



The Lodgeroom International Magazine

Volume 1 - Issue 4
April 2006

Rebuilding The Superstructure

Articles:

Book on The Altar
Fighting City Hall
Masonic Recollections
Why Do We Keep Secrets?
Recognition Procedures
The House of History
Are You a Traveling Man?
Reading Masons
Is Freemasonry a Religion

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Between The Pillars What do Masons DO?



By Worshipful David Perraia
January 21, 2006 at the 116th Annual
Installation of Officers for
Santa Monica-Palisades Lodge No. 307

As one of my final privileges this evening, I have the opportunity to talk about my experiences in Masonry. And, honestly, out of them all, the first that comes to my mind is the reaction I generally get when people find out that I am a Mason. It's usually one of wonder and disbelief — "You're a Mason? Isn't that a throwback, a bit archaic?" And, that's always followed by questions like "Can you show me the handshake?" or "Can you tell me a secret?" and "Come on, what do Masons really do?"

Now, ask any Mason that last question and you'll get a lot of different answers, which is natural since Masons engage in a lot of activities. And, in the past, in answering that same-question, I have-also talked-about our different activities, from our initiatic ceremonies, our studies in symbolism and philosophy and numerous charitable works only to afterwards be asked again "No, really, what do Masons do?"

So, I decided to explore my answer to that question and share it with you this evening. What do Masons do? And how is that of interest or even meaningful to people today? It took me a little time to think of it. I remembered being instructed, at the beginning of my law career, that all matters come down to the basics; and that in understood the basics of my field of law, then I , would be able to effectively deal with any issue I confronted.

It then occurred to me that, in Masonry, it is not

so much our activities that matter but the principles behind them; the reasons why we engage in our many events and activities. In Masonry, it is our principles that are important; these are "the basics" of our Craft. And, in this beautiful room, you can see some of our principles emblazoned on the walls. But, I submit to my Brothers, and to you our guests, that there is one principle that serves as the foundation of our entire Craft.

As with most things in Masonry, it is communicated by a symbol. It is not one of our "trademark" symbols, not the square or the compass; but the tool each Brother is given and told to make use of; and I brought the one I received on my birthday with me tonight. It is the trowel; the symbol of Brotherly Love, the first principle tenant of Freemasonry, the belief that all of humanity, came from the same Divine Source, and that all the peoples of this earth truly are one family; and so we must learn to respect and treat each other as family. Significantly, the symbol for our central belief, is a tool, a useful instrument, which serves to remind us that Brotherly Love is not an ideal simply meant for reflection; but an ideal to be used, to be put in practice in our everyday lives.

That, in essence, is what Masons do. Each one of our various activities is an effort by our Craft to effectuate the ideal of Brotherly Love, to cause this ideal of true Brotherly Love to exist, here and now.

And, that is meaningful; that is what makes Masonry relevant today, and meaningful to me and to others.

We use initiatic traditions and symbolism to make men examine and improve their selves, to help

them find the wisdom of the ages and to impress on each of them to be a man of integrity; but let us remember that we do so in order that each one of our initiates may find in his search the common truths of man and ultimately emulate Brotherly Love. In our fraternal events, like this one, let us remember that they are gatherings and celebrations attended by Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Muslims, African-Americans, Caucasians, Asians, Latinos, people from different countries, of different faiths, creeds, race and backgrounds, who all regard each other as Brother Masons, and as Family. In our charitable activities, let us remember that they represent opportunities for us to express our belief in Brotherly Love and cause it to be experienced by others.

My brothers, I suggest to you, that just as with the compass, and our other symbols of ideals, we should never lose sight of the use of THIS valuable instrument; and remember that this ideal is the paramount purpose of our endeavors.

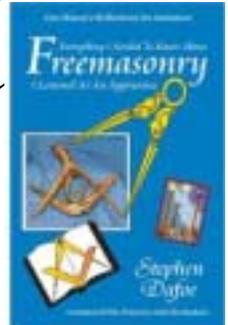
Brothers, this year, and every year, let us carry on our tradition and TAKE UP THE TROWEL; TAKE UP THE TROWEL and find the cracks in ourselves, our prejudices, our own flaws, and cement them with Brotherly Love; Take up the trowel, and demonstrate through our actions, that Brotherly Love can and should exist, inside and outside the walls of our Lodges, and that, yes, it is possible in this world for true friendship to exist among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.



Everything I Needed to Know About Freemasonry I Learned As An Apprentice

Stephen
Dafoe

\$15.00



There are many lessons of vast importance contained in the Entered Apprentice Degree of Freemasonry. These lessons are so important to the author of this book that he has been so bold as to

title the book, Everything I needed to know about Freemasonry; I learned as an apprentice.

Worshipful Brother Stephen Dafoe is not a Freemason who takes his craft lightly. He is often fond of saying, "We do not need more men in Masonry, but more Masonry in men." Every page of this book reflects that expression. The book is one man's reflection on the lessons learned in that first degree and is a thorough examination of the philosophy taught with each step, pace and gesture. In so doing, Dafoe has not created a dry account of the first degree, but rather a book that will inspire all Freemasons to get back to the basics.

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The Lodgeroom International Magazine

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Restoring The Temple

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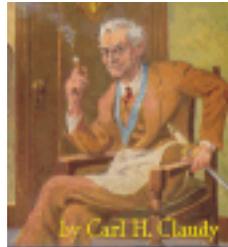
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Book On the Altar

by Carl Claudy



"I heard the most curious tale," began the New Brother seating himself beside the Old tiler during refreshment.

"Shoot!" commanded the Old Tiler.

"Friend of mine belongs to a midwest lodge. Seems they elected a chap to become a member but when he took the degree he stopped the work to ask for the Koran in place of the Bible on the Altar. Said he wanted to the holy book of his faith, and the bible wasn't it!"

"Yes, go on," prompted the Old Tiler. "What did they do?"

"The officers held a pow-wow and the Master finally decided that as the ritual demanded the 'Holy Bible, Square and Compasses' as furniture for the lodge, the applicant was wrong and that he'd have to use the Bible or not take his degree.

And the funny part was that the initiate was satisfied and took his degree with the Bible on the Altar. I'm glad they have him, and not this lodge."

"Why?"



"Why, a chap who backs down that way can't have very much courage; I'd have had more respect for him if he'd insisted and if he couldn't have his way, refused to go on with the degree."

"All wrong, brother, all wrong!" commented the Old Tiler. "The Mohammedan initiate wasn't concerned about himself but about the lodge. He showed a high degree of Masonic principle in asking for his own holy book, and a great consideration for the lodge. This man isn't a Christian. He doesn't believe in Christ. He believes in Allah, and Mohammed his prophet. The Bible, to you a holy book, is to him no more than the Koran is to you. You wouldn't regard an obligation taken on a dictionary or a cook book or a Koran as binding, in the same degree that you would one taken on the Bible."

"That's the way this chap felt. He wanted to take his obligation so that it would bind his conscience. The Master would not let him, because he slavishly followed the words of the ritual instead of the spirit of Masonry.

"Masonry does not limit an applicant to his choice of a name for a Supreme Being. I can believe in Allah, or Buddha, or Confucius, or Mithra, or Christ, or Siva, or Brahma, or Jehovah, and be a good Mason. If I believe in a Great Architect that is all Masonry demands; my brethren do not care what I name him."

"Then you think this chap isn't really obligated? I must write my friend and warn him-"

"Softly, softly! Any man with enough reverence for Masonry, in advance of knowledge of it, to want his own holy book on which to take an obligation would feel himself morally obligated to keep his word, whether there was his, another's or no holy book at all, on the Altar. An oath is not really binding because of the book beneath your hand. It is the spirit with which you assume an obligation which makes it binding. The book is but a symbol that you make your promise in the presence of the God you revere. The cement of brotherly love which we spread is not material- the working tools of a Master Mason are not used upon stone but upon human hearts. Your brother did his best to conform to the spirit of our usages in asking for the book he had been taught to revere. Failing in that through no fault of his own, doubtless he took his obligation with a sincere belief in its sacredness. Legally he would not be considered to commit perjury if he asked for his own book and was forced to use another."

Fighting City Hall



W.: Tim Bryce, PM, MPS
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Palm Harbor, Florida, USA

"If anything in life is constant, it is change."
- Bryce's Law

"You can't fight city hall" has been a part of our vernacular for many years. Basically, it is an admission that it is futile to fight the powers in charge, consequently people resign themselves to either live within the system or move on. Unfortunately, a lot of people are moving on in Freemasonry. As a small example, I recently received an e-mail from a young Mason who is resigning from the fraternity. I asked him why he was leaving and he enumerated four reasons:

1. I just grew tired of the same routine.
2. Some treated me like I didn't have anything to contribute; like an idiot.
3. I couldn't support the next 2-3 people coming into the Master's chair.
4. There is no meat to the Masonic organization any longer.

This typifies the frustration younger Masons are feeling about the current state of the fraternity. As a result, we are witnessing polarization in the Lodge room and elsewhere; Old-Guard versus New-Guard, Lodge versus Lodge, District versus District, Grand Jurisdiction versus Grand Jurisdiction. I saw this same phenomenon occurring in the computer field during the 1980's with the proliferation of PC's. During this time, the old-guard maintained the mainframe computers while the young-guard was infatuated with the new technology. The sad thing was that both parties served a vital purpose, but neither party had any use for the other. Inevitably, the new-guard ultimately won out as the old-guard eventually retired. This left a void in technical expertise for the mainframes and companies floundered.

This same phenomenon is occurring in the fraternity as younger members feel powerless against the current regimes in Blue Lodges and Grand Lodges. Whereas the old-guard is content with the status quo, younger members are looking for more substance and fellowship in the fraternity. And the two parties are not working to-

Continued on Page 10 - Bible

Continued on Page 10 - Bible

Masonic Recollections



By Galen Dean

The other day a Brother suggested that we all write a short story that chronicles a moment in our life in which being a Mason has produced a special, single moment in time that is unforgettable. What a wonderful idea! We can each share that special moment and remind each other of the privilege of being a Mason.

My moment came at some forgotten airport. I was doing one of my usual cross-country jaunts for business and was feeling a little home-sick. You tend to get that way when every airport, city and hotel starts to blend together and you can no longer remember where you are.

I have a practice of being one of the last people on board, having learned to travel light and avoid the crush of people that jockey for space on the plane. This affords me the opportunity to just sit and watch the people around me.

In this particular instance, I had noticed an elderly couple waiting to board the plane. I could tell that they were unsure of themselves and seemed overwhelmed with the whole boarding process. I was about to approach them to offer guidance when a ticket agent intervened and assisted them aboard.

Being the last person to board, as I walked down the aisle I saw the elderly gentleman sitting in an aisle seat and on his hand resting upon his knee was a Masonic Ring. As I walked towards him, I made eye contact and casually raised my right hand as if to rub my eye; displaying my Masonic Ring.

The recognition in his face and the twinkle in his eye told me he understood that he was not alone on this flight; he had a trusted Masonic Brother along.

As I passed him, I gently patted him on the shoulder and he reached up and gave my hand a quick squeeze. That brief and unspoken communication between Masonic Brothers was a powerful and meaningful moment that I will never forget.

What are some of your unforgettable moments?

Masonic Humor

Living in California

Jack was sitting in the airplane, when another guy took the seat beside him.

The new guy was an absolute wreck, pale, hands shaking, biting his nails and moaning in fear.

"Hey, pal, what's the matter?" Jack asked.

"Oh man... I've been transferred to California," the other guy answered. "There's crazy people in California and they have shootings, gangs, race riots, drugs, gays, and the highest crime rate..."

"Hold on," Jack interrupted, "I've lived in California all my life, and it's not as bad as the media says. Find a nice home, go to work, mind your own business, enroll your kids in a good school and it's as safe as anywhere in the world."

The other passenger relaxed and stopped shaking for a moment and said, "Oh, thank You. I've been worried to death, but if you live there and say it's ok, I'll take your word for it. What do you do for a living?"

"Me?" said Jack, "I'm a tail gunner on a beer truck in Oakland!"



Why do we keep Secrets...



By R. Theron Dunn
Master
Evergreen Lodge #259

When we are initiated, passed and raised, we swear to always keep, forever conceal and never reveal... This occurs in each of the three degrees, and is reiterated many times in the degree. For instance, in the California Ritual we are told:

On your first reception into a lodge of free and accepted masons, you are received upon the point of a sharp instrument, which is to teach you that as this instrument may be a torture to your flesh, so may the recollection be should you ever presume to reveal the secrets of Freemasonry unlawfully

...that he may dedicate and devote his life to thy service and become a true and faithful

Continued on Page 13 - Secrets

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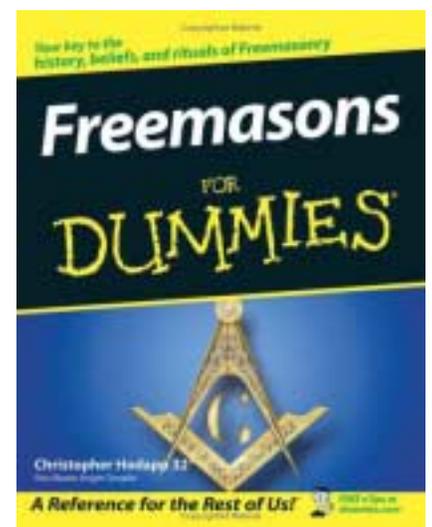
At last, a plain-English guide to Freemasonry - the secret society that's reportedly at the centre of Dan Brown's forthcoming novel The Solomon Key.

With Freemasonry featured prominently in The Da Vinci Code as well as the hit movie National Treasure, it's no wonder that more and more people are curious about this ancient organization, and interest is sure to intensify when Dan Brown's new blockbuster appears. This eye-opening guide demystifies Freemasonry, explaining the organization's origins in medieval Europe, its philosophy and purpose, and, of course, the elaborate rituals, secret signs, and cryptic symbols that set Freemasonry apart from other fraternal orders. The book profiles famous Freemasons throughout history including many of America's Founding Fathers, as well as prominent politicians and business leaders and offers a balanced assessment of the many controversies and conspiracy theories that continue to swirl around Freemasonry. For anyone who wants an evenhanded overview of Freemasonry's past, present, and future, this guide is the key.

Christopher Hodapp (Indianapolis, IN) is a Mason who has travelled extensively reporting on Masonic practices in Great Britain, France, and elsewhere. He is currently a Past Master and a Master of his Lodge. Hodapp edits the Lodge newsletter and has written for the Grand Lodge magazine, the Indiana Freemason.

Paperback 368 pages
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Author: Christopher Hodapp
Lewis Masonic Order code: L97965



Recognition Procedures



By Most Worshipful Don Robey, Past Grand Master Grand Lodge of Virginia

I'm sure that many of you are familiar with the book *List of Lodges, Masonic* published each year by the

Pantagraph Printing Company which contains the names of most of the regular Grand Lodges in the world today. Under each Grand Lodge heading is a list of the subordinate lodges working under a charter of that Grand Lodge. You, no doubt, have seen the Tiler look up, in this book, the Lodge of an unknown visitor to see if his Lodge is listed as a regular lodge.

with irregular Grand Lodges.

Since no regular Grand Lodge wants to lose its status with other regular Grand Lodge and thereby place its members in an embarrassing position, this standard acts as a strong incentive to be careful in extending recognition to those Grand Lodges that are not entitled to such recognition.

The procedural steps taken by a Grand Lodge to be recognized is of practical importance because this action establishes their regularity as well as their own constituent lodges. Usually the Grand Lodge that desires to be classified as being regular will take the first step and ask to be recognized. When this has been done, it will supply certain basic information about itself. An investigation usually follows, and sometimes specific questions are asked to determine whether the Grand Lodge meets the established norms.

Continued on Page 11 - Recognition



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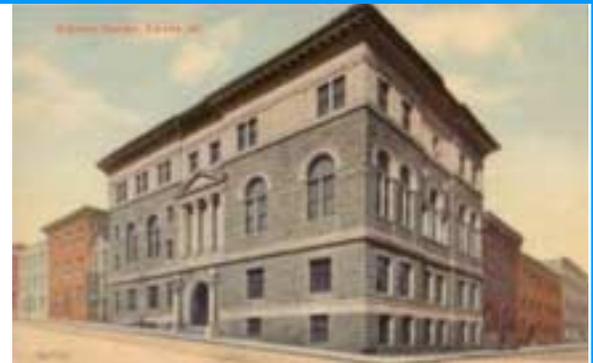
Have you ever wondered why, in a fraternity such as ours, that this procedure is even necessary? Most Masons have a vague idea that not all Lodges that claim to be Masonic are and the members of some of these lodges are described as *irregular, unrecognized, or clandestine*, or by some other negative designation. A Mason who travels outside the United States and decides to visit a Masonic lodge, soon learns that some lodges are improper for him to visit.

Questions naturally come to mind as one asks himself "why should such a situation exist?" ³/₄ "how did this come about?" ³/₄ "how is this matter of regularity determined?" An easy way to explain regularity is to draw an analogy with the relationship of nations toward one another. A nation may exist, as a matter of fact, but if diplomatic relations have not been established with another nation, there can be no official correspondence or regular dealing between them or their citizens.

Generally speaking, this matter of regularity exists because each Grand Lodge is independent and has no direct legal relationship with any other Grand Lodge except to the extent that it desires to engage in such a relationship. The regularity of a Grand Lodge is established when steps are taken which result in what is described as "granting recognition to another Grand Lodge." Each Grand Lodge individually decides which Grand Lodge it will recognize. This is usually done by the application of generally accepted standards established over the years.

There is always the possibility that if these standards are applied with too much laxity, or if a Grand Lodge is recognized which clearly is not entitled to be recognized, that other Grand Lodges may withdraw their recognition of the offending Grand Lodge. This will be done to prevent the members of the constituent Grand Lodge running the risk of engaging in Masonic association

A House of History: The Start of Our Legacy



By Bro. Lansing V. Ten Eyck, III

I have wanted to research and write about our temple for some time now and now it seems that the time has come for such a series. To try and squeeze its history into one small article would be impossible since so much history has happened in and around our Masonic temple. Though I'm not an historian and don't have a researcher's background but, what I do have is a love and respect of this particular building.

I guess the best way to start this is to begin at the beginning of how Freemasonry came and grew in Albany. One more item I will mention and that is you will recognize some names and some you won't but you can be sure all played an important roll in our Albany temple. I was introduced to its history with the help of a knowledgeable Brother who is not with us but is continuing his craftwork under the guidance of the Grand Architect. Ernie



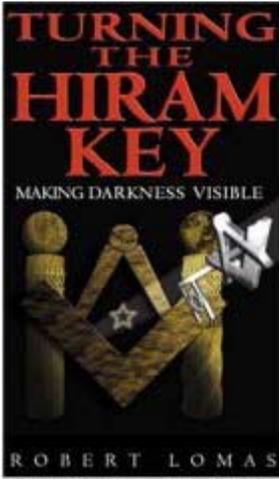
Thomas left me with the urge to continue with what he'd already told me so, let's get started.

Though I cannot locate the name of the person who wrote the article for the newspaper "The Knickerbocker Press" back in 1925 but, as he said, "In the spring of 1737 a regiment (there were barely 200 of them) of red-coated British regulars, tramped into the sparsely settled sprawling river front village that was Albany." Thus Irish "Red Coats" brought Masonry to the Capitol District.

"When The First Royals arrived in Albany they were taken to the bosom of the community, officers were accorded an official reception; they were entertained in the finest homes." Quickly the First Royals adapted to

their surroundings and became part of the community.

"The First Royals shared their pride in their regi-
Continued on Page 12 - History



Turning the Hiram Key

Only \$31.00

To order this book, or any item featured in The Lodgeroom International Magazine, go to: <http://mason-defender.net/recommend.htm>

The Real Secrets of Freemasonry? Robert Lomas (co-author of The Hiram Key) has finally tackled the big unanswered questions about The Brotherhood. What is the purpose of Freemasonry? What do Masons gain from working its Rituals? Can anybody benefit from the Spiritual Teachings of 'The Craft'? Are Masonic rituals simple moral plays designed to encourage people to behave well? Are they a secret tradition preserved from a long lost civilisation? Are they meaningless formalities? ...Or do they serve some deeper purpose? In this ground-breaking work Lomas describes his personal journey through the mystical rituals of Freemasonry.

Drawing from personal spiritual insights, hidden Masonic texts and modern scientific knowledge, he reveals why people join Freemasonry, what they expect to find and how they benefit. In the past, these inner secrets have been preserved for a select few, until this book Synopsis Turning the Hiram Key invites readers to join a gripping journey of discovery to find the real secrets of Freemasonry. Robert Lomas - co-

author of best-selling The Hiram Key - has finally tackled the big unanswered questions about The Brotherhood... What is the purpose of Freemasonry? What do Masons gain from working the Rituals? Can anybody benefit from the spiritual teachings of The Craft? Does Freemasonry hold the secret to unlocking the hidden potential of the human mind? Are Masonic rituals simple moral plays designed to encourage people to behave well? Are they a secret tradition preserved from a long lost civilisation? Are they meaningless formalities?

Or do they serve a deeper purpose? In this ground-breaking new book Lomas describes his personal journey through the mystical rituals of Freemasonry. Drawing from personal spiritual insights, hidden Masonic texts and modern scientific knowledge, he reveals why people join Freemasonry, what they expect to find and how they benefit.

life. Our ceremonies, lodges and regalia are filled with symbolic meaning, all with a lesson to teach and yet as Freemasons many of us never see Freemasonry outside our own lodge, let alone our jurisdictions so how can we expect to learn all the "secrets" Freemasonry has to offer us?

By applying our individual uniqueness under the banner of Freemasonry we have all the teachings life and our creator have to offer, all we have to do is knock on the door. One of the first books I ever read on Freemasonry was written by a mason that both I never met, and was a great inspiration to me, Brother Stephen Dafoe, and his book was entitled "Everything I need to Know about Masonry I learned as an Entered Apprentice". Now this book received mixed review, although in the majority it was a success and in essence it is very true.

If I ask myself now "Am I a Travelling Man?" I would have to answer No, but I am a Freemason who intends to be.

Again using such means as the internet I guess I could say I have travelled the world over, regarding Freemasonry, and talked with many brethren regarding the changes/differences in the ritual and it is amazing how subtle some are, and still the impact they produce.

Are You A Travelling Man?



By Brother Gary Bond
Adair Lodge # 936
(UGLE)

Are you a Travelling Man?

This was one of the first unique phrases to Freemasonry I ever heard in my early years in the craft, it meant nothing to me, other than a cryptic question that had no meaning to anyone other than a Freemason.

In fact I even tried it when noticing a man bearing a broach with the two headed eagle of the Scottish Rite, the response I received was a blank look of almost fear as the gentleman had no idea what I was talking about. Turns out the lapel badge was from his association with a military unit, so I suppose my original assumption on the phrase was reasonably well founded.

As with any group where you learn, Freemasonry being no exception, my own mind was expanded. I began to make certain realisations, connect a few dots and generally make my Masonic progression of each day.

However, this one phrase, from so early on still plagued me for closure: "why a travelling man?"

Now with such means as the internet I have had the pleasure of conversing with brethren the world over and therefore had a vast array of learned gentleman of the craft to pose my ques-

tion. So being the inquisitive mind that I am, ask away I did.

As with the characteristics of all Freemasons I was inundated with response, some in depth regarding why we are called "Free & Accepted Masons" and the origins of our operative brethren, but in my masonically youthful mind although perfectly fitting the many possible answers still offered me no means to an end.

As aforementioned, one response, in fact, the most common response, was the ability of our operative brethren to move freely about the land to find work, which is as good an explanation and probably the most effective seeing as we are called Freemasons, but on looking into some of the works carried out and the general life of an Operative Mason many were static, spending many years learning the craft and a lifetime working on a single project, some not even seeing the completion before ascending to those celestial mansions.

What to do? I started again, this time with a little more Masonic experience under my belt and a little more Masonic light than when I began.

Looking at today's Freemasonry you see our brethren travelling from lodge to lodge, but why? To meet new brethren, and to see alternate ritual and that is when it happened, my realisation hit me as if I was being struck with a setting maul.

What are our rituals all about? It is not just an initiatory rite where passage is merely the goal, but it is a journey of knowledge in both self and



To stay on the topic of Brother Dafoe's book, the Entered Apprentice, I have personally heard account of four variations in the Apprentices approach to the East, some differences a reverse of another, some different in its details and all, possibly, alluding to something different. One such difference in its instruction displays a physical allusion to the Past Masters jewel, something in my own lodge that has never become apparent to me personally.

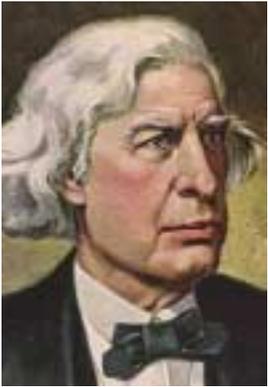
This is not to say at some later date, when I finally pass through the Chair of King Solomon and become a Past Master this unusual jewel will not be explained, but the imagery itself is no secret and the fact that if thought about an Entered Apprentice from another jurisdiction can form this explanation so early on makes me believe that for us to be true Freemasons, we literally should be "Travelling Men".

There is no limit to lessons taught by Freemasonry, both in number and in substance, it is important for Freemasonry that these lessons are kept alive by the brethren who hold it so dear.

We all joined Freemasonry for different reasons, and we have all gained something unique, but there is much for us to learn. Probably too much for one life time, but all Freemasons should hold true the meaning of Freemasonry and be "Travelling Men".



Reading Masons and Masons Who Do Not Read



Wr. Albert G. Mackey, 33°

Note: Although Bro. Mackey wrote this more than a hundred years ago, they are just as relevant today as they were then. Neglect of meaningful Masonic study is not just a recent problem.

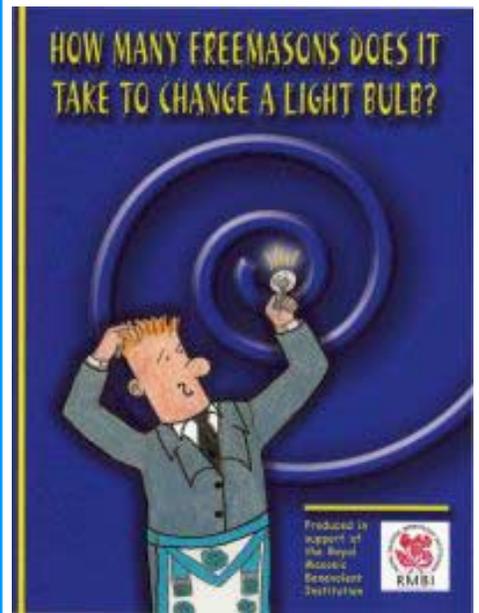
I SUPPOSE THERE are more Masons who are ignorant of all the principles of Freemasonry than there are men of any other class who are chargeable with the like ignorance of their own profession. There is not a watchmaker who does not know something about the elements of horology, nor is there a blacksmith who is altogether unacquainted with the properties of red-hot iron. Ascending to the higher walks of science, we would be much astonished to meet with a lawyer who was ignorant of the elements of jurisprudence, or a physician who had never read a treatise on pathology, or a clergyman who knew nothing whatever of theology. Nevertheless, nothing is more common than to encounter Freemasons who are in utter darkness as to every thing that relates to Freemasonry. They are ignorant of its history — they know not whether it is a mushroom production of today, or whether it goes back to remote ages for its origin. They have no comprehension of the esoteric meaning of its symbols or its ceremonies, and are hardly at home in its modes of recognition. And yet nothing is more common than to find such sciolists in the possession of high degrees and sometimes honored with elevated affairs in the Order, present at the meetings of lodges and chapters, intermeddling with the proceedings, taking an active part in all discussions and pertinaciously maintaining heterodox opinions in opposition to the judgment of brethren of far greater knowledge.

Why, it may well be asked, should such things be? Why, in Masonry alone, should there be so much ignorance and so much presumption? If I ask a cobbler to make me a pair of boots, he tells me that he only mends and patches, and that he has not learned the higher branches of his craft, and then he honestly declines the offered job. If I request a watchmaker to construct a mainspring for my chronometer, he answers that he cannot do it, that he has never learned how to make mainsprings, which belongs to a higher branch of the business, but that if I will bring him a spring ready made, he will insert it in my timepiece, because that he knows how to do. If I go to an artist with an order to paint me an historical picture, he will tell me that it is beyond his capacity, that he has never studied nor practiced the composition of details, but has confined himself to the painting of portraits. Were he dishonest and presumptuous he would take my order and instead of a picture give me a daub.

It is the Freemason alone who wants this modesty. He is too apt to think that the obligation not only makes him a Mason, but a learned Mason at the same time. He too often imagines that the mystical ceremonies which induct him into the Order are all that are necessary to make him cognizant of its principles. There are some Christian sects who believe that the water of baptism at once washes away all sin, past and prospective. So there are some Masons who think that the mere act of initiation is at once followed by an influx of all Masonic knowledge. They need no further study or research. All that they require to know has already been received by a sort of intuitive process.

The great body of Masons may be divided into three classes. The first consists of those who made their application for initiation not from a desire for knowledge, but from some accidental motive, not always honorable. Such men have been led to seek reception either because it was likely, in their opinion, to facilitate their business operations, or to advance their political prospects, or in some other way to personally benefit them. In the commencement of a war, hundreds flock to the lodges in the hope of obtaining the "mystic sign," which will be of service in the hour of danger. Their object having been attained, or having failed to attain it, these men become indifferent and, in time, fall into the rank of the non-affiliates. Of such Masons there is no hope. They are dead trees having no promise of fruit. Let them pass as utterly worthless, and incapable of improvement.

THERE IS A second class consisting of men who are the moral and Masonic antipodes of the first. These make their application for admission, being prompted, as the ritual requires, "by a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution, and a desire of knowledge." As soon as they are initiated, they see in the ceremonies through which they have passed, a philosophical meaning worthy of the trouble of inquiry. They devote themselves to this inquiry. They obtain Masonic books, they read Masonic periodicals, and they converse with well-informed brethren. They make themselves ac-



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quainted with the history of the Association. They investigate its origin and its ultimate design. They explore the hidden sense of its symbols and they acquire the interpretation. Such Masons are always useful and honorable members of the Order, and very frequently they become its shining lights. Their lamp burns for the enlightenment of others, and to them the Institution is indebted for whatever of an elevated position it has attained. For them, this article is not written.

But between these two classes, just described, there is an intermediate one; not so bad as the first, but far below the second, which, unfortunately, comprises the body of the Fraternity.

THIS THIRD CLASS consists of Masons who joined the Society with unobjectionable motives, and with, perhaps the best intentions. But they have failed to carry these intentions into effect. They have made a grievous mistake. They have supposed that initiation was all that was requisite to make them Masons, and that any further study was entirely unnecessary. Hence, they never read a Masonic book. Bring to their notice the productions of the most celebrated Masonic authors, and their remark is that they have no time to read—the claims of business are overwhelming. Show them a Masonic journal of recognized reputation, and ask them to subscribe. Their answer is, that they cannot afford it, the times are hard and money is scarce.

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The Lodgeroom International Store

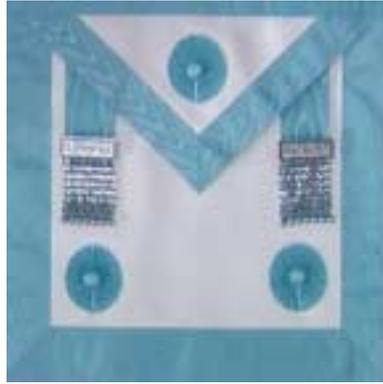
<http://www.lodgeroomuk.com/sales/>

Below is a small sampling of the variety of Masonic items that are available at the Lodgeroom International Store. In addition to regalia in Carft, Royal Arch, Provincial and Rose Croix, we also offer a large selection of printed materials, from rituals and administrative manuals to research to fiction.

Please visit The LodgeroomInternational Store for all your masonic needs.



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PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Is Freemasonry a Religion?



By Rev. Wayne Major
South Carolina Ancient Free Masons
Cottageville Round Lodge 270

There has been so much said on this subject, and so much accused by

Masonry's critics, that perhaps there are many who think one more article on the matter will make little difference. In spite of that, having seen so much said in opposition to Masons on the point, and so many countering opinions that deny any role of religion in Freemasonry, perhaps it would be timely to recall that this discussion is far from being merely a contemporary one. It is almost as old as the fraternity itself, ever since the Constitutions of 1723 declared Masonry an institution that is non-sectarian in nature. From that point, it seems, there has been a tug-of-war in attempting to define just exactly what is the relationship of religion, or even "the religions," to Freemasonry. Throughout Masonic history since that time, the struggle has existed in greater or lesser degree, depending upon the location and/or the set of cultural factors that were involved.

Currently that struggle, both inside and outside of fraternal bonds, has been heightened immensely by the availability of rapid communication and the quick transmission of ideas through the internet highway. Unfortunately, our detractors have gained the upper hand in making accusations, as the traditional "Masonic silence," at first anyway, carried over to this new medium, and there was little or no challenge to accusations that quickly became more varied and more vehement. But recently, more particularly within the last four or five years, there has been an increasing presence of Masonic websites interested in establishing and upholding the truth, and in countering the misinformation being so rapidly and widely dispersed.

This is yet another attempt to address the accusations and assert a few points of Masonic truth. More specifically, this article will address the commonly and falsely made accusation that Freemasonry is a religion; that is, in the sense that it properly belongs in a listing of other groups defined as religions, like Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. Unlike some responses, which have taken a position of denial at all points, this discussion will attempt to define just exactly what "religion" consists of from a Masonic viewpoint, and to show why we should embrace rather than reject the idea of religion as a significant component of who we are as Masons.

One of the first directions generally taken by critics of the craft, is to assert a definition of "religion," and proceed to build an argument for

Freemasonry's inclusion as a religion, based on a point-by-point exposition of the definition they have presented. So at the outset, it would be good to take a look at what Masonry has already said, and what sort of definition it has been based upon.

One of the most solid and prolific writers in Freemasonry, and one who has addressed this issue very thoroughly, is Albert G. Mackey. Mackey makes the point from Webster's, listing four definitions:

"There has been a needless expenditure of ingenuity and talent, by a large number of Masonic orators and essayists, in the endeavor to prove that Freemasonry is not a religion. This has usually arisen from a well-intended but erroneous view that has been assumed of the connection between religion and Freemasonry, and from a fear that if the complete disseverance of the two was not made manifest, the opponents of Freemasonry would be enabled successfully to establish a theory which they have been fond of advancing, that the Freemasons were disposed to substitute the teachings of their Order for the truths of Christianity.

Now I have never for a moment believed that any such unwarrantable assumption, as that Freemasonry is intended to be a substitute for Christianity, could ever obtain admission into any well-regulated mind, and, therefore, I am not disposed to yield on the subject of the religious character of Freemasonry, quite so much as has been yielded by more timid Brethren. On the contrary, I contend, without any sort of hesitation, that Freemasonry is, in every sense of the word, except one, and that its least philosophical, an eminently religious institution—that it is indebted solely to the religious element it contains for its origin as well as its continued existence, and that without this religious element it would scarcely be worthy of cultivation by the wise and good. But, that we may be truly understood, it will be well first to agree upon the true definition of religion. There is nothing more illogical than to reason upon undefined terms. Webster has given four distinct definitions of religion:

1. Religion, in a comprehensive sense, includes, he says a belief in the being and perfections of God—in the revelation of His will to man—in man's obligation to obey His commands—in a state of reward and punishment, and in man's accountableness to God; and also true godliness or piety of life, with the practice of all moral duties.
2. His second definition is, that religion, as distinct from theology, is godliness or real piety

in practice, consisting in the performance of all known duties to God and our fellow-men, in obedience to divine command, or from love to food and His law.

3. Again, he says that religion, as distinct from virtue or morality, consists in the performance of the duties we owe directly to God, from a principle of obedience to His will.
4. Lastly, he defines religion to be any system of faith or worship and in this sense, he says, religion comprehends the belief and worship of Pagans and Mohammedans as well as of Christians—any religion consisting in the belief of a superior power, or powers, governing the world, and in the worship of such power or powers. It is in this sense that we speak of the Turkish religion, or the Jewish religion, as well as of the Christian."

There is a significant difference in the first three in contrast to the fourth. The first three are religious rather than "a" religion, because they are comprised of specific actions taken by the believer: (1) he believes; (2) he practices; (3) he performs. The fourth has a distinct difference, in that it is a system, that is, it is not "just" belief, it is not "just" practice, it is not "just" performance. Rather, it is a system or combination of the three before it, into a system which is definable by the combination of those things which, when put together, make it distinguishable as "a" religion.

Mackey continues:

"Now, it is plain that, in either of the first three senses in which we may take the word religion, and they do not very materially differ from each other, Freemasonry may rightfully claim to be called a religious institution. Closely and accurately examined, it will be found to answer to any one of the requirements of either of these three definitions. So much does it "include a belief in the being and perfections of God," that the public profession of such a faith is essentially necessary to gain admission into the Order. No disbeliever in the existence of a God can be made a Freemason. The "revelation of his call to man" is technically called the "spiritual, moral, and Masonic Trestle-Board" of every Freemason, according to the rules and designs of which he is to erect the spiritual edifice of his eternal life.

A "state of reward and punishment" is necessarily included in the very idea of an obligation, which, without the belief in such a state, could be of no binding force or efficacy. And "true godliness or piety of life" is inculcated as the invariable duty of every Freemason, from the inception of the first to the end of the very last Degree that he takes. So, again, in reference to the second and third definitions, all this practical piety and performance of the duties we owe to God and to our fellow men arise from and are founded

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Fighting

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gether. The major difference here though is that Freemasonry is a volunteer organization and one becomes a member for life. Consequently, the old-guard maintains a stranglehold on the fraternity. This does not sit well with the younger members who are now looking for further light through other venues.

In my article, "Are We Reading the Signs?" I described how some younger members are starting new Lodges that are unencumbered with an old-guard mentality. The ritual work of these new Lodges is excellent, they just spend less time "reading the bills" and more time on fellowship. As a result, younger members are flocking to the new Lodges, leaving the older Lodges to die on the vine.

As another example, consider The Rite of the Rose Cross of Gold which was started three years ago as another venue for Masons to practice their craft and enjoy some fellowship. According to Rose Cross organizers, the group was organized with the permission of the Grand Lodge of Georgia. As part of their membership requirements, a person had to be a Master Mason and a member of both the Scottish and York Rites (this was done to appease all of the various parties involved).

Unfortunately, something went awry over time; the Grand Lodge requested a list of their members and, from it, unceremoniously expelled all of its members from the fraternity without the benefit of a Masonic trial. To this day, organizers are at a loss as to why their membership was expelled, but this did not deter the members who subsequently went on to establish The United Grand Lodge of America of Accepted Free-Masons (UGLofA) on December 27th, 2005.

If you read the web pages of the Rose Cross and UGLofA you have to wonder what all the hub-bub was about. On the surface it appears their intent is noble and their activities harmless. Further, there is no mention of their activities on the Grand Lodge of Georgia web site. Nonetheless, the Rose Cross continued their activities without the support of the Grand Lodge of Georgia. So much so, they started additional chapters in Georgia and Alabama. Organizers claim the Grand Lodge is continuing their policy of expelling members joining these new chapters (also without Masonic trial). Now, the Grand Master of Alabama is becoming concerned with their activities and is questioning why there is a problem in Georgia.

According to a Rose Cross organizer, "We are offering a high quality organization that provides excellent Masonic education and fun social activities. All we are doing is giving the people what they want."

I'm not taking sides on the issue in this article, but am merely noting the phenomenon. Frankly,

we shouldn't be surprised by this activity as it represents a classic example of the growing rift emerging between the old-guard and the young-guard. One can only wonder if we will see more of this in the near future.

As Masons, we are taught that if we do not like the current system, we should work from within to improve it. Unfortunately, legislation is often torpedoed before it even gets to a vote. If it doesn't conform to the current policies, it is often stonewalled or sabotaged before it gets to the floor. There are even stories of character assassination of authors of proposed legislation. This is unsettling to younger Masons who, instead, are opting to change the fraternity not from within, but from without. The Rose Cross episode is but one example of this.

These are strange and awkward times for Freemasonry. We now live in an era of highly charged politics where distrust, contempt, back stabbing, and a lack of cooperation is the norm as opposed to the exception. This leads to such things as censorship and political machines with agendas. For an institution that is theoretically devoid of politics, it is political wrangling that is disrupting the harmony and moral fabric of the fraternity.

When I joined the fraternity, I was taught that every Brother was allowed to have their say, right or wrong, and allow the Craft to decide. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be the case. And frankly, we shouldn't be surprised by all of this as man is a political animal by nature. What is disturbing is the rift that is ensuing. Regardless of our age, I always naively believed we were all on the same team.

Today, Grand Lodges are demanding blind faith in the judgment of its officers. They recognize that most people are unthinking and prefer to be told what to do and how to vote. Such abdication of the thinking process naturally results in a Theory X dictatorial form of management which several Grand jurisdictions are currently experiencing. Blind faith is fine if you do not care, but unacceptable if you do. True, we should respect our leaders, but I do not believe Freemasonry should prohibit free-thought or free-expression.

Further, people do not want to sit in Lodge if there is going to be constant bickering and backbiting. Life is hectic enough without adding another level of contention. People want to leave such problems behind. If they cannot find harmony in their fortress of solitude, the Lodge, they simply will not attend anymore (and many are doing just that).

It is very disheartening to describe a scenario where young and old Masons are at odds with each other. The old-guard should mentor the new, but be smart enough not to resist change simply because "that's the way we have done it for years." Change is a natural part of life; change is constant. But change for the sake of change is

rediculous. There has to be an intelligent reason for implementing change. And this can only happen if we are allowed to discuss matters openly, rationally, and respectfully. It would seem on the surface that censoring our younger Masons is a smart stalling tactic. In reality, it accelerates the change process by bringing the subject to a boiling point. Let us all hope that cooler heads prevail on both sides and Freemasonry survives well into the future.

Down in Florida, the Department of Motor Vehicles offers license plates to "Save the Manatees, Whales, Wild Dolphins, Sea Turtles, Florida Panther, etc." Let us hope we will never need a "Save the Masons" plate.

Keep the Faith.

NOTE: As with all of my articles herein, please feel free to reuse them in Masonic publications or re-post them on Masonic web sites (except Florida). When doing so, please add the following: *Article reprinted with permission of the author and "Freemason Information"*



Bible

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"What's the law got to do with it?"

"Just nothing at all, which is the point I make. In England and America, Canada and South America, Australia, and part of the Continent, the bible is universally used. In Scottish Rite bodies you will find many holy books; but let me ask you this; when our ancient brethren met on hills and in valleys, long before Christ, did they use the New Testament on their Altars? Of course not; there was none. You can say that they used the Old Testament and I can say they used the Talmud and someone else can say they used none at all, and all of us are right as the other. But they used a reverence for sacred things.

"If you write you friend, you might tell him that the ritual which permits a man to name his God as he pleases, but demands that a book which reveres one particular God be used, is faulty. The ritual of Masonry is faulty; it was made by man. But the spirit of Masonry is divine; it comes from men's hearts. If, obligation and books and names of the Deity are matters of the spirit, every condition is satisfied. If I were Master and an applicant demanded any one or any six books on which to lay his hand while he pledges himself to us, I'd get them if they were to be had, and I'd tell my lodge what a reverent Masonic spirit was in the man who asked."

"Seems to me you believe in a lot of funny things; how many gods do you believe in?"

"There is but one," was the Old Tilers answer, "Call Him what you will. Let me repeat a little

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Bible

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bit of verse for you: 'At the Muezzin's call for prayer The kneeling faithful thronged the square; Amid a monastery's weeds, An old Franciscan told his beads, While on Pushkara's lofty height A dark priest chanted Brahma's might, While to the synagogue there came A Jew, to praise Jehovah's Name. The One Great God looked down and smiled And counted each His loving child; For Turk and Brahmin, monk and Jew Has reached Him through the gods they knew.'

"If we reach Him in Masonry, it makes little difference by what sacred name we arrive," finished the Old Tiler, reverently.

"You reached me, anyhow," said the New Brother, shaking hands as if he meant it.



Recognition

Continued from Page 5

The matter of determining whether a Grand Lodge shall be recognized, thereby establishing its regularity, did not emerge all at once, but was a gradual development over many years. Early in our history, before the establishment of Grand Lodges and the development of our present system of creating new lodges by securing a charter from a Grand Lodge, there existed lodges that are now described as "time immemorial lodges." These Lodges were started informally and, after working for a number of years, were considered regular as a matter of custom. But once the system of securing charters was established, these "time immemorial Lodges" took steps to secure charters from a Grand Lodge and thus formally establishing their regularity.

In the United States, over a period of years, a doctrine of exclusive jurisdiction was developed, beginning around the time of the War for Independence and the formation of the Grand Lodges in each of the new states. Under this doctrine only one Grand Lodge may legitimately exist in a geographical area. This rule has worked well in the United States over the years and has made for stability and order within the craft.

With the passage of time, certain basic tests have been developed to determine what Grand Lodges are legitimate and entitled to recognition and, thereby, to be classified as regular and legitimate.

Three basic tests are usually considered:

- (1) The legitimacy of origin, meaning that the Grand Lodge has been formed by at least three regular Grand Lodges and has been working for a number of years demonstrating its adherence to the high standards of the craft.
- (2) That it is an independent and self-govern-

ing organization having authority over an established governmental territory, or shares that territory with another Grand Lodge by mutual consent.

- (3) That the organization subscribes to the Masonic landmarks, usages, and established rituals of the craft.

In 1951 a *Commission of Information for Recognition* was appointed by the Grand Master's Conference. In 1956 there was published under the auspices of this commission a book entitled *Grand Lodge Recognition* from which much of the information used in this article was obtained. The purpose of this commission is to serve as a guide to determine which Grand Lodges are acceptable to be recognized, to serve as a clearing-house for information, and to establish some uniformity in the tests to be used to determine regularity and legitimacy.

Recognition may come in a variety of ways. It might be informal by an exchange of letters. But in the case of a newly formed Grand Lodge, it is usually on a formal basis by applying for recognition and giving the needed information to have a determination made. This may be followed by extensive correspondence or an investigation.

We have now seen the re-formation of the Grand Lodges of Hungary, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Croatia, Romania, Russia, Poland and Portugal. Many North American Grand Lodges have recognized these Grand Lodges and I'm sure many more will.

The Masonic Service Association of North America issues a chart each year which displays the various Grand Lodges in existence throughout the world and which of them recognize specific other Grand Lodges. In 1990 MSA requested the *A. Douglas Smith Lodge of Research No. 1949* in Virginia to assist them in researching the information necessary to publish the chart. I have been privileged to be the Chairman of the Committee that prepares the charts since it was formed. Each year surveys are sent by MSA to all of the Grand Secretaries in the United States to obtain the latest information on who they recognized. A similar chart is also prepared to indicate the Grand Lodges recognized by the Canadian Grand Lodges.

Mentioned earlier was the *List of Lodges* book, which is published each year by the Pantagraph Printing Co. in Bloomington, Illinois. Not all, but most, Lodges subscribe to this valuable book each year. If your Lodge is in an area of the state where you are prone to have visitors from other Grand Lodges, it is absolutely necessary that you have a current copy of this publication in the Lodge.

One word of caution about using this book. There is one "rule" to be followed when looking up a Grand Lodge to determine if it is recognized by

your Grand Lodge. Unless a Grand Lodge specifically states, in its "Notes", that a particular Grand Lodge listed is "not recognized", it is to be automatically assumed that it "is recognized" by that Grand Lodge. Each year a survey is sent out to each Grand Lodge listed by Pantagraph to determine if any changes have occurred in the last year regarding that Grand Lodge's recognitions. It is incumbent upon each Grand Lodge to return this information to Pantagraph in a timely manner.

If a Lodge doesn't have a current copy of this book and you have a visitor from another Grand Lodge, you either have to assume he is from a regular Lodge in that jurisdiction, or refuse him to attend the Lodge. But, even if you have the latest edition of this book, and you have a visitor from a Grand Lodge not listed in the book, he may still be eligible to attend your Lodge.

Many Grand Lodges recognize some foreign Grand Lodges that are not listed in the *List of Lodges* book. There seems to be no answer as to what procedure is to be followed if a visitor from an "unlisted" Grand Lodge tries to visit a Lodge.

A simple step by step procedure should be followed by your Tiler when an unknown visitor appears at your Lodge and requests admittance.

1. The Tiler should ask to see the visitor's dues card to determine that he has paid his dues to date and to find out the Grand Jurisdiction and full name and number of the Lodge the visitor claims to be from.
2. The Tiler should then look up the Grand Lodge and the Lodge the visitor claims to be from in the *List of Lodges* Book to determine if his Grand Lodge is recognized by the their Grand Lodge and that his Lodge is listed under that Grand Lodge as a working Lodge.
3. Once the Tiler is satisfied that the visitor's Lodge is holden under a Grand Lodge recognized by his Grand Lodge, he needs to have a committee of at least two members of the Lodge examine the visitor to satisfy themselves that he is a member of the Masonic fraternity.
4. The Committee will need a Holy Bible or other book of faith to allow the visitor to swear upon and give the *Tiler's Oath* as prescribed by their particular Grand Lodge. This oath usually consists of a simple statement that he is not suspended or expelled and knows of no reason why he should be.
5. Once the visitor has done this he should then be asked to step off as a Master Mason, and give the proper signs of a Master Mason.
6. The next step in examining a visitor should be to ask him if he knows the password of a Master Mason and when this has been re-

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Recognition

Continued from Previous Page

ceived he should be told if this word will be taken up by the Deacons or not when the Lodge is opened.

- The final and very important step by the Committee is to ask the visitor if he knows the Secret Word of a Master Mason and in what form it may be communicated. His response should be that he knows the word and that it can only be communicated in a special manner. One of the Committee members should then place himself in the proper form with visitor and receive the Secret Word from him.
- The Committee should then report to the Tiler that the visitor has been examined and found to be worthy of admittance to the Lodge.

I know this sounds very complicated, and it is if the proper information is not made available to the Tiler to identify a visitor as being from a regular Lodge recognized by his Grand Lodge. The last thing we want to do is deny a visitor the right to attend a meeting of one of our Lodges if he is entitled to do so. This is one of the most famous "rights" of a Master Mason, the right to visit any Lodge in the world with whom his Grand Lodge has fraternal relations.



Donald M. Robey, PGM
Published in the November, 2005
Short Talk Bulletin by MSA



Authors Note: The above picture is the "Official" picture of me when I was Grand Master of Virginia in 1987. The interesting thing about this picture is the fact that I was still Deputy Grand Master when it was taken and the jewel I am wearing is the original gold jewel made by Paul Revere for George Washington to wear as the first Grand Master of Masons in Virginia.

Of course, Worshipful George Washington refused to serve as Grand Master, but the jewel had already been made by Wr. Paul Revere. Each Grand Master of Virginia is installed into office while wearing this jewel, after which the jewel is put back into the vault and thereafter he wears the polished brass Grand Master's jewel during his term.

History

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mental Masonic Lodge with the people of Albany. Masonic degrees were conferred upon a score of the citizens."



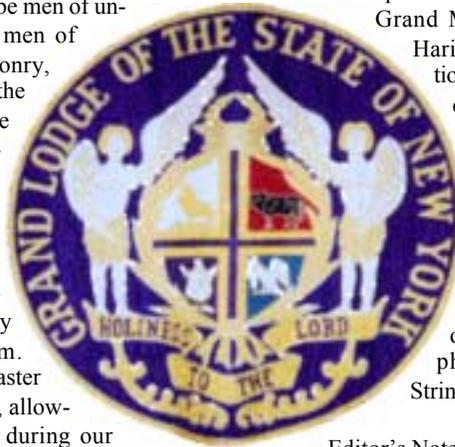
Then came orders for them to march to their next encampment in Canada.

The regiment quickly gathered up all their equipment and personal belongings to prepare for their long march. However, "the soldiers did not forget their new found friends; nor did the members of the army lodge forget their newly made brothers. The lodge men congregated at their accustomed place of meeting. There was a quick roll call, the usual ritualistic observances and the meeting was opened to business. How to keep Masonry in Albany was the question.

In the emergency a novel plan was proposed and carried through. Assistant officers, duplicating all the regular officers of the lodge, were installed and Albanians were given formal authority to carry on the work of the lodge."

As was the custom in these days, a copy of the charter of Lodge No. 74, issued by the Grand Lodge of Ireland to the brethren of the Second Battalion 1st Royals left with their newly made local brothers enabling them to continue their Masonic meetings. This copy of the Irish warrant was endorsed as follows:

"We, the Master, Warden and Brethren of a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, No. 74, Registry of Ireland, held in the second Battalion Royal, adorned with all the honors, and assembled in due form, Do hereby declare, certify and attest, that Whereas, our body is very numerous by the addition of many new members, merchants and inhabitants of the city of Albany, they having earnestly requested and besought us to enable them to hold a Lodge during our absence from them and we knowing them to be men of undoubted reputation and men of skill and ability in Masonry, and desirous to promote the welfare of the craft: We have, therefore by unanimous consent and agreement, given them an exact true copy of our Warrant as above, and have properly installed Mr. Richard Cartright, Mr. Henry Bostwick and Mr. Wm. Ferguson, as Assistant Master and Wardens of our body, allowing them to set and act during our absence, or until they, by our assistance, can procure a separate WARRANT for themselves from the GRAND LODGE IN IRELAND.



Given under our hands and seal of our Lodge in the City of Albany, the eleventh day of April, in the year of MASONRY, 5759, and in the year of our LORD GOD 1759.

John Steadman, Secretary.
Anias Sutherland, Master.
Charles Calder, Senior Warden.
Thomas Parker, Junior Warden."

"These," to quote the writer of the article, "were the beginnings of Albany Masonry."

The Lodge continued for a time as it was, however while correspondence with their soldier Masons continued, it was suggested that they might approach the Provincial Grand Master at the time being George Harison. After a period of time the lodge was chartered Union Lodge No. 1 on February 21st, 1765. Later Sir John Johnson, Grand Master, confirmed this charter on July 30th, 1773. The lodge continued its work under this until the end of the- Revolution.

Finally, on January 6th, 1807, it surrendered its Colonial warrant and received a warrant from the Grand Lodge of the State of New York. At that time its name was changed to Mount Vernon Lodge No. 3, considered by many and justifiably, the oldest lodge in the State.

In 1768 Grand Master Harison constituted Masters' Lodge No. 5 in Albany and it remains No.5 on the list of Lodges under the official jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York under it's first Master, William Gamble. That next year Dr. Samuel Stringer was elected to sit in the East and an interesting impediment arose from a fowl up as to who was the sitting Grand Master at that time. It seems that Dr. Stringer had petitioned Sir John Johnson requesting that a new charter be issued and that the Lodge be named St. John the Evangelist's Lodge, No. 2 at Albany. There was no reason given for the requested change, just that he, Dr. Stringer, wish it urgently. However, Sir John could not fulfill

the request until he was installed as Grand Master, for at that point Harison still filled that position. After that no further requests were made for a change and so it remains Masters' Lodge No. 2.

By now Masonry had become an established institution in the community. The foremost leader of the Craft was an eminent physician, Dr. Samuel Stringer.

Editor's Note: It is hoped that you have enjoyed this first installment regarding our Temple in Albany and will join us for the next

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History

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one in out following issues.

I should like to credit various writers for their publishing's that have helped me compile this for you.

Ossian Lang's "History Of Freemasonry In The State of New York", copyrighted 1922 by Grand Lodge of New York, F. & A. M. –

Ossian Lang and Herbert T. Singer's "New York Freemasonry"

"(A Bicentennial History)" Copyrighted 1981 by The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York. Also, Stefan Bielinski, Director of the "Colonial Albany Social History Project," for his short piece on Dr. Samuel Stringer. For without their valuable works this series could not be compiled.



Secrets

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brother among us...

Before we can proceed any further with the ceremonies of this degree, it will be necessary for you to take an obligation, by which you will bind yourself to keep inviolate all the mysteries of Freemasonry...

...do hereby and hereon, solemnly and sincerely promise and swear that I will always hele, for-

ever conceal and never reveal...

I furthermore promise and swear, that I will not write, indict, print, cut, carve, hack, hew, etch, letter or engrave the same upon anything moveable or immovable whereby the least letter, figure or character may become legible or intelligible to myself or any other person... whereby the secrets of Freemasonry may become unlawfully communicated.

From the first degree onward, we are told that the "secrets" of Freemasonry must be concealed. Why must they be concealed, though? If the secrets are really the grips, passwords, due guards and signs, which have been endlessly published in breathless "revelations", then why do we conceal and never reveal?

Albert Pike writes:

Secrecy is indispensable in a Mason of whatever Degree. It is the first and almost the only lesson taught to the Entered Apprentice. (emphasis mine)

The obligations which we have each assumed toward every Mason that lives, requiring of us the performance of the most serious and onerous duties toward those personally unknown to us until they demand our aid,— duties that must be performed, even at the risk of life, or our solemn oaths be broken and violated, and we be branded as false Masons and faithless men, teach us how profound a folly it would be to betray our secrets to those who, bound to us by no tie of common obligation, might, by obtaining them, call on us in their extremity, when the urgency of the occasion should allow us no time for inquiry, and the preemptory mandate of our obligation compel us to do a brother's duty to a base impostor.

Secrecy is the only lesson. Yet, mindful that masonry is like an onion, and the symbols are there to teach us in accordance with our ability to understand, each meaning giving way to a deeper and more profound meaning, let us take a look at the full compass of those teachings in the first degree, which are simply emphasized in the fourth degree.

The man that appears at the door of the preparation room is emotionally, physically, and symbolically leaving behind his old life, stepping forward into a new life, and opening new eyes... truly being taken from darkness into a new light... a new way of seeing, of living. To reinforce his condition as an outsider, he is dressed in a manner similar to a heretic being brought to the gallows for execution, neither naked nor clad, barefoot nor shod, a cabletow (hangman's knot) once around his neck. Blindfolded, vulnerable and "naked"... on his way to a rebirth.

Being passed through his initiatory degree, and told that he should always conceal the "secrets" of masonry. He even swears an impressive oath

to that end. He is shown a grip and given a word, then he is given an apron, given an "explanation", shown some tools, given and "explanation", listens to a lecture and the ritual is over. Or is it?

On the surface, the above is what happens. But a look at the symbolism of the initiation reveals linkages and symbolic teachings.

The candidate is first received upon the point of a sharp instrument, which was to teach him that as that instrument was a torture to his flesh, so should the recollection be *to his mind and conscience should he ever presume to reveal the secrets of Freemasonry unlawfully*. Upon his reception his is told to keep the secrets.

Further, the imperative of keeping the secrets is impressed by the symbol of a knife at his heart, piercing his flesh, that his conscience would pain him if he violated his integrity in keeping the secrets. Before even entering the lodgeroom, the candidate is instructed in keeping secrecy. Then the candidate is conducted to the center of the lodge, where a prayer is offered up:

...and grant that this candidate may become a true and faithful brother among us...

So, in addition to being told to maintain secrecy, the command is reinforced by the prayer that he is a true and faithful brother... keeping the secrets. This reinforces for the candidate what he was told upon his reception.

After perambulation, the candidate is told by the master:

Before we proceed any further with the ceremonies of this degree, it will be necessary for you to take an obligation, by which you will bind yourself to keep inviolate all the mysteries of Freemasonry appertaining to the degree of Entered Apprentice...

He is told before taking the obligation that it will require him to keep the mysteries of Freemasonry *inviolate*... keep the secrets. So three times BEFORE he takes the obligation he is told he must keep the secrets. Three is a number that appears often in our degrees, and is symbolic of the triune nature of g-d, as well as being sacred within geometry.

When the candidate takes the obligation, he is told three times that he must keep the secrets:

...that I will always hele, forever conceal and never reveal any of the secrets of Freemasonry to any person under the canopy of heaven...

And neither unto him nor them until by strict trial, due examination, or legal information I shall have found them to be as lawfully

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entitled to the same as I am myself.

I furthermore promise and swear that I will not write, indict, print, cut, carve, hack, hew, etch, letter or engrave the same... whereby the secrets of Freemasonry may become unlawfully communicated.

Three times before taking the obligation and three times within the obligation, the candidate swears or accedes to keeping the secrets of Freemasonry. After taking the obligation, the candidate is shown, between the master and the Senior Warden, the pass grip of an Entered Apprentice Mason, and is given the word, by syllable.

The manner that the word is given is peculiar, until the words formed by it are examined. The word is lettered, but the first letter of the password is NOT given first. That is done to confuse the candidate. Closer examination will show a hidden meaning.

The first two letters given are a Hebrew word for father, and the next two a Hebrew word for Strength/Glory. Taken together, they imply that the father of glory is strength, or, that Strength is the Glorious father. but of what? Honor. Keeping your word is strength, keeping your word is the father of strength and the glory of honor.

A closer examination of the word itself shows that it is a name, and a name that is related to how the candidate is shod. We are told in the lecture that:

You were neither barefoot nor shod, in allusion to an ancient Israelitish custom, adopted among the fraternity of free and accepted masons regarding redeeming and changing. We read in the book of Ruth, that to confirm all things, a man plucked off his shoe and gave it to his neighbor. This was considered testimony in Israel. This, therefore WE do, when, on solemn occasions like this when we desire to testify in the strongest manner possible to the sincerity of our intentions in the business on which we are engaged.

Here is that passage from Ruth:

Ruth 4:5-10

⁵Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

⁶And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself; for I cannot redeem it.

⁷Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and concerning changing, for to confirm all things; a man plucked off his shoe, and gave it to his neighbour: and this

was a testimony in Israel.

⁸Therefore the kinsman said unto Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off his shoe. ⁹And Boaz said unto the elders, and unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this day, that I have bought all that was Elimelech's, and all that was Chilion's and Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

¹⁰Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.

The real mason will recognize from that passage the link to the password, and to the confirmation the candidate is offering in his manner of dress. He is not told the significance of the word he is given, he is, however, offered several clues.

In the second degree, the candidate is told that the name of the Terrestrial Pillar (the North Pillar), represents STRENGTH. The mason will also recognize the significance of the Pillar, the shoe, the word, and its component's meanings.

So in each of the degrees, the candidate learns that he must keep the secrets of Freemasonry, even if he is not clear at any step in this what the secrets are... through the degrees, he is lead to believe that the secrets are but the signs, words, grips.

In the first degree, he is taught that the principle tenets of freemasonry, morality, and that he should keep secrets and knowledge appropriately, through strength and honor. So removing the shoe also symbolizes strength, honor, and FIDELITY.

The candidate is given an apron and listens to a lecture about morality, Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, Justice, Brotherly Love, Relief, Truth, Freedom, Fervency, and Zeal. These are lessons that a good man would already know, so they are not new to the candidate. The one thing the candidate comes away from the Entered Apprentice Degree with is the necessity for keeping silent.

So, we have the grips, words, signs. They are not, however, the real secrets of masonry. Oh, on a superficial level, they are, but as introspective masons, we know that the secrets of masonry go much deeper than those. They are the "public" secrets, which we "conceal". They are, to quote Pike, *but the outer portico*. The REAL mysteries of masonry require contemplation, study and experience.

In the second section of the third degree, the candidate is told:

...it will be necessary for you to travel, to convince the brethren of your fidelity in keeping inviolate that which has already been entrusted to your case...

What the real secrets of Freemasonry are is a subject well beyond the scope of this document. However, a quick overview of what the secrets are reveals that there are:

- Traditional secrets
- Hidden secrets
- Secrets of confidentiality
- Personal secrets.

Why, then, DO we keep the secrets of Freemasonry?

A TEST Of Character.

The relationship between secrets, trust and brotherhood has already been alluded to. In freemasonry, especially in the lodges, there should be a mutual trust between the brethren: it is a vital requirement without which true brotherhood cannot exist.

The act of entrusting the traditional secrets points to a condition of trust which has been established between the lodge and the candidate, initially as the result of investigations made and recommendations received, and later on the basis of his conduct within and outside the lodge. The trust the candidate receives also places an obligation upon him to keep secret that which has been entrusted to him. As a consequence this situation places a test of strength of character upon the brother, especially when he knows these traditional secrets are not wholly restricted to his brethren but are also known outside the Craft.

Furthermore - having been told in the Charge after Raising 'Let no motive, therefore, make you swerve from your duty, violate your vows or betray your trust; but be true and faithful, and imitate the example of that celebrated artist whom you have once represented' - there is a great lesson to be learned in the fact it was the faithful keeping of a coveted secret which led to the death of HAB and the consequent loss of the 'genuine secrets'.

Keeping the secrets IS a test of character, then, and more, the practice of keeping the secrets is essential for trust to exist, which is a condition of brotherhood. Without trust, these can be no bond, and without that bond of brotherly love, there is no fraternity. Trust, then, is a foundational characteristic of any fraternity.

More than trust however, is that keeping the secrets is a palpable demonstration of a man's honor and integrity, a shining light that says: I am a man of honor. Even more than that, if the masonry is considered a teacher, is that keeping the secrets is a lesson to the brother. The practice of keeping private and secret that which is entrusted to a brother is a practice when teaches trust, honor, integrity, faith and fidelity.

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Secrets

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SECRECYP AND SILENCE

These virtues constitute the very essence of all Masonic character; they are the safeguard of the Institution, giving to it all its security and perpetuity, and are enforced by frequent admonitions in all the Degrees, from the lowest to the highest. The Entered Apprentice begins his Masonic career by learning the duty of secrecy and silence. Hence it is appropriate that in that Degree which is the consummation of initiation, in which the whole cycle of Masonic science is completed, the abstruse machinery of symbolism should be employed to impress the same important virtues on the mind of the neophyte or newcomer. The same principles of secrecy and silence existed in all the ancient Mysteries and systems of worship. When Aristotle was asked what thing appeared to him to be most difficult of performance, he replied, "To be secret and silent."

This is a self reinforcing lesson. Keeping the secrets demonstrates honor, but honor is essential for a man to be made a mason, and trust is necessary for the fraternity to survive. It is like a three legged stool. Honor is one leg, fidelity in keeping secret that which is to be kept secret another, and the trust of the brethren in a man's honor in keeping his fidelity is the other. Freemasonry is the stool upon which we stand. Without all three legs, the stool fails, and if the stool fails, so fails the fraternity.

THIS is why we keep the secrets: Because we swore an oath to do so, because it is the RIGHT thing to do, the honorable thing to do, the JUST thing to do, and because doing so demonstrates and inculcates fidelity and trust..

If a real man gives his word, he carries it out, it is gold. There should not need to be any other reason than that.

1. Grand Lodge of California, *An Aid to Memory*, © 1990, Allen Publishing Co., Richmond, VA
2. *Morals And Dogma*, © 1871, Albert Pike, L.H. Jenkins, Inc. Published 1920, Richmond, VA
3. King James Bible
4. <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Thebes/6779/secrets.html#PROLOGUE> Lecture by W. Bro. H. F. van Tongeren, PM 218, at the Victorian Lodge of Research on 25 August 1995 and published in the VLOR's transactions for 1995 entitled "Freemasonry uncovered"
5. An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Vol 2, by © 1873 Albert Gallatin Mackey, Masonic History Company 1924, New York, NY 1924



Reading Masons

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And yet, there is no want of Masonic ambition in many of these men. But their ambition is not in the right direction. They have no thirst for knowledge, but they have a very great thirst for office or for degrees. They cannot afford money or time for the purchase or perusal of Masonic books, but they have enough of both to expend on the acquisition of Masonic degrees.

It is astonishing with what avidity some Masons who do not understand the simplest rudiments of their art, and who have utterly failed to comprehend the scope and meaning of primary, symbolic Masonry, grasp at the empty honors of the high degrees. The Master Mason who knows very little, if anything, of the Apprentice's degree longs to be a Knight Templar. He knows nothing, and never expects to know anything, of the history of Templarism, or how and why these old crusaders became incorporated with the Masonic brotherhood. The height of his ambition is to wear the Templar cross upon his breast. If he has entered the Scottish Rite, the Lodge of Perfection will not content him, although it supplies material for months of study. He would fain rise higher in the scale of rank, and if by persevering efforts he can attain the summit of the Rite and be invested with the Thirty- third degree, little cares he for any knowledge of the organization of the Rite or the sublime lessons that it teaches. He has reached the height of his ambition and is permitted to wear the double- headed eagle.

SUCH MASONS are distinguished not by the amount of knowledge that they possess, but by the number of the jewels that they wear. They will give fifty dollars for a decoration, but not fifty cents for a book.

These men do great injury to Masonry. They have been called its drones. But they are more than that. They are the wasps, the deadly enemy of the industrious bees. They set a bad example to the younger Masons - they discourage the growth of Masonic literature - they drive intellectual men, who would be willing to cultivate Masonic science, into other fields of labor - they depress the energies of our writers - and they debase the character of Speculative Masonry as a branch of mental and moral philosophy. When outsiders see men holding high rank and office in the Order who are almost as ignorant as themselves of the principles of Freemasonry, and who, if asked, would say they looked upon it only as a social institution, these outsiders very naturally conclude that there cannot be anything of great value in a system whose highest positions are held by men who profess to have no knowledge of its higher development.

IT MUST NOT be supposed that every Mason is expected to be a learned Mason, or that every man who is initiated is required to devote him-

self to the study of Masonic science and literature. Such an expectation would be foolish and unreasonable. All men are not equally competent to grasp and retain the same amount of knowledge. Order, says Pope -

*Order is heaven's first law and this confess,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest,
More rich, more wise.*

All that I contend for is, that when a candidate enters the fold of Masonry he should feel that there is something in it better than its mere grips and signs, and that he should endeavor with all his ability to attain some knowledge of that better thing. He should not seek advancement to higher degrees until he knew something of the lower, nor grasp at office, unless he had previously fulfilled with some reputation for Masonic knowledge, the duties of a private station. I once knew a brother whose greed for office led him to pass through all the grades from Warden of his lodge to Grand Master of the jurisdiction, and who during that whole period had never read a Masonic book nor attempted to comprehend the meaning of a single symbol. For the year of his Mastership he always found it convenient to have an excuse for absence from the lodge on the nights when degrees were to be conferred. Yet, by his personal and social influences, he had succeeded in elevating himself in rank above all those who were above him in Masonic knowledge. They were really far above him, for they all knew something, and he knew nothing. Had he remained in the background, none could have complained. But, being where he was, and seeking himself the position, he had no right to be ignorant. It was his presumption that constituted his offense.

A more striking example is the following: A few years ago while editing a Masonic periodical, I received a letter from the Grand Lecturer of a certain Grand Lodge who had been a subscriber, but who desired to discontinue his subscription. In assigning his reason, he said (a copy of the letter is now before me), "although the work contains much valuable information, I shall have no time to read, as I shall devote the whole of the present year to teaching." I cannot but imagine what a teacher such a man must have been, and what pupils he must have instructed.

THIS ARTICLE is longer than I intended it to be. But I feel the importance of the subject. There are in the United States more than four hundred thousand affiliated Masons. How many of these are readers? One-half - or even one-tenth? If only one-fourth of the men who are in the Order would read a little about it, and not depend for all they know of it on their visits to their lodges, they would entertain more elevated notions of its character. Through their sympathy scholars would be encouraged to discuss its principles and to give to the public the results of their thoughts, and good Masonic magazines would enjoy a prosper-

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Reading

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ous existence.

NOW, BECAUSE there are so few Masons that read, Masonic books hardly do more than pay the publishers the expense of printing, while the authors get nothing; and Masonic journals are being year after year carried off into the literary Acaldama, where the corpses of defunct periodicals are deposited; and, worst of all, Masonry endures depressing blows.

The Mason who reads, however little, be it only the pages of the monthly magazine to which he subscribes, will entertain higher views of the Institution and enjoy new delights in the possession of these views. The Masons who do not read will know nothing of the interior beauties of Speculative Masonry, but will be content to suppose it to be something like Odd Fellowship, or the Order of the Knights of Pythias - only, perhaps, a little older. Such a Mason must be an indifferent one. He has laid no foundation for zeal.

If this indifference, instead of being checked, becomes more widely spread, the result is too apparent. Freemasonry must step down from the elevated position which she has been struggling, through the efforts of her scholars, to maintain, and our lodges, instead of becoming resorts for speculative and philosophical thought, will deteriorate into social clubs or mere benefit societies. With so many rivals in that field, her struggle for a prosperous life will be a hard one.

The ultimate success of Masonry depends on the intelligence of her disciples.

About the Author

Albert Gallatin Mackey 33° was one of Freemasonry's most voluminous authors. This article was first published in 1875.



Religion

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on a principle of obedience to the divine will. Else whence, or from what other will, could they have arisen?

It is the voice of the G. A. O. T. U. symbolized to us in every ceremony of our ritual and from every portion of the furniture of our Lodge, that speaks to the true Freemason, commanding him to fear God and to love the Brethren. It is idle to say that the Freemason does good simply in obedience to the Statutes of the Order. These very Statutes owe their Sanction to the Masonic idea of the nature and perfections of God, a belief that has come down to us from the earliest history of the Institution, and the promulgation of which idea was the very object and design of its origin.

But it must be confessed that the fourth definition does not appear to be strictly applicable to Freemasonry. It has no pretension to assume a place among the religions of the world as a sectarian "system of faith and worship," in the sense in which we distinguish Christianity from Judaism, or Judaism from Mohammedanism. In this meaning of the word we do not and can not speak of the Masonic religion, nor say of a man that he is not a Christian, but a Freemason. Here it is that the opponents of Freemasonry have assumed mistaken ground in confounding the idea of a religious Institution with that of the Christian religion as a peculiar form of worship, and in supposing, because Freemasonry teaches religious truth, that it is offered as a substitute for Christian truth and Christian obligation. Its warmest and most enlightened friends have never advanced nor supported such a claim. Freemasonry is not Christianity, nor a substitute for it. It is not intended to supersede it nor any other form of worship or system of faith. It does not meddle with sectarian creeds or doctrines, but teaches fundamental religious truth—not enough to do away with the necessity of the Christian scheme of salvation, but more than enough to show, to demonstrate, that it is, in every philosophical sense of the word, a religious Institution, and one, too, in which the true Christian Freemason will find if he earnestly seeks for them, abundant types and shadows of his own exalted and divinely inspired faith."²

Religious? Yes.
"A" religion? No.

To be "a" religion means that someone has developed specific beliefs and put together a combination of them in a way that sets that system apart from another in ways that it will accept but another such group defined as a religion may not. Very often, and perhaps most often, that involves a name designated for God. Though Freemasonry has been accused of having a "name" for God, by those who falsely reckon "Grand Architect of the Universe" to be a name, it has no such name. A "name" for God is exclusive to a particular religion and sets it off from other religions by its exclusivity. "Allah" is distinctly the name in Islam for God. "Jahveh" or "Jehovah" is distinctly the Jewish name for God. The Trinity of God, Father, and Son is distinctly the Christian name for God, as well as the names "Jesus," "Christ," or "Jesus Christ."

"Grand Architect of the Universe" is not distinctly a "name" for God, nor was it ever designed to be a "name" at all. It may not even be Masonic in origin, as it has been attributed to John Calvin in his Institutes of the Christian Religion.³ Nor is it exclusively used by Masons, because they interchangeably use "Divine Architect" along with "God," or "Father," or "Grand Artificer," or a number of other designations, and none of them constitutes a "name" for God either.

Nor does it have a "Holy Book" considered as its exclusive idea of divine written revelation. Typically when Masons to suggest that it does, and that this is the Bible, the claim has been met with denials, proving the point, there is no distinguishable book by which it is set off in comparison and contrast with "religions." Certainly, by even the most conservative estimates, most Masons are Christians and follow the Bible as their rule and guide, as do all true Christians, but that predominance does not make the Bible Masonry's "holy book." That is a matter that is left up to the individual, and the individual may choose whichever book pertains to his own religion—thus proving once again that Masonry is not a religion, but is made up of men from a number of different religions, and that Masonry allows each individual the expression of that religion in his choice for the book upon which he takes his obligation.

But there still is that one vast and uncrossable cavern to surmount, the one undeniable proof that shows Freemasonry is surely NOT a religion:

Where are all the Masons who supposedly believe Masonry functions for them as their "religion?" Someone may find an exception here or there, a person who has no other religion and who might state the case to be so. But proving the exception in no way proves the point of the accusation. No significant group exists that fits the description. Even if they did, they are not a unified group that would comprise "a religion." And even so, they could not call it "a religion of Freemasonry," because the majority of Masons would disagree.

Part of the difficulty in responding to critics on this matter is the variety of opinions to be found even among Masons. Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia says, for instance:

Some attempt to avoid the issue by saying that Freemasonry is not a religion but is religious, seeming to believe that the substitution of an adjective for a noun makes a fundamental difference. It would be as sensible to say that man had no intellect but was intellectual or that he had no honor but was honorable. The oft repeated aphorism: "Freemasonry is not a religion, but is most emphatically religion's handmaid," has been challenged as meaningless, which it seems to be. If Freemasonry is not religion, how could it presume to aid religion? How does it aid religion any more than it aids politics? Neither is subject to discussion in the Lodge.⁴

Many critics are fond of quoting Coil, as they find such comments as these to be excellent fodder on which to build seeming support from within Freemasonry that our fraternity is indeed "a" religion. But I find it interesting that in spite of the above comments, Coil states in his summary of the section in which the above quote appears:

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Religion

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"In asserting that Freemasonry is not a religion, the speaker inevitably thinks of a sect or denomination or a church congregation or church ritual and forms. He is likely to be thinking of church going, hymn singing, communion service, collecting the free-will offering, and hearing a sermon. But there can be religion without any church and, indeed, without any congregation or even one companion, save God. There can be religion without the recitation of any liturgy; and the recitation of a formula does not necessarily induce religion. In short, there can be much religion which is neither a religion nor one of the religions."⁵

At first glance, Coil appears to have contradicted the earlier remarks, since first he mildly scoffs at the idea of any difference between religion as a noun contrasted to religion as an adjective, then uses the very forms he criticizes. But there is a significant point to be made from Coil's use of the italics in saying "a religion nor one of the religions." I would submit that Coil has simply misplaced the distinction in his comments in the earlier quote, and that it would perhaps be more accurate to distinguish between what is meant by saying simply "religion," as opposed to using the word with the article. The use of the article is the distinction that delineates between religion as practice and religion as a sectarian system of beliefs and/or practices.

At this point, having dealt at some length with some of the factors that constitute "a" religion, and some of the reasons Freemasonry defined as "a" religion is incorrectly understood, it would be in order to address the idea of Freemasonry as religion—or if one prefers, as "religion's handmaid." Coil quotes that expression, of course, from Albert Mackey's "Religion" entry in his *Encyclopedia*. To put Mackey's comment in context, let's look at it:

But the religion of Freemasonry is not sectarian. It admits men of every creed within its hospitable bosom, rejecting none and approving none for his peculiar faith. It is not Judaism, though there is nothing in it to offend a Jew; it is not Christianity, but there is nothing in it repugnant to the faith of a Christian. Its religion is that general one of nature and primitive revelation—handed down to us from some ancient and Patriarchal Priesthood—in which all men may agree and in which no men can differ. It inculcates the practice of virtue, but it supplies no scheme of redemption for sin. It points its disciples to the path of righteousness, but it does not claim to be "the way, the truth, and the life." In so far, therefore, it cannot become a substitute for Christianity, but its tendency is thitherward; and, as the handmaid of religion, it may, and often does, act as the porch that introduces its votaries into the temple of divine truth. Freemasonry, then, is in-

deed a religious institution; and on this ground mainly, if not alone, should the religious Freemason defend it.⁶

The image of the porch is used to define the "handmaid of religion" phrase, and it is a good one. It evokes a couple of other thoughts that are worth noting. For one, the sole religious requirement of Freemasonry, or so it has typically been described, is the belief in a Supreme Being. With that requirement alone, it is hard to define Freemasonry as "a" religion. But that belief is most certainly foundational and not to be taken lightly at all. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever comes to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him." The first step of faith is to believe that God exists. The next step is to learn to have a reverential fear toward God—not fear as we typically think, of being afraid, but an attitude of reverence as befits our Creator. In the Old Testament, it is stated more than once that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." This belief that God is, and the accompanying reverence may adequately be described as the "porch" Mackey describes.

Secondly, this image brings to mind an analogy used by C.S. Lewis. In describing the various ways of believing about God, he used the analogy of a house, and defined all believers as being "in the house," and the rooms in the house are the various religious beliefs held by different groups. Those who are still in the halls and not yet in one of the rooms are the ones who have not yet formulated their beliefs well enough to decide on one of the rooms. Following that analogy, he says:

"When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall. If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; and if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them. That is one of the rules common to the whole house."⁷

In many ways, this is an accurate description of Freemasonry in its relation to the various religions. The Lodge or Temple has been described as representing the universe, and in another sense it represents the world. Through its doors all may come, from whatever religion they may be, and find a "room" there. Brotherly love is a primary emphasis and is to be shown to all no matter what "doors" they may have chosen. They all owe their debt of gratitude to the "owner" of the house who has seen fit to bring them together. And it should take little imagination to understand the "porch" of Mackey's analogy and the "hall" of Lewis's analogy are the same: the commonly shared belief that unites them, the belief in a creating God to whom they owe their very existence.

Another point that stands out in Mackey's com-

ments is the commonly quoted position of Freemasonry in regards to religion, that Freemasonry affirms we adhere to "that religion in which all men may agree and in which no men can differ." Different ideas have been offered by various writers to try to define what is meant by this. But there are certain general affirmations from scripture that are described by Masons as a key to understanding the statement. Sometimes the Ten Commandments come up, sometimes various parts of the Sermon on the Mount, sometimes the Golden Rule. A solid statement on the issue comes from Macoy's *Dictionary of Freemasonry*, under the heading of "Religion":

Religion, we have said, is everlasting and immutable. It is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Sectarianism is but the material framework, changeable and perishable, which men in different ages and countries have raised around it. This material and human investiture of sectarian dogmas changes with the times and seasons; but *that* religion, in the light of which all Masons, whatever their particular creed, desire to walk—that religion, sent forth into the world with the awful sanction of the Deity upon it, which, as an Ancient says, "is to visit the widow and the fatherless in their afflictions, and keep one's self unspotted from the world"—that religion, the essence of which is to love God supremely and our neighbors as we love ourselves, can never change; being absolute, it can never pass away, and it may be taught, with all its obligations, duties and hopes, and all its beautiful applications to life, without being trammelled by any sectarian dogmas whatever. About religion, in its absoluteness, neither men nor sects ever dispute or quarrel. No; it shines over the human soul clear and bright, like the eternal stars, visible to all; and always, and everywhere, has her voice been heard, consoling the sorrowful, fortifying the weak, and bidding the sons of men aspire to a celestial communion. Such is the Masonic idea of religion.⁸

To such a statement, little more can be added. Freemasonry does indeed look toward those religious beliefs "in which all men may agree": The Golden Rule of "do unto others as you would have them do unto you," which was taught even before Christ taught it, by Confucius in one time and place, and the ancient Persians in another; the "pure religion" that James spoke of, so often cited in Masonry, of care for widows and orphans, and "keeping oneself unspotted"; and that important and foremost of the commandments, lifted up by Jesus as the "greatest commandment," to love God above all, and our neighbors as ourselves. These and many other truths universally taught among the world's religious systems are that inner core of commonly held truths by which Masons everywhere seek to abide and to make the rule and guide of their lives.

Let others misunderstand these and interpret our
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Religion

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meaning as “universalism,” a belief that all humankind will ultimately be redeemed, regardless of their belief in God or lack thereof; let them misunderstand the idea of the G.A.O.T.U. as some sort of “name” for God, even though it is quite the opposite; let them accuse us of “syncretism” in the mistaken notion that we combine our beliefs rather than the truth that Masonry holds the individual’s beliefs inviolate; let them misunderstand Masonry’s religious bearing as “a” religion itself; let them think what they will, it matters not, so long as we know our Creator has set His design upon these things, and calls us all, as much as it is possible, to “live peaceably with all men,” to “have regard for things that are good in the sight of all men,” and to “let brotherly love continue.”

NOTES:

1. Albert G. Mackey, Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, Philadelphia: McClure, 1917, p. 727.

2. Ibid., 727-28.

3. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, online @ www.ccel.org, Chapter 14, “In the Creation of the World, and All Things in it, the True God Distinguished by Certain Marks From Fictitious Gods.” In the particular copy of the Institutes consulted here, however, the specific phrase G.A.O.T.U. does not appear, and only two instances may be found where he uses even the lone term “Architect”:

Section 1, “Creator and Architect of the world; and Section 21, where he simply refers to God as “the Architect.”

Perhaps the attribution to Calvin was made by someone who simply noticed Calvin’s use of the term and made a connection that is not necessarily there. It may be an equally plausible explanation that the reference derives from the involvement of operative Masons in the medieval “morality plays,” and from the development of allegories centering around their trade, as was the custom of all the guilds involved.

4. Henry Wilson Coil, Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia, eds. William Moseley Brown, William L. Cummings, and Harold Van Buren Voorhis, New York: Macoy, 1961, p. 512.

5. Ibid.

6. Mackey, Encyclopedia, p. 728-29.

7. C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, New York: MacMillan, 1971, preface.

8. Robert MaCoy, A Dictionary of Freemasonry, New York: Gramercy Books, 1989, p. 324.



Valuable Links To Masonic Works

If you have any links to masonic works, please send them to us and we will publish them here every month.

These are clickable Links.

Ahmon Rezon

Ahimon Rezon

Ancient Charges

Book of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry (1884)

Book of the Words by Albert Pike

The Builder Magazine 1915 - 1930

Ceremonial Explanation of the Entered Apprentice Degree

Ceremonial Explanation of the Fellowcraft Degree

Concise History of Freemasonry

The Craftsman and Freemason’s Guide; Cornelius Moore; 1851

David vs. Goliath?

The Dionysian Artificers

English Speculative Freemasonry

Focusing on What Matters Most

General Regulations Of Freemasonry

The History of Freemasonry; James William Mitchell; 186?

Illustrations of Masonry, By One Of The Fraternity, Who Has Devoted

Thirty Years To The Subject; Captain William Morgan; 1826, 1851

Initiation, Mystery and Salvation

Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry?

Landmarks and Old Charges

The Lights and Shadows of Freemasonry; Rob Morris; 1852

The Lost Keys Of Freemasonry by Manly P. Hall

Masonry and Religion

The Masonic Manual, A Pocket Companion For The Initiated; Robert Macoy; 1867

Masonry CAPT. WILLIAM. MORGAN’S

The Meaning Of Masonry by W.L. Wilmshurst

Misrepresentation of Freemasonry

Morals and Dogma by Albert Pike

More Light

My Ideal Mason

Mysticism of The Royal Arch

Opinions on Speculative Masonry; James Creighton Odiorne; 1830

The Principles of Masonic Law; Albert Gallatin Mackey; 1858

The Regius Manuscript

Richardson’s Monitor of Free-Masonry; Jabez Richardson; 1860

The Secret Teachings Of All Ages by Manly P. Hall

The Symbolism of Freemasonry; Albert Gallatin Mackey; 1869

Symbols

Tales of a Masonic Life; Rob Morris; 1860

The Taxil Confessions

The Theocratic Philosophy of Freemasonry, In Twelve Lectures; George Oliver; 1866

The Truth About Freemasonry

The Virginia Text Book; John Dove; 1866

Webb’s Freemason’s Monitor; Thomas Webb Smith; 1865

The Last Word

How Much Does A Miracle Cost?

A little girl went to her bedroom and pulled a glass jelly jar from its hiding place in the closet. She poured the change out on the floor and counted it carefully. Three times, even. The total had to be exactly perfect. No chance here for mistakes.

Carefully placing the coins back in the jar and twisting on the cap, she slipped out the back door and made her way 6 blocks to Rexall's Drug Store with the big red Indian Chief sign above the door.

She waited patiently for the pharmacist to give her some attention but he was too busy at this moment. Tess twisted her feet to make a scuffing noise. Nothing. She cleared her throat with the most disgusting sound she could muster. No good. Finally she took a quarter from her jar and banged it on the glass counter. That did it!

"And what do you want?" the pharmacist asked in an annoyed tone of voice. I'm talking to my brother from Chicago whom I haven't seen in ages," he said without waiting for a reply to his question.

"Well, I want to talk to you about my brother," Tess answered back in the same annoyed tone. "He's really, really sick... and I want to buy a miracle."

"I beg your pardon?" said the pharmacist.

"His name is Andrew and he has something bad growing inside his head and my Daddy says only a miracle can save him now. So how much does a miracle cost?"

"We don't sell miracles here, little girl. I'm sorry but I can't help you," the pharmacist said, softening a little.

"Listen, I have the money to pay for it. If it isn't enough, I will get the rest. Just tell me how much it costs."

The pharmacist's brother was a well dressed man. He stooped down and asked the little girl, "What kind of a miracle does your brother need?"

"I don't know," Tess replied with her eyes welling up. I just know he's really sick and Mommy says he needs an operation. But my Daddy can't pay for it, so I want to use my money."

"How much do you have?" asked the man.

"One dollar and eleven cents," Tess answered barely audibly.

"And it's all the money I have, but I can get some more if I need to."

"Well, what a coincidence," smiled the man. "A dollar and eleven cents—the exact price of a miracle for little brothers. "



He took her money in one hand and with the other hand he grasped her mitten and said "Take me to where you live. I want to see your brother and meet your parents. Let's see if I have the miracle you need."

That well dressed man was Dr. Carlton Armstrong, a surgeon, specializing in neuro-surgery. The operation was completed free of charge and it wasn't long until Andrew was home again and doing well.

Mom and Dad were happily talking about the chain of events that had led them to this place. That surgery," her Mom whispered. "was a real miracle. I wonder how much it would have cost?"

Tess smiled. She knew exactly how much a miracle cost: \$1.11.... plus the faith of a child.

In our lives, we never know how many miracles we will need..

A miracle is not the suspension of natural law, but the operation of a higher law.. I know you'll keep the ball moving!

Here it goes. Throw it back to someone who means something to you!

A ball is a circle, no beginning, no end. It keeps

us together like our Circle of Friends. But the treasure inside for you to see is the treasure of friendship you've granted to me.

As masons, a primary tenet of our craft is charity. This is not always money, though that is the common thought when someone says charity. Sometimes it is a kind word, a gentle touch, aid and assistance.

This is my promise to all masons... and by extension, all of mankind. We never stand so tall as when we stoop to help a fellow human being.



New Feature:

Ask A Brother

Starting in our April Issue, we will begin a new feature called "Ask A Brother". We ask you to email us with your masonic questions, tradition, ritual, tenets, teachings... in a word, anything related to masonry.

Wr. Gary Bond will then find an answer for your question (or make on up...) and we will publish this every month, or until everyone runs out of questions (as IF). So, please email us Wr. Bond at askabrother@lodgeroomuk.com with your questions.

We're making YOU a part of the process.