



Notes from a Preceptor's Handbook

A Preceptor:

(OED) 1440 A.D. from Latin *praeceptor*

one who instructs, a teacher, a tutor, a mentor

Fred & Charlie ask.....



Who was Tubal Cain and what's
an ~~arficiter~~ artificer artificer?

And who has never got that word wrong

'Tubal Cain'

Charlie was sitting in Fred's garden – two metres away as was the new custom. As Fred was feeling 'proper poorly' Charlie volunteered to do his good Masonic deed for the day by queuing at Sainsbury's for the weekly shop. Having been suitably refreshed on return Charlie's thoughts sprang to a recent 'virtual' Lol. *'A propos nothing at all, Fred, why did our Founders choose so many unknown 'celebs' from the 'B or C' lists of names when developing our rituals. They had the entire Old Testament to choose from.'*

*'Security I suppose, Charlie. If **you** don't know the names, others might not either. Who did you have in mind?'*

'Tubal Cain. His name appears to be so important. Our ritual describes him as 'the first artificer in metals' but I saw in Genesis [H. 4 vs 22] he's only mentioned as a maker of 'all kinds of bronze and iron tools'. Is that one fact sufficient justification for his inclusion in a moral story. Who was he, Fred, and why is he in our ritual?'

'Well, Charlie, we know his father was Lamech, his mother was called Zillah and he was a grandson of Cain, Abel's brother. That 's about all we know historically. He lived perhaps in the second millennium BC.'

'But our ritual's all about the building of the First Temple , Fred – which was around 1000 BC and the rebuilding didn't take place until even later, 520 BC or so. Tubal Cain's not even remotely in the time frame for either. I ask again, Fred, why was he ever included?'

Fred having established Charlie was not due back home for an early lunch returned from the house with refilled glasses and the threads of an answer..

'Let's first look at another craftsman, who became the leading light of our Craft allegory, Hiram Abiff. Remember he was described [1 Kings 7 vs 13] as a man 'full of skill, intelligence and knowledge in working bronze' - he was never described as an architect incidentally. His artistic creations in the Temple {ibid. vs 15-39} were as extensive as they were beautiful. Furthermore nothing was too lowly as we know [vs 40] he also made the pots, the shovels and the basins'.

Charlie interjected: *'Are you suggesting the reason for including Tubal Cain was merely his connection with Hiram in working metal.? Surely not. There must be more to it than that.'*

'Indeed there was. Let's first ask ourselves why our C18 'Founding Fathers' chose Hiram. They were intelligent and well educated. They included doctors of theology and philosophy and members of the Royal Society. They were practical men and philosophical giants. They were

united by a strong wish to preserve the traditions of Operative Masonry unchanged. So why would they rate any metal smith's significance so highly?'

'We can find one answer in those Operative's initiation ceremonies. These were formed of three elements with the central one being a long explanation of 'the Traditional History of Masonry'. The earliest Masonic manuscripts, the 'Lowland' and 'Halliwell', date from before 1390 and come from differing traditions but both tell a very similar story.'

Fred picked up his massive manual of 'Preceptor's Pages' which he was for ever re- editing. *'If I may paraphrase from their Chaucerian English they read:'*

'Before Noah's Flood there was a man called Lamech [a descendant of Adam's son Cain who murdered his brother Abel] who had two wives. By his first wife Adah he begot two sons, Jabel and Jabul; by his second wife Zillah he begot a son, Tubal Cain, and a daughter, Mahmah. These four children inspired all of Mankind's arts and sciences.'

'The elder son Jabel founded the science of geometry and built the first house of tree and stone; his brother Jabul discovered music and the song of tongue, harp and organ. The third brother Tubal Cain developed the smith's craft of working gold, silver, copper, iron and steel. Their sister Mahmah gave birth to the art of weaving'.

'These children knew well that God would take vengeance on Man for his Sin, by fire or by water. Therefore they inscribed their sciences on two pillars that these might be found after Noah's Flood or Fire. One pillar was of metal that would not burn by fire and the other was of 'burnt brick' that would float and so not be drowned by flood'.

'After the Flood had receded the pillars were discovered by Hermes so enabling Man's first tower, in Babylon, to be built from the knowledge they had conveyed. The creation of a building of such size is taken as the first step in the new science of Masonry.'

Fred paused to allow Charlie to take stock. *'This Masonic history continues on and is all obviously allegorical. The section I've read out though reveals the significance of Tubal Cain to Speculative Freemasonry. He was clearly a man of high skill and unique learning, he was fully aware of his inevitable death by Flood or Fire yet he chose to devote his remaining hours and efforts not to prolonging his own survival but to recording his precious knowledge for the benefit of other men and other generations in a new world that he would neither see nor share.'*

'In mediaeval paintings God is frequently depicted as the Creator of Earthly beauty, often with compass in hands. Who better to depict our three great principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and

Truth than human creators of beauty. Hiram Abiff, rather than sacrificing Truth and Honour, preferred death to dishonour and our Founders possibly considered there was no finer example of Brotherly Love and Charity in all Masonic history than the self-sacrifice of Tubal Cain.'

'The giving of one's own skills, talents, efforts, to benefit others, freely and without thought of return, is surely the essence of our Charity – the heart-beat of Speculative Freemasonry.'

'When in future we hear the Warden and Deacon make reference to Tubal Cain let's not reflect on whether or not the Candidate can remember the word 'artificer' but on the example Tubal Cain set all future Masons – how on each and every day we should think of using our gifts to first help family, friends and neighbours before helping ourselves.'

A cry from the kitchen indicated that Fred's lunch was ready. Charlie had also been given some food – for thought...

© W. Bro. MJW Lee CBE PJGD

Province of Wiltshire

14th April 2020