

# THE TWO PILLARS

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Standing implicitly at the threshold of every Lodge are two pillars, as they are said to have stood "in the porchway or entrance of King Solomon's Temple." We know from the full description given in the Lecture on the Tracing Board of the Second Degree that these are not ordinary architectural pillars; they are in fact ornamental columns, without any structural significance or use in practical building work. Their value is purely symbolic, and they are examples of emblematic imagery; firstly, of metaphysical principles; secondly, of ourselves in whom those metaphysical principles are reflected and embodied. The pillars are twin; traditionally one is black and the other white, thereby corresponding with the chequered flooring of the Lodge; one pillar is likewise associated with the left hand, and one with the right. Interpreted in the terminology of the sciences of metaphysics, the symbolism of the twin pillars proclaims that the ultimate substance of the Universe is a Unity which, in the manifested world, is observed by us as splitting up into a Duality; into such "pairs of opposites" as Spirit and Matter, positive and negative, male and female. Everything in Nature, including ourselves, has two sides; a spiritual and a physical side an active objective side and a passive subjective side a good side and a bad side.

Modern physics recognises that the visible world and everything it comprises is composed of positive and negative electrical forces in a state of balance; nothing would or could exist without these two forces; it is their union and equilibrium that holds things together and makes them "stand firm." Humanity divides into two sexes with opposite characteristics and functions. Electric light is the result of two currents of positive and negative energy conducted through separate wires until they meet and generate light by their union. This principle of dual-forces in balance, only comparatively recently acknowledged by modern science, has been known and acted upon by Initiates from the most ancient times, and the fact of it has always been proclaimed by two symbolic pillars; one representing the active, positive, centrifugal energy (called Boaz in the Craft system); the other representing the passive, negative, centripetal force (called Jachin in the Craft system). In our Ritual (following the marginal interpretation given in the Bible) Boaz is defined as "*in strength*;" the modern, and more expressive, term would be "force," signifying primordial dynamic electrical energy, of which lightning-fire is an example. The full meaning of the word Boaz, from the ancient Hebrew, is "fiery energy in a state of intense activity"; whilst Jachin, which we explain to mean "*to establish*," denotes passive or static force, signified by "inertia," the resistance necessary to check the positive force and "establish" it in objective concrete form and "*stability*."

In the Lodge itself these two aspects of metaphysical force or energy are further exemplified by the pillars (described as "columns") being exhibited on the Wardens' pedestals, where they are placed in opposite positions. One of them stands erect, while the other lies horizontal; their polarity changes depending upon whether the Lodge is at labour ("active") or "called off" at refreshment ("passive"). We are intended to apply this symbolism to ourselves, for like the columns on the pedestals we are beings with opposite aspects. We have an outward and active nature, and an inward and passive nature. Our physical body reveals a similar dualism; every organ in our body is duplicated; two limbs, two eyes, two ears, two lungs; two brains (the cerebellum and cerebrum), one positive by which we act consciously and voluntarily, and the other negative which is unconscious and controls the involuntary sympathetic system. The purpose of the symbolic columns is to emphasise the dualism of our constitution, and likewise to inculcate the necessity of bringing the two opposite sides of our unstable nature into equilibrium. We should observe that the columns are not in evidence on the Master's pedestal; this is because the Master is deemed to transcend the Wardens, thereby combining their united forces in himself. It is instructive to reflect that were the pillars shown on the Master's pedestal, they would have to be exhibited in their combined form of the Cross (the plus symbol). As a matter of fact, this symbol is actually displayed upon the person of the Master in the LEVEL (properly the TAU, the Hebrew form of the Cross) of the Apron which he wears as an Installed Master; hence "PER SIGNUM TAU," the ancient formula.

We would next briefly refer to the great antiquity of the symbolism of twin pillars. In ancient Greece we find that Homer mentions them in the ILIAD (XXIV 527), as two vessels, or jars, standing at the gate of heaven, one filled with good and one with evil, a blend of which is poured into each man's life at birth. The old Chinese philosophy describes them as the YIN and the YANG; and ages ago in Egypt there was held twice in every year the Festival called the "setting up of the Pillars." Finally, we have the ancient Zodiacal sign of GEMINI, traditionally known as "The house of the Twins." Originally this house was symbolised by two kids, for which the Greeks substituted twin children, the sons of Jupiter, represented by two bright stars Castor and Pollux. Gemini is also symbolised by two pillars joined at the top and base, which is a diagrammatic representation of the twins seated side by side with embracing arms. In mythology these "sons of the All-Father" were designated as the "Great Twin Brethren"; one of them was mortal, the other immortal. On the death of the mortal, it is related, he became united to his Brother and the two were translated to heaven; in sign whereof the constellation of the Twins has since shone in the night sky, where these "two witnesses" testify prophetically to the redemption of the body of man, his reunion with "*the companion of his former toils*" (his own higher-self), and the salvation and immortality of both.

From the Lecture on the Tracing Board of the Second Degree we learn that the symbolic pillars are both alike in form, as follows:

1. Square base, or cubical pediment, resting on the ground;
2. Rising out of the base is a shaft, or column, resembling the trunk of a tree;
3. At the top of the column there is a capital, or chapter, garnished with flowers and fruit, and surmounted by a circle, or globe, over which is thrown a veil or net-work.

In the description of these two pillars we are invited to see an image of ourselves, and their interpretation as symbols is the Craft

method of providing, at the very entrance to the Lodge, our first lesson in the science of self-knowledge. This lesson is likewise

-2

threefold:

1. The square base is a figure of our normal personality; the bodily man, sprung from, and resting upon, the earth.
2. Within the earthly square of our mortal person dwells an energy, or Life-force, called the soul. This is denoted by the ascending shaft of the pillar. Like a tree trunk springing from the soil in which it is rooted, and from which it draws nourishment, so the human soul grows upwards out of the personal patch of Mother-Earth forming the physical body, and is developed by earthly experience, ever building something new into itself by daily activities of thought, conduct and aspiration. And as the sap, or life-force, of a tree ultimately breaks into leaf, flower and fruit, so here at the capital of the pillar, the energies of the soul are shown as manifesting in analogous results (the graces and fruits of the spirit), and finally shaping themselves into a circle, or rounded whole.
3. The highest part of ourselves, our spiritual summit, is always beyond the sight of the eye and the ken of the mind. This is why, in the pillar, it is exhibited covered with a veil, or network. We see not what we build into ourselves from day to day, but as the pillar indicates, the essence of our bodily activities is conserved and comes to bloom in our superphysical part. Note especially in this pillar imagery the contrast between the base, which is a square, or cube, and the summit, which is a circle, or globe. The square is the ancient geometrical symbol for what has physical form, whereas the circle is the traditional symbol of what is spiritual and formless. In the old Chinese cosmogonies we find the adage: "Heaven is round; earth is square." The veiled globe, or circle, at the top of the pillar, therefore, is an emblem of man's spiritual pole; it is the sphere into which the seeds, or essence, of his bodily activities come to final fruition. These seeds are described emblematically by the many-seeded pomegranate fruit with which the chapter is surrounded, whilst the globe itself is otherwise spoken of as the "golden bowl." In the poem, "The Testament of Beauty," our Masonic chapter is referred to as :

*"The full circle where the spirit of man, Escaping from the bondage of physical law, Re-entereth eternity."*

which immediately calls to mind the admonition given to the Craftsman, "in all his pursuits to have eternity in view."

The derivation of the names of the two pillars has been widely discussed by scholars, but it is significant to note that in the Eleusinian Mysteries the name of the Sun God was "IACCHUS," while "BOHU" represented the Earth. The names have, of course, become transposed. In the Craft system the first pillar, surmounted by the celestial globe, is in charge of the Junior Warden, who marks the Sun at the Meridian. The second pillar, representing Earth, is surmounted by the terrestrial globe, and is in charge of the Senior Warden, who marks the Setting Sun. There is a sense in which the pillars themselves may be said to represent Heaven and Earth, and, remembering the theory of their Reconciliation, the meanings attributed to the "separate" pillars are barren of result while they remain isolated. In other words, "stability" can only be attained by the significance of the pillars when "conjoined," thus symbolising the consummation of the Atonement of God and Man.