

Symbolism

To stimulate a deeper interest
and love for the teachings of
our order.

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O. E. S.

Address by Effie H. Lahr, Past Worthy Grand Matron, before the Fortieth Annual Session of the Grand Chapter Order of the Eastern Star of North Dakota.

The Order of the Eastern Star is essentially a Religious Order. It is founded upon the Holy Scriptures, and its Symbols, Teachings and Precepts, are all found within the pages of the Bible.

The Order is a system of self help, leading the individual up to high and holy ideals of living.

Symbolism is the most ancient method known for the imparting of knowledge. It is much older than reading or writing. All secret societies use a system of symbols in their ritualistic work to impress upon the Initiate certain fundamental truths of life.

Masonry, the oldest of all secret Orders which have survived the passing of the years, employs a most elaborate system of symbols in their ritualistic work.

Several of these same symbols have been borrowed for use in the Order of the Eastern Star. They are not used in the same way; the figure of the symbol slightly changed, but the idea kept intact.

The Ritual of the Order of the Eastern Star is very simple, as few symbols are used and these are easily understood.

"Stars" have ever been looked upon as symbolic of great events. There are three that are used symbolically in Fraternal Orders, and which carry a significant message of Truth to all who understand the meanings.

The Seven Pointed Star is used very little, and not at all by the O. E. S. The six pointed Star is of ancient religious significance, and is known as "King Solomon's Seal." Robert Morris has said that he borrowed the plan of the O, E. S. Signet from "King Solomon's Seal." This Six Pointed Star is used in Masonic work and other well known Secret Orders.

The Five Pointed Star is a very ancient symbol and a sacred one. It has always been Our Emblem. It is composed of triangles, and signifies to the Order our inseparability from the Divine, and the final blending of all with goodness upon the floor of the Chapter Room or upon the Signet. Our Star means to all students of the Order "Humanity," the body of all mankind or the Five Senses, which are represented by the Five Points.

The White Ray is the Head.

The Yellow and Green Rays are the Hands.

The Blue and Red Rays are the Feet.

The Altar is the Heart.

The Open Bible is the Light of Life.

The symbol of the prepared Altar with open Bible is: "That Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

The Signet or Chart, is a beautiful method for imparting instructions: There are many hidden meanings in the symbols that are used on the Signet.

The name Symbols of the Christ are used as "The Lion of Judah, the Lamb, the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of Sharon, and the Bright Morning Star."

Open Bible: The Altar with the open Bible and the Five Points in position facing the East, signifies "The Soul enshrined within its Five Jewels."

There is within the Star also a five sided space at the base of the Star points. This is known as the "Five Fold Cord of Love." This binds the Promise and the Sacrifice.

Altar: The correct symbolic Altar is the one shaped as a triangle, with one angle pointing East. With reverence we should approach the prepared Altar, which symbolizes for us the "Universal Mind," the All in All as present within the Heart of every one. The Altar represents the seat of Power. Under our laws after the Altar has been duly prepared and the Chapter at work, there is a sacred place to be observed as inviolate by every member of the Order. This is guarded by Two Points of the Star, and lies between the open Bible and the East. The open Bible on the Altar means that great sacrifice offered for all humanity. Therefore the Symbol is Holy. That is why it is forbidden to pass between the Altar and the East. For it is holy ground.

"Triangles:" From earliest times the Triangle has been the basis of all ritualistic work, and is the foundation of Symbolism. A Triangle is a figure bounded by three equal sides and containing three angles. In Symbolism like the Circle it means "Perfection." There is a Triangle within the Central Star which faces the East, and is known as "The Triangle of Battle." Its angles are composed of the points of Adah, Electa, and Esther. Each of these points represent a story of a battle. Adah tells the story of the fight to save her father's honor. Electa portrays the battle for the

Cross. Esther pictures the fight to save her people from extermination. It is significant to note that the colors composing the angles of this Triangle are the Red, the White, and the Blue.

The Triangle in the Floor Work: The ritualistic work of the Order employs Three Symbols upon the Floor, the Triangle, the Square, and the Circle. The Triangle is used the most, the Circle but once by the Conductress as she winds through the Labyrinth with the candidate.

Triangle in Motion: The influence of the Triangle upon the work is shown by its Symbolic number Three. The Signs have three movements. The Passes, have three words. Adah uses the triangle in her sign. Ruth uses it. Esther uses two triangles. Martha uses two triangles. Electa employs crossed triangles. Grand honors have three movements and two triangles. In opening and closing the Bible, the Conductress uses three movements. Three taps of the gavel is used to call up the Chapter. In ritualistic work wherever the triangle is used it signifies "Perfection."

The Square: The Square is of importance in all ritualistic work. All fraternal societies use the Square and insist upon making square corners in the floor work. The "Squared Heavens" was the New Jerusalem, and so the Square means to us the dimensions of King Solomon's Temple, which are outlined every time it is made around the Star. Composed of four equal sides its Symbol is "The Material Universe."

The Symbol of the East: The human race has ever faced the East for light and Wisdom. The cradle of the race is said to be in the East. Our East is a symbol of Light, Power, and Knowledge. The gavel in the East is a symbol of Power, a token of government. It also figuratively is a Scepter, which invests the holder with Regal Power. In the beginning of the story of mankind we read in the Bible that "The Lord God planted a Garden Eastward in Eden" and there he placed man, whom he had created, "In the image of God created He him, male and female created He them." The Order of the Eastern Star recognizes this God given equality, and places in the East a Matron and a Patron, as their first Two Officers, to rule and govern according to the duties assigned to them.

By looking upon the Chapter when in session, this symbol of the "Garden of Eden" brings to us all many wonderful lessons. All the beautiful flowers are there. The graces and wonders of a garden Divinely planted. The work is to keep it free from the intrusion of vile weeds that would smother and kill all the sweet, good, and lovely flowers of human impulses, words, and deeds. Each member is a worker in this garden, and she or he must see to it that a watch is set upon ears and lips.

The two in the East symbolize Knowledge and Justice. Knowledge has always been symbolized as the feminine, and Justice as the masculine types. The Associate Matron and the Associate Patron are the officers seated in the West and they are a symbol of Reflection. In nature the West is the place of reflected light, so in all symbolism that particular side of the Square is the one of Meditation and Reflection. Facing the East where shines Light and Wisdom, the West should reflect the same in Purity and Sweetness, so that all sides of the Symbolic Square be bathed and illumined with Light and adorned with Wisdom.

"Symbol of the South:" The Order of the Eastern Star has placed in the South one of the most important officers of the Order, "The Conductress." All through the Initiatory Ceremonies she acts as the Guide, symbolic of the truth that Conscience can only point the way.

In the Order of the Eastern Star the North is very important. There is perhaps no other side of the Square that calls for such careful consideration. It is the sacred duty of every member of a Chapter to be very sure that they place officers on the Square who have the ability to rule and govern. The North is the place where the office must be considered before the person, as it is the first step upward.

The Associate Conductress and the Conductress are synonymous in their work, therefore the Associate Conductress also teaches Conscience. In balloting she takes her place at the entrance to the ballot, and in this position she symbolizes "Conscience at the Door." Everyone who goes into the Heart of the Star to cast a ballot must first pass Conscience, and if each one sees and understands aright, the ballot is right, no matter what color it may be.

Another important office in the North is that of Treasurer. She guards the gate of the Treasury, and upon her discretion depends the good name of her Chapter.

The officers of the O. E. S. are the selection of the members of the Chapter. Eight are elected and these for the O. E. S. Square. This is the Square of Ruling Power. If the voting members of a Chapter understand and always act on the knowledge of the Landmarks of the Order, its Precepts and its Principles, there is never any excuse for the election of those not qualified to "Stand upon the Square."

The Secretary is placed in the South and she is to the Work of the Order what the hub is to the wheel; verily the one who is elected to fill this important office must be wise and tactful.

The winding of the Labyrinth is symbolic of the Journey of Life. Every woman is a daughter, some are sisters, many are mothers, others are wives, and there are widows. During the journey, the initiate is led by the Conductress to each stage marked by some important period in woman's life. It is in the Labyrinth that the initiate is shown the way which leads to the Star in the East, and is instructed in the signs and passes which open the Five Gates of the Order.

The mission of our Star, as it shines forth in the world, is to bring the world to the realization of Unity, the truth of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man.

All fraternities must have an obligation to live by and up to. The obligation of the O. E. S. is one that calls Moral Strength into action, demands courage and self-Sacrifice. This is demanded if that obligation be fully obeyed in the letter and spirit. "Prayers and obligations well lived are preferred to those well said."

Our obligation is a solemn pledge not only to each other but to God, and to our better and higher selves. It is a sacred promise made in the presence of many; that we will be true to the Golden Rule given us by the Master, who when on Earth said, "Therefore all things, whatsoever

ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Everyone who seeks admission to the Order should know that we require a pledge from them, a pledge that will not permit any mental reservation, and which though difficult to follow, still is livable and sane. The outside world knows better than we can realize if the Order of the Eastern Star is living the obligation. All the use the Order has in the world is the impression which its members make upon the thought of the world. If the influence is for good, for closer friendship and higher ideals of living, then the impression is favorable.

To cultivate the true spirit of helpfulness and charity towards others, is the aim and purpose of the Symbolism of the Order. Only by being kind and helpful towards all human beings, and gentle and forgiving toward each other, can we choke out the weeds of strife and hatred. "By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another," said The Christ.

The Story of the Star is told by the Points.

At the First Point, Adah, the veil is raised typical of that revelation which will follow. This is also symbolic of the coming of every member into the Order, out of the darkness into the fuller knowledge and light of the Star. It requires three steps to enter the Order: The Desire, the Request and the Initiation.

In the Second Point, or Ruth, read the story with this symbol in mind. The field is the world. Ruth, the O. E. S. Boaz, the Master, Christ. Ruth was the ancestress of the child of Promise, the Messiah, whose Star shone in the East.

At the Third Point it is fitting that the story of a Queen should be told. We honor Esther for her devotion to her people, and her willingness to lay aside her dignity and risk her life to save them.

At the Fourth Point we find Martha as the Spiritual Woman. Her faith was an active faith; she believed in Deeds; she expected her friend Jesus to do something and she believed He would. Her splendid faith, deep and lasting, is the Rock of our Symbol in Immortality. She is the emblem of our faith.

Electa at the Fifth Point, reminds us that no one lives to herself alone, that everywhere some point of contact is met with the other person. Electa keeps the spark of hospitality alive, and a warm welcome like a river should ever flow from this point toward the members and the stranger in the Chapter. The living point of good fellowship is at Electa's station. Here is the Symbol of Love, love so warm and true that it lightens the whole Chapter.

"Colors" teach the Beauty of Life. The founders of our Order chose five colors. The three primary colors were chosen—the Red, the Yellow, and the Blue. The one that has no color (White), and the color that contests all others for attention and beauty (Green).

"Blue"—Our first color of Love, a type of the Garment of Christ's Righteousness made by His sacrifice for all sinners.

"Yellow"—Indicates Sincere Affection; the color is used in the scriptures to symbolize what is Divine, Pure, Precious, and Useful.

"White"—Means in all Symbolism, Chastity, Purity, Innocence and Light.

"Green"—Is the Garb of Nature, and represents Life. It means Immortality and Hope.

"Red"—Has symbolized many of the Attributes of Blood. It has signified Fire, Hatred, Cruelty, and Passion. It speaks also of Life and Love, and to the Order of the Eastern Star, Red means warm and enduring friendship.

The Order of the O. E. S. has Five Flowers to correspond with the Five Colors.

"Adah"—The Point where only Blue Violets bloom, and these are the special pride and care of the daughters of Masons.

"Ruth"—The Yellow gleam is where the widows of Masons work, and the lovely Jassamine waves her plume like a sunbeam.

"Esther"—At the Third Point is where the Lillies are the special care of the wives of Masons. The soft Green Fern waves gently over the Fourth Point, or Martha, and the sisters of Masons cultivate it in this wonderful garden of gardens. It means much to us and is an Expression of Faith.

"Electa"—The Mother of Masons has the most beautiful flower in the Star Garden, the Red Rose, which symbolizes Love, deep, enduring, such Love as only a mother's heart knows and can bestow.

"Initiation"—Means the getting of Knowledge. All the symbols we use are made up of straight lines. Our beautiful floor work is only a means, not an end. The symbols point to the Light, which shows the individual the way.

In our study of Symbolism we should keep in mind that a symbol is but the figure of a truth, and that all the symbols we use in the O. E. S. speak of the power behind the visible universe—the tremendous reality of the unseen. The golden beams from the Star, when rightly understood, should so shine in our everyday lives that all the outside world may know the wonderful loyalty and friendship the members feel and express for each other.

"Our Star"—is the light on the pathway of the word made flesh, and as we "follow in His steps," those blood-stained footprints of the meek and lowly Nazarene, we soon find that the "Pathway" is the way of the Cross, and all those who would share the glory and the crown, must also bear the cross.

The Five Rays of the "Human Star" when totaled spell "Serve."

This is our mission upon earth—"SERVICE." Our work is to proclaim the gospel of a Living Master, and the preparing of a world "TO SEE HIS STAR IN THE EAST."