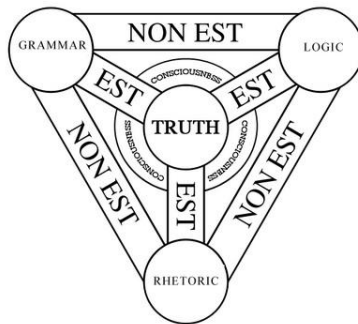


AUGUST, 2017

Sir Knights:

As Masons, first and foremost, we were taught the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences in our Fellowcraft Degree. Historically, these seven were divided into two portions, the Trivium and the Quadrivium, where the Trivium (literally, the place where three roads meet) was considered the first level of a classical education, comprising Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric. In the Medieval period, this was sometimes represented by the following graphical device:



In this diagram, the liberal arts of Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric are distinct, non-equivalent entities, all of which are required to arrive at a proper understanding of Truth, which paradoxically is both equivalent to each art, and also to the sum of the arts through the workings of consciousness.

Of these liberal arts today, Grammar is most likely the one for which we all harbor some residual dread. Sitting in grade school diagramming sentences, learning conjugations, tenses, participles, gerunds, cases, and irregularities...the list of parts of speech goes on and on. God forbid that later in high school we took on a foreign language or two (or more over time) and had to relive this painful exercise over and over again – potentially with more forms and terms not native to our mother tongue. I can sense your wincing at the memories...

Why this trip down a potentially painful memory lane? Why do we need to worry about Grammar in this age of texts and tweets? Why, when we “speak” with “emojis” does this Science still hold meaning?

Frankly, because some things just don’t translate well. Take, for example, our familiar motto: In Hoc Signo Vinces. In Latin, this directly translates as “In this sign,

you (second person, singular) will conquer.” We are told that this comes from a vision that the emperor Constantine had of a Cross of Light in the sky over the sun where these words appeared. After instruction by Christ, Constantine created his famous battle standard to incorporate the Chi-Rho of the vision. We, as Knights Templar, adopted this motto and tend to use it everywhere – even though the motto of the original Knights is the “Non Nobis...”. This Latin phrase, handed down to us by the Church Fathers sounds like something a valiant Order should adopt, right?

Problem, though. Constantine’s message was in Greek. What he actually received was not an oracle for future battles – as the second person singular future tense “vinces” indicates – but a direct command from Christ using the Greek second person imperative verb form. To better fit the narrative “story”, His message may actually be “lost in translation”. Grammatically: “In Hoc, Vincite.” In this, Conquer.

We have our orders. Conquer. NOW. What are you waiting for?

Soli Deo Gloria!



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