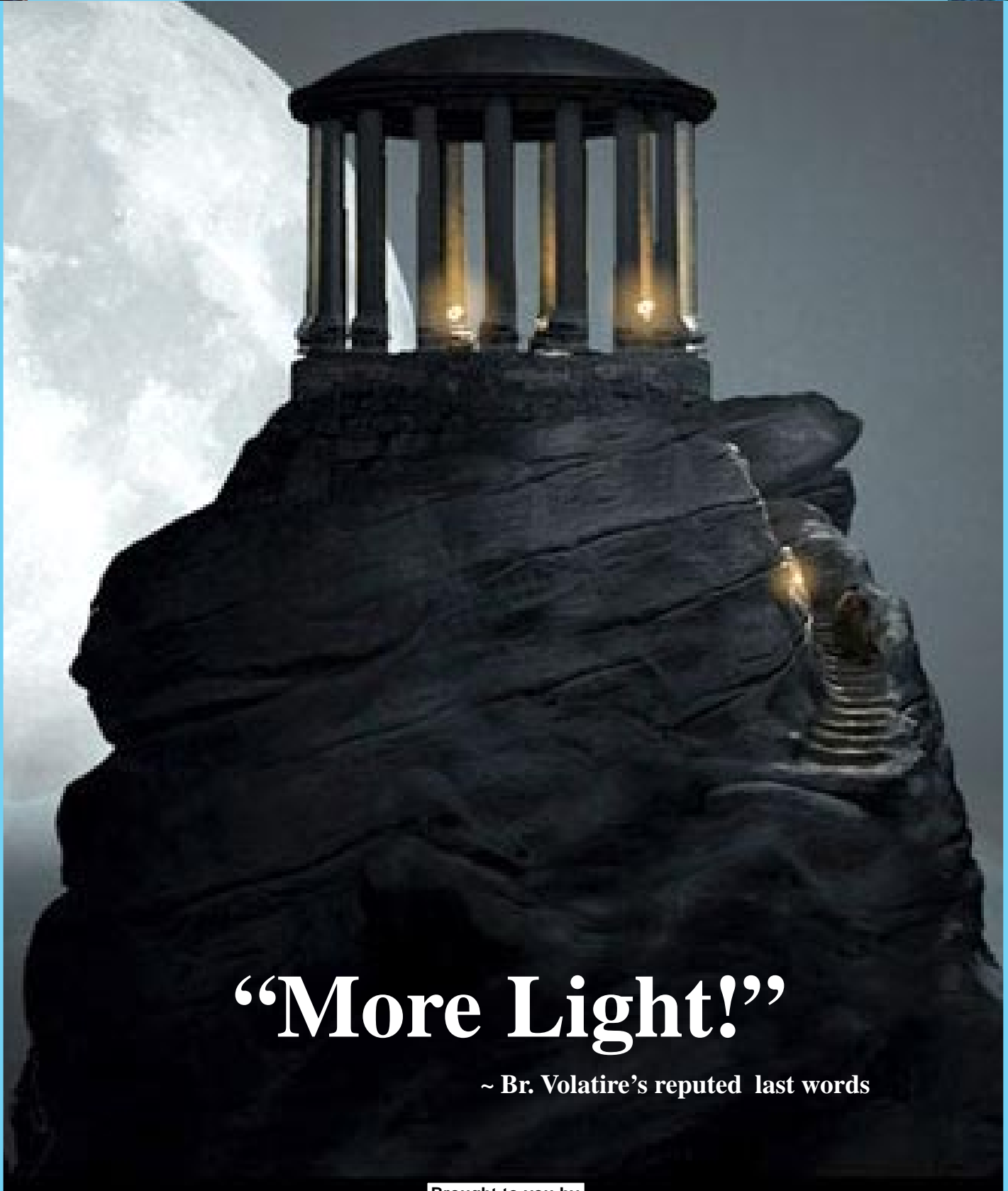




The Lodgeroom Magazine International

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“More Light!”

~ Br. Voltaire’s reputed last words

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Between The Pillars

Is Masonic Ritual Timeless and Unchanging?

By R. Theron Dunn

First of all, the obligatory disclaimer. The following is solely the opinion of the author, and does not represent any group, sub group, lodge, district, Lodge Officer, Grand Officer, Grand Lodge or other Masonic entity.

Whew!

Ok, now that we have that out of the way, the issue of the day is Masonic Ritual, and the question is: Is Masonic Ritual Timeless and Unchanging? Concerning making changes in Freemasonry and/or attempting to define Freemasonry as a social club and community service organization...

In the installation of officers the Master is admonished;

"You admit that it is not in the power of any man, or body of men, to make innovations in the body of Masonry."

In the anteroom lecture we are asked

"Do you seriously declare upon your honor that you

will cheerfully conform to all the ancient usages and established customs of the fraternity?"

We all answered that question in the affirmative, from the youngest Entered Apprentice to the Most Worshipful Grand Master.(1)

You admit that it is not in the power of any Man or Body of Men to make innovation in the Body of Masonry.(2)

You admit that it is not in the power of any man, or body of men, to make innovations in the body of Masonry.(3)

There are more sources, but these three will do to make the point that innovations cannot be made in the Body of Masonry. The Grand Lodge of California, and the Grand Lodge of California are in agreement, as are, well, darn near every REGULAR Grand Lodge on which I could find references. The question we need to answer before proceeding then, is RITUAL included in not

Continued on Page 9 - Timeless



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The staff at the Lodgeroom International would like to invite you to send your comments in for inclusion in the magazine. This magazine is for you, and we would like to hear what you think about the

articles and about the magazine. If you have any questions about the articles, or would like to ask the author a question, please feel free to send them in as well.

Send your comments to:

editor@lodgeroominternational.com

We will run your letters in the magazine and on the Lodgeroom US Lodgeroom International Magazine forum. We look forward to hearing from you!

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Why Is Ritual Important to Freemasonry?



By R. Theron Dunn

As Always when discussing a subject of import, lets start off with a definition and progress in the examination. So, what IS a ritual:

A **ritual** is a set of actions, often thought to have **symbolic** value, the performance of which is usually prescribed by a **religion** or by the **traditions** of a community by religious or political laws because of the perceived efficacy of those actions^{[1][2]}

A ritual may be performed at regular intervals, or on specific occasions, or at the discretion of individuals or communities. It may be performed by a single individual, by a group, or by the entire community; in arbitrary places, or in places especially reserved for it; either in public, in private, or before specific people. A ritual may be restricted to a certain subset of the community, and may enable or underscore the passage between religious or social states.

The purposes of rituals are varied; they include compliance with religious obligations or ideals, satisfaction of spiritual or emotional needs of the practitioners, strengthening of social bonds, demonstration of respect or submission, stating one's affiliation, obtaining social acceptance or approval for some event — or, sometimes, just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.

Rituals of various kinds are a feature of almost all known human societies, past or present. They include not only the various **worship** rites and sacraments of organized religions and cults, but also the **rites of passage** of certain societies, **oaths of allegiance**, **coronations**, and presidential inaugurations, marriages and funerals, school “rush” traditions and graduations, club meetings, sports events, Halloween parties and veteran parades, **Christmas** shopping, and more. Many activities that are ostensibly performed for concrete purposes, such as **jury trials**, **execution** of criminals, and scientific **symposia**, are loaded with purely symbolic actions prescribed by regulations or tradition, and thus partly ritualistic in nature. Even common actions like **hand-shaking** and saying **hello** are rituals.

In any case, an essential feature of a ritual is that the actions and their symbolism are not arbitrarily chosen by the performers, nor dictated by logic or necessity, but either are prescribed and imposed upon the performers by some external source or are inherited unconsciously from social traditions.¹

So, it's a set of actions though to have symbolic value that are traditional and are not arbitrarily chosen by the performers. Sounds a lot like

freemasonic ritual so far. Joseph Campbell said: A ritual is the enactment of a myth. And through the enactment it brings to mind the implications of the life act that you are engaged in ... But you don't know what you're doing unless you think about it. That's what a ritual does. It give you an occasion to realize what you're doing so that you're participating in the inevitable energy of life in its exchanges. That's what rituals are for; you do things with intention, and not just in the animal way, ravenously, without knowing what you're doing.²

Enactment of a myth, symbolism, imposed on the

performers. Now that we have defined what ritual is, now we should begin to look at the place ritual has in Freemasonry, and what it does for the craft.

One thing that should be noted is that while ritual is the foundational means by which we form masons from the cowans of the world, it is not the **ONLY** means of Masonic formation. Yet, in writing that, we must realize that it is the ritual that opens the door, and it is the ritual the effects the fundamental change in the psyche which makes a man a mason. There are some men that have been made a mason in a single day, and while they are good men, true brothers, it is the opinion of this author that such brothers have been robbed of a valuable and life changing experience.

Continued on Page 10 - Important

The Convention That Changed the Face of Freemasonry



By Allen E. Roberts

We are indebted to Wor. Brother Roberts, a noted Masonic scholar and author, for accepting the challenge of preparing this Short Talk Bulletin. It is another example of

his concern for the work of the Masonic service Association.

For more than one hundred forty years many Freemasons have been misinformed. They have not been told the full story of one of Freemasonry's most important events.

This story starts in December, 1839. It began with a resolution adopted by the Grand Lodge of Alabama, which requested all Grand Lodges to send a delegate to the City of Washington on the first Monday in March, 1842, “for the purpose of determining upon a uniform mode of work throughout all the Lodges of the United States and to make other lawful regulations for the interest and security of the Craft.” (The emphasis is mine, for this indicates what I mean when I say we have been misinformed.)

The Convention was held on March 7, 1842, “in the Central Masonic Hall at four and a half and D Streets N.W.” Ten Grand Lodges were represented. And these representatives refused to seat a delegate from the Grand Lodge of Michigan, declaring that it had not been established under constitutional principles. The report was made by Charles W. Moore, Chair-man of Credentials Committee and Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts. The Convention upheld his report.

After due deliberation, it was concluded that not enough Grand Lodges were represented, and there was not enough time to formulate a uniform ritual that would be acceptable to all Grand Lodges. Differences of opinion among the committee selected to develop a uniform mode of work were too many and not reconcilable. The Convention voted to request each Grand Lodge to appoint some well-versed Mason and style him as a Grand Lecturer to report to a Convention to be held the following year.

The report of another Committee was to have important, immediate, and far reaching effects on the Grand Lodges of the country. The “Committee on General Regulations Involving The Interests and Security of The Craft” reported in several areas. It recommended that the Representative System “already adopted by some of the Grand Lodges” be extended to all Grand Lodges. To protect the Fraternity from unworthy men claiming to be Masons, the Committee recommended that “certificates of good standing of visiting Brethren who are strangers” be made available by the Grand Lodge to which they belong. “These certificates will not only shield the Institution,” said the committee, “from the undeserving, but will furnish the widow and orphans of the deceased Brethren the best evidence of their claim upon the Fraternity.”

This Committee also considered as “reprehensible” the practice “of receiving promissory notes for the fees for conferring Degrees, instead of demanding the payment thereof before the Degrees are conferred.”

The Committee considered it an “impropriety” to transact “business in Lodges below the Degree of

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Just a Few Words on Ritual



By Giovanni Lombardo

In the early days of my Masonic life I remember an old, grumpy Brother in my lodge. He paid a lot of attention to the ritual, and if a Brother made a mistake, he waited till the closing and then jumped the poor brother, shouting «This is not the Rotary club!»

Setting aside any paranoid attitudes, rite and symbol are nevertheless an essential part of any initiatory context. Even more, the rite itself is a symbol, an “acted symbol”, as Bro. Guénon defined it.

Unfortunately, because of either negligence or ignorance, it often happens that nobody explains the deep meaning of the ritual to the candidate (or the brethren for that matter), so it is neither understood nor lived. It remains in the corner, like a cumbersome trimming, that is taken out only on special occasions, and not being understood, provokes nothing but clumsiness and embarrassment.

It is not the purpose of this article to take a position about a particular ritual, be it Scottish, York, English or French. In a so widespread a communion as Freemasonry, being spread all over the world, it is unavoidable - and perhaps good, too - that the rituals show traces of the particular history attitudes of each country. We will, therefore focus more generally on rituality’s meaning and purpose, which will be a greater service to the Craft.

The ritual can be examined from various perspectives. The first is that of purification. Through the ritual the brethren get rid of his “metals” by coming ritually in to the Temple. It is for this reason that it is important for the brethren to gather together fraternally for at least thirty minutes before starting the ritual work.

We should do this to remove ourselves from the profane world, so the brethren can join informally to wake the egregore of the lodge. This awakening, or quickening acts to shed the profane world and bring them gradually into the special atmosphere, full of a mix of rational and sacred, both united by the fraternal love.

The second perspective is that of consciousness-raising. By acting ritually, repeating words and gestures, being attentive so everything is “upright and perfect”, each Brother becomes aware of his being, of his life which goes through in a way quite different from the profane one. With awareness

Masonic Business



By R. Theron Dunn

As is noted in The Convention that Changed the Face of Freemasonry, it was traditional up until the mid 1800's for the business of lodges throughout the world to work in the first degree. Masonic Tradition Informs Us that this change was due to the William Morgan Affair, and was a change made to prevent cowans from sitting in on our business meetings. Shoot, I have been to and RUN several business meetings, and as far as I am concerned, they are welcome to sit in... the "secrets" of freemasonry are not discussed in business meetings anyway!

So, this was an innovation, one which, as is typical of these things, become de riguer, standard, and somehow, written in stone (in the United States, think of Income Taxes, which were supposed to be a temporary emergency measure...) The point of this blog, therefore, is to examine whether the time has come to return to Masonic tradition, and the reasons we should, or should not do so.

One of the innovations to masonry that, in my opinion, is causing the most trouble for the craft, is the "simplification" of freemasonry. We are taught in every degree that freemasonry is a progressive science, taught by degrees. The purpose of the three degrees is to confer upon the candidate certain teachings, opening his heart and spirit to make him a better man. Yet, for some reason, we RUSH through the degrees, as if there is nothing to be learned and internalized.

This is a typical American failing... we spend too much time in front of the television, where all the world's problems can be solved between the commercials and in under an hour. The members of my grand lodge even voted in 1996 and amended in 1997 to allow the candidates to return the proficiency in the first and second degree in a "short" form... memorizing only the obligation and the means and modes of recognition rather than the traditional two minute (!!) memorized two part catechism between the candidate and his coach.

comes knowledge. To study symbols with companions who strive to ignore their differences, to work together for a common goal, improves the whole humankind.

The third perspective is the creative one. To work ritually is tantamount to re-creating, by repeating a cosmogony in smaller terms. This entails the pass from *kaos* to *kosmos*, from chaos to order - the word “rite” stemming from Sanskrit *rita*, which means “complying with the order”.

To create order, a scale of values needed, to differentiate the “wheat from chaff”. In creating order out of the confusion which any novices feels, masons are forced to reassess their behaviour and old values which they have abandoned but not yet replaced. The inner path is long and gradual and there are no shortcuts. Patience and

Part of the reason for the rush, however, is that the candidate cannot participate in the business of the lodge, he is excluded from one part of the lodge because we only do business in the third degree. If we did business in the first degree, there would be no need for a mad rush from EA to MM, a process that is usually completed in 90 (!) days from the time a candidate is balloted upon.

How can we look people in the eye and claim we are going to teach them great and serious truths in less than one third the time it takes to bake a baby? And lets not EVEN get into the concept that is, fortunately falling from use, the aberration called “All the Way in A Day”. How on earth can you form a mason in 8 hours?

This must all seem like a foreign concept to our worldwide brethren, who, by and large, conduct business in the first degree, and only open in other degrees, or all UP to confer degrees.


It is my opinion that it is time, and actually well PAST time for the Grand Lodges to seriously consider, not a new tradition, but of returning to the true tradition of working in the first degree except for the conferral of higher degrees and Masonic education appropriate to a specific degrees.

Its time to lengthen the time between one degree

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persistence in building the inner “edifice”, which is, literally, “to build the temple”, *aedem facere*, is what makes a mason a better man.

The most important feature of the rite is freedom. Not only - and no more - the profane freedom, but the initiatory one, which lets the initiate - the man who began to walk the inner path: *in-ire* - to go to the Absolute, *solutus-ab*, that is, loosen from any human contingency. “Liberty” stems from the Sanskrit root *leud*, elevation.

In this new condition there is peace with the Sacred, which is in a heuristic dimension, where knowledge has replaced faith, as faith alone may sometimes be blind and intolerant. This is the peak’s experience, of the cosmic consciousness, of the solitude which is seemingly such, because man ideally hugs the One, resting in it. 



Other Masonic Publications of Interest



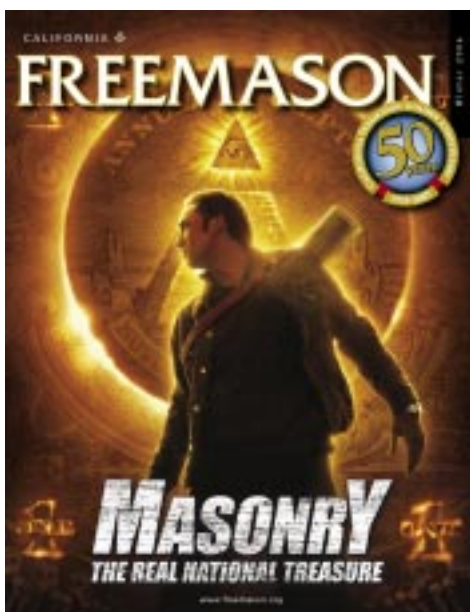
Man of the Year
Solomon Wallace
The Honorable Solomon Wallace

Phylaxis Magazine

Phylaxis magazine is published quarterly by the Phylaxis society. The First Quarter issue covers diverse issues, including the Man of the Year.

In this issue, we feature an article about two Texas Masons, one of whom marries a woman of color, and the other who struggled for purity of the blood of the white race. We have an excellent review of the recognition process in Ontario, Canada.

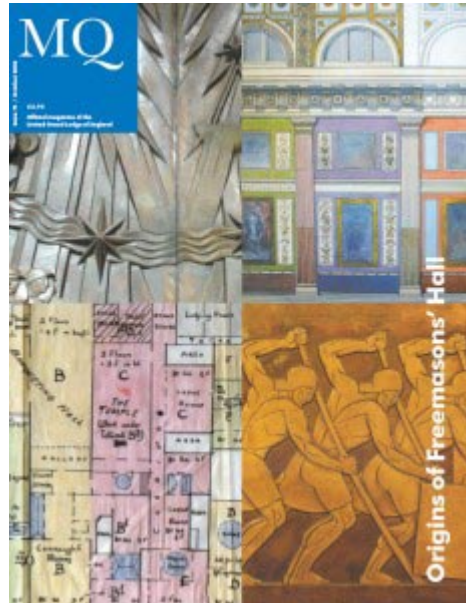
We have a heated debate about the actual date the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was established, and the new president of the Phylaxis Society urges Prince Hall Masons to correct the errors in their history perpetuated by those who may not have our interests at heart.



The California Freemason is published six times

annually by the Grand Lodge of California. It may be downloaded free by going to:

www.cafreemason.com/

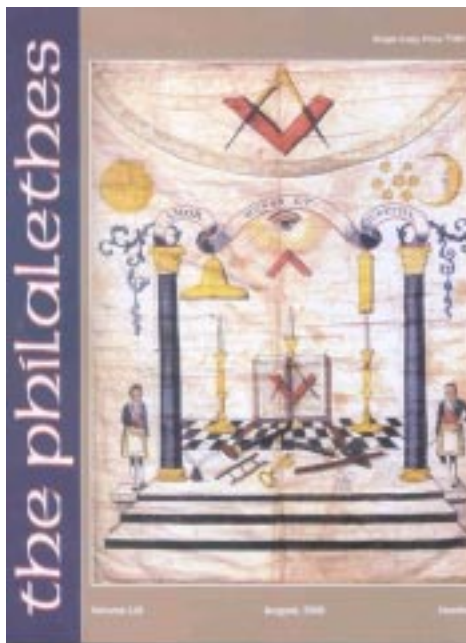


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THE PHILAETHES

The International Masonic Research Society

The name of the Society is pronounced fill a [as in a-bate] lay thess with the accent on the third syllable - lay. It is derived from two Greek words, philos and alethes. It means lover of truth. The Philaethes Society was founded on October 1, 1928, by a group of Masonic Students. It was designed for Freemasons desirous of seeking and spreading Masonic light. In 1946 The Philaethes Magazine was established to publish articles by and for its members. And to this day publishes 6 times a year. The sole purpose of this Research Society is to act as a clearing house for Masonic knowledge. It exchanges ideas, researches problems confronting Freemasonry, and passes them along to the Masonic world.

Its membership consists of Members and 40 Fellows who are Master Masons in good standing in a Regular Masonic Lodge anywhere in the world. Today the Society has members within 185 Regular Grand Lodges. More information about the Society can be found at <http://freemasonry.org>

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On The Origins Of Freemasonic Ritual



By Rev. Wayne Major

The challenge has been raised over and over concerning Freemasonic rituals, claims to the effect that the ritual represents anything ranging from a “distortion” of biblical truth, to outright Satanism. I was prompted to offer this response after seeing one of the latest diatribes on the subject at christianforums.com:

*As a **former** Mason, I can assure you that the Masonic version is NOT an accurate account of the Biblical record of the building of King’s Solomon’s Temple. Freemasonry has modified and altered God’s Word, therefore they have distorted the truth.*

*They’ll admit that the legend is not true, and say that it is an allegory to teach moral truth. Yet, if you look up the word “**allegory**” it has to do with fictional characters and fictional events. As a Christian, you know that the building of the Temple to Yahweh was an actual historical event, and those involved such as King Solomon, were real people. Don’t let Freemasonry fool you. You can’t tell a lie in order to teach a moral truth.*

They are contradictory terms — an oxymoron. Lying is immoral, but lying about God’s Word is the worse kind of lie anyone could tell, that is why God curses anyone who does.

In following the debate on this particular issue, I have seen different theories advanced as to the origins of ritual and the setting it arose from. The suggestion has been made, and a proper one in my estimation, that for a proper understanding of the rituals of Masonry, we must have a firm grasp of the context from which they arose. As I have sought to keep an open eye and ear for those sources, there is one in particular which I have seen occasionally alluded to, but it seems, never expounded on with a great deal of clarity. Several times I have seen just a sentence or short paragraph

acknowledgment that these rituals arise out of medieval “morality plays.” I thought it would be a good idea to investigate in greater depth and determine for myself, if possible, the merits of this suggested link. What I found was interesting and informative, and I would like to share some observations. (If someone has already expounded on this subject in detail, I would be grateful if they could steer me to the source, be it book, magazine, or weblink.)

To begin, I would like to take a look at the morality plays themselves, and the era and social milieu from which they arose. What exactly is a morality play? Morality plays developed from a genre of sacred drama known as mystery plays and miracle plays. The mystery plays were a characterization or reenactment of key events in scripture. Miracle plays were essentially the same, but were focused more on particular personalities found in scripture, or of historical saints and the miracles wrought in their lives. The morality plays essentially arose and developed from the mystery plays and miracle plays, but there was one particular focus that made them completely different:

Unlike the perspective of the mystery and miracle plays, that of the morality play was individual rather than collective. The

[Continued on Page 12 - Origin](#)

Masonic Principles, Morals and Ethics

By R. Theron Dunn

Freemasonry teaches us we must walk uprightly before g-d and man, acting upon the square and on the level. In the first degree, we are reminded of those principles, as the foundation of a Masonic life. They are the mission statement of the fraternity. This is the statement of what we are, what we stand for, and what we will and will not do.

Principles are like lighthouses. They are natural laws that cannot be broken. As Cecil B. deMille observed: “It is impossible for us to break the law. We can only break ourselves against the law.

Principles are not practices. A practice is a specific activity or action. A practice that works in one circumstance will not necessarily work in another, as parents who have tried to raise a second child exactly like they did the first can readily attest.

While practices are situationally specific, principles are DEEP, fundamental truths that have universal application. They apply to individuals, to marriages, to families, to private and public organizations of every kind. When these truths are internalized into habits, they empower people to create a wide variety of practices to deal with different situations.

~ The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People

~ by Stephen R. Covey

Our principles are the foundation of our actions, they define us as men. The set of principles that we live by are the touchstones of our lives. Freemasonry offers a set of principles in the first degree, and expands on them in the following two degrees. The principles I am referring to are NOT esoteric, mysterious, or “religious” ideas. There is not one principle taught (in Freemasonry) unique to any specific faith or religion...

Masonic principles are a part of most every major enduring religion, as well as enduring social philosophies and ethical systems. They are self-evident and can easily be validated by any individual. It’s almost as if these principles or natural laws are part of the human condition, part of the human consciousness, part of the human conscience.

They seem to exist in all human beings, regardless of social conditioning and loyalty to them, even though they might be submerged or numbed by such

conditions or disloyalty. These principles are, for instance:

Fairness, Integrity, Honesty, Service, Quality, Excellence, Potential, Patience, Human dignity, Encouragement, Nurturance (brotherhood), and Growth (personal and spiritual).

Principles are the territory. Values are the maps. When we value correct principles, we have truth – a knowledge of things as they are. So, lets take a look at the principles as they are taught in the very first degree of masonry:

Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, Justice, Integrity, Silence, Brotherly Love, Relief, Truth, Hope, Faith, Charity, Freedom, Fervency, and Zeal.

The principles enumerated above are fundamental to human life, regardless of where or how the humans live, or what understanding they have of g-d. These principles are like the very air we breathe, they are essential to any human society. One way to quickly grasp the self-evident nature of the principles is to simply consider the absurdity of attempting to live an effective life based on their opposites.

These fundamental principles, like all great fundamentals, are really self evident to all men who pause for just a moment to consider what they expect from their fellow men. They spring from what is the basis of divine law. To quote Hillel:

[Continued on Page 15- Principles](#)



Tim Bryce On...

By Wr. Tim Bryce, PM, MPS
timb001@phmainstreet.com
Palm Harbor, Florida, USA
"A Foot Soldier for Freemasonry"

HAVE WE GOT OUR PRIORITIES RIGHT?

TIM'S NOTE: I cannot take credit for the following article as it was written by Bro. Patrick O'Neill, a fine young Mason from Greeley, Colorado who I had the pleasure of meeting recently. His youth and enthusiasm for True Masonry is very heartening and gives me a ray of hope that the future of the fraternity will be fine as long as we have young and conscientious Masons like Bro. O'Neill. I hope you enjoy his article.

Possibly the greatest danger to Freemasonry today is confusion - confusion of what it is, and what it is not. Without a clear-cut understanding of what Freemasonry is we find ourselves involved in extraneous matters. These diversions lure us away from Masonry's proper place.

After much study, Brother C.C. Hunt suggested that "Freemasonry is an organized society of men symbolically applying the principles of operative masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building." This is very simple and is the core of our art, and if we keep our eyes on the central objective, we may yet preserve Masonry.

"The concern of Masonry is the science and art of character building." Lodges frequently fall into the trap of engaging in many worthwhile endeavors, but which are not the direct concern of the Masonic Lodge. That is not to say that those endeavors are not worthy, or that they should never be the concern of Masons.

It does illustrate that often in trying to do too much we lose sight of our primary purpose; we head in all directions at once and get nowhere. Let us consider some of the things that Freemasonry is not - things that divert the Lodge from its central purpose of character building. It is not a charity, though it is charitable. It is not a service club; it is not a place to hone one's political or business skills. It is not a place to make business contacts or to

look for better jobs.

Freemasonry is especially not a self-glorification society. Neither, is it a mutual-admiration society. Many persons outside our membership consider



it to be only this. In fact, I was told by a member that the reason he wanted to become a Mason was because when he was doing construction work on a Lodge he saw the master of the Lodge driving a Corvette; he was impressed by this, and he wanted to join Masonry to be like that man. This is certainly the wrong reason to seek out membership in Freemasonry.

These men seek honors, not the opportunity for service, they flaunt their insignia, rank, and ostentatious trappings without the slightest inkling

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of their symbolic meaning, and they have no sincere dedication to those principles? If our own members are so confused, is it any wonder we're on the wrong path?

History proves that elevation of the human spirit is the product of devotion to principle, hard work, and sacrifice. No honor worth having can be earned by laziness, purchased with currency, or bargained for. The only true honor is earned by merit and is extended only through continued service to his fellow man. There is a vast difference between self-glorification and self-improvement. The one is ludicrous and a sham. The other is the road to life's fulfillment.

The member who takes office and honor for the sake of pride and personal glory and does not understand the deeper obligations implied, is truly the Emperor with no clothes. He is deluded in thinking the honor is deserved. He is an embarrassment and is actually the object of pity, not of respect and admiration.

These men surround themselves with sycophants and "yes men," because they cannot stand the light of truth, they cannot look at themselves with an objective eye.

Men are drawn to Masonry by the quality of its members. When that quality is compromised in the Lodge, members of a different sort will attempt to maintain the Lodge by

any manner of devices, not Masonic.

They will attempt to become a "club" which deviates from the purpose of character building. This "club" will pat itself on the back at every corner, congratulating themselves for the most mediocre of accomplishments. They will build monuments to themselves and hang pictures and plaques on walls, congratulating themselves for mediocre years of service. They do not recognize the basic principle of Masonry. This is not Freemasonry, this is a sham.



Tim Bryce On...

By W^r. Tim Bryce, PM, MPS
timb001@phmainstreet.com
Palm Harbor, Florida, USA
"A Foot Soldier for Freemasonry"

This group will join the group of hundreds of "clubs" which had no definable purpose except self glorification.

History has respected Masonry, but history will not be kind to the lazy, the self promoting; the insincere. This group or "club" will never attract the potential members and the leadership that the fraternity needs. Self-serving back scratching is too transparent to fool discerning men of principle.

We have seen a great number of men come through our doors and not remain, "Why?" Is it because we asked too much of them, or is it because they found nothing but a shell of what was supposed be here behind our doors? I offer that it is the latter.

Now we can continue down this path to oblivion, or we can pull back and find our first purpose, that of character building. Sometimes Lodges start looking for a "purpose" so they adopt a cause or a charity, and while these pursuits are for the greater good they do not sustain or build the fraternity.

Too often Lodges fall victim to the idea that rather than building the character of men we'll build a building or we'll fix up the one we currently occupy. They falsely believe that this will attract and keep members and by doing this everything will be all right. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The purpose of Freemasonry is character building, not building or reconditioning buildings. Are great characters built in shiny new edifices with marble floors and chandeliers? Possibly. But they cannot be built without the dedication and hard work of a mentoring group.

Marble floors and new buildings don't build character. I can name dozens of businessmen that while very successful in business should never be allowed to darken the door of our fraternity. Likewise, I can think of dozens of NFL and pro basketball players who have shiny marble floors and beautiful chandeliers whom I wouldn't lower myself to accept a petition from for membership in the fraternity.

These men might even try to buy my respect by offering me great sums of money to rebuild the building I occupy. They might offer to build me a shiny new Lodge, but I would accept nothing from them because they are insincere in their motives.

The fraternity's major problem isn't charitable works or buildings, no the true problem lies in how

we choose our leaders. I liken our current system, the progressive line, to musical chairs. The guy who is the only one remaining in the Lodge after the other new brothers are neglected and fail to return is the one they put in the progressive line, regardless of his qualifications and dedication to his job.

It should not be this way. For years now we have promoted a series of men through our chairs who were not qualified to advance through them; that's not to say they aren't good people. They did not have the benefit of proper training and education. They cannot properly lead a Lodge of Masons because they don't know how.

To the new members they appear to be confused and unsure about what they are doing. Men of character will not follow a fool even if he is tied to the oldest and most successful fraternity in the world, so they leave. We have allowed mediocrity to become the norm and it shows now in the membership.

Is it proper to promote people just because they were the only ones who continually showed up to Lodge or they wanted to do it "without putting in the work or having the leadership qualities so necessary for the propagation of our order?" This is completely backwards: There is no man, nor has there ever been one, who could thrive in a leadership position with no training and no guidance.

Why wasn't character development and leadership development instituted as it should have been? The answer is simple: the men who had the responsibility of mentoring didn't do their jobs. No one is born a leader, leadership is taught, cultivated, and perfected. Character is likewise developed, it is cultivated, and it is certainly not found in each successive chair, after simply filling the former one with one's buttocks.

If we were to reevaluate our priorities and concentrate on

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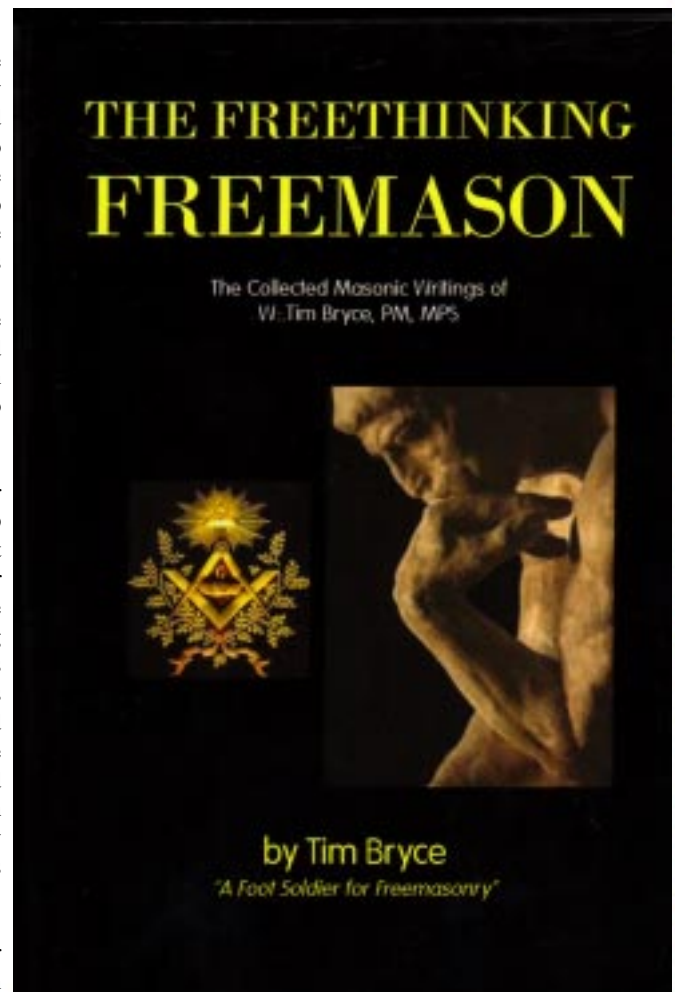
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our primary mission, namely character building, we can then expand our duties to take care of the widows and orphans as our obligation as Master Masons directs. Our obligation does not say pay for the building of a new lodge or the remodeling of a deficient one to the exclusion of character building or to the exclusion of those worthy distressed Master Masons, their widows and orphans.

Until we address the fact that our foundation is buckling brick by brick, and strengthen those "bricks," Freemasonry will continue to suffer. Brothers, let's stop attacking symptoms and address the true problems of the fraternity, let us not fall into the trap of putting a fresh coat of paint on our building when the foundation is crumbling underneath us.

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Timeless

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making innovations?

Clearly, the answer is no. Referencing alone the information contained in "The Convention that Changed the Face of Freemasonry" we can see that the ritual was deliberately and systematically... standardized in the early 19th Century. And yet...

Ritual, from Merriam-Webster Online:

- 1: the established form for a ceremony; specifically : the order of words prescribed for a religious ceremony
- 2 a: ritual observance; specifically : a system of rites
- 2 b: a ceremonial act or action
- 2 c: an act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner(4)

There is nothing in this definition which would give one the sense that ritual cannot be changed or modified, so based on historical usage and technical definition, the ritual is NOT timeless, and CAN be changed at whim. Therein lies the challenge, for the ritual is designed to inculcate certain wise and serious teachings, to assist in the formation of a mason, to set a man on the path to inner change... to make him a better man, before g-d, his family, and his community.



It is a challenge because, any time change is undertaken without serious contemplation of all possible ramification, a slippery slope has been trod upon, with the end unknown to the authors.(5)(6)

The Grand Lodge of California is very strict about the ritual. As prescribed at the Convention noted above, the ritual is overseen by a Grand Lecturer, whose duty it is, with five Assistant Grand Lecturers, and a number of Inspectors, one assigned per district, to teach the ritual and ensure that all lodges under charter to the Grand Lodge of California, follow and use the same

ritual, jot and tittle, pronunciation, gesture and floorwork. This leads to some interesting ritual work, and in the past several years, a continuous stream of minor "modifications"/"Corrections" to the ritual work.

An effort to "standardize" the ritual has also been undertaken in the past few years, so that what is done in the first degree is also done in the second and third. So if the Senior Deacon makes a 1/4 turn at one point in the ritual of the first degree, in a similar circumstance in the second he does not make a 1/2 turn, but instead ALSO makes the 1/4 turn. Minor tweaks.

This also means that if one Grand Lecturer feels that, say, Succoth should be pronounced Suk-koth, and the next feels it should be pronounced Zuk-oth, well, the inspectors make sure that all Senior Deacons know of the decision and are doing that in all future degrees.

These "corrections" are communicated through the Officer's Association all officer's are required to attend once per month, where the ritual is "exemplified" and information is disseminated. A great opportunity for masonic education is wasted in these sessions, because the Inspectors (and really, pitty the poor inspectors who have to try to make this interesting) are required to exemplify each degree at least twice per year, and assorted other materials must be presented, each year, year after year after year. So discussions of an educational nature must be set aside to focus on the ritual... but I digress.

The point here is that the Grand Lodge of California is very strict about the ritual, and what actually constitutes ritual. For instance, strangely, the color of the lights in the lesser lights is a matter of ritual, as is the wearing of white gloves by officers in other than one part of the third degree. Also, so, apparently,

is the path a Deacon walks in carrying out his duties. These examples are offered not to ridicule the Grand Lecturer or the good work that he and his Assistant Grand Lecturers do, because it IS an often thankless job they face, but to offer an insight into the ritual workings in California (and as I am NOT a member of any other Grand jurisdiction, I can only offer my perspective on California practices).

What we end up with, then, is ritual controlled by a small, closed group of well educated brothers with the best intentions of the craft at heart. The

problem, however, is that these men, by the very nature of their work, send out these "corrections" without the input of the men who will be using them. We are all brothers and fellows, and we practice charity, of thought as well as of action, and obedience to lawful authority, but men are men, and over time what has resulted is a dual ritual, one used when the Inspector/some grand officer is looking, and the ritual that is worked in the lodge for the conferral of degrees.

The two rituals are similar, but in many cases what has developed is the knowledge that the Grand Lecturer and Assistant Grand Lecturers are ever changing, and the knowledge that the next Grand Lecturer or Assistant Grand Lecturer will change what his predecessors have changed makes the ever changing ritual more complex.

Even the best intentioned brother, dedicated to inculcating every single "innovation" that comes down the pike at some point just tries to keep his head above water, listening politely when the Inspector corrects him, and then goes on doing what he knows. The body of changes just gets too large to compass and still learn the work.

California has a working, systemic, and well implemented methodology in place to teach the ritual (Officer's Association), it has an authoritative and well educated cadre of Grand Officer's in place to teach the ritual and carry questions / suggestions / complaints up to the Assistant Grand Lecturers and Grand Lecturer (Inspectors), and has a small, manageable, dedicated, well educated group of Ritual Authorities (Grand Lecturer and Five Assistant Grand Lecturers) to oversee the ritual. This system has worked, and despite its flaws, it continues to be a working and respected methodology with the backing of the Executive Committee and brethren of the lodges.

So, is ritual timeless and unchanging, written in stone and inflexible?

Not in California... thank the GAOTU

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- (1) Freemasonry as a Sacred Retreat by John W. Taylor
- (2) The ANTIENT CHARGES and REGULATIONS of the UNITED GRAND LODGE of ENGLAND
- (3) Grand Lodge of California, Free and Accepted Masons, Installation Ritual, Obligations of a Master
- (4) Merriam-Webster Online, Ritual, as a noun
- (5) Slippery Slope, Wikipedia Online, English Version, 02-17-08
- (6) A Discourse on Method, by Rene Descartes, ISBN-10: 0872204200; ISBN-13: 978-0872204201, Hackett Pub Co Inc; 4 edition (June 1999)



Important

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Are these brothers any less masons for not having personally experienced the ritual? No, of course not, most of them are active, wonderful brothers. None the less, the manner of their formation took away from them a fundamental awakening of the spirit which they may only achieve with difficult work and contemplation.

It is NOT the intent of this article to discuss the relative merits of one day conferrals, however, but no discussion of the importance of the ritual in the formation of a mason would be complete without at least a nod in the direction of this subject.

Ritual teaches fundamental lessons through symbols, on a subconscious level. This is a very powerful teaching tool! Masonry is something slightly different to every man, yet the fundamental truths are always there, and it is the ritual which speaks to the unconscious mind, which slips the fundamental truths of Freemasonry past the conscious defenses and makes fundamental and substantive changes.

So, why ritual? Again, quoting Joseph Campbell: It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back.³

Ritual then is the tool which speaks directly to the spirit, it is the three distinct knocks upon the portals of the spirit which cause the doors to open and spiritual eye to open and see more than the material world. By this awakening, we use the spiritual eye (reflected in our lodges as the "All Seeing Eye") to behold Jacob's Ladder, which rises from the material plane to the spiritual plane, and upon which we place our first foot, symbolically, in the Entered Apprentice Degree.

Without the Ritual, Freemasonry would just be another frat club, and would offer nothing more than the Moose or Elks or Eagles... material charity without a spiritual change.

Where, then, did the ritual originate? How did this ritual, by which we are so fundamentally altered, taught and spiritually nurtured, arise? That, my brothers, is the subject of my next blog. .

- 1 Wikipedia – English: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual_2/26/08
- 2 Mythic Reflections, Thoughts on myth, spirit, and our times an interview with Joseph Campbell, by Tom Collins, One of the articles in The New Story (IC#12), Winter 1985/86, Page 52 Copyright (c)1986, 1997 by Context Institute.
- 3 *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell, Bollingen Series XVII, Princeton University Press, 1973, pp 11



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Convention

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Master Mason, except as such that appertains to the conferring of the inferior Degrees and the instruction therein." It credited the Grand Lodge of Missouri for bringing this to the attention of Freemasons everywhere. The Committee went on to say "Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts are not members of Lodges, nor are they entitled to the franchises of members."

The suspension of a Mason for non-payment of dues was also considered by the Committee. It believed that uniform legislation should be adopted by the Grand Lodges to protect the Fraternity.

It wasn't long before several Grand Lodges changed their laws to conform to the recommendations of this Committee. Certificates or cards were issued by Grand Secretaries to members of Lodges. And Grand Lodges ordered lodges to set cash fees for conferring degrees. Representatives were appointed by some Grand Lodges that had never done so before. And many Grand Lodges changed from conferring all business in the Entered Apprentice Degree to that of the Master Mason Degree.

Maryland was one Grand Lodge that acted almost immediately on these suggestions. on May 16, 1842, it voted to elect one Grand Lecturer to attend the conference in 1843. It ordered the Grand Secretary to procure certificates to issue to Master Masons in good standing. It ordered all Lodges to conduct their business in the Master Mason Degree. It said "that when a Mason is suspended for any cause whatever, he is for the time of such suspension debarred from all rights and privileges of the order."

In 1842, some Lodges in Virginia started conducting their business in the Master Mason Degree. So it went over the next several years, but it was as late as 1851 before the Grand Lodge of Maine changed from working or conducting its business in the First to that of the Master Mason Degree.

It might be well to consider why some of the leaders of Freemasonry were concerned about the

looseness of the ritual, as well as many other facts of the Fraternity.

Looking back to the year 1826, and the two decades that followed, it is found that in 1826, one William Morgan, who had purported to be a Freemason, disappeared. Freemasons were accused of murdering him, although there has never been any evidence that he was harmed in any way. He merely disappeared. This set off a hue and cry against Freemasonry. In many in-stances, Grand Lodges could not find a quorum to meet. Lodges turned in their charters by the hundreds. Freemasons quit by the thousands. Freemasonry was in deplorable condition.

During this period many of the ritualists and the men who had been dedicated to the principles of Freemasonry were lost to the Craft. Many died. Others quit because of the persecution handed down to their families because they would not renounce their membership in the Order. For these and various other reasons, Masonic Lodges were not operating anywhere near their capacity.

This was the state of affairs in the late 1830s, when Alabama called for a Convention to rectify many of the things that had gone awry. These were some of the things causing the Convention meeting in Washington to make the recommendations it did. These were some of the things carried into the Baltimore Convention of 1843, the Convention which we have heard so much about.

The ritual in its various forms did take much of the time of those attending the Baltimore Convention from May 8 to 17, 1843, meeting in the Masonic Hall on Saint Paul Street with sixteen of the twenty-three Grand Lodges in the United States represented. But many hours were taken to discuss the several points brought out during the convention held in Washington. And it approved everything that had been accomplished in the District.

The evening session was opened with the address of the President of the Convention, John Dove of Virginia. His opening remarks stated the purpose for the Convention: "For the first time in the Masonic history of the United States of North America, the Craft have found it necessary and expedient to assemble by their representatives, to take into consideration the propriety of devising some uniform mode of action by which the ancient landmarks of our beloved Order may be preserved and perpetuated, and by which posterity in all times to come may be enabled to decide with certainty upon the pretensions of a Brother, no matter in which section of our blessed and happy land he may reside; and, finally, and we hope no distant date, to transfer those inestimable privileges to our Brothers throughout the Masonic World." Dove's statement shows that much more than the ritual was involved.

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The following day, May 9, the "Committee on the General Object of the Convention" submitted its report. It said: "The objects of the Convention are two-fold, viz.: 1. To produce uniformity of Masonic Work; 11. To recommend such measures as shall tend to the elevation of the Order to its due degree of respect throughout the world at large."

Four standing committees were appointed:

1. On the work and lectures in conferring Degrees.
2. On the Funeral Service.
3. On the ceremonies of Consecration and Installation.
4. On Masonic Jurisprudence.

It is interesting to note the prominent Masons who were appointed to the Committee on Work. John Dove, at the insistence of the Convention, became the Chairman. John Barney of Ohio, S.W.B. Carnegy of Missouri, Charles W. Moore of Massachusetts, and Ebenezer Wadsworth of New York were the other members.

On the morning of May 10, this Committee recited the lecture of the First Degree. The Convention adopted the work of the Committee by a vote of fourteen to one. Ebenezer Wadsworth of New York, cast the dissenting vote. The following day, the Committee reported "on the opening and closing of ceremonies of the First Degree" and their work was accepted by the Convention.

Then the Chairman of the Committee, John Dove, assisted by Charles Moore, reported the lecture of the Second Degree. This work was also accepted by the Convention. But evidently Ebenezer Wadsworth was not happy with the work that had been accepted by the Convention. He "requested to be excused from serving longer on the Committee on Work." He was excused and Brother Edward Herndon, of Alabama, substituted.

At the Friday morning session, "the opening work of the Third Degree was accepted by the Convention with a vote of twelve to one "with New York dissenting."

On Monday morning, May 15, the following was reported: "The undersigned Committee on the Dedication, Consecration and Installation of Lodges, etc., having had the several subjects submitted to them under consideration, beg leave respectfully to report that they have examined and carefully compared all the various authors and systems which they have been able to obtain, and present the following, viz.:

"That the forms in the 'Monitor,' under the authorship of M.W. Thomas S. Webb, republished in 1812, possesses the least faults of any which have been before them, and has a high claim to antiquity, and having been in general use as a standard work for nearly half a century, possess no errors of material as to re-quire alteration, except as follows."

There followed six minor changes that it recommended be made, three of them in the Installation Ceremony.

Concerning the "Certificates of Good Standing," the Convention said that the Washington Convention of 1842 earnestly recommended to the consideration of the Fraternity "such Certificate, and where it has escaped attention in the deliberations of any Grand Lodge, this Convention call it to their view, as being a check admirably calculated to preserve the Fraternity from unworthy Brethren from a distance, and an additional means of protection to the good and the deserving."

The Convention adopted a resolution that was to have far-reaching and controversial effects:

That a Committee be designated to prepare and publish at an early day, a text book, to be called "The Masonic Trestle-Board," to embrace three distinct, full and complete "Masonic Carpets," illustrative of the three Degrees of ancient Craft Masonry; together with the ceremonies of consecrations, dedications and installation; laying of corner-stones of public edifices; the Funeral service, and order of processions. To which shall be added the Charges, Prayers and Exhortations, and the selection from scripture, appropriate and proper for Lodge service. The Committee further report, that they deem it expedient that a work be published to contain archaeological research into the history of the Fraternity in the various nations of the world.

The Committee on Masonic Jurisprudence reported it had considered whether or not "the evils which this Convention has met to rectify and remove, have arisen from any defect or fault in the present system of organizations as adopted by the Fraternity of the United States." It concluded the evils existed, mainly because of the individual action of the numerous Grand Lodges in the United States. Inter-communication between Grand Lodges did not exist. The "purity and unity" of work prevalent in Europe was therefore missing.

"UNITY throughout the whole Masonic family is essential," claimed the Committee. "Any system of polity tending to throw obstacles in its way must be wrong. The simple truth that we are all Brethren of one family, and look up to one common Father, the Lord our God, is the basis of all the ancient constitutions . "

To correct the "evils" that prevailed, the Committee said it had considered two plans:

"1st. A General Grand Lodge of the United States. 2nd. A triennial convention of representatives of the several Grand Lodges of the United States."

It went on to state: "Your Committee, without encumbering their report with long arguments, beg to recommend the latter course as being that, which in their opinion, will best attain the end proposed."

So, contrary to what many Freemasons have been led to believe, the Baltimore Convention of 1843 did not recommend the establishment of General Grand Lodge. It did recommend "the several Grand Lodges of the United States to enter into and form a National Masonic Convention."

The Jurisprudence Committee had also considered a question about whether or not a Lodge could try its Master. It concluded: "The Master is an integral part of its government, unable to sit in judgment on himself, and yet without whom the Lodge could not act, without, as it were, committing felon de se (suicide). The Committee offered the following, with which the Convention concurred.... "a subordinate Lodge has not the right to try its Master, but that he is amenable to the Grand Lodge alone."

The Committee considered sojourning Masons as "freeloaders." It believed all Masons living in the vicinity of a Lodge and not a member of it should be required to contribute "a sum equal in value to the annual dues per capita of the subordinate Lodge in whose jurisdiction they reside." The Convention voted to recommend that all Grand Lodges take this recommendation under advisement.

In an attempt to bring unity "Throughout the world in all things pertaining to Masonry," the Convention approved a recommendation to send "a Delegate from the Masonic Fraternity of the United States to their Brethren in Europe."

On the evening of May 15 the Committee on Work exemplified the opening and closing of the Lodge in "the Third Degree." The ceremonies for opening and closing a Lodge were exemplified on the morning of the 16th. Then the Convention adopted a resolution thanking the Grand Lodge of Maryland for its hospitality. It was especially appreciative of Maryland assuming all expenses. This was followed by the presentation of the "Lecture of the First Degree."

It was "Resolved, that the interest of the Masonic Fraternity, and the good of mankind may be greatly promoted by the publication of a periodical devoted to Free-Masonry. This Convention, therefore, cheerfully recommend the Free-Mason's Monthly Magazine, edited and published by Brother Charles W. Moore, of Boston, Massachusetts as eminently useful and well-deserving the generous patronage, support and study of the whole Fraternity." The Convention concurred.

Each delegate contributed \$5.00 to defray the expenses of printing. It was resolved to hold the next Convention in Winchester, Virginia, "on the second Monday in May, in the year 1846." This was never held.

The evening session of May 16th was devoted to the degree work. "The President repeated the first section of the F.C. and M.M. Degrees; and Brother


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Moore, the second sections of the same Degrees. The Committee then exemplified the work in the Third Degree.”

On the morning of the last day of the Convention, the Master Mason Degree was exemplified. Then, while the President was absent from the hall, “Brother Carnegy took the chair,” and a resolution praising John Dove of Virginia was unanimously adopted. Albert Case of South Carolina was also thanked for his work as secretary. The concluding session was held in the afternoon of May 17th. The Convention approved a letter, read by the Secretary, Albert Case, to be sent to “the Masonic Fraternity of the United States.” Each paragraph contained the flowery language of the day pleading with the Freemasons of the country to unite in love, friendship and brotherhood.

This letter, written immediately following the anti-Masonic craze that began in 1826, called upon all Lodges “to exercise their powers and cleanse the sanctuary” of unfaithful Masons. It concluded by asking all Freemasons to “Be true to your principles, and the great moral edifice will stand beautiful and complete. Together, Brethren, be true and faithful.”

The President thanked the delegates for the compliments paid him, and for their diligent work. He called upon the Chaplain to dismiss them with prayer. The Convention was then adjourned sine die.

The Convention was ended, but its accomplishments would change the face of Freemasonry throughout the United States. 

Business

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to another from, in some cases, ONE DAY, to a minimum of 90 days. Give the candidate time to learn to BE a mason, to take in the wise and serious truths being presented to him, to take the time to actually become a Mason.

Below is some information from Paul Bessel on the Grand Lodges that already have chosen to return to the true tradition of working in the first degree.

Grand Lodges Where Business Can Now be Done on the First Degree

1. Connecticut as of Apr. 1, 1987: Grand Lodge voted to allow Stateds on any degree, but only MM's vote.
3. Missouri as of Sept. 27, 1994: Bylaws now says: A STATED COMMUNICATION requires that the lodges open on the first, second and third degrees.
5. Washington as of June 13, 1996: Resolution said a significant number of EA's, FC's, and MM's fail to progress, if they can attend and participate in Lodge business their interest and knowledge may

increase at an earlier time and they will be more likely to continue as active Masons, doing business on the 3rd degree was an innovation in the U.S. in 1843. The WM decides on which degree to open a meeting. Only MM's who have passed their proficiency can vote on certain items.

7. Idaho as of Sept. 20, 1996: Idaho voted to allow lodges to open and conduct business on any degree at the discretion of the Master. There is an exception that balloting on petitions may only be done on the 3rd degree. Masons below the rank of Master Mason are not allowed a vote and may debate only at the discretion of the Worshipful Master. This action was probably taken in 1996 or 1997.
9. Colorado as of January 1997.
11. Kansas as of March 1997 by edict of the Grand Master
13. Arizona as of June 7, 1997: Resolution said restricting attendance at stated meetings to MM's deprives EA's and FC's of fellowship and activity. Says business will be done in lodge of EA, FC, or MM, decided by the WM, but only MM's can vote and hold office.
15. Nevada as of Nov. 11, 1997: Resolution states all business, except conferring of the FC and MM degrees, shall be done in a Lodge of EAs, but only MMs who are members of a lodge may vote in that Lodge. In 1998 (and again in 1999), rejected a resolution to allow the WM to conduct business meetings on any of the 3 degrees, so they must be on the EA degree, except for conferring of degrees.
17. Alabama as of 1998: GL voted to allow business on any degree.
19. Minnesota as of April 15-17, 1999: Resolution said present rules exclude EA's and FC's from attending stateds of lodge they have joined, while they are subject to discipline already, it is desirable to include new members as soon as possible, educational programs will be of interest to new members. Allows WM to open on any degree, but only MM's can vote.
21. Oregon as of June 4, 1999: WM permitted to open Stated meetings on EA or FC degree to permit EAs and FCs to attend, without benefit of being voting members.
23. Montana as of 2000, The GL of Montana began allowing all lodges to conduct business on the EA or FC degrees at the option of the WM.
25. Maryland as of Nov. 15, 1999: At the discretion of the Worshipful Master, a Lodge may be opened in any of the three degrees and all business except that which relates specifically to a particular degree may be transacted in the Lodge sitting in any of the three degrees. Provided, however, that only Master Masons who are members of the Lodge may cast a ballot, vote, or participate in debate on any matter coming before the Lodge or exercise

any other right or privilege of membership relating to the business of the Lodge.

27. New Mexico as of March 2000
29. Utah - No details available
31. District of Columbia as of November 4, 2000: WM may open and conduct business on any degree, but only MMs can vote or exercise other privileges of Lodge membership.
33. Massachusetts, date not known Grand Lodge voted to allow Stateds on any degree, but only MM's vote.
35. Vermont (Thanks Errol and Wr. O'Sullivan!!)
37. Ohio (Thanks Tom)
39. South Dakota (Thanks Silence Dogood)
41. Texas as of 2007

Grand Lodges Where Business on the First Degree is Known to be Under Consideration

- Alaska
- Illinois
- New York
- Oklahoma



Origin

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morality play (usually called simply a morality) presented religious and ethical concerns from the point of view of the individual Christian, whose main concern was to effect the salvation of his soul:

One of the longest and best preserved morality plays is The Castle of Perseverance. Like most morality plays, it takes a central figure who represents all of us, and confronts him (he is always a male) with a situation which involves a moral decision. The central character in The Castle of Perseverance is Mankind (another well-known morality play concerns Everyman). The staging of The Castle of Perseverance is discussed in the section of the site on the early stage.¹*

So it was religious in nature in its beginnings, arising from the dramatizations of the sacred events and scenes of scripture. But a process of secularization had begun even before the morality plays arose as a separate form within the genre.

Originally, the cast of characters involved in these plays were the clergy and their congregations. But the Catholic Church frowned on the plays when certain secular elements entered in, and a papal edict issued in 1210 forbade clergy from acting on the public stage. That was merely the first step in further secularization.

Increasingly the actors came from townspeople who were not necessarily members of the church, and as a result, supervisory control of the

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moralties, as they were also called, shifted to the town guilds. With this change, fewer and fewer people understood what was happening onstage in the Latin vernacular, and the Latin was replaced.

Eventually other scenes became inserted that were not in the Bible. To increase the dramatic effect of the plays, character and story detail grew in importance. But they still retained their connection to the sacred, and they began to follow the cycle of the Christian Church calendar.

As the interest in them grew, and as they became more refined and enhanced, some definite characteristics began to stand out. A study at Arizona State University notes these characteristics, and makes the bold assertion that we still maintain the same forms in practically every format we have in drama today, be it comedy, or drama, or even the television news:

- *Narrative structure: there's a story that can be told.*
- *Universal and Moral: the story could or does affect many people.*
- *Specific time and place: a specific location and time is involved providing urgency.*
- *Unambiguous: the event either is or can be made to have a cause-effect relationship and is easily understood.*
- *Focus is disorder: something is wrong and there is a solution.*
- *Culturally resonant: the story is something that people can identify with easily.²*

There are other elements which stand out as well, particularly the struggle of a central character with the forces of good and evil. The characters are generally personifications of some particular virtue or vice, and there are allurements throughout the story that try to persuade the main character to succumb to one or the other. Eventually various representations of the devil gave way to one main character simply known as "Vice," who was the main antagonist who tried to turn the lead character from following his path.

By the fifteenth century, the moralities had evolved into a form of secular dinner entertainment, often performed before royal courts. They developed into a briefer, more comic form known as "interludes," after the brief humorous segment included in each play became a standard audience favorite. From this the form even developed into a new breed of political and religious satire. One example of this focus is the play "Mankind":

Within the play there is there is a reference to an imaginary 'Pope Pocket' which is seen as many as a jibe against the Pope's greed. It is also possible that this was a reference to John Poket who was the Prior of Barnwell Abbey, near Cambridge, the area in which 'Mankind' is believed to have originated. John was Prior between 1444 and 1464. Line 514 suggests that Prior had dealings with

'Master Allington of Bottisham', this is seen as a reference to the local papal representative of the time. This explains the ironic 'Pope' reference.³

There is no doubt that the immortal bard, William Shakespeare, was influenced by the morality plays, as has been attested to by many a Shakespeare historian already. So should it be any surprise that he would be connected with Freemasonry as well?

The Masonic references in the Shakespeare plays are numerous, some fairly obvious and others extremely subtle, but all woven into the text in such a way that they form a natural part of the magical garment. A Freemason is referred to several times and in several ways, as, for instance, referring to the higher degrees, 'a brother of gracious Order, late come from the Sea, in special business from his Holinesse.'⁵

In Henry V the brethren are referred to as 'the singing masons building roofs of gold'; **6** in King John as 'a worshipful society'; **7** whilst Love's Labor's Lost not only mentions 'profound Solomon' **8** but also the Lodge and a password, suitably disguised:

Arm. I will visit thee at the Lodge.
 Jaq. That's hereby.
 Arm. I know where it is situate.
 Jaq. Lord, how wise you are....
 Arm. Come Jaquenetta...**9**

But how may this dramatic form be said to be linked to Freemasonry and/or its development? That depends a great deal on whose format you accept for exactly when Freemasonry developed.

The most common understanding is that it arose during this same period, and had its origins in the medieval craft guilds. That would place the development of Freemasonry squarely within the same time frame of the development of the morality plays.

The most accurate dating we have for any of the extant morality plays is the play "Mankind," which has been dated by internal evidence in the mention of two coins of the realm, the royal and the angel, which both date from the late 1400's.

With the transition of the mystery plays into the more secular Moralities, one may speculate that the Catholic Church, who denounced them from the very first secular elements they absorbed, would have become increasingly critical of them as they further evolved in that direction. This may certainly be one factor that figured into the historic relationship of animosity of the Catholic Church toward Freemasonry.

Ironically, one of the most striking descriptions I found in looking at the connection of the Moralities with Freemasonry, came from a Catholic website:

The aim of both was religious. In the Miracle play the subject-matter is

concerned with Bible narrative, Lives of Saints, the Apocryphal Gospels, and pious legends, a certain historical or traditional foundation underlies the plot, and the object was to teach and enforce truths of the Catholic faith. In the Morality the matter was allegorical rather than historical, and its object was ethical; the cultivation of Christian character. The intention of both Miracle Plays and Moralities, as we have said, was religious; in the one it aimed at faith, the teaching of dogma, in the other morals, the application of Christian doctrine to conduct.⁴

That description is almost a mirror image of much of the current debate, in which Freemasons have made the assertion, as a counter to antimasonic claims that Freemasonry is a religion, that it is simply a system designed to teach morals, but morals which are distinctly founded on Christian principles. Of course, the author of that article did not have Freemasonry in mind at all. But there are many writers around who have spotted the connection of Freemasonry with the morality plays:

Freemasonry is avowedly concerned with morality. Its symbols are interpreted for the candidate in moral terms (thus, when the working tools are displayed in the first degree, the candidate is told that 'we apply these tools to our morals') and its ceremonies are effectively morality plays, stressing particular virtues.

Freemasonry is an "esoteric art," in that certain aspects of its internal work are not generally revealed to the public. Masons give numerous reasons for this, one of which is that Freemasonry uses an initiatory system of degrees to explore ethical and philosophical issues, and this system is less effective if the observer knows beforehand what will happen.⁵

There are three initial "degrees" of Freemasonry: (1) Entered Apprentice, (2) Fellow Craft and (3) Master Mason. One works through each degree by taking part in a ritual, essentially a medieval morality Play, in which one plays a role, along with members of the Lodge that one is joining. The setting is Biblical—the building of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem—although the stories themselves are not directly from the Bible, and not intended to be necessarily Jewish or Christian in nature.

Nothing supernatural happens in these stories. The Temple can be taken to represent the "temple" of the individual human being, that of the human community, or of the entire universe.

As one works through the degrees, one studies the lessons and interprets them for oneself. There are as many ways to interpret the rituals as there

[Continued on Next Page](#)

are Masons, and no Mason may dictate to any other Mason how he is to interpret them. No particular truths are espoused, but a common structure—speaking symbolically to universal human archetypes—provides for each Mason a means to come to his own answers to life’s important questions.⁶

This constant movement of skilled labor from project to project, Lodge to Lodge, country to country, created lines of communication, and an increasing uniformity of standards; of modes of recognition and levels of expectation; of “secrets” that were the currency - the coin - of the craft.

Beyond skills, reliable moral and ethical behavior was expected. Morality plays were developed, sometimes performed in public on construction sites. Were these the source of our modern Degree rituals?

Obviously, there are quite a few people who have answered that question with a well-qualified yes. But within the descriptions provided by these sources, I noticed little details that in my judgment bolster the case for the suggested origin of the rituals from the morality plays:

The action of the morality play centres on a hero, such as Mankind, whose inherent weaknesses are assaulted by such personified diabolic forces as the Seven Deadly Sins but who may choose redemption and enlist the aid of such figures as the Four Daughters of God (Mercy, Justice, Temperance, and Truth).

No Mason should have to look twice at this paragraph to see two of the four cardinal virtues, in those four attributes, and a strong emphasis on the other two as well.

Typically, the morality play is a psychomachia, an externalized dramatization of a psychological and spiritual conflict: the battle between the forces of good and evil in the human soul. This interior struggle involves the Christian’s attempt to achieve salvation, despite the obstacles and temptations that he encounters as he travels through life, toward death.

In England the moralities dramatized the progress of the Christians life from innocence to sin, and from sin to repentance and salvation. Among the most widely known of the fifteenth-century moralities are The Castell of Perseverance, which features a battle between Virtues and Vices; Mankind, which incorporates topical farce; and perhaps the most famous of all the English morality plays, Everyman (c. 1495), which concerns the Christians experience of mortality and Judgment.

Think for a moment of the typical antimasonic objection to the presence of these themes, suggesting that they reflect “a Masonic plan of salvation.” It is one thing to contain these themes as a matter of course within the dramatic form(s)

in which the rituals appear; it is quite another to divorce the rituals from their format, strip them of the Christian bearing with which they were conceived, and come up with anything with the least resemblance to truth in whatever understanding is left as a result. Thus the typical antimasonic objection to the words in the Fellow Craft degree prologue is totally unfounded when you consider it in comparison with the same themes prevalent in the form from which it derived:

As you progress through the three degrees, remember also that they are emblematical of the stages of one’s life. The Entered Apprentice represents youth, and the attainment of knowledge. The Fellowcraft degree represents manhood, and the application of what has been learned in our youth. And we will see later, that the Master Mason degree represents the man of years, with the wisdom of a lifetime, and the setting sun in his eyes.⁷

They conceived the different desires and appetites of Man as personalities, named them Greed, Pride, Vanity, Good Will, Patience, and the like, and caused them to weave their plots so as to capture the soul of the hero, who was called Everyman, Humanum Genus, or Man. Besides the personified desires, there were also in most plays other characters such as the Doctor, the Priest, or a public officer. God and the Devil were usually present.⁸

The main characters in Everyman are God, a Messenger, Death, Everyman, Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin, Goods, Knowledge, Beauty, Strength, and Good Deeds. Everyman is immersed in worldly pleasures when Death summons unexpectedly him. He soon finds that none of his supposedly loyal companions (Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin) will go with him. His treasured Goods also desert him, and at the grave the qualities of the flesh (Beauty, Strength) also fade away. Only Good Deeds stays with him to help him get into Paradise, which is accomplished with the help and guidance of Knowledge, by means of Confession and Priesthood.

In other moralities, various manifestations of the forces of Evil (the Seven Deadly Sins, the World, the Flesh, the Devil, Vice) are arrayed against the Christian, who turns for help to the forces of Good (God, His angels, Virtue). The quality of writing in the moralities is uneven, and in many cases the author is unknown. Characterization is also crude and nave, and there is little attempt to portray psychological depth.⁹

Need I point out the obvious virtues, and the themes, that are characteristic of the rituals of Freemasonry? Certainly not to most of you here.

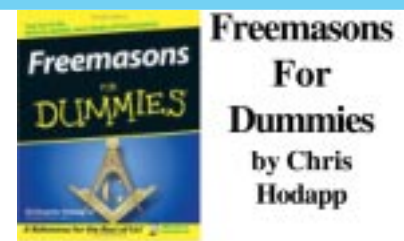
The connection of Masonic ritual to a dramatic form of its time raises questions that must of necessity be raised, whether speaking of Masonic ritual, or of Scripture, or of any other literary work

which comes down to us from a time and culture very different from our own: What were the forms? What was the influence on both structure and content? To what degree did these affect the writing in question? How does this influence affect the way we approach interpretation and understanding? To what degree does it alter what we have already come to believe and accept?

In answering these questions, the measure to which we acknowledge and allow the influence of a very specific literary genre and form, will greatly influence our understanding of the content. In this case, my own assessment is, that it is very clear there was significant influence from the morality plays in the style and presentation of these ritual enactments, enough to make it impossible to ignore the significance of allegorical interpretation of their content, and of the characters represented.

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Principles

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That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. This is the whole of the law. The rest is commentary.

Therefore a little commentary: Freemasonry teaches us principles to inculcate in our morality, as our morality is rooted in those principles. As masons, we are enjoined to act upon the square, as the square is a symbol of morality. Lets look at what Merriam-Webster has to say about morality:

- a. of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior : ethical (moral judgments)
- b: expressing or teaching a conception of right behavior (a moral poem)
- c: conforming to a standard of right behavior
- d: sanctioned by or operative on one's conscience or ethical judgment (a moral obligation)
- e: capable of right and wrong action (a moral agent)

So, principles of right and wrong behavior define our morals. Inculcation of Masonic principles therefore informs our morals. By the inculcation of these principles, we improve our morals, or rather, reinforce our morals, and become better men.

I write reinforce our morals deliberately, because to become a mason, you must already be a good and upright man. There is nothing in freemasonry, hopefully, that does not already exist in your heart and conduct, hence the inference that a man is first made a mason in his heart. To become a mason, you must already BE one in your heart, life and conduct.

Initiation simply reteaches you, reinforces in you, those great moral principles that you have already learned from your parents and from, hopefully, society. Freemasons are, or should be, moral men, acting upon the level and the square, upright before god and man, circumscribing their desires and keeping their passions within dues bounds.

From morals proceeds, or ought to proceed, ethics. Again, from Merriam-Webster:

Ethics:

- 1. plural but sing or plural in constr : the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation
- 2 a: a set of moral principles : a theory or system of moral values (the present-day materialistic ethic) (an old-fashioned work ethic) — often used in plural but singular or plural in construction (an elaborate ethics) (Christian ethics)
- b: plural but sing or plural in constr : the principles of conduct governing an individual or a group (professional ethics) c: a guiding philosophy
- d: a consciousness of moral importance (forge a conservation ethic)
- 3 plural : a set of moral issues or aspects (as

rightness) (debated the ethics of human cloning)

From Principles proceeds morals and from a set of morals proceeds our ethics. Once again, the trinity, the triad which is really a monad, three sides of the same thing, each supporting and defining the other. The principles of freemasonry are much the same.

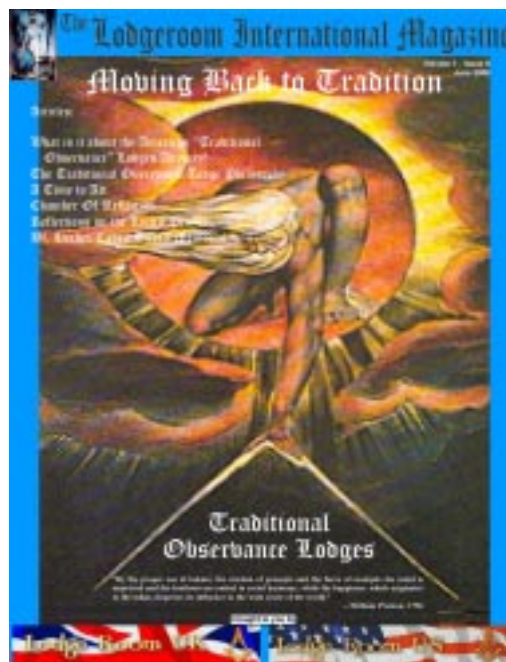
No one principle stands alone, but works in conjunction, each supporting the other into a pleasing and unified whole. By the influence of brotherly love

we are more charitable toward our brothers failings (and strengths). By being prudent, and speaking only that which is appropriate to be spoken (Maintaining silence), acting in a brotherly manner with charity, we avoid the pitfall of gossip.

An extended case can be made that acting on the principles in all our lawful activities we will be moral and upright men, acting with ethics than none can reproach. In fact, it is quintessentially Masonic TO act by these principles, and do nothing that will cast a cloud upon our ancient and honorable fraternity.

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The Last Word Who You Love

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn't, the girl with the rose.

His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library. Taking a book off the shelf he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind.

In front of the book, he discovered the previous owner's name, Miss Hollis Maynell. With time and effort he located her address. She lived in New York City.



He wrote her a letter introducing himself and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II

During the next year and one-month the two grew to know each other through

the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A Romance was budding. Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn't matter what she looked like.

When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting - 7:00 pm at Grand Central Station in New York. "You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I'll be wearing on my lapel." So at 7:00 he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved, but whose face he'd never seen.

I'll let Mr. Blanchard tell you what happened: A young women was coming toward me, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were blue as flowers.

Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit she was like springtime come alive. I started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose. As I moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. "Going my way, sailor?" she murmured.

Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl. A women well past 40, she had graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. I felt as though I split in two, so keen was my desire to

follow her, and yet so deep was my longing for the women whose spirit had truly companioned me and upheld my own.

And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible, her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. I did not hesitate. My fingers gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful.

I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the women, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my disappointment. "I'm Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?"

The women's face broadened into a tolerant smile. "I don't know what this is about, son," she answered, "but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should go and tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!"

It's not difficult to understand and admire Miss Maynell's wisdom. The true nature of a heart is seen in it's response to the unattractive. "Tell me whom you love," Houssaye wrote, "And I will tell you who you are."

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