is the message for us as Freemasons. It says that Freemasonry is not just the rituals, but is what the rituals say to head and heart. After looking at the Declaration with new eyes, Gates discovers that we must first go to the Wall, then look behind Parkington Lane, and finally discover the treasure. So we are reminded of the three ruffians. The Wall in the movie is a defensive structure built by the Dutch to protect them from the English. But we should see the Wall as a symbol of our duty to walk that narrow path that takes us on the Path to true Righteousness. It is the attempt to deviate us from the true Righteousness that is represented by the first Ruffian. He attempts to extort the Secret Word from Grandmaster Hiram. But one cannot get the Word by extortion, only by experiencing it. Likewise, the bad guy in the movie tries to use extortion to find out the secrets, but ultimately Gates must lead him step by step. The second Ruffian is represented by Parkington Lane, who was a Freemason buried in Trinity Church. He represents the concept of mediocrity, the concept of the status quo. Hidden behind his coffin, the ultimate symbol of status quo, is a tunnel or path to greater treasure. Likewise, our willingness to serve and to agree leads us to a path that ultimately makes us obedient to the Divine Will and brings us every closer to the Lost Word. The third ruffian is represented by the lie that the Gates tell to

the kidnapers. We hide the truth in plain sight because everyone expects it to be hidden. The truth is apparent only when seen with the eyes of faith. People see what they want to see.

Gates knew that there must be a way out of the Middle Chamber. He knew that the way out would have been the first tunnel made by the builders. He had to remove the enemy before he found this last secret. So he tricked the enemy into going to Boston. Likewise, much trickery is involved in protecting the secret of the Lost Word. We must not give it to the profane. Finally, on the wall before the door to the treasure chamber we see three clues: the first clue was a shining star and then a Masonic symbol. The Star represents true knowledge and the Masonic symbol our duty to protect true knowledge. It is at this point that the pipe becomes the key to opening the treasure chamber. The pipe represents faith in God. In the movie, Gates discovered the treasure and then gives most of it away to others. However, he gets the girl, his honor, and fabulous wealth any way. Likewise the Lost Word cannot be kept by any one person. It must be given away to those who seek it with pure hearts. However, in the end it is the journey that has changed our lives and that secret is the Holy Grail, the Lost Word and the National Treasure.

The movie National Treasure is then an allegory on Freemasonry and the name of the movie is a riddle. Freemasonry is the national American treasure. Throughout the movie, we are told that the Masons were involved in starting this country and founding our most sacred principles. It is not the Declaration of Independence, but the Order, the mentor of the founders, the Freemasons, which is the National Treasure.

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