



PAPER

So mote it be According to Fred & Charlie



Summary: *What is the difference between 'So mote it be' and 'Amen'?*

Charlie had made his weekly shopping trip for Fred. He always enjoyed the prospect of the leisurely chat that normally followed. A cat ambled its stately way across the lawn towards them.

'What's its name, Fred?'

'Ben Hur', came the reply.

'Curious name for a cat' mused Charlie.

'Our daughter just called it Ben...' said Fred, gazing into the distance. '...until it had kittens.'

Over their coffee Charlie laughed:

'Ben Hur, bit like Masonry. We use catch phrases so often most of us long ago ceased to wonder what they actually mean. Take 'So mote it be', for example. Is it the same as Amen and, if not, what's the difference?'

Fred smiled.

'Do you remember Humpty Dumpty and his advice?'

'When I use a word... it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less.'

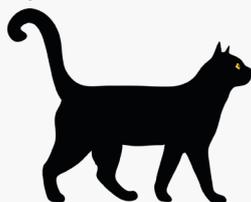
He might well have had the word 'mote' in mind.'

Charlie raised a questioning eyebrow.

Fred shrugged.

'Well, in the Middle Ages the word mote (M-O-T-E) could mean the rallying blast on a hunting horn, the Order of the Day on a military bugle, a speck of dust in the eye (balancing the beam!) or the hill on which a castle was erected (as distinct from a M-O-A-T which provided its watery defences). Take your pick.'

Fred warmed to his theme.





'If that's not confusing enough it could also be used as a useful alternative to the words could, would, may or must.'

Charlie couldn't help teasing.

'Gosh, you certainly know your English dictionary, Fred, but do you know your Masonry equally well?'

Fred laughed.

'Try me. There's evidence that both Amen and So mote it be were in use by the Guild Craft Masons as early as the 14th century, often combining the two as in the Regius Craft manuscript:

'Amen, amen, so mote it be - So say we all for sweet charity'

'So mote it be here might have meant simply 'so must it be' or 'let it be so' but then, disconcertingly, that is often the meaning of Amen.'

Charlie looked puzzled.

'So what's the difference?'

'It's the word Amen. It can also have a deeply religious significance. It was Hebrew in origin and was used to confirm earlier statements in prayer, Blessings, Psalms or in liturgy generally. In Christian practice its use was stronger still. It confirmed the spiritual truth of all that had preceded it. By the time of St John even Jesus Christ become known as the Great Amen.'

'When the Moderns and Antients came together as the United Grand Lodge in 1813 they agreed to have a common and universal ritual. This meant removing from the ceremonies any reference to a specific religion, including of course the many remaining Christian symbols, prayers and phrases. Because of the close connection between Amen and the Christian liturgy it may have seemed appropriate at the time to remove the first (religious) word from the old Guild Craft phrase 'Amen so mote it be' leaving just the second (secular) part of the phrase.'

Charlie nodded.

'That makes good sense, but I'm sure I've heard some still say Amen at the dining table.'

Fred agreed.

'Many of us use 'So mote it be' in the Temple and 'Amen' after Grace, when dining.'

'Why the difference? queried Charlie.

'Simple, the response to Grace at table is a very personal one and not in a Masonic ritual. Amen is therefore perfectly acceptable as an affirmation to a Grace in the Dining Room for anyone who prefers to use it.'

As Charlie said his farewells he added dryly:



'Amen, Amen, so mote it be; Fred explains it all with great clarity...'

He successfully side-stepped the wet garden sponge being hurled in his direction!

Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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Fred and Charlie character drawings courtesy of Eddie Wildman.

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