

Masonic Education Programs 2015



The Grand Lodge of Texas, A.F.&A.M.

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Preface

In his oration during the 1987 Grand Annual Communication, Grand Orator Reese L. Harrison, Jr. offered the following thoughts.

“Freemasonry was never intended to be anything other than a profound quest by mankind for participation in the nature and purpose of God and the Universe. It is one of the elements of Masonic genius that this quest, common to many world religions and philosophies, was uniquely framed within a practical, institutional brotherhood which has served its members and the human family at least since its formal organization in 1717 with the Grand Lodge of England. Freemasonry is unique. It is not just another club, lodge, or society, but, on the contrary, it is rather a startling creative institution which has carried certain basic and fundamental insights down to the present day. To be a Freemason is to be both a member of an institutional fraternity, and an heir to a vast legacy of man’s perception and inspiration about both the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. But do we know how to teach it? Few members of Freemasonry develop a vision of what the Craft could be and become because there is no emphasis on the richness of the fabric of Freemasonry.

“Freemasons have largely stopped cherishing their legacy; not because they do not love it, but rather because they do not understand it. They do not let it speak sufficiently to them; but they incessantly do speak to and for it. The capacity to allow the mind and the spirit to roam in and through the Masonic ethic is almost extinct. Lodges that once reflected the most vital and dynamic elements of life are now symbols of stagnation, and they attract the loyalty and spirit of but few energetic men.”

The genius of Freemasonry is the daily practice of those things Freemasonry teaches. But how can we as Freemasons practice what we do not learn and are not taught? How can Freemasonry prosper if Freemasonry does not teach the meaning and mission of the symbolism, allegories, philosophy, morality, history, and traditions of Freemasonry?

As Masonic leaders, we must develop a vision for the Fraternity, educate ourselves and our fellow members, and instill a rich appreciation of our past and an optimistic view of our future. We can accomplish this by embarking upon our own Masonic quest and enlisting our fellow Freemasons. It begins with one Freemason and then another, one lodge and then another. We must join together on our journey in the discovery of the nature and purpose of God!

We must build our own Masonic edifice within ourselves. We have to help our fellow Freemasons by providing a high quality, intellectually stimulating Masonic education program so that we understand our fraternity, appreciate its legacy, and create its future. Only with that understanding can we band together as friends and brothers in the genius of Freemasonry.

As the Master has the obligation to provide the Craft with good and wholesome instruction, it is imperative that Masonic leaders prepare themselves for that role. To assist them in this

undertaking, I asked the 2015 Resource Team to develop an educational program for Texas Lodges to implement during my term as Grand Master. This is only a beginning as each lodge must develop a regular, consistent Masonic education program that educates and inspires its members. A program that propels each of us on our Masonic quest.

During the 2015 Grand Lodge year (December 2014 through November 2015), I am asking each Worshipful Master to set aside a few minutes at one stated meeting per month to present the following Masonic education programs or a suitable substitute of a Masonic nature dealing with the symbolism, allegories, or philosophy of Freemasonry. As Carl H. Claude wrote in *The Master's Book*, "One thing and only one thing a Masonic Lodge can give its members which they can get nowhere else in the world. *That one thing is Masonry.*"

In 1987, Grand Orator Harrison challenged us to develop a Masonic education program to teach Masonology to our members. This program is a step in that direction. It is a noble task; however, it will not be easy, it will not be popular, and it will not be fashionable. It will take effort and a commitment by each lodge and its leadership to provide its members with Masonic education, to add an element of intellectual stimulation to our meetings, not occasionally but at each lodge meeting.

As Harrison said, "Masonic education awakens the interest of a Master Mason in Freemasonry and makes him enthusiastic, while ignorance keeps him lukewarm." While Claudy wrote, "The Master whose instruction program is strictly Masonic has to send to the basement for extra chairs for most of his meetings."

Michael L. Wiggins
Grand Master 2015
Grand Lodge of Texas

Acknowledgements

My Masonic education has been influenced by many people, Freemasons and non-Masons alike. Each has had an impact in some way in shaping my understanding of Freemasonry and my belief in Masonic education as the key to our Fraternity's growth and prosperity. To each of you, I want to extend a very sincere Thank You. For those that have gone to the Celestial Abode, I have fond memories and hope I carry your legacy in a suitable manner.

I want to thank the members of the 2015 Resource Team for encouragement in completing this task and their contributions in developing the concept for this project. My special thanks goes to Judge and Brother Kenneth C. Curry who championed this project and was the primary contributor to the final product.

MLW
December 2014

Introduction

This booklet is a collection of brief Masonic education programs available through internet sources and represent the views of the individual authors and not any official position of the Grand Lodge of Texas or any other Masonic Grand Lodge. The programs are provided as a way to encourage each constituent Lodge in Texas to undertake a monthly Masonic education program as a routine part of its monthly stated meeting. These programs are only a starting point to stimulate substantive discussion in your lodge regarding our Masonic symbols, allegories, philosophy, and heritage. As with all Masonic presentations the reader or listener must be careful to use the Light granted him by the Supreme Deity to reflect upon and discern these presentations.

While the program is under the direct supervision of the Worshipful Master, it is suggested that either the Senior or Junior Warden of the Lodge be responsible for implementing the monthly education program. It is felt this approach will allow the Worshipful Master to focus on his duties and give some sense of consistency to the program as we move through the 2015 Grand Lodge year.

The Masonic education programs are to be presented or read at the monthly stated lodge meetings. The programs may be presented by anyone designated by the Lodge Officer in charge of implementing the education program. These programs are brief, usually being 10 to 15 minutes in length, and can serve as a lodge education program or a basis for further discussion during lodge study nights. It is suggested that each program be presented during the month indicated in the Table of Contents. The person presenting the Masonic education program should familiarize himself with the wording to make the reading as comprehensible as possible.

These programs contained in this booklet are attributed to their source when known. To the best of our knowledge, no copyrighted material has been used in this publication. Many of the programs originated in the *Short Talk Bulletin*, published monthly by the Masonic Service Association of North America under the auspices of its member Grand Jurisdictions, or from Masonic education programs developed for the Grand Lodge of Texas.

MASONIC SYMBOLISM

Grand Lodge of Texas: January 2002

Symbols are described as the universal language because they represent an idea or message in a way that is understood by all without using words, in written or verbal form, that are different in the various languages. Webster's Dictionary defines a *symbol* as something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship or association. In Freemasonry, a symbol might be thought of as an act or a material object that represents a basic moral truth or lesson.

Symbolism is a part of everyday life. The driver of an automobile is constantly seeing symbols on road signs that indicate road conditions and provide instructions for safe driving. These symbols are universally adopted and used throughout the world. Mathematical symbols are encountered on a daily basis and each signifies some particular mathematical operation such as addition, subtraction, or multiplication. One also is reminded of justice when a blindfolded figure holding scales is observed. The list could go on and on. Symbols are so common that we soon forget to recognize the symbols and see in our mind's eye the concept being symbolized.

The flag of the United States of America is an excellent example of symbolism. When asked what the flag represents, many people would immediately respond that the flag represents the United States, its government, and its people. Others would say the flag represents the freedom and opportunity this country provides its citizens. While these responses are correct, the US flag takes on a much deeper meaning when one carefully considers the symbolism of this red, white and blue piece of cloth.

The thirteen stripes represent the thirteen original colonies while the stars represent the current fifty states of our country. The red is symbolic of the blood shed to create and preserve our country throughout its history. The white on the flag represents purity and the concept of freedom for all men while the blue represents fidelity to the highest principles of behavior and conduct upon which this country was founded. The patriot might see the flag as a symbol of loyalty and the glorious past of our country and others as a symbol of freedom of speech or religion. There is no limit to what one can find in this great symbol, as each person will look upon the flag from a unique and personal perspective.

The ritualistic ceremonies of the three Masonic Degrees are the foundation of the world's oldest and largest fraternity. In these ceremonies are contained the philosophy and lessons of Freemasonry, and each stone in the foundation is a symbol of one kind or another. Many of the symbols are called to the attention of the new member through the conferral of the degrees, but there is much to the ceremonies that escapes our detection at the time. As a result, the careful study of the ceremonies is an enlightening journey that brings to our attention additional symbols and allows each of us to further refine our Masonic experience.

In fact, there is no limit to what one may find in any Masonic symbol. Our background and experience help or hinder us in defining a particular symbol for ourselves. No one can write everything there is to be known about a particular symbol. One can only state his personal views of a particular Masonic symbol and then it only represents his perception of the meaning of the symbol.

However, there is a limit to the amount of interpretation that should be affixed to Masonic symbols. If a symbol is not understood to represent a common concept for all Masons, then the symbol has lost its purpose. If not, one can begin to “find” meaning in a symbol far beyond the intent of the symbol. This is a trap that one finds many Masonic writers have fallen into inadvertently. Those who have explored Masonic symbols looking for hidden meanings assuming the symbols are abstract, mysterious, uncertain, or vague have missed the point. After all, a symbol represents an idea or a concept and is effective only if those observing the symbol understand it.

In addition, one must realize that symbolism and the teaching of symbolism is not the primary purpose of Freemasonry. Symbols are a means to an end, signposts pointing to values, ideas, and concepts that they, themselves, do not possess. Those who declare that Masonry delivers its lessons solely in symbolic form are mistaken. The lessons of Freemasonry are included in the ritualistic ceremonies of the three degrees, which are delivered, in plain language and most are also included in the public or monitorial portions of the ceremonies. Symbolism is merely a tool of Masonic ritualism and not an end or purpose of Masonry.

An informed Mason is a better Mason and there are numerous books and articles written that assist the Mason in understanding the symbolism of the ritualistic ceremonies. The following is just a sampling of references that can assist in enhancing one’s understanding of Masonic symbols.

- *Monitor of the Lodge: Monitorial Instructions in the Three Degrees of Symbolic Masonry*, The Grand Lodge of Texas, A.F.&A.M., Waco, TX (1982).
- Roberts, Allen: *The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism*, Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, Inc., Richmond, VA (1974).
- Coil, Henry W. revised edition by Roberts, Allen: *Coil’s Masonic Encyclopedia*, Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, Inc., Richmond, VA (1996).
- Horne, Alex: *Sources of Masonic Symbolism*, Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, Inc., Richmond, VA (1981).
- *Transactions of the Texas Lodge of Research*, Texas Lodge of Research, The Grand of Texas, A.F.&A.M., Waco, TX.
- *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, United Grand Lodge of England, London, England.
- Short Talk Bulletins, Masonic Service Association of North American, Burtonsville, MD.

No one doubts that there is symbolism in Freemasonry. It is the lifeblood of the Craft. It is what distinguishes Freemasonry from other fraternal organizations. It is the primary vehicle by which the ritualistic ceremonies teach Masonic philosophy and moral lessons. The ultimate end of Freemasonry, of course, is the teaching of morality, ethics, and truth and the use of symbols helps achieve that end. Those who study Freemasonry will have a better understanding of the ceremonies of the Craft, of the symbolism woven into the entire fabric of Freemasonry, and develop a deeper appreciation of the meaning of the ceremonies that led him to becoming a Master Mason.

Monthly Masonic Education Programs

THE MASONIC APRON

By Plez A. Transou

Grand Lodge of Texas: April 2002

The Lambskin or white leather apron, is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason; more ancient than the Golden Fleece or Roman Eagle; more honorable than the Star and Garter, or any other order that could be conferred, at this, or any future period, by king, prince or potentate, or any person, except he be a Mason; and which, I trust, you will wear with equal pleasure to yourself and honor to the Fraternity.

With these or similar words every Mason is presented one of the most visible signs of Masonic membership, the lambskin or white leather apron. In this, the newly made brother receives the first tangible evidence of his acceptance into the Masonic fraternity and the one perpetual emblem of his Masonic affiliation. This badge, the “essential” apron of an Entered Apprentice, will figure predominately throughout his career in Masonry from the first lesson in the Northeast corner of the lodge room until both his Masonic pursuit and life’s span is ended, and he is duly called from labor.

The “Right of Investiture,” the ceremony of emblematically clothing the candidate, is neither original nor unique to Freemasonry. Use of the apron in the Hermetic ceremonies of ancient Egypt is evident. The apron was worn as a symbol of priestly power in the Levitanic economy. The Persian mysteries incorporated the white apron and, in the Hindustan, the investiture consisted of a scarf being tied around the candidate’s waist. Without question, the Operative Masons used the apron as an item of protective clothing.

The origin of the apron and its early development and character in Freemasonry is obscure. The leather apron of the operative mason found its way into Speculative Masonry along with other symbols of the Craft. Over time, it became an emblem and a badge, recognized as a symbol of antiquity and was presented to the new Mason as a paramount honor. There is not the slightest hint that operative masons used the apron as a teaching tool. Moreover, there is little evidence that there was much more than a tenuous allegorical inference involved in the presentation during the formative stages of Freemasonry in the early 18th century. As the Masonic ritual went through the development and evolutionary processes, the apron progressed to a place of prominence by the 1760’s that the Mason recognizes today.

It would seem that the symbolical wearing of aprons by Freemasons in imitation of operative masons would require little explanation, as the workman wore the apron as a protective covering. However, the modern Masonic apron is a white lambskin apron, which adds two specific qualities. First, the color white is a ritualistic development to represent purity and, second, the lambskin material is emblematical of innocence. No better explanation of the Masonic apron can be found than that provided in the Apron presentation to the new Mason. It is quoted here as presented in the *Monitor of the Lodge* published by the Masonic Grand Lodge of Texas.

My brother, in behalf of this Lodge, I now present to you this white Lambskin Apron. It may be, that in the coming years, upon your brow shall rest the laurel leaves of victory; it may be that, pendant from your breast, may hang jewels fit to grace the diadem of some Eastern potentate.

Aye! More than these, for light, added to coming light, may enable your ambitious feet to tread round after round of the ladder that leads to fame in our Mystic order; and even the purple of our fraternity may rest upon your honored shoulders; but never again, from mortal hands; never again, until your enfranchised spirit shall have passed upward and inward, through the pearly gates, can a greater honor be bestowed, or one more emblematical of purity and innocence, than that which has been conferred upon you tonight.

This Apron, the special gift of this Lodge, is yours to wear upon all proper occasions throughout an honorable life, and at your death, is to be placed upon the coffin that contains your lifeless remains and with them shall be laid beneath the silent clods of the valley.

May the pure and spotless surface of this Apron be an ever-present reminder of "that purity of heart and uprightness of conduct so essentially necessary," thus keeping pure your thoughts, and inspiring nobler deeds and greater achievements.

Then, when at last, your weary feet shall have come to the end of life's toilsome journey, and from your nerveless grasp, shall drop, forever, the working tools of life, may the record of your life and actions be as pure and spotless as this Apron now is; and when your soul, freed from earth, shall stand naked and alone before the Great White Throne, may it be your portion to hear from Him who sits thereon, the welcome plaudit: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

It is in this apron presentation the new Mason receives a wonderful and most profound lesson and gains an understanding of the symbolic importance of his Masonic Apron. In this presentation the Mason is told that whatever he does, wherever he goes, the apron should remind him of his Masonic obligations. He is told that the apron is not only important as a symbol of his Masonic membership, but it is also a symbolic reminder to follow the noblest pursuits in life.

The apron reminds the Mason to do his duty to God, his country, his neighbor and his family. Every time he puts the apron on, he should be reminded of his obligations to God and of that purity of character and behavior necessary for his proper relationship with God. The Masonic apron is symbolic of the Masonic teachings designed to make men better citizens and servants of God. Though Freemasons are not builders of great buildings, they are builders of men. As such, the Masonic apron is an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. May the Mason ever strive to fulfill the tenets of Freemasonry in heart, mind, and soul.

This article has been adapted from the research paper entitled "The Origin and Development of the Masonic Apron" by Plez A. Transou which appears in Vol. X of the Transactions of the Texas Lodge of Research.

CORN, WINE, AND OIL

Author Unknown

Short Talk Bulletin: August 1930

The wages which our ancient brethren received for their labors in the building of King Solomon's Temple are paid no more. In the lodge we use them as symbols, save in the dedication, constitution and consecration of a new lodge and in the laying of cornerstones when once again the fruit of the land, the brew of the grape and the essence of the olive are poured to launch a new unit of brotherhood into the fellowship of lodges; or to begin a new structure dedicated to the public use.

Corn, wine and oil have been associated together from the earliest times. In Deuteronomy the "nation of fierce countenance" which is to destroy the people "shall not leave thee either corn, wine or oil." In II Chronicles we read "the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine and oil." Nehemiah tells of "a great chamber where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine and the oil" and later "then brought all Judah the tithes of the corn, the new wine and the oil into the treasures." There are other references in the Great Light to these particular forms of taxes, money and tithes for religious purposes; wealth and refreshment. In ancient days the grapes in the vineyard and olives in the grove and the grain of the field were not only wealth but the measure of trade; so many skins of wine, so many cruses of oil, and so many bushels of corn were to them as are dollars and cents today. Thus our ancient brethren received wages in corn, wine and oil as a practical matter; they were paid for their labors in the coin of the realm.

The oil pressed from the olive was as important to the Jews in Palestine as butter and other fats are among occidentals. Because it was so necessary, and hence so valuable, it became an important part of sacrificial rites. There is no point in the sacrifice which is only a form. To be effective it must offer before the Altar something of value; something the giving of which will testify to the love and veneration in which the sacrificer holds the Most High. Oil was also used not only as a food but for lighting purposes; more within the house than in the open air, where torches were more effective. Oil was also an article of the bath; mixed with perfume it was used in the ceremonies of anointment, and in preparation for ceremonial appearances. The "Precious ointment upon the head, which ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garment;" as the quotation has it in our Entered Apprentice Degree, (and Nevada's Master Mason opening and closing) was doubtless made of olive oil, suitably mixed with such perfumes and spices as myrrh, cinnamon, galbanum and frankincense. Probably oil was also used as a surgical dressing; nomadic peoples, subject to injuries, could hardly avoid knowledge of the value of soothing oil. With so many uses for oil, its production naturally was stimulated. Not only was the production of the olive grove a matter of wealth, but the nourishing and processing of the oil gave employment to many. Oil was obtained from the olive both by pressing - probably by a stone wheel revolving in or on a larger stone, mill or mortar - and also by a gentle pounding. This hand process produced a finer quality of oil. "And thou shalt command the children of Israel that they bring pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always." (Exodus, 27-20.)

The corn of the Bible is not the corn we know today. In many, if not the majority of the uses of the word, a more understandable translation would be simply "grain." The principal grains of the Old Testament days were barley and wheat; corn represents not only both of these, but all the grains which the Jews cultivated. Our modern corn, cultivated and cross-bred was, of course,

unknown to the ancients, although it might be going too far to say they had no grain similar to the Indian maize from which our great corn crop has grown.

An ear of grain has been an emblem of plenty since the mists of antiquity which shroud the beginnings of mythology. Ceres, goddess of abundance, survives today in our cereals. The Greeks call her Demeter, a corruption of Gemeter, our mother earth. She wore a garland of grain and carried ears of grain in her hand. The Hebrew Shibboleth means both an ear of corn and a flood of water. Both are symbols of abundance, plenty and wealth. American Masonic use of a sheaf of wheat in place of an ear of wheat - or any other grain such as corn - seems rather without point or authority. As for the substitution occasionally heard, of "water ford" for "water fall," we can only blame the corrupting influence of time and the ignorance of those who have permitted it, since a water "Ford" signifies a paucity, the absence of water, while a water "Fall" carries out both the translation of the word and the meaning of the ear of corn - plenty.

Scarcely less important to our ancient brethren than their corn and oil, was the wine. Vineyards were highly esteemed both as wealth and as a comfort - the pleasant shade of the "vine and fig tree" was a part of ancient hospitality. Vineyards on mountain sides or hills were most carefully tended and protected against washing away by terraces and walls, as even today one may see the hillsides of the Rhine. Thorn hedges kept cattle from helping themselves to the grapes. The vineyardist frequently lived in a watch tower or hut on an elevation to keep sharp look-out that neither predatory man nor beast took his ripening wealth.

The feast of Booths, in the early fall, when the grapes were ripe, was a time of joy and happiness. "New Wine" - that is, the unfermented, just pressed-out juice of the grape - was drunk by all. Fermented wine was made by storing the juice of the grape in skins or bottles. Probably most of the early wine of Old Testament days was red, but later the white grape must have come into esteem - at least, it is the principal grape of production for that portion of the world today.

Corn, wine and oil were the wages paid our ancient brethren. They were the "Master's Wages" of the days of King Solomon. Masons of this day receive no material wages for their labors; the work done in a lodge is paid for only in the coin of the heart. But those wages are no less real. They may sprout as does the grain, strengthen as does the wine, nourish as does the oil. How much we receive and what we do with our wages depends entirely on our Masonic work. A brother obtains from his lodge and from his Order only what he puts into it. Our ancient brethren were paid for their physical labors. Whether their wages were paid for work performed upon the mountain and in the quarries, or whether they received corn, wine and oil because they labored in the fields or vineyards, it was true then, and it is true now, that only "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." To receive the equivalent of corn, wine and oil, a brother must labor. He must till the fields of his own heart or build the temple of his own "house not made with hands. "He must labor to his neighbor or carry stones for his brother's temple.

If he stands, waits, watches and wonders he will not be able to ascend into the Middle Chamber where our ancient brethren received their wages. If he works for the joy of working, does his part in his lodge work, takes his place among the laborers of Freemasonry, he will receive corn, wine and oil in measures pressed down and running over, and know a Fraternal Joy as substantial in fact as it is ethereal in quality; as real in his heart as it is intangible to the profane of the world.

THE HIRAMIC LEGEND

By George S. Draffen

Short Talk Bulletin: October 1989

During the ceremony of the Third Degree, which is so well named the Sublime Degree, you can hardly fail to have been deeply impressed by the tragedy of Hiram Abiff. To understand it, and to appreciate to the full its profound richness of meaning, is something that will remain with you as long as you live.

It is first of all important to understand that the drama of Hiram Abiff is a ritualistic drama. We all know what a drama is. It is a conflict between a man and other men or between a man and other forces, resulting in a crisis in which his fate or fortune lies at stake. The crisis, or problem, is followed by a solution or resolution. If it turns out in favor of the man the drama is a comedy, in the true and original meaning of that word as a happy ending. If it turns against him, and as a result he becomes a victim or a sufferer, it means that the drama is a tragedy. By drama in either sense I do not refer to plays as they are acted on the stage, which are not dramas at all, but representations of dramas. I refer to drama as it occurs in our own lives, to every one of us, and in our daily experience. The only reason for our interest in reading or seeing stage plays is because they mirror the drama in which in real life we ourselves are the actors.

But the ceremony of Hiram Abiff is not only a drama, it is a ritualistic drama, and the major emphasis should be placed on the word "ritualistic." What is a ritual? It is a set of fixed ceremonies which address themselves to the human spirit solely through the imagination. A play in the theatre may be built round some historical figure or some historical event, as in the case of Shakespeare's plays about the English kings and about Macbeth or Hamlet. And if the figures and events are not actually historical, they are supposed to be, so that the facts of time, place and individual identity are of some importance to it.

A ritualistic drama, on the other hand, does not pay any heed to historical individuals, times or places. It moves wholly in the realms of the spirit, where time, space and particular individuals are ignored. The clash of forces, and crises and fates of the human spirit alone enter into it, and they hold true of all men, everywhere, regardless of who they are, or where and when they are.

Since the drama of Hiram Abiff is ritualistic, it is a mistake to accept it as history. There was a Hiram Abiff in history, but our Third Degree is not interested in him. Its sole concern is with a Hiram Abiff who is a symbol of the human soul, that is, its own Hiram Abiff. If, therefore, you have been troubled with the thought that some of the events of this drama could not possibly have ever happened you can cease to be troubled. It is not meant that they ever happened in ancient history, but that they are symbols of what is happening in the life of every man.

For the same reason it is an inexcusable blunder to treat it as a mere mock tragedy. Savage peoples employ initiation ceremonies as an ordeal to test the nerve and courage of their young men, but Freemasonry is not savage. Boys in school often employ ragging, which is horseplay caricature of the savage ceremonial ordeals, but Freemasonry is not juvenile. The exemplification of our ritualistic drama is sincere, solemn, and earnest. He who takes it trivially betrays a shallowness of soul which makes him unfit ever to become a Mason.

Hiram Abiff is the acted symbol of the human soul, yours, mine, any man's. The work he was engaged to supervise is the symbol of the work you and I have in the supervision, organization, and direction of our lives from birth to death. The enemies he met are none other than the symbols of those lusts and passions which in our own breasts, or in the breasts of others, make war on our characters and our lives. His fate is the same fate that befalls every man who becomes a victim to those enemies, to be interrupted in one's work, to be made outcast from the lordship (or mastership) over one's own self, and, at the end, to become buried under all manner of rubbish--which means defeat, disgrace, misery and scorn.

The manner in which he was raised from that dead level to that living perpendicular again is the same manner by which any man, if it happens at all, rises from self-defeat to self-mastery. And the Sovereign Great Architect, by the power of whose word Hiram Abiff was raised, is that same God in whose arms we ourselves forever lie, and whose mighty help we also need to raise us out of the graves of defeat, or evil, and death itself.

Did you wonder, while taking part in that drama, why you were personally made to participate in it? Why you were not permitted to sit as a spectator? You were made to participate in order to impress upon you that it was your drama, not another's, there being exemplified. No man can be a mere spectator of that drama, because it takes place in his own soul. Likewise because it was intended that your participation should itself be an experience to prepare you for becoming a Master Mason, by teaching you the secret of a Master Mason, which is, that the soul must rise above its own internal enemies if ever a man is to be a Mason in reality as well as in name. The reality of being a Master mason is nothing other than to be the Master of one's self.

Did you wonder why it was that the three enemies of Hiram Abiff came from his own circle and not from outside? It is because the enemies to be feared by the soul are always from within, and are nothing other than its own ignorance, lust, passions, and sins. As the Volume of Sacred Law reminds us, it is not that which has power to kill the body that we need most to shun, but that which has power to destroy the spirit.

Did you wonder why it was that, after Hiram Abiff was slain, there was so much confusion in the Temple? It was because the Temple is the symbol of a man's character, and therefore breaks and falls when the soul, its architect, is rendered helpless. Because the Craftsmen are symbols of our powers and faculties and they fall into anarchy when not directed and commanded by the will at the center of our being.

And did you wonder why the lodge appeared to neglect to explain this ritualistic drama to you at the end of the degree? It was because it is impossible for one man to explain the tragedy of Hiram Abiff to another. Each must learn it for himself; and the most we can obtain from others is just such hints and scattered suggestions as these I have given you. Print the story of Hiram Abiff indelibly upon your mind; ponder upon it; when you yourself are at grips with your enemies recall it and act accordingly to the light you find in it. By so doing you will find that your inner self will give in the form of first-hand experience that which the drama gave you in the form of ritual. You will be wiser and stronger for having the guidance and the light the drama can give you.

ASHLARS - ROUGH, SMOOTH - STORY OF A STONE

By J. Fairbairn Smith

Short Talk Bulletin: May 1979

An eminent sculptor was once asked: "How do you carve such beautiful statues?" He replied, "It is the simplest thing in the world. I take a hammer and chisel and from a massive, shapeless rock, I knock off all the stone I do not want, and there is the statue. It was there all the time."

In every Masonic Lodge room there is, or should be, the Rough Ashlar and the Perfect Ashlar. These two and the Trestle Board constitute our Movable Jewels. What is their significance? What do they have to do with Masonry?

In our monitorial work we are taught that the Rough Ashlar "is a stone as taken from the quarry in its rude and natural state" and that the Perfect Ashlar "is a stone made ready by the hands of the workman, to be adjusted by the working tools of the Fellow Craft." The Rough Ashlar was not a stone that was merely picked up somewhere. It was a stone that has been selected. Some work was done upon it. It was apparently a good stone. It was a stone that showed good prospects of being capable of being made into a Perfect Ashlar. If it had not been a good stone, it would never have been cut out from the quarry.

So it is with our prospective member. He cannot be merely picked up somewhere. He must be selected. Before he is ready to be initiated some work must be done upon him. He must stand certain basic tests. He must be apparently of good material. He must be a man who shows good prospects of being capable of being made into a good Mason. If he had not been a good man, he should never have been proposed for membership.

In changing a Rough Ashlar into a Perfect Ashlar, the workman takes away and never adds to. He chips and chips. He cuts away the rough edges. He removes the visible flaws, he does not create by chemical means or otherwise, a new material. He takes that which is already there and develops it into the Perfect Ashlar.

The stone from which the Venus de Milo was carved by an unknown sculptor of ancient times, lay since the beginning of time in the rocks of the Island Milo. A common, unknown workman may have cut a huge piece of marble from the quarry. But it took a master artisan to carve out the beautiful statue. It took a good piece of marble and a skilled artist to produce the Venus de Milo.

Not many operators in Masonry can make a Perfect Ashlar. So there are not many perfect Masons in our Lodges. In our Ritualistic and other work, we can take away much of the roughness, remove the sharp points and obliterate the visible defects. We can produce as good a Mason as there is within our power to produce. But the essential thing is to have a good material upon which to work.

This statement is applicable to all mankind, but to us as Symbolic Masons, it is pregnant with meaning, for, was not each one, at the commencement of his Masonic career, placed in the Northeast corner as an example stone, in the hope that the stone so placed would, in the fullness of time, be wrought into a thing of beauty acceptable to the builder?

What does the poet say of the stone?

Isn't it strange that Princes and Kings
And clowns that caper in sawdust rings,
And common folks like you and me
Are builders for eternity?
Each is given a kit of tools,
A shapeless mass and a book of rules:
And each must make, ere life is flown;
A stumbling block or a stepping stone.

These are very true words. The kit of tools are those talents with which God has blessed us to enable us to fulfill our mission in life. We are told in the Volume of the Sacred Law that one man received five talents, another, two talents, and yet another, only one talent, so that our duty is for each to discharge his allotted task to the best of his ability, and help those who have not been so well blessed as himself. Thus each will be assisted in carving out the "Grand Design" of being happy and communicating happiness and thereby of being more "extensively serviceable to his fellow creatures."

The shapeless mass is a man's character, and each one of us is his own Architect, Builder and Material, and like our predecessors, the Operative Masons, we each must show our craftsmanship in working out a perfect "Ashlar" fit to be tried by the square of his own conscience.

The book of rules is the V.S.L. "That great light that will guide us to all truth, direct our steps in the path of happiness, and thus, point out the whole duty of man."

Let us pause for a moment and earnestly ask ourselves, which are we making--stumbling block or a stepping stone? If a man's life is such that he cannot "join in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness to others," then he is a stumbling block, not only to himself, but to all those with whom he is associated. If that man is a Freemason he should study the ritual and discover the inner meaning, so that he can learn to perfect his stone.

Let us trace from whence this perfect stone comes. An ancient charge provides that a mould stone shall be given to a visiting Operative Mason to enable him to demonstrate his craftsmanship. The stones were selected individual stones from the quarries to suit the requirement of the material building. As Speculative Masons, we obtain our mould stones from the quarries of life. Thus, when we receive an application for admission to our Lodge it is our duty to carefully scrutinize all the credentials of the applicant from every angle, so that only approved material is admitted to the Craft.

Freemasonry can and does improve good material, but it cannot make bad material good. As with the Operative Mason, poor material would have endangered the material structure. So with us as Speculative Masons, a faulty Ashlar will endanger the Spiritual temple we are endeavoring to build.

Having found, by the strictest inquiry, that the applicant, or mould stone, is suitable, we have, by those inquiries, knocked off some of the irregularities which surrounded him, and after his initiation, he is represented as the "rough Ashlar," that is, the stone is no longer the mould stone,

but it is approximately a cube which still requires a considerable amount of "dressing" before the "perfect Ashlar" which is within it can be brought to light, and the candidate is given him to "knock off rough knobs and evanescence," of his character.

Later on he finds that, although the common gavel and chisel are suitable for reducing the roughness they are not capable of achieving perfection. As a Craftsman he receives another set of working tools, one of which is essential to perfection, namely, the square, and here he learns that it is only by continual grinding and many applications of the square that the stone can be brought to a true die, or cube.

In his capacity as a Craftsman and as a man of the world, he is continually coming into contact with his fellows and he learns to control his passions and to recognize the rights of others, with the result that the stone he is working upon, namely, his character, is gradually taking shape as a perfect Ashlar.

Later, he is called upon to hand his stone over to the Builder, who cuts a beveled hole at the top, so that the stone can be attached to a lewis and be hoisted up ready to be placed on the base assigned to it by the Builder. Thus, he is reminded that the rope, the lewis, and the crane represent the all sustaining power of God, and that if he has discharged his duty faithfully and in accordance with the precepts laid down in the V.S.L., he may rest assured that when his final summons comes he will find that the great Builder will have prepared a place for him in that "Great Spiritual Temple not made with hands eternal in the Heavens."

Finally, let us consider this "perfect Ashlar" from a geometric point of view. Looking at the perfect "Ashlar," as it stands in the Lodge we notice that it has six equal and exactly similar sides, and that no matter how it is placed down, on the level, it must stand on one of its faces and present a similar face to the observer, from any point of view. It is the only geometrical body which requires no support from its fellows, but when placed in line with similar cubes, demands its own space, and lines up with the others on top, bottom and sides.

THE SQUARE

Author Unknown

Short Talk Bulletin: April 1924

The Holy Bible lies open upon the Altar of Masonry, and upon the Bible lie the Square and Compasses. They are the three Great Lights of the Lodge, at once its Divine warrant and its chief working tools. They are symbols of Revelation, Righteousness and Redemption, Teaching us that by walking in the light of Truth, and obeying the Law of Right, the Divine in man wins victory over the earthly. How to live is the one important matter, and he will seek far without finding a wiser way than that shown us by the Great Lights of the Lodge.

The Square and Compasses are the oldest, the simplest and the most universal symbols of Masonry. All the world over, whether as a sign on a building, or a badge worn by a Brother, even the profane know them to be emblems of our ancient Craft. Some years ago, when a business firm tried to adopt the Square and Compasses as a Trade- Mark, the Patent Office refused permission, on the ground, as the decision said, that "There can be no doubt that this device, so commonly worn and employed by Masons, universally recognized as existing; whether comprehended by all or not, is not material to this issue." They belong to us, alike by the associations of history and the tongue of common report.

Nearly everywhere in our Ritual, as in the public mind, the Square and Compasses are seen together. If not interlocked, they are seldom far apart, and the one suggests the other. And that is as it should be, because the things they symbolize are interwoven. In the old days when the earth was thought to be flat and square, the Square was an emblem of the earth, and later, of the earthly element in man.

As the sky is an arc or a circle, the implement which describes a Circle became the symbol of the heavenly, or sky spirit in man. Thus the tools of the builder became the emblems of the thoughts of the thinker; and nothing in Masonry is more impressive than the slow elevation of the compasses above the Square in the progress of the Degrees. The whole meaning and task of life is there, for such as have eyes to see.

Let us separate the Square from the Compasses and study it alone, the better to see its further meaning and use. There is no need to say that the Square we have in mind is not a Cube, which has four equal sides and angles, deemed by the Greeks a figure of perfection. Nor is it the square of the carpenter, one leg of which is longer than the other, with inches marked for measuring. It is a small, plain Square, unmarked and with legs of equal length, a simple try-square used for testing the accuracy of angles, and the precision with which stones are cut. Since the try-square was used to prove that angles were right, it naturally became an emblem of accuracy, integrity and rightness. As stones are cut to fit into a building, so our acts and thoughts are built together into a structure of Character, badly or firmly, and must be tested by a moral standard of which the simple try-square is a symbol.

So, among Speculative Masons, the tiny try-square has always been a symbol of morality, of the basic rightness which must be the test of every act and the foundation of character and society. From the beginning of the revival in 1717 this was made plain in the teaching of Masonry, by the fact that the Holy Bible was placed upon the Altar, along with the Square and Compasses. In one

of the earliest catechisms of the Craft, dated 1725, the question is asked: "How many make a Lodge?" The answer is specific and unmistakable: "God and the Square, with five or seven right and perfect Masons." God and the Square, Religion and Morality, must be present in every Lodge as its ruling Lights, or it fails of being a just and truly Constituted Lodge. In all lands, in all rites where Masonry is true to itself, the Square is a symbol of righteousness, and is applied in the light of faith in God.

God and the Square - it is necessary to keep the two together in our day, because the tendency of the times is to separate them. The idea in vogue today is that morality is enough, and that faith in God - if there be a God - may or may not be important. Some very able men of the Craft insist that we make the teaching of Masonry too religious. Whereas, as all history shows, if faith in God grows dim morality becomes a mere custom, if not a cobweb, to be thrown off lightly. It is not rooted in reality, and so lacks authority and sanction. Such an idea, such a spirit - so wide-spread in our time, and finding so many able and plausible advocates - strikes at the foundation, not only of Masonry, but of all ordered and advancing social life. Once men come to think that morality is a human invention, and not a part of the order of the world, and the moral law will lose both its meaning and its power.

Far wiser was the old book entitled "All in All and the Same Forever," by John Davies, and dated 1607, though written by a non-Mason, when it read reality and nature of God in this manner: "Yet I this form of formless deity drew by the Square and Compasses of our Creed."

For, inevitable, a society without standards will be a society without stability, and it will one day go down. Not only nations, but whole civilizations have perished in the past, for lack of righteousness. History speaks plainly in this matter, and we dare not disregard it. Hence the importance attached to the Square of Virtue, and the reason why Masons call it the great symbol of their Craft. It is a symbol of that moral law upon which human life must rest if it is to stand. A man may build a house in any way he likes, but if he expects it to stand and be his home, he must adjust his structure to the laws and forces that rule in the material realm. Just so, unless we live in obedience to the moral laws which God has written in the order of things, our lives will fall and end in a wreck. When a young man forgets the simple Law of the Square, it does not need a prophet to foresee what the result will be. It is a problem in geometry.

Such has been the meaning of the Square as far back as we can go. Long before our era we find the Square teaching the same lesson which it teaches us today. In one of the old books of China, called "The Great Learning," which has been dated in the fifth century before Christ, we read that a man should not do unto others what he would not have them do unto him; and the writers adds, "This is called the principle of acting on the Square." There it is, recorded long, long ago. The greatest philosopher has found nothing more profound, and the oldest man in his ripe wisdom has learned nothing more true. Even Jesus only altered it from the negative to the positive form in his "Golden Rule." So, everywhere, in our Craft and outside, the Square has taught its simple truth which does not grow old. The Deputy Provincial Grand Master of North and East Yorkshire recovered a very curious relic, in the form of an old brass Square found under the foundation of an ancient bridge near Limerick in 1830. On it was inscribed the date, 1517, and the following words: "Strive to live with love and care Upon the Level, by the Square."

How simple and beautiful it is, revealing the oldest wisdom man has learned and the very genius of our Craft. In fact and truth, the Square Rules the Mason as well as the Lodge in which he labors. As soon as he enters a Lodge, the candidate walks the square steps around the Square pavement of a rectangular Lodge. All during the ceremony his attitude keeps him in mind of the same symbol, as if to fashion his life after its form. When he is brought to light, he beholds the Square upon the Altar, and at the same time sees that it is worn by the Master of the Lodge, as the emblem of his office. In the North-East Corner he is shown the perfect Ashlar, and told that it is the type of a finished Mason, who must be Square-man in thought and conduct, in word and act. With every art of emphasis the Ritual writes this lesson in our hearts, and if we forget this first truth the Lost Word will remain forever lost.

For Masonry is not simply a Ritual; it is a way of living. It offers us a plan, a method, a faith by which we may build our days and years into a character so strong and true that nothing, not even death, can destroy it. Each of us has in his own heart a little try-square called Conscience, by which to test each thought and deed and word, whether it be true or false. By as much as a man honestly applies that test in his own heart, and in his relations with his fellows, by so much will his life be happy, stable, and true. Long ago the question was asked and answered: "Lord, who shall abide in thy Tabernacle? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." It is the first obligation of a Mason to be on the Square, in all his duties and dealings with his fellow men, and if he fails there he cannot win anywhere. Let one of our poets sum it all up:

It matters not whate'er your lot
Or what your task may be,
One duty there remains for you
One duty stands for me.

Be you a doctor skilled and wise,
Or do your work for wage,
A laborer upon the street,
An artist on the stage;

Our glory still awaits for you,
One honor that is fair,
To have men say as you pass by:
"That fellow's on the Square."

Ah, here's a phrase that stands for much
'Tis good old English too,
It means that men have confidence
In everything you do.

It means that what you have you've earned,
And that you've done your best,
And when you go to sleep at night
Untroubled you may rest.

It means that conscience is your guide,
And honor is your care;
There is no greater praise than this:
“That fellow’s on the Square.”

And when I die I would not wish
A lengthy epitaph;
I do not wish a headstone large,
Carved with fulsome chaff,

Pick out no single deed of mine,
If such a deed there be,
To ‘grave upon my monument,
For those who come to see,

Just this one phrase of all I choose,
To show my life was fair:
Here sleepeth now a fellow who
Was always on the Square.”

THE COMPASSES

Author Unknown

Short Talk Bulletin: May 1924

In our study of the Square we saw that it is nearly always linked with the Compasses, and these old emblems, joined with the Holy Bible, are the Great Lights of the Craft. If the Lodge is an "Oblong Square" and built upon the Square (as the earth was thought to be in olden time), over it arches the Sky, which is a circle. Thus Earth and Heaven are brought together in the Lodge - the earth where man goes forth to his labor, and the heaven to which he aspires. In other words, the light of Revelation and the Law of Nature are like the two points of the Compasses within which our life is set under a canopy of Sun and Stars.

No symbolism can be more simple, more profound, more universal, and it becomes more wonderful the longer one ponders it. Indeed, if Masonry is in any sense a religion, it is Universe Religion, in which all men can unite. Its principles are as wide as the world, as high as the sky. Nature and revelation blend in its teaching; its morality is rooted in the order of the world, and its roof is the blue vault above. The Lodge, as we are apt to forget, is always open to the sky, whence come those influences which exalt and ennoble the life of man. Symbolically, at least, it has no rafters but the arching heavens to which, as sparks ascending seek the sun, our life and labor tend. Of the heavenly side of Masonry the Compasses are the Symbol, and they are perhaps the most spiritual of our working tools.

As has been said, the Square and the Compasses are nearly always together, and that is true as far back as we can go. In the sixth book of the philosophy on Mencius, in China, we find these words: "A Master Mason, in teaching Apprentices, makes use of the Compass and the Square. Ye who are engaged in the pursuit of wisdom must also make use of the Compass and the Square. Note the order of the words: the Compass has first place, as it should have to a Master Mason. In the oldest classic of China, "The Book of History," dating back two thousand years before our era, we find the Compasses employed without the Square: "Ye Officers of the Government, apply the Compasses." Even in that far off time these symbols had the same meaning they have for us today, and they seem to have been interpreted in the same way.

While in the order of the Lodge the Square is first, in point of truth it is not the first in order. The Square rests upon the Compasses before the Compasses rest upon the Square. That is to say, just as a perfect square is a figure that can be drawn only within a circle or about a circle, so the earthly life of man moves and is built within the circle of Divine life and law and love which surrounds, sustains, and explains it. In the Ritual of the Lodge we see man, hoodwinked by the senses, slowly groping his way out of darkness, seeking the light of morality and reason. But he does so by the aid of inspiration from above, else he would live untroubled by a spark. Some deep need, some dim desire brought him to the door of the Lodge, in quest of a better life and a clearer vision. Vague gleams, impulses, intimations reached him in the night of Nature, and he set forth and finding a friendly hand to help knock at the door of the House of Light.

As an Apprentice a man is, symbolically, in a crude, natural state, his divine life covered and ruled by his earthly nature. As a Fellowcraft he has made one step toward liberty and light and the nobler elements in him are struggling to rise above and control his lower, lesser nature. In the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason - far more sublime than we yet realize - by human love, by the discipline

of tragedy, and still more by the Divine help the divine in him has subjugated the earthly, and he stands forth strong, free, and fearless, ready to raise stone upon stone until naught is wanting. If we examine with care the relative positions of the Square and Compasses as he advanced through the Degrees, we learn a parable and a prophecy of what the Compasses mean in the life of a Mason.

Here too, we learn what the old philosopher of China meant when he urged Officers of the Government to “apply the Compasses, since only men who have mastered themselves can really lead or rule others. Let us now study the Compasses apart from the Square, and try to discover what they have to teach us. There is no more practical lesson in Masonry and it behooves us to learn it and lay it to heart. As the Light of the Holy Bible reveals our relation and duty to God, and the Square instructs us in our duties to our Brother and neighbor, so the Compasses teach us the obligation which we owe ourselves. What that obligation is needs to be made plain; it is the primary, imperative, everyday duty of circumscribing his passions, and keeping his desires within due bounds. As Most Excellent King Solomon said long ago: “Better is he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.”

In short, it is the old triad, without which character loses its symmetry, and life may easily end in chaos and confusion. It has been put in many ways, but never better than in the three great words; self-knowledge, self-reverence, self-control; and we cannot lose any one of the three and keep the other two. To know ourselves, our strength, our weakness, our limitations, is the first principle of wisdom, and a security against many a pitfall and blunder. Lacking such knowledge, or disregarding it, a man goes too far, loses control of himself, and by that very fact loses, in some measure, the self-respect which is the corner stone of a character. If he loses respect for himself, he does not long keep his respect for others, and goes down the road to destruction, like a star out of orbit, or a car into the ditch.

The old Greeks put the same truth into a trinity of maximums: “Know thyself; in nothing too much; think as a mortal; and it made them masters of the art of life and the life of art. Hence their wise Doctrine of the Limit, as a basic idea both of life and of thought, and their worship of the God of bounds, of which the Compasses are a symbol. It is the wonder of our human life that we belong to the limited and to the unlimited. Hemmed in, hedged about, restricted, we long for a liberty without rule or limit. Yet limitless liberty is anarchy and slavery. As in the great word of Burke, “It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that a man of intemperate passions cannot be free; his passions forge their fetters.” Liberty rests upon law. The wise man is he who takes full account of both, who knows how, at all points, to qualify the one by the other, as the Compasses, if he uses them aright, will teach him how to do.

Much of our life is ruled for us whether we will or not. The laws of nature throw about us their restraining bands, and there is no place where their wit does not run. The laws of the land make us aware that our liberty is limited by the equal rights and liberties of others. Our neighbors, too, if we fail to act toward him squarely may be trusted to look after his own rights. Custom, habit, and the pressure of public opinion are impalpable forces which we dare not altogether defy. These are so many roads from which our passions and appetites stray at our peril. But there are other regions of life where personality has free play, and they are the places where most of our joy and sorrow lie. It is in the realm of desire, emotion, motive, in the inner life where we are freest, and most alone, that we need a wise and faithful use of the Compasses.

How to use the Compasses is one of the finest of all arts, asking for the highest skill of a Master Mason. If he is properly instructed, he will rest one point in the innermost center of his being, and with the other draw a circle beyond which he will not go, until he is ready and able to go farther. Against the littleness of his knowledge he will set the depth of his desire to know, against the brevity of his earthly life the reach of his spiritual hope. Within a wise limit he will live and labor and grow, and when he reaches the outer rim of the circle he will draw another, and attain to a full-orbed life, balance, beautiful, and finely poised. No wise man dare forget the maxim "In nothing too much," for there are situations where a word too much, a step too far, means disaster. If he has a quick tongue, a hot temper, a dark mood, he will apply the Compasses, shut his weakness within the circle of his strength, and control it.

Strangely enough, even a virtue, if unrestrained and left to itself, may actually become a vice. Praise, if pushed too far, becomes flattery. Love often ends in a soft sentimentalism, flabby and foolish. Faith, if carried to the extreme by the will to believe, ends in over-belief and superstition. It is the Compasses that help us to keep our balance, in obedience to the other Greek maxim: "Think as a mortal" - that is, remember the limits of human thought. An old mystic said that God is a circle whose center is everywhere, and its circumference nowhere. But such an idea is all a blur. Our minds can neither grasp nor hold it. Even in our thought about God we must draw a circle enclosing so much of His Nature as we can grasp and realize, enlarging the circle as our experience and thought and vision expand. Many a man loses all truth in his impatient effort to reach final truth. It is the man who fancies that he has found the only truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and who seeks to impose his dogma upon others, who becomes the bigot, the fanatic, the persecutor. Here, too, we must apply the Compasses, if we would have our faith fulfill itself in fellowship. Now we know in part - a small part, it may be, but it is real as far as it goes - though it be as one who sees in a glass darkly. The promise is that if we are worthy and well qualified, we shall see God face to face and know ever as we are known. But God is so great, so far beyond my mind and yours, that if we are to know him truly, we must know Him together, in fellowship and fraternity. And so the Poet-Mason was right when he wrote:

He drew a circle that shut me out,
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout;
But love and I had the wit to win,
We drew a circle that took him in.

THE SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

By Michael L. Wiggins
Grand Lodge of Texas: September 2002

During the Fellowcraft Degree, the candidate is symbolically led up a winding stairway that consists of three, five, and seven steps. In doing so, he is introduced to the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences. It is interesting to note that there is little explanation of this portion of the Fellowcraft Degree and no attempt to bring meaning to these subjects for the candidate. If every part of the Masonic ritual has meaning for the candidate, then one must examine this brief portion of the Fellowcraft Degree to determine its value for the Mason.

The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences were the curriculum known to ancient Greece and Rome and to Western Europe of medieval times. During their cultural ascent, the Greeks came to see learning as being composed of seven arts: grammar, logic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy. This curriculum was adopted by the Romans and divided into two parts called the trivium and the quadrivium. The word trivium simply means three ways and quadrivium, four ways. Thus the trivium was composed of what the Romans considered the basic of the seven arts: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The quadrivium was composed of the other four arts.

Aristotle believed the liberal arts were those subjects that were suitable for learning by a freeman. He contended that a freeman should not seek practical skills but should strive for moral and intellectual excellence, the goal being theoretical and philosophical knowledge. He further believed if a man was capable of pure thought, he was capable of leadership of those who merely possessed the practical skills.

The educational concepts of these cultures withstood the “dark ages” which enveloped Europe from roughly the Sixth Century until the Eleventh Century. During this period, Western European culture was virtually blotted out and what little education that remained was confined to the church. The reign of Charlemagne during the Ninth Century began to see an increase in education, which was extended to the palaces and cathedrals. While still ecclesiastical in organization, the system of education fanned the flame of intellectual curiosity. By the Eleventh Century, Europe had begun to emerge from its darkness into a degree of political and social stability. With this emergence came a renewal of the spirit of learning, which was nurtured for nearly four hundred years until it would burst forth during the Renaissance. Education during these centuries consisted of grammar, logic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, music, and astronomy: the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences.

With this background, one now turns to the seven liberal arts to gain an insight into their nature.

Grammar: One must remember that instruction was in Latin during this early period; hence the grammar referred to was Latin grammar. Grammar was not the tedious business of determining the parts of speech, but instead was the art of writing. Cassiodorus defined grammar as the study of great poetry and oratory that would enable one to write with correctness and elegance. Grammar is correct writing and skillful speaking.

Logic: Logic in general is the science and art of right thinking. Unlike physical or social science or philosophy, it is not concerned with the reality about which we are thinking, but only with the

operations of thinking itself. Great value was placed upon the ability to carry on a conversation or argue in a wholly rational manner with the thoughts carefully linked together.

Rhetoric: Rhetoric is defined as the art of using language in such a way as to make the desired impression upon the hearer or reader. Generally speaking, rhetoric covered the whole subject of composition, both oral and written. In rhetoric we see the interplay of both grammar and logic.

Arithmetic: Arithmetic was originally the science or theory of numbers. Someone has said that the teaching of arithmetic during medieval times consisted of simple calculations and complex superstitions. This seems too simple a view, although perhaps not a wholly unreasonable one. It seems likely that the arithmetic of the quadrivium probably consisted of four elements. These would have been numeration, the naming of numbers; notation, the writing and reading of numbers; counting, the act of numbering; and computation, the manipulation of numbers. For all this simplicity, years later the mathematician Karl Gauss was able to refer to arithmetic as the “queen of mathematics.”

Geometry: In this day of calculators and computers, mathematics holds little of mystery or romance for any except the most dedicated mathematician. As a result it is difficult for one to relate to Plato’s statement “geometry will draw the soul towards truth, and create the spirit of philosophy.” To understand this, one must remember that the Greeks pursued all mathematics out of intellectual curiosity and a zest for pure thought. They were concerned with teaching men to reason abstractly and preparing them to contemplate the ideal and the beautiful. Their complete absorption with geometry led them to convert mathematical ideas into geometrical ones. Their preference for idealizations and abstractions expressed itself in a mathematical spirit whose ultimate end was philosophy. It is essentially this Greek idealization of geometry that has carried over into Masonry.

Astronomy: Astronomy today is one of the exact sciences and it has long since divested itself of the metaphysics and mysticism which once characterized its studies. In the minds of all peoples, astronomy is the science of the heavens and has been closely connected with religious tradition. It was long thought that in the heavens would be found the supernatural causes of observed phenomena as well as the answers to the future. Masonry has idealized astronomy as it has geometry. The monitorial lecture tells us that, “Astronomy is that divine art, by which we are taught to read the wisdom, strength, and beauty of the Almighty Creator in those sacred pages, the celestial hemisphere.” For Masonry, the value of astronomy is metaphysical rather than physical as indicated by the final sentence of the lecture. “While we are employed in the study of this science, we must perceive unparalleled instances of wisdom and goodness, and through the whole creation, trace the glorious Author by His works.”

Music: Somewhere back in time, man discovered that the sounds from his stringed instrument depended upon their lengths. He further found that putting multiple strings together allowed him to produce a pleasing harmony. His inquiring mind led him to discover that the ratio of the lengths of the strings were simple whole numbers. So from the time of Pythagoras the study of music was regarded as mathematical in nature. It seems strange to think of music as mathematical until one considers the words of the philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Leibniz, “Music is the

pleasure the human soul experiences from counting without being aware that it is counting.” It was this essentially mathematical character of music that leads to its being included in the quadrivium.

The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, represented by the seven steps in the Fellowcraft Degree, symbolize for the Mason an idealization of education, that intellectual and cultural discipline necessary for man in his quest to obtain perfection and understand his Maker. From a symbolic standpoint, these seven subjects must be considered a single symbol composed of seven parts of equal dignity. While geometry is exalted by Masonry, it is dealt with separately within the Fellowcraft Degree in another context and should not be provided additional significance in the context of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences.

This seven-part symbol represents education and all its attendant values, not the precise content of education. When one examines each of the parts of this symbol, one discerns not only the nature and content of each part, but also an idealized purpose of education as well. The view provided by the symbol coincides with Plato’s view of education, that education tends to lift the mind above the mundane and routine considerations and enables it to comprehend the final aim of philosophy, an understanding of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, God. This is the ultimate essence of Freemasonry that man should continually strive to develop his understanding of his own spiritual being and the essence of God. So Masonry’s Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences together symbolize the conscious effort to control the mind and spirit so that reason prevails and man will always strive to obtain a perfect relationship with God.

WHERE PARALLEL LINES INTERSECT

By Rev. Jan L. Baderstadt
MasonicWorld.com Website: Undated

“[Our ancient brethren dedicated their lodges to King Solomon, because he was our first Most Excellent Grand Master.] But in modern times they are dedicated to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, who were eminent patrons of Masonry; and since their time there is represented in every regular and well governed Lodge a certain Point within a circle; the Point representing an individual Brother; the Circle representing the boundary which he is never to suffer his passions, prejudices or interests, to betray him on any occasion. This Circle is embroidered by two perpendicular parallel lines, representing St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, who are perfect parallels in Christianity as well as Masonry. Upon the vertex rests the book of Holy Scriptures, which points out the whole duty of man. In going round this Circle, we necessarily touch upon these two lines, as well as upon the Holy Scriptures; and while a Mason keeps himself thus circumscribed it is impossible that he should materially err.” (Michigan Monitor)

As a new entered apprentice, I stood and looked at that circle with the two parallel lines, and at my proficiency examination, recited it with perfection. But what does this really mean to me, a Man and a Mason? And why the Sts. John? Indeed, why? They were unique characters of Christianity who were strange in their own right.

At first glance in the Scriptures, they seem like strange people to hold up as examples. John the Baptist's diet consisted of wild honey and locusts. Honey certainly is appealing, but the locust! A study of Middle Eastern customs indicate that they could be eaten fried, boiled, dried or raw. Certainly not a person you'd want to invite to your lodge's next potluck. He dressed in camel hair clothing and his hair and beard had a wild look about it. And he didn't have a lot of tact, he told you the truth straight to your face. He called the Pharisees a "brood of vipers" and was fond of telling every-one to repent. In our "politically correct" era, he would certainly not be riding high in the polls.

St. John the Evangelist was also a different sort. He was a rich kid (Scripture tells us that his father owned at least one fishing boat on the Galilee and they had servants) and at the beginning of the Gospel of John he was looking to find himself. He first attached himself to John the Baptist until called by Christ. He was hot tempered, so much so that Jesus called John and his brother James "boanerges" meaning "sons of thunder." He lived up to that name when the villagers in a small town in Samaria refused to welcome Jesus and the disciples, so he asked Jesus if he (John) could rain fire and brimstone down upon them (Luke 9:51-55). Fortunately for the village, Jesus rebuked him. John was also self-seeking, asking with his brother James for thrones on the right and left of Christ when Jesus set up his early kingdom, thus placing himself above the other disciples.

But when one goes beyond their faults, the Sts. John have some strong qualities that every Mason should exhibit. When looking at John the Baptist, one must look at him through an Eastern light. John was a Nazirite from birth, literally set aside for service to God. He let his hair and beard grow wild, because like Sampson, he could not cut his hair, which was forbidden by Mosaic Law. His appearance brought to mind, to the people who heard him, the stories of Elijah the prophet who

had dressed in similar manner. His clothing was of camel hair, because that was what poor people wore. It was plentiful when the camels shed their coats. It was cheap, warm, and although scratchy, quite waterproof. John taught "change of character." He pointed fearlessly to the truth, even at the cost of his life. It was better to die for truth than to live a lie, because he knew that the Great Light upon the Altar, the Holy Scriptures, pointed to a better way, a life with God.

St. John the Evangelist teaches us to subdue our passions, one of the first things every Mason is taught in lodge. When we follow the Gospels and the Book of Acts in the New Testament, we see a major transformation of young John. He goes from being the hot-tempered young man to one who exhibits peace in his old age. He goes from being intolerant of others, to working with others in sharing his theology of a better way of life. John is loyal. He was the only disciple to attend the trial of Jesus as well as to be at the foot of the cross for the crucifixion. And when he heard about the empty tomb on Sunday morning, he was the first of the disciples to arrive. He also took care of the widows taking Mary, the mother of Jesus, into his home until she died. A study of John's writings shows that he teaches truth with love. He didn't waiver from his convictions, but he knew the power of truth and love in a person's life.

Applying the Sts. John to Our Lives

If they form the two parallels, then a Mason traveling the circle must touch both of the Sts. John and learn from each of them. He must learn to subdue his passions. A story is told in my lodge about a man who took his entered apprentice degree and then 20 years later came back to take his proficiency. When asked why he waited so long, he replied, "It took me this long to learn to subdue my passions!" Learning to subdue our passions is a lifelong process. Zeal not tempered by love becomes extremism and leads to misuse of power. The problems throughout our world can be directly related to failure to subdue one's passions.

While subduing one's passions is good, a Mason must always stand for truth. Truth, even when it is unpopular, is still better than the alternative. Truth will always reign. Even when some dictator tries to re-write it, the real truth will always emerge.

Like St. John the Evangelist, a Mason must help the widow and orphan. It's up to every Mason to look after the widows and orphans. Every Mason must practice brotherly love, which is the unique characteristic of our fraternity. St. John writes about the true meaning of brotherly love when he says: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need, but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?" I John 3:16-17. A Mason is called to practice charity. We must hear the cries of a needy brother, but we must also be aware of each other to see when we are in need. Masons must care, which we learn from traveling the circle.

Where Parallel Lines Meet

If one travels the circle, he quickly finds that the two parallel lines meet at the point where the circle touches upon the Volume of Sacred Law. In Masonry, the Bible is called the Great Light and is placed in an open position in the center of the lodge. A brother is admonished to open it and learn from its wisdom in all the three degrees of Masonry. Indeed, the Sts. John were well versed

in Scripture, and held it in high esteem. They looked with reverence to its knowledge, because they knew the answers of life were contained within its pages. They were not afraid to quote it, to trust it, to read it, and to apply it to their lives.

Masons must likewise emulate the Sts. John in their application of this Holy Light in their lives. Only by its constant attention and application can a Mason improve his own life. If Masonry is to grow today, it will not be through some flashy change or altering of ritual, it will be when each brother begins to travel the circle on a regular basis, touching upon each of the patrons of Masonry as well as the Scriptures. Each time we touch the Scriptures or the Sts. John, something should rub off on each of us, just as brushing against chalk will leave its mark, no matter how light the touch.

Values like truth, subduing passions, brotherly love, care of widows and orphans and practicing charity never go out of style. They are timeless values, and no matter how often attacked, always rise victorious in the end.

The Sts. John are timeless examples for each of us. Their foibles simply show their humanness. It is in their humanness that we can relate to them, and see that if we apply Scripture and our Masonic teachings, we too can become better men!

THE FELLOWCRAFT PILLARS

Author Unknown

Grand Lodge of Texas: December 2001

The three degrees of Freemasonry symbolically represent the three stages of life: youth, manhood, and old age. The lodge symbolizes the world as a whole with the Entered Apprentice representing the youth entering the world and the Master Mason about to leave it. The Fellowcraft represents manhood, the period in which a man is in the prime of his life prepared to face the trials and tribulations of the world, and equipped to do its work.

The work of the world is indeed the greatest endeavor of human life. Human progress is not carried forward by the ignorant or the unskilled as life is complex. Human progress rests on the shoulders of those who have knowledge, skill, and experience. This is the principal idea behind the Fellowcraft Degree. It is a drama of education, the philosophy of enlightenment. The Degree is wise in its teachings and profound in its truths.

As now practiced in Freemasonry, the lessons of the three degrees are built upon the Biblical description of King Solomon's Temple constructed in Jerusalem as a monument to the God of the Israelites. The building of this edifice is described in I Kings Chapters 5 through 7, while Chapter 8 describes the dedication of the Temple. A careful reading of these passages provides insight into the three degrees.

The great pillars that figure so prominently in the ceremonies of the Fellowcraft Degree are reminiscent of the two pillars that stood in front of King Solomon's Temple, not to support its roof but as symbolic reminders of the truths and forces in government and religion. While there have been many contradictions regarding the introduction of the pillars into the Masonic system, they are now universally recognized as part of the Fellowcraft Degree.

The terminology is confusing in the way *pillar* and *column* are used almost interchangeable in Masonic writings while each term has a distinct meaning. A pillar is a firm upright support for a superstructure such as an upper wall, floor, roof or arch. A pillar can be of any proportions necessary to perform the needed mechanical function of support. A pillar can also be a freestanding shaft that serves as a monument. A column is an architectural feature that is composed of a base, shaft, and capital that has definite geometric proportions and is designed to support as well as to adorn the building. Thus, both pillars and columns are primarily structural supports, the difference being that a column is an architectural feature designed to be functional while beautifying the building.

The Biblical account of the pillars of King Solomon's Temple is contained in I Kings 7: 13-22, where the writer describes the work of Hiram, a skilled metal worker, in creating the pillars. In addition to this account, Flavius Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, provides the following account.

Now Solomon sent for an artificer out of Tyre, whose name was Hiram. He was by birth of the tribe of Naphtali, on the mother's side (for she was of that tribe), but his father was Ur, of the stock of the Israelites. This man was skillful in all sorts of work; but his chief skill lay in working in gold, and silver, and brass, by whom were made all the mechanical works about the

temple, according to the will of Solomon. Moreover this Hiram made two hollow pillars, whose outsides were of brass, and the thickness of the brass was four fingers breadth, and the height of the pillars was eighteen cubits, and their circumference twelve cubits; but there was cast, with each of their chapters, lily-work that stood upon the pillar, and it was elevated five cubits, round about which there was net-work interwoven with small palms made of brass, and covered with lily-work. To this also were hung two hundred pomegranates in two rows. The one of these pillars he set at the entrance of the porch on the right hand, and called it Jachin, and the other at the left hand, and called it Boaz.

References to these two great pillars are found in pre-Grand Lodge of England rituals. Their symbolism is the same today as then. Boaz means “in him is strength” and Jachin, “he shall establish.” Thus, Boaz signifies strength while Jachin denotes establishment and allude to a passage of scripture, “In strength will I establish this My house and Kingdom forever.” As Masons, we should reflect upon the significance of the pillars as we construct our personal values and morals.

The characteristics of the pillars present important symbolic lessons. The pillars are described in ornate detail with particular geometric attributes. The details of beauty and geometry are to encourage us to fully develop our minds regarding the mysteries of nature and the laws of the universe. Through an improved understanding of our surroundings and the works of nature we begin to develop a true appreciation for Deity and his mighty creation.

The ornamental detail regarding the network, lily-work and pomegranates denote unity, peace, and plenty, respectively. While the Biblical account does not provide a clear picture of what the capitals (chapters) looked like, it does indicate they were highly ornate. The purpose of the network was to provide a background and its intricate, interconnected arrangement suggests unity. The lily-work represents peace, the lily being a symbol of both peace and purity. Peace is a noble attribute we should strive for in our spiritual relationship with God and as Masons, we should promote peace between all men. The pomegranates must have been striking with two hundred on each capital. The pomegranate fruit, due to the exuberance of its seed, is an emblem of plenty, which was one of its ancient significances.

The explanation of the Fellowcraft Degree in the Masonic ritual provides very similar details of the two pillars provided in both the Biblical account of I Kings and that of Flavius Josephus. However, the Masonic ritual alludes to two spherical bodies placed on top of the pillars, which represent the terrestrial and celestial spheres upon which maps of the features of the earth’s surface and heavenly bodies were depicted. An account of King Solomon’s Temple in II Chronicles 4: 13 suggests the pillars were topped with bowl-like containers. This Masonic addition, however, does not distract from the symbolism that together these spherical shapes represent the universality of Freemasonry.

The Fellowcraft Pillars, as reminders of the two pillars Jachin and Boaz that stood in front of King Solomon’s Temple, can be studied from two viewpoints. From one viewpoint, the pillars suggest the massive power, which upholds the universe, provides the laws of nature, and suggests the eternities of the heavens. Before such a Power, man should bow down and worship, engrave upon

his heart that the Almighty God is indeed the creator of the universe and the giver of life, and realize that the most godlike man is one whose life is the most constructive.

From another point of view, the pillars suggest the fact of birth, which has more and larger meanings than at first thought. One does not enter a well-furnished manhood by chance, like a blind man blundering through a doorway, but by virtue of study, labor, and preparation. On one-hand, there is the terrestrial sphere with its wisdom and knowledge concerning the earth, its physical existence, and its manual tasks to provide for himself and his family physically. On the other, there is the celestial sphere, with its wisdom of spiritual life, the conscience and imagination, and of the intellect and study of God's nature to provide for himself and his family spiritually.

In the process of becoming a Fellowcraft Mason, you passed between the two great pillars, Jachin and Boaz, of your own free will. This signified you were no longer a youth but a man. You have the essentials for success, achievement, and happiness. If you passed these pillars with understanding, if you realize that power without control is dangerous, you have learned the lesson taught by the symbolism of the pillars.

TEMPERANCE, FORTITUDE, AND PRUDENCE

By Alphonse Cerza

Short Talk Bulletin: November 1977

Freemasonry is sometimes described as a school which teaches men a way of life which has met the test of time. We do not have a monopoly on the teaching of moral Truths, but we do have a special way of teaching which is both interesting and effective. Freemasonry teaches its members all the cardinal virtues which are designed to make its members better men, but this Short Talk will discuss only three of them: Temperance, Fortitude and Prudence.

Temperance: The word "temperance" has acquired an unfortunate connotation in modern times. It is frequently associated with the movement to eliminate the use of alcoholic beverages. But the word has a much broader meaning. The Masonic definition of Temperance may be stated briefly as follows: Temperance is that due restraint upon our affections and passions which renders the body tame and governable, and frees the mind from the allurements of vice. Every Mason is then told that Temperance should be the constant practice of every Mason, as he is taught to avoid excess in all things, such as contracting any licentious or vicious habit, the indulgence of which might lead him to- suffer, or to lose his health, or cause him to lose his reputation.

In a general sense it means that one must exercise a degree of self-restraint and self-control at all times, in all the activities of life, including both words and deeds. The key idea is "moderation in all things." The idea is well illustrated in the old statement: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." It does not mean abstinence except in matters which are inherently bad or harmful.

The word "temperance" comes to us from the Latin, which means to temper or harden according to the use intended. As a consequence, we must recognize that there cannot be hard and fast rules in this subject. Each person must decide for himself how much restraint and self-control must be exercised in a particular situation. For example, I like to eat apple pie; one small piece is adequate to satisfy my desire after a hearty meal. My neighbor might not eat as hearty a meal, but might desire a larger piece of apple pie. Both of us by the exercise of self-control and by being temperate refrain from having a second helping.

Fortitude: The second principle under consideration is that of Fortitude. It is closely related to Temperance because very often the use of Fortitude is necessary to being temperate in a specific situation.

In Freemasonry Fortitude is defined as that noble and steady purpose of the mind whereby we are enabled to undergo any pain, peril or danger, when prudentially deemed expedient. The word is related to the word "fort," which originally denoted a structure built around something for protection. It is a word that comes to us from the Latin and indicated not so much a moral attitude, but rather the true quality of manhood, as is implied that one had strength and courage.

Fortitude, therefore, is that quality of character which gives a person strength to withstand temptation and to bear all suffering in silence. Fortitude is a virtue, for it permits one to do his duty undisturbed by evil distractions. It is in great measure a frame of mind to regulate one's words and deeds with courage and with determination. It is both a positive and a negative quality in that it creates courage to do what is right and also creates strength or character to withstand intemperance.

Above all else, it also creates the mental attitude to bear one's burden bravely when all other remedies fail.

Prudence: The third basic principle, Prudence, is closely related to both Temperance and Fortitude, for it is the type of yardstick which is to be used in determining what constitutes Temperance in a specific situation and to what extent Fortitude should be applied.

Freemasonry defines Prudence as that principle which teaches us to regulate our lives and actions agreeably to the dictates of reason, and is that habit by which we wisely judge, and prudently determine, the effect of all things relative to our present as well as our future happiness.

The application of Prudence to our everyday life means that we will use discretion in our acts and words; that we will use good judgment in what we say and do; and that we will use self-control and foresight in all such matters. It also means that we will act intelligently and with conscious regard of what the consequences will be.

I mentioned that I like to eat apple pie. By the use of Prudence I realize that if I have had an ample meal, it is best that I have only a small piece of apple pie for dessert. Using Prudence helped me to realize that if I have a large piece of apple pie, and then have a second helping, I will feel stuffed and suffer physical discomfort. So I decide to be temperate in eating apple pie. I realize the possible consequences and with the use of Fortitude I refrain from having a second helping. Prudence teaches me to build a fort against my desire to satisfy unduly my desire and taste for a second helping and that it is best that I be temperate and have only one small piece.

Sometimes it is easy to abstain or to be temperate. I am reminded of the familiar witticism of the elderly Brother who said, "I have finally learned to subdue my passions. Mother Nature has taken care of that."

In conclusion, we would do well to remember the words of Voltaire, a Mason, when he said: "The richest endowments of the mind are temperance, prudence, and fortitude. Prudence is a universal virtue, which enters into the composition of all the rest; and where she is not, fortitude loses its name and nature."

SUN, MOON, AND STARS

Author Unknown

Short Talk Bulletin: March 1930

We have more right to be astonished that the astronomical references are so few, rather than to be surprised that there are so many! We are taught that geometry and Masonry were originally synonymous terms and geometry, fifth of the seven liberal arts and sciences, is given more prominence in our Fellowcraft degree than the seventh, astronomy. Yet the beginnings of astronomy far antedate the earliest geometrician. Indeed, geometry came into existence to answer the ceaseless questionings of man as to the "why" of celestial phenomena. In these modern days it is difficult to visualize the vital importance of the heavens generally, to early man. We can hardly conceive of their terror of the eclipse and the comet, or sense their veneration for the Sun and his bride, the Moon. We are too well educated. We know too much about "the proportions which connect this vast machine." The astronomer has pushed back the frontiers of his science beyond the inquiries of most of us; the questions which occur as a result of unaided visual observations have all been answered. We have substituted facts for fancies regarding the sun, the moon, the solar system, the comet and the eclipse. Albert Pike, the great Masonic student "who found Masonry in a hovel and left her in a palace" says:

"We cannot, even in the remotest degree, feel, though we may partially and imperfectly imagine, how those great, primitive, simple-hearted children of Nature, felt in regard to the Starry Hosts, there upon the slopes of the Himalayas, on the Chaldean plains, in the Persian and Median deserts, and upon the banks of the great, strange River, the Nile. To them the universe was alive - instinct with forces and powers, mysterious and beyond their comprehension. To them it was no machine, no great system of clockwork; but a great live creature, in sympathy with or inimical to man. To them, all was mystery and a miracle, and the stars flashing overhead spoke to their hearts almost in an audible language. Jupiter, with its kingly splendors, was the Emperor of the starry legions. Venus looked lovingly on the earth and blessed it; Mars with his crimson fires threatened war and misfortune; and Saturn, cold and grave, chilled and repelled them. The ever-changing moon, faithful companion of the sun, was a constant miracle and wonder; the Sun himself the visible emblem of the creative and generative power. To them the earth was a great plain, over which the sun, the moon and the planets revolved, its servants, framed to give it light. Of the stars, some were beneficent existences that brought with them Spring-time and fruits and flowers - some, faithful, sentinels, advising them of coming inundations, of the season of storm and of deadly winds some heralds of evil, which, steadily foretelling. They seemed to cause. To them the eclipse, were portents of evil, and their causes hidden in mystery, and supernatural. The regular returns of the stars, the comings of Arcturus, Orion, Sirius, the Pleides and Aldebaran; and the journeyings of the Sun, were voluntary and not mechanical to them. What wonder that astronomy became to them the most important of sciences; that those who learned it became rulers; and that vast edifices, the pyramids, the tower or Temple of Bel, and other like erections elsewhere in the East, were built for astronomical purposes? - and what wonder that, in their great childlike simplicity, they worshipped the Light, the Sun, the Planets, and the stars; and personified them, and eagerly believed in the histories invented for them; in

that age when the capacity for belief was infinite; as indeed, if we but reflect, it still is and ever will be?"

Anglo-Saxons usually consider history as their history; science as their science; religion as their religion. This somewhat naive viewpoint is hardly substantiated by a less egoistic survey of knowledge. Columbus's sailors believed they would "fall off the edge" of a flat world, yet Pythagoras knew the earth to be a ball. The ecliptic was known before Solomon's Temple was built. The Chinese predicted eclipses long, long before the Europeans of the middle age quit regarding them as portents of doom! Astronomical lore of Freemasonry is very old. The foundations of our degrees are far more ancient than we can prove by documentary evidence. It is surely not stretching credulity to believe that the study which antedates "Geometry, the first and noblest of sciences," must have been impressed on our Order, its ceremonies and its symbols, long before Preston and Webb worked their ingenious revolutions in our rituals and gave us the system of degrees we use - in one form or another - today.

The astronomical references in our degrees begin with the points of the compass; East, West, and South; and the place of darkness, the North. We are taught the reason why the North is a place of darkness by the position of Solomon's Temple with reference to the ecliptic, a most important astronomical conception. The Sun is the Past Master's own symbol; our Masters rule their lodges - or are supposed to! - with the same regularity that the Sun rules the day and the Moon governs the night. Our explanation of our Lesser Lights is obviously an adaption of a concept which dates back to the earliest of religions; specifically to the Egyptian Isis, Orsiris and Horus; represented by the Sun, Moon and Venus.

Circumambulation about the Altar is in imitation of the course of the Sun. We traverse our lodges from East to West by way of the South, as did the Sun Worshipers who thus imitated the daily passage of their deity through the heavens.

Measures of time are wholly a matter of astronomy. Days and nights were before man, and consequently before astronomy, but hours and minutes, high twelve and low twelve, are inventions of the mind, depending upon the astronomical observation of the Sun at Meridian to determine noon, and consequently all other periods of time. Indeed, we are taught this in the Middle Chamber work, in which we give to Geometry the premier place as a means by which the astronomer may "fix the duration of time and seasons, years and cycles."

Atop the Pillars representing those in the porch of King Solomon's Temple appear the terrestrial and celestial globes. In the Fellowcraft degree we are told in beautiful and poetic language that "numberless worlds are around us, all framed by the same Divine Artist, which roll through the vast expanse and are all conducted by the same unerring law of nature."

Our Ancient brethren, observing that the sun rose and set, easily determining East and West in a general way. As the rises and sets through a variation of 47 degrees north and south during a six month's period the determination was not exact. The earliest Chaldean star gazers, progenitors of the astronomers of later ages, saw that the apparently revolving heavens pivoted on a point nearly coincident with a certain star. We know that the true north diverges about from the North Star one and one-half degrees, but their observations were sufficiently accurate to determine a North - and

consequently East, West and South. The reference to the ecliptic in the Sublime Degree has puzzled many a brother who has not studied the elements of astronomy. The earliest astronomers defined the ecliptic as the hypothetical “circular” plane of the earth’s path about the sun, with the sun in the “center.”

As a matter of fact, the sun is not in the center and the earth’s path about sun is not circular. The earth travels once about the sun in three hundred and sixty-five days, and a fraction, on an “elliptic” path; the sun is at one of the foci of that ellipse. The axis of the earth, about which it turns once in twenty-four hours, thus making a night and a day, is inclined to this hypothetical plane by 23 and one-half degrees. At one point in its yearly path, the north pole of the earth is inclined towards the sun by this amount. Half way further around in its path the North Pole is inclined away from the sun by this angle. The longest day in the northern hemisphere - June 21st - occurs when the North Pole is most inclined toward the sun.

Any building situated between latitudes 23 and one-half north and 23 and one-half south of the equator, will receive the rays of the sun at meridian (high twelve, or noon) from the north at some time during the year. King Solomon’s Temple at Jerusalem, being in latitude 31 degrees 47 seconds north, lay beyond this limit. At no time in the year, therefore, did the sun or moon at meridian “dart its rays into the northerly portion thereof.”

As astronomy in Europe is comparatively modern, some have argued that this reason for considering the North, Masonically, as a place of darkness, must also be comparatively modern. This is wholly mistaken - Pythagoras (to go further back) recognized the obliquity of the world’s axis to the ecliptic, as well as that the earth was a sphere suspended in space. While Pythagoras (510 B.C.) is much younger than Solomon’s Temple, he is almost two thousand years older than the beginnings of astronomy in Europe.

The “world celestial and terrestrial” on the brazen pillars were added by modern ritual makers. Solomon knew them not, but contemporaries of Solomon believed the heavens to be a sphere revolving around the earth. To them the earth stood still; a hollow sphere with its inner surface dotted with stars. The slowly turning “celestial sphere” is as old as mankind’s observations of the “starry decked heavens.”

It is to be noted that terrestrial and celestial spheres are both used as emblems of universality. They are not mere duplications for emphasis; they teach their own individual part of “universality.” What is “universal” on the earth - as for instance, the necessity of mankind to breathe, drink water, and eat in order to live - is not necessarily “universal” in all the universe. We have no knowledge that any other planet in our solar system is inhabited - what evidence there is, is rather to the contrary. We have no knowledge that any other sun has any inhabited planets in its system. Neither have we any knowledge that they have not. If life does exist in some other, to us unknown world, it may be entirely different from life on this planet. Hence a symbol of universality which applied only to earth would be a self-contradiction.

Real universality means what it says. It appertains to the whole universe. While a Mason’s charity, considered as giving relief to the poor and distressed, must obviously be confined to this particular planet, his charity of thought may, so we are taught, extend “through the boundless realms of

eternity.” Hence “the world terrestrial” and “the world celestial” on our representations of the pillars, in denoting universality mean that the principles of our Order are not founded upon mere earthly conditions and transient truths, but rest upon Divine and limitless foundations, coexistent with the whole cosmos and its creator. We are taught of the “All Seeing Eye whom the Sun, Moon and Stars obey and under whose watchful care even comets perform their stupendous revolutions.” In this astronomical reference is, oddly enough, a potent argument, both for the extreme care in the transmission of ritual unchanged from mouth to ear, and the urgent necessity of curbing well-intentioned brethren who wish to “improve” the ritual.

The word “revolution” in this paragraph (it is so printed in the earliest Webb monitors) fixes it as a comparatively modern conception. Tycho Brahe, progenitor of the modern maker and user of fine instruments among astronomers, whose discoveries have left an indelible impress on astronomy, made no attempt to consider comets as orbital bodies. Galileo thought them “emanations of the atmosphere.” Not until the seventeenth century was well underway did a few daring spirits suggest that these celestial portents of evil, these terribly heavenly demons which had inspired terror in the hearts of men for uncounted generations, were actually parts of the solar system, and that many if not most of them were periodic, actually returning again and again; in other words, that they revolved about the sun.

Obviously, then, this passage of our ritual cannot have come down to us by a “word of mouth” transmission from an epoch earlier than that in which men first commenced to believe that a comet was not an augury of evil but a part of the solar system. The so-called “lunar lodges” have far more a practical than an astronomical basis. In the early days of Masonry, both in England and in this country, many if not most lodges, met on dates fixed in advance, but according to the time when the moon was full; not because the moon “Governed” the night, but because it illuminated the traveler’s path! In days when roads were but muddy paths between town and hamlet, when any journey was hazardous and on black nights dangerous in the extreme, the natural illumination of the moon, making the road easy to find and the depredations of highwaymen the more difficult, was a matter of some moment! One final curious derivation of a Masonic symbol from the heavens and we are through. The symbol universally associated with the Stewards of a Masonic lodge is the cornucopia.

According to the mythology of the Greeks, which go back to the very dawn of civilization, the God Zeus was nourished in infancy from the milk of a goat, Amalthea. In gratitude, the God placed Amalthea forever in the heavens as a constellation, but first gave one of Amalthea’s horns to his nurses with the assurance that it would forever pour for them whatever they desired! The “horn of plenty,” or the cornucopia, is thus a symbol of abundance. The goat from which it came may be found by the curious among the constellations under the name of Capricorn. The “Tropic of Capricorn” of our school days is the southern limit of the swing of the sun on the path which marks the ecliptic, on which it inclines first its north and then its south pole towards our luminary. Hence there is a connection, not the less direct for being tenuous, between our Stewards, their symbol, the lights in the lodge, the “place of darkness” and Solomon’s Temple.

Of such curious links and interesting bypaths is the study of astronomy and its connection with Freemasonry, the more beautiful when we see eye to eye with the Psalmist in the Great Light; “The Heavens Declare the Glory of God and the Firmament Sheweth His Handiwork.”

THE INFLUENCE OF BIBLICAL VERSE IN FREEMASONRY

By Mark Meyer

Grand Lodge of Texas: June 2002

The topic of Freemasonry offers a wide array of subjects for study to the Masonic scholar interested in unlocking its mysteries. In pursuit of our quest for Masonic learning we should stop to examine the three Degrees of Ancient Craft, or Blue Lodge Masonry and ask ourselves, “What lesson (or lessons) should I be learning from each Degree?” The key to the subject matter is hidden within a little understood yet vitally important part of the ritual of the first section of each Degree.

We tell ourselves and the new initiates that the manner of candidate preparation is intended to present a condition where the “... mind might conceive before the eyes beheld the beauties of Freemasonry.” As the candidate of each Degree undergoes the ritual of circumambulation he is then presented with the theme of the Degree – contained in the Scriptural reading. The theme is often lost however, or misunderstood, because of the mystic nature of the readings. An examination of each of the Scriptural readings reveals the unique manner in which each theme is presented.

Entered Apprentice Degree

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore. Psalms 133

Imagine yourself as the candidate once again, hearing these words for the first time. The first sentence might tend to calm your apprehensions and uncertainties about your forthcoming experience by pronouncing in simple terms what a pleasure it is to “dwell together in unity” or to be in the presence of a body of men united together in mind and spirit of purpose. This peaceful unity is of utmost importance to Masons as it is the mortar or cement that binds us together as a fraternity. “*It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments;...*” Aaron, the elder brother of Moses, and his sons were appointed by God to be the High Priest and ministers of God for the children of Israel (Exodus 28:1). God directed that an “oil of holy ointment” (Exodus 30:23-25) be made consisting of measured amounts of myrrh, sweet cinnamon, sweet calamus, cassia and olive oil. This “holy anointing oil” was to be poured upon Aaron and his sons as a blessing or consecration prior to their entry as priests into the tabernacle, containing all the holy vessels and the Ark of the Covenant, to minister and pray unto the Lord (Exodus 30:30). This reference therefore alludes to the sacredness of such unity. Mount Sion or Mount Hermon (Deuteronomy 4:48) was known to have copious amounts of humidity, even in the driest weather, which formed on the tents so profusely that it appeared as though it had rained the whole night. This precious dew or water provided continuous life giving growth to the plants and animals of the otherwise arid region; hence the allusion to life forevermore.

The theme of the Entered Apprentice Degree then, as foretold to the candidate through this reference to the Scripture passage, is that he is about to enter into a fraternal union with men of

good character. This unity of good brethren is so precious that it is comparable to the holy anointing of the High Priest of the ancient Israelites. Further, his association with this fraternal unity promises to enrich his future life just as the dew of Mount Hermon and the mountains of Zion.

Fellowcraft Degree

Thus he shewed me; and behold the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumb line, with a plumb line in His hand. And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, a plumb line. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel. I will not again pass by them anymore. Amos 7:7-8

This is perhaps the least understood and most misinterpreted passage of Scripture as it relates to the theme of the Fellowcraft Degree. Amos was one of the lesser prophets of the Old Testament. He was a herdsman and tender of fig trees who lived in the territory of Tekoa south of Bethlehem and was sent by God to call the people of Israel to repentance. He foretold the judgments of God which were to fall on the Syrians, Philistines, Tyrians, Edomites, Moabites and Ammonites. In this Chapter of Scripture Amos describes a vision shown to him by God. In this vision God represents to Amos the judgements he is about to bring upon Israel for their many iniquities. Verses 7 and 8 describe God's illustration to Amos of His attitude regarding the sins and transgressions of the people of Israel. The Lord standing upon a wall made by a plumb line signifies the laws and commandments He has communicated to the people of Israel to build them into a just and upright nation. The plumb line in His hand symbolizes the strict justice He will visit upon them according to their iniquities. The phrase "I will not again pass by them anymore." is an indication that God will no longer show them any mercy in His administration of justice.

The underlying theme of this Scripture as it applies to the Fellowcraft Degree is to admonish the candidate that he is now crossing the threshold from youth to manhood. As a man and a loyal member of the Masonic fraternity he will be more strongly bound to the fraternity by strict moral guidelines. Likewise, as an adult member of society, he will be expected to exemplify the highest standards of behavior and uphold the civil laws. As an Entered Apprentice, the candidate was introduced to the most basic moral principles, loyalty, trust and charity, which serve as the foundation upon which to build strong relationships. His development as a Fellowcraft will expose him to greater responsibilities that require a stronger discipline.

Master Mason Degree

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them; while the sun or the light, or the moon, or the stars be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease, because they are few; and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and

the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

The Book of Ecclesiastes was supposedly written by Solomon in order to show the vanity of the world, and of human life, and that no happiness can be expected by the human soul, but in the fear, love and obedience of God.

The Twelfth Chapter begins with the admonition to every person that he should remember to worship and praise God as his Creator beginning in the early days of his youth, while his mind is still strong and sharp, and not distracted by trivial or worldly matters, or weakened by the physical infirmities of old age. The remaining verses of this Scriptural reference describe, in a mystical way, the many ailments and infirmities that mark our passage into old age, up to and including the death of the physical body and the return of our spirit to its Creator.

The theme set forth by this Scripture for the candidate desirous of attaining the sublime degree of Master Mason is that death awaits us all. Just as Solomon expressed throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes, all earthly ambitions are but vanity and there is no real happiness to be gained in this world except in the nurturing and development of our soul through love of God and obedience to His will.

Informational or Inspirational Programs

TEXAS MASONRY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

By Edward N. Thompson

Grand Lodge of Texas: March 2002

For many years, the Grand Lodge of Texas has celebrated Public Schools Week by pausing in March of each year to pay tribute to the educational system of Texas. Yet the public and many Masons know little about the role the Masonic fraternity has played in the development of free public education in Texas. As the Masons of Texas once again mark this annual event, it is appropriate that the contributions of Freemasonry to Texas public education be highlighted.

Attempts to establish a system of public education in Texas began as early as 1823. Stephen F. Austin, a Mason, requested support from Mexico for a public school in his Texas colony. This effort met with limited response and in 1832, Anglo-American settlers passed several resolutions requesting that the government of the State of Coahuila and Texas set aside public lands for the support of “dissemination of knowledge through every part.” This resolution met with some success, yet no funding was permanently established for supporting public education when the State Congress in 1833 made several provisions for education in Texas. Masons such as Austin, William Wharton, and Ira Ingram were involved in these early attempts to establish public education in Texas.

When Texas declared its independence on 2 March 1836, the signers of the Declaration of Independence stated Mexico had “failed to establish any public system of education” although the government had substantial resources to do so. They further said that “unless a people are educated and enlightened, it is idle to expect that continuance of civil liberty, or the capacity of self-government.” These same men went on to draft the constitution for the Republic of Texas, which was adopted on 17 March 1836. One provision of this constitution made it a duty of Congress “to provide by law a general system of education.” Many of the men involved in developing these documents were Freemasons committed to the ideal of public education.

In December 1838, Mirabeau B. Lamar, a Mason, became president of the Republic of Texas and distinguished himself as the “Father of Texas Education” for his support of a public school system. In his first address to the Congress, he pleaded for the creation of a public school system in Texas. He declared, “If we desire to establish a republican government upon a broad and permanent basis, it will become our duty to adopt a comprehensive and well regulated system of mental and moral culture.” He proposed the set aside of public lands for the creation of a permanent endowment to support public education. His educational views met with the approval of Congress and provisions were made for public education. Congress set aside three leagues (13,285 acres) of land in each county to support primary schools and an additional fifty leagues (221,420 acres) to support two colleges in 1839. In 1840, Congress set aside an additional league for the support of county schools. In addition, they made provisions for the certification of teachers. Once again, many of these legislators were Masons.

While these acts were important in the establishment of public education in Texas, the lasting impact was in the creation of a permanent endowment for the support of public education that lives to this day. Furthermore, Texas was the first state to give state aid to education. In 1854, the State legislature established a permanent school fund and an available school fund to finance the education of the youth of Texas. The “school lands” of Texas continue to provide revenue to the

permanent endowment and support common education in Texas and supplement the property taxes dedicated to the school systems.

There can be no doubt that Masons did much to influence early legislation of the Republic in the field of education. The leaders of government for the most part were members of the Masonic fraternity and their dreams of a system of public education took root. These early Masons provided a foundation upon which the Republic and State would create an effective system to diffuse knowledge. They included Stephen F. Austin, David G. Burnet, Sam Houston, Mirabeau B. Lamar, Anson Jones, William H. Wharton, and many others.

In addition, the Masonic fraternity took a direct interest in education during the period between 1840 and 1860. There was a serious problem with the condition of the schools and Masonry became alarmed that the children might go through life without formal education. Determined, individual Masonic lodges began to establish schools in towns where they were located. The lodge building itself became the town's learning center. The lodge often employed the schoolteacher and attendance was not limited to Masonic youth but opened to any person with a desire for learning. The first known primary school sponsored by a Masonic lodge opened in 1842 and by 1860 there were at least 23 Masonic sponsored schools.

The State Constitution of 1845 provided the foundation for free public schools. Of the sixty-two members drafting the constitution, at least thirty were Masons. The 1848 Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Texas reports "The subject of education is one of peculiar interest to the fraternity. We as Texans can be justly proud of the magnificent provision made by our State for the future education of her children. It will be a noble rivalry for us to engage simultaneously with her in this noble enterprise.

Masons were in a position to influence the development of legislation related to public education during her formative years. All the Presidents of the Republic were Masons and many members of the various legislatures were also Masons, in some cases exceeding fifty percent of the legislative membership. Masonry has certainly played its part in the development of Texas education. The services of Masonic lodges in sponsoring schools and furnishing buildings were possibly greater than any other organization. These services must be considered as among the important transitional steps in achieving free public education in Texas.

The noted Texas educator and non-Mason Frederick Eby in his introduction to James D. Carter's *Education and Masonry in Texas to 1846* states that "Education in Texas is indebted to the courageous assistance of the Masonic Brotherhood for their labors in championing the establishment of its Public School System at the most critical moment in its history." Carter concluded his book with the following statement: "The evidence leaves little doubt that Masons were using every means in their power, in government, in private associations, in religious bodies and with individuals, to bring about the creation of education institutions."

Masonry continues to honor public schools. The emphasis on Public Schools Week can do much to inform the general public regarding the Masonic influence on today's public schools. In many instances, Masons offer more than lip-service to education as they provide scholarships to deserving students to assist them with college expenses, support school teachers with special

recognition nights and outstanding teaching awards, and support programs that enhance school activities. Masons can be justly proud of their contributions to Texas education.

This article has been adapted from a paper written by Edward N. Thompson entitled "Freemasonry and Texas Education" which was published in the *Transactions*, Texas Lodge of Research, Volume XXV.

The following references provide additional information regarding the Masonic influence on Texas education.

James D. Carter: *Education and Masonry in Texas to 1846*, The Grand Lodge of Texas, Waco, TX 1963.

James D. Carter: *Education and Masonry in Texas, 1846 to 1861*, The Grand Lodge of Texas, Waco, TX 1964.

FREEMASONRY AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Pierre G. Normand, Jr.
Grand Lodge of Texas: July 2002

The month of July is special to all Americans because we celebrate the birth of our nation on the fourth of July. On that date in the year 1776, representatives of the thirteen American colonies, assembled at what is now known as Independence Hall in Philadelphia, adopted a manifesto asserting their political independence from the British crown. We know that document as the American Declaration of Independence.

Over the last two centuries various Masonic writers have often attempted to inflate the involvement of members of the Masonic fraternity in the events leading up to and resulting from this important historic event. It has often been claimed that all or most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Freemasons; or that all or most of the general officers serving under Washington were Freemasons. These claims have been made to bolster the theory that the events of the American Revolution and the formation of the American colonies into an independent republic were carried out according to some Masonic plan, and in accordance with universal Masonic principles.

It is always best that such claims be tempered by the light of responsible and accurate historic research, not for the purpose of discounting the patriotic nature of our early American Masonic forbearers, but rather to understand the role that Freemasons did play in the formation of this great nation. Probably the best accounting of Masonic membership among the signers of the Declaration of Independence is provided in the book *Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers*, by Ronald E. Heaton, published by the Masonic Service Association at Silver Spring, Maryland. According to this well researched and documented work, proof of Masonic membership can be found for only eight of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence. They are:

Benjamin Franklin, of the Tun Tavern Lodge at Philadelphia;
John Hancock, of St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston;
Joseph Hewes, recorded as a Masonic visitor to Unanimity Lodge No. 7, Edenton, North Carolina, in December 1776;
William Hooper, of Hanover Lodge, Masonborough, North Carolina;
Robert Treat Payne, present at Grand Lodge at Roxbury, Massachusetts, in June 1759;
Richard Stockton, charter Master of St. John's Lodge, Princeton, Massachusetts in 1765;
George Walton, of Solomon's Lodge No. 1, Savannah, Georgia; and
William Whipple, of St. John's Lodge, Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Additionally, another five or six signers have from time to time been identified as members of the fraternity based on inconclusive or unsubstantiated evidence.

As for the Masonic membership among Washington's generals, it is true that many were members of the fraternity, but many were not. The recognized modern authority on the subject is James R. Case, former Grand Historian of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut, who published his findings in the 1955 booklet *Fifty Early American Military Freemasons*.

When examining the participation of Freemasons in the American Revolution we should first remember the Ancient Charges of a Freemason, and especially that charge concerning “the Civil Magistrates, Supreme and Subordinate,” which enjoins the Mason to be “a peaceable subject to the Civil Powers” and “never to be concern'd in plots and conspiracies against the peace and welfare of the nation.” This charge was listed as the second of those contained in the Constitutions adopted by the Premier Grand Lodge at London in 1723, long before the American Revolution.

How then can we justify the participation of American Freemasons in their rebellion against the King? The answer can be given in two parts. First, the Masonic fraternity in the American colonies took no part in the Revolution, following Masonic tradition by taking no official stance. However, the fraternity’s official neutrality may have owed as much to the divided loyalties of its leadership as it did to Masonic tradition. Many Masons were Loyalists. And second, rebellion against the state, whether justified or unjustified, is not a Masonic offense. The Old Charges state clearly “if a Brother should be a Rebel against the State, ... if convicted of no other Crime, ... they cannot expel him from the Lodge, and his Relation to it remains indefeasible.” This simply means that, in the case of the American Revolution, many brethren, feeling that the actions of the crown warranted revolution and independence, were justified in following their consciences without fear of violating their Masonic obligations or any Masonic law.

As the charge concerning the Civil Magistrates reminds us, “Masonry hath been always injured by War, Bloodshed, and Confusion,” the fraternity was indeed injured by the war. General Joseph Warren, Grand Master of the Ancient’s Provincial Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, lost his life at the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775 and his body was thrown into an unmarked grave. While he had led the American troops during that battle, his lodge brother, Dr. John Jeffries assisted the British troops. Nearly a year later, his body was exhumed and identified by another Lodge brother, Paul Revere.

Even before the Declaration of Independence, colonial Masonry suffered from the disruptions of the war, and the division of loyalties among its members. Many lodges found it difficult to meet regularly, and others ceased to meet at all. Many lodges were disbanded as occupying British forces prohibited private assemblies, and loyalist Masons fled the country or joined the British forces.

Although the Masonic fraternity played no part in the Revolutionary War, it can easily be shown that in many ways the revolutionary ideals of equality, freedom, and democracy were espoused by the Masonic fraternity long before the American colonies began to complain about the injustices of British taxation. The revolutionary ideals expressed in the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and the writings of Thomas Paine, were ideals that had come to fruition over a century before in the early speculative lodges of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where men sat as equals, governed themselves by a Constitution, and elected their own leaders from their midst. In many ways, the self-governing Masonic lodges of the previous centuries had been learning laboratories for the concept of self-government.

On September 18, 1793, President George Washington, dressed in his Masonic apron, leveled the cornerstone of the United States Capitol with the traditional Masonic ceremony. Historian Stephen Bullock in his book *Revolutionary Brotherhood* carefully notes the historic and symbolic

significance of that ceremony. The Masonic brethren, dressed in their fraternal regalia, had assembled in grand procession, and were formed for that occasion as representative of Freemasonry's new found place of honor in an independent American society. At that moment, the occasion of the laying of the new Republic's foundations, Freemasons assumed the mantles "high priests" of that "first temple dedicated to the sovereignty of the people," and they "helped form the symbolic foundations of what the Great Seal called 'the new order for the ages'."

MASONIC PRESIDENTS
Compiled from Various Sources
Grand Lodge of Texas: February 2003

Until 1971, both February 12 and February 22 were observed as federal holidays to honor the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (February 12) and George Washington (February 22). In 1971 President Richard Nixon proclaimed one single federal holiday, Presidents' Day, honoring all past presidents of the United States of America to be observed on the third Monday of February.

While many Masons know about the Masonic affiliation of Brother George Washington, thirteen other Presidents have also been Masons. These fourteen Masonic Presidents span the history of the United States from George Washington to Gerald Ford. February and Presidents' Day offers the opportunity for Masons to recognize the contributions of these Brothers to their country.

The fourteen Masonic Presidents are George Washington, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, James K. Polk, James A. Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, James A. Garfield, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, Warren G. Harding, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman, and Gerald R. Ford. The following paragraphs provide a brief summary for each of these Masonic Presidents.

George Washington, First U.S. President, 1789-1797: George Washington served as the first President of the United States of America. He was inaugurated on April 30, 1789 and served two terms as President. Born in 1732, Washington was initiated on November 4, 1752, passed on March 3, 1753, and raised a Master Mason on August 4, 1753 in Fredericksburg Lodge, Virginia. He would serve as the Commander in Chief of the Continental Armies during the Revolutionary War. In 1788, Washington was appointed Charter Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 22, Virginia during the organization of the lodge and in December 1788, he was elected Master. There is no evidence that he was ever installed or presided over any meetings of this lodge. While President, he would act as Grand Master in leveling the cornerstone of the U.S Capitol in Washington, D.C. on September 18, 1793. During his life, Washington was somewhat active and supportive of Freemasonry. He died on December 14, 1799, less than three years following his second term as President.

James Monroe, Fifth U.S. President, 1817-1825: James Monroe was born in Westmoreland County, Virginia in 1758. Monroe attended the College of William and Mary, fought with distinction in the Continental Army, and practiced law in Fredericksburg, Virginia. There is some dispute regarding the Masonic affiliation of Bro. Monroe due to the loss of lodge records. It appears that he was initiated on November 9, 1775 in St. John's Regimental Lodge in the Continental Army. He later affiliated with Williamsburg Lodge No. 6 in Williamsburg, Virginia. There are no known records to confirm his advancement through the degrees but there is evidence that Monroe was received as a Master Mason during a visit to a Tennessee lodge in 1819. It is interesting to note that Bro. Monroe was not yet eighteen when initiated indicating the concept of "lawful age" had not been universally fixed at twenty-one at this time. Like Washington, Monroe would serve two terms as President. He died on July 4, 1831 in New York.

Andrew Jackson, Seventh U.S. President, 1829-1837: Born in the backwoods settlement of Waxhaw, South Carolina on March 15, 1767, Andrew Jackson received sporadic education. But

in his late teens he read law for about two years, and he became an outstanding young lawyer in Tennessee. Fiercely jealous of his honor, he engaged in brawls, and in a duel killed a man who cast an unjustified slur on his wife Rachel. A major general in the War of 1812, Jackson became a national hero when he defeated the British at New Orleans. The Masonic record of Brother Jackson has not been located though there is no doubt he was a Mason. He appears to have been a member of St. Tammany Lodge No. 29, Nashville, Tennessee, as early as 1800. The lodge name was later changed to Harmony Lodge No. 1 on November 1, 1800. Brother Jackson is officially listed as a member in the Lodge Returns to the Grand Lodge of Tennessee for 1805. Very active in Freemasonry, Brother Jackson was a Grand Master of Masons in Tennessee, serving from October 1822 until October 1824. Jackson served two terms as President from 1829 until 1837. He died on June 8, 1845 at the Hermitage near Nashville, Tennessee.

James K. Polk, Eleventh U.S. President, 1845-1849: James K. Polk was born in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, on November 2, 1795. Studious and industrious, Polk was graduated with honors in 1818 from the University of North Carolina. As a young lawyer he entered politics, served in the Tennessee legislature, and became a friend of Andrew Jackson. Brother Polk was initiated in Columbia Lodge No. 31 on June 5, 1820 located in Columbia, Tennessee. He would be passed and raised in this lodge though the actual dates are unknown. In 1825 he was exalted a Royal Arch Mason in LaFayette Chapter No. 4 located in Columbia. Polk would serve as the Governor of Tennessee from 1839 through 1841 prior to his election as President of the United States. He would serve one term as President from 1845 to 1849. He left office in poor health and died a few months later on June 15, 1849 in Nashville, Tennessee.

James A. Buchanan, Fifteenth U.S. President, 1857-1861: Born in Cove Gap near Mercersburg, Pennsylvania into a well-to-do Pennsylvania family on April 23, 1791, James A. Buchanan, a graduate of Dickinson College, was gifted as a debater and learned in the law. Tall, stately, and stiffly formal, he was the only President who never married. Brother Buchanan was initiated on December 11, 1816, passed and raised in Lancaster Lodge No. 43 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He served as Master of his lodge from 1822 to 1823. In 1824, he was appointed District Deputy Grand Master for the Counties of Lancaster, Lebanon and York. His tenure as President was fraught with controversy surrounding the issues of states' rights and slavery. Inaugurated in 1857, Buchanan retired from the Presidency after one term in office and returned to Lancaster, Pennsylvania where he died on June 1, 1868.

Andrew Johnson, Seventeenth U.S. President, 1865-1869: Born in Raleigh, North Carolina, on December 29, 1808, Johnson grew up in poverty. He was apprenticed to a tailor as a boy, but ran away. He opened a tailor shop in Greeneville, Tennessee, married Eliza McCardle, and participated in debates at the local academy. Entering politics, he became an adept stump speaker, championing the common man. Johnson became a Mason in 1851 when he was initiated, passed, and raised in Greenville Lodge No. 119 located at Greenville, Tennessee. Following the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865, the Presidency fell upon Vice-President Johnson, an old-fashioned southern Jacksonian Democrat. Although an honest and honorable man, Andrew Johnson was one of the most unfortunate of Presidents. Arrayed against him were the Radical Republicans in Congress, brilliantly led and ruthless in their tactics. In 1867, the House of Representatives voted eleven articles of impeachment against him. He was tried by the Senate in the spring of 1868 and acquitted by one vote. While serving as President, he received the Scottish Rite degrees during

1867. Johnson left the White House in 1869 after serving almost four years as President completing Lincoln's second term. Johnson died on July 31, 1875 in Carter's Station, Tennessee.

James A. Garfield, Twentieth U.S. President, 1881: James A. Garfield was born in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, on November 19, 1831. Fatherless at two, he later drove canal boat teams, somehow earning enough money for an education. He was graduated from Williams College in Massachusetts in 1856, and he returned to the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute (later Hiram College) in Ohio as a classics professor. Within a year he was made its president. Garfield was initiated on November 19, 1861 in Magnolia Lodge No. 20 in Columbus, Ohio. Owing to Civil War duties, Brother Garfield did not receive the Third Degree until November 22, 1864 in Columbus Lodge No. 30 in Columbus, Ohio. On October 10, 1866, he affiliated with Garrettsville Lodge No. 246 in Garrettsville, Ohio. Brother Garfield became a Charter Member of Pentalpha Lodge No. 23 of Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1869. Garfield was elected President in 1880 by a margin of only 10,000 popular votes and was inaugurated on March 4, 1881. His Presidency was cut short when an embittered attorney who had sought a consular post shot him on July 2, 1881, in a Washington railroad station. Mortally wounded, Garfield died on September 19, 1881 from the gunshot wound.

William McKinley, Twenty-Fifth U.S. President, 1897-1901: Born in Niles, Ohio, on January 29, 1843, McKinley briefly attended Allegheny College, and was teaching in a country school when the Civil War broke out. Enlisting as a private in the Union Army, he was mustered out at the end of the war as a brevet major of volunteers. He studied law, opened an office in Canton, Ohio, and married Ida Saxton, daughter of a local banker. McKinley was initiated, passed, and raised in Hiram Lodge No. 21 located in Winchester, Virginia during 1865. He affiliated with Canton Lodge No. 60 in Canton, Ohio on 1867 and later demitted to become a Charter Member of Eagle Lodge No. 431, also in Canton. McKinley was elected Governor of Ohio in 1891 and served two terms from 1892 to 1896. He was inaugurated as President in 1897 and was elected to a second term in 1900. Garfield's second term as President came to a tragic end in September 1901. While attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, New York he was shot by a deranged man. Garfield would die eight days later on September 14, 1901, becoming the second Masonic President to be assassinated.

Theodore Roosevelt, Twenty-Sixth U.S. President, 1901-1909: With the assassination of President McKinley in 1901, Theodore Roosevelt, not quite 43, became the youngest President in the Nation's history. He brought new excitement and power to the Presidency as he vigorously led Congress and the American public toward progressive reforms and a strong foreign policy. He was born in New York City on October 27, 1858 into a wealthy family. Though he suffered from ill health as a youth, he was an avid outdoorsman and conservationist. During the Spanish-American War, Roosevelt was lieutenant colonel of the Rough Rider Regiment, which he led on a charge at the battle of San Juan. He was elected Governor of New York in 1898, serving with distinction. Assuming the Presidency in September 1901, Roosevelt received the three degrees in Matinecock Lodge No. 806 in Oyster Bay, New York during the year. He was very supportive of Freemasonry during the remainder of his life. Following the completion of McKinley's term, Roosevelt was elected to a second term in his own right and served as President through 1909. Roosevelt died on January 6, 1919 in Oyster Bay.

William H. Taft, Twenty-Seventh U.S. President, 1909-1913: William Howard Taft was born on September 15, 1857 in Cincinnati, Ohio, the son of a distinguished judge. He was graduated from Yale and returned to Cincinnati to study and practice law. He rose in politics through judiciary appointments earned through his own competence and availability. Brother Taft was made a "Mason at Sight" within the Body of Kilwinning Lodge No. 356 located in Cincinnati, Ohio on February 18, 1909. Taft's father and two brothers were also members of this Lodge. After the ceremony, Brother and President Taft addressed the Brethren, saying, "I am glad to be here, and to be a Mason. It does me good to feel the thrill that comes from recognizing on all hands the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man." Taft was a distinguished jurist and an effective administrator but a poor politician. Large, jovial, and conscientious, Taft was inaugurated as President in 1909, and spent four uncomfortable years in the White House caught in the intense battles between the political factions of Washington. Taft's term ended in 1913 and, free of the Presidency, served as Professor of Law at Yale until Brother and President Warren G. Harding made him Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, a position he held until just before his death on March 8, 1930 in Washington, D.C.

Warren G. Harding, Twenty-Ninth U.S. President, 1921-1923: Warren G. Harding was born near Marion, Ohio, on November 2, 1865. An active civic leader, he became the publisher of a newspaper. He was a trustee of the Trinity Baptist Church, a director of almost every important business, and a leader in fraternal organizations and charitable enterprises. Harding was initiated in Freemasonry on June 28, 1901 in Marion Lodge No. 70 located in Marion, Ohio. Because of some personal antagonism, Brother Harding's advancement was hindered until 1920, by which time he had been nominated for President. Friends persuaded the opposition to withdraw the objection, and on August 27, 1920, nineteen years after his initiation, Brother Harding achieved the Sublime Degree of Master Mason in Marion Lodge. Harding won the Presidential election of 1920 by an unprecedented landslide of 60 percent of the popular vote. By 1923 the post-World War I depression was giving way to a new wave of prosperity and newspapers proclaimed Harding as a wise statesman. However, word began to reach Harding that some of his friends were using their official positions for personal enrichment. This alarmed and worried Harding but he feared the political repercussions of exposing the scandals. Looking wan and depressed, Harding journeyed westward in the summer of 1923 carrying the burden of revealing the corruption. Unfortunately, he did not live to find out how the public would react to the scandals of his administration. On August 2, 1923, Harding died in San Francisco of a heart attack.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thirty-Second U.S. President, 1933-1945: Franklin D. Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882 at Hyde Park, New York. He attended Harvard University and Columbia Law School. On St. Patrick's Day, 1905, he married Eleanor Roosevelt. Roosevelt entered public service through politics, serving in several state and federal positions before being elected Governor of New York in 1928. In the summer of 1921, at the age of 39, he was stricken with poliomyelitis. Demonstrating indomitable courage, Roosevelt fought to regain the use of his legs, particularly through swimming. Roosevelt received the three degrees in Masonry within Holland Lodge No. 8 located in New York City in 1911. During his lifetime he was supportive of Freemasonry and somewhat active in the fraternity. He was elected President in November 1932 to the first of four terms spanning the Great Depression to World War II. His tenure as President was a period of great social and political change in the United States. Assuming the Presidency at the depth of the Great Depression, he brought hope to the American people as he promised prompt,

vigorous action, and asserted in his Inaugural Address, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Roosevelt directed organization of the Nation's manpower and resources for global war. During this period he directed the war effort but also contemplated the planning of a United Nations in which international difficulties could be resolved. As the war drew to a close, Roosevelt's health deteriorated, and on April 12, 1945, while at Warm Springs, Georgia, he died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the beginning of his fourth term as President.

Harry S. Truman, Thirty-Third U.S. President, 1945-1953: Harry S. Truman was born in Lamar, Missouri, in 1884. He grew up in Independence, and for 12 years prospered as a Missouri farmer. He went to France during World War I as a captain in the Field Artillery. Returning, he married Elizabeth Virginia Wallace, and opened a haberdashery in Kansas City. A very active Freemason, Truman received his Masonic degrees in Belton Lodge No. 450 in Grandview, Missouri in 1909. In 1911, Truman and several other Masons organized Grandview Lodge No. 618 and Truman served as the first Master of the Lodge. In 1940, Truman was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Missouri and would serve as such until October 1941. Truman became a U.S Senator in 1934 and was active in monitoring the war effort while in the Senate. Brother Franklin D. Roosevelt chose Truman to be his Vice-Presidential candidate in the 1944 elections, which Roosevelt won. During his few weeks as Vice President, Truman scarcely saw President Roosevelt, and received no briefing on the development of the atomic bomb or the unfolding difficulties with Soviet Russia. Suddenly these and a host of other wartime problems became Truman's to solve when, on April 12, 1945, he became President upon the death of Roosevelt. He told reporters, "I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me." As President, Truman made some of the most crucial decisions in history. Soon after V-E Day, the war against Japan had reached its final stage. An urgent plea to Japan to surrender was rejected. Truman, after consultations with his advisers, ordered atomic bombs dropped on cities devoted to war work. Two were Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese surrender quickly followed in 1945. In 1948, campaigning against the backdrop of crises in foreign affairs around the globe, Truman won a term as President in his own right. Deciding not to run for a second term, Truman retired from the Presidency in 1953 and returned to Independence, Missouri where he died on December 26, 1972 at the age of 88.

Gerald R. Ford, Thirty-Eighth U.S President, 1974-1977: Born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1913, Gerald R. Ford grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He starred on the University of Michigan football team, and then went to Yale where he served as assistant coach while earning his law degree. During World War II he attained the rank of lieutenant commander in the Navy. After the war he returned to Grand Rapids, where he began the practice of law, and entered Republican politics. In 1948 he was elected to Congress where he developed a reputation for integrity and openness. That reputation made him popular during his twenty-five years in Congress where he served as House Minority Leader from 1965 to 1973. Ford was initiated in Freemasonry on September 30, 1949 in Malta Lodge No. 465 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In 1951 he received the Fellowcraft degree and was raised to the Master Mason degree in Columbia Lodge No. 3 in Washington, D.C. as a courtesy for Malta Lodge while Ford served in Congress. When Ford took the oath of office as President on August 9, 1974, he declared, "I assume the Presidency under extraordinary circumstances.... This is an hour of history that troubles our minds and hurts our hearts." It was indeed an unprecedented time. He had been the first Vice President chosen under

the terms of the Twenty-fifth Amendment and, in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, was succeeding the first President ever to resign. President Ford won the Republican nomination for the Presidency in 1976, but lost the election to his Democratic opponent.

A MASON WITHOUT APOLOGY

By Bishop Carl J. Sanders

United Methodist Church; Dothan, Alabama

Published in THE NEW AGE; Grand Lodge of Iowa; Republished in THE TRACING BOARD; GRS; March, 1987.

I AM A MASON! This plain and simple statement is said with pride, not apology! But to make such a statement is not enough. Reasons are expected and I give them briefly and almost in outline form.

Because of the Friendships the Fraternity has Offered Me. These friendships reach back 50 years to a rural community in Virginia where I was raised a Master Mason. Those plain, simple men took me into their circle of friendship and sustained me through many of the difficulties a young minister will find in his first year out of the seminary. Across half a century, my life has been blessed by friends from all walks of life and many denominational groups. Freemasonry is truly ecumenical in its membership. In a day of mistrust, suspicion, discrimination, separation, and even hatred. Freemasonry removes the distance between men. Friendship, morality, and brotherly love are the hallmarks of our relationships. There is a basic integrity in the Fraternity so often lacking in many of life's relationships.

Because of the Beautiful Ritual Rooted in Biblical History. These Rituals relating to each Masonic degree are not forms without substance. Out of the ancient landmarks they come with honored words that plumb the depths of human emotion. As one who loves the beauty and meanings of words, I never tire of watching and listening to the granting of any degree, the opening and the closing of lodge meetings. Ancient Biblical history comes alive in the drama and language of Freemasonry. The beauty and order of a Masonic lodge, added to the symbols so familiar to the Fraternity, have meant so much to so many.

Because of the Practice of Brotherhood & the Charitable Endeavors. Masons are not interested in shallow social activity, although they need and enjoy good fellowship. They are not interested only in a community service club, although they want to be proud of the service record and community image of the Fraternity to which they belong. Masonic homes, hospitals, and institutions are rendering a service to "the least of these" in such a manner that underscores the care and the devotion of the people called "Mason". No hospital offers quite the care for crippled children or burned children as do those that bear the name of "Mason". At no cost to the families, these hospitals open their doors and lives are restored and made whole again.

Because of the Deep Religious Tone. Let me quickly and emphatically say that Freemasonry is not and has never been a religion, however, Freemasonry has always been a friend and ally of religion. In 50 years as a minister and a Mason, I have found no conflict between my Masonic beliefs and my Christian faith. I have not found and do not now find that Freemasonry is "incompatible with Christian faith and practice".

Freemasonry has never asked me to choose between my lodge and my church. Masonry has never and will never usurp the place of God. Never has anyone dared to say: "Thou shalt love Masonry with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind". There can be only one ultimate loyalty, and the Living God is the only worthy object of such loyalty. Possibly there are those who have made a god out of Masonry. You can make a god out of anything - your business, your labor

union, your civic club, your lodge, and even your church. You can even make a god out of leftovers (Isaiah 44).

My Masonic activities have never interfered with my loyalty to and my love for my church. Quite to the contrary. The Grand Master of Pennsylvania Masonry says: Freemasonry is having faith to live by; Freemasonry is being a self to live with; Freemasonry is a never-ending pursuit of excellence. This, then, is my testimony. I am a Mason without apology!

WHAT FREEMASONRY MEANS TO ME

By The Reverend Dr. Norman Vincent Peale

I recently received a letter in which the writer asked: "Why are you a Freemason?" The question caused me to think and reaffirm my feelings about Masonry.

At first I thought about my own forebears. My grandfather was a Mason for 50 years, my father for 50 years, and I have been a Mason for 60 years. This means that my tie with Freemasonry extends back to 1869 when my grandfather joined the Masons.

My feelings on my first entrance into a Masonic Lodge are very clear in memory. I was a young man and it was a great thrill to kneel before the altar of the Lodge to become a Freemason. This must have been the same feeling my father and grandfather experienced before me. And it must also have been identical to the one that many great leaders of America and the world felt as they became Masons. Prominent among this select group are George Washington, Harry Truman, and 12 other Presidents as well as countless statesmen and benefactors of humanity.

So I found myself thinking: "What does Freemasonry mean to me?" Of course Masons say that Freemasonry actually begins in each individual Mason's heart. I take this to mean a response to brotherhood and the highest ideals. I recall the story of a man who came to me once and said: "I see that you are a Freemason. So am I." As we talked, he told me of an experience he had years ago. It seems that he joined the Masonic Fraternity shortly after he became 21 years old. When he was stationed in the military, he decided to attend various Lodge meetings. On his first visit to a Lodge in a strange city, he was a bit nervous. One thought was constantly in his mind; could he pass the examination to show that he was a Mason? As the committee was carefully examining his credentials, one of the members looked him squarely in the eye and said: "Obviously you know the Ritual, so you can enter our Lodge as a Brother Mason. But I have one more question. Where were you made a Mason?" With that he told the young visitor to think about it because when he knew the answer the examiner would not have to hear it. He would see it in his eyes. My friend told me that after a couple of minutes a big smile came to his face and he looked at the examiner, who said: "That's right, in your heart."

Freemasonry is not a religion though, in my experience, Masons have predominately been religious men and, for the most part, of the Christian faith. Through Freemasonry, however, I have had opportunity to break bread with good men of other than my own Christian faith. Freemasonry does not promote any one religious creed. All Masons believe in the Deity without reservation. However, Masonry makes no demands as to how a member thinks of the Great Architect of the Universe. Freemasonry is, for all its members, a supplement to good living which has enhanced the lives of millions who have entered its doors. Though it is not a religion, as such, it supplements faith in God the Creator. It is supporting of morality and virtue.

Freemasonry has no dogma or theology. It offers no sacraments. It teaches that it is important for every man to have a religion of his own choice and to be faithful to it in thought and action. As a result, men of different religions meet in fellowship and brotherhood under the fatherhood of God. I think that a good Mason is made even more faithful to the tenets of his faith by his membership in the Lodge.

Freemasonry is much more than a social organization. Through Masonic teachings, good men practice love and charity. As a Fraternity they spend millions of dollars to support hospitals, childhood language disorders clinics, and research into problems that plague man's physical and mental being. Whenever I visit a Masonic hospital, of which there are many, my eyes fill with tears. As I see a youngster, who could not walk, now able to get from one end of the corridor to the other with the aid of an artificial leg, I am thrilled. For a young person to have the opportunity to become whole and productive is to me exciting and wonderful. And this opportunity is given at no cost to his or her family or the state. Living is beautiful but sometimes life can be harsh and cruel. Whenever or wherever people are in need Masons are there to help. From large undertakings to the smallest of needs, Masons are always there, caring and serving.

I have always been interested as to why Masons devote so much time to their Fraternity. A good answer to this question came from a Grand Master who once told me that he enjoys his involvement because it gives him another dimension to living. The same answer is echoed by Brethren as they meet in Lodge rooms from one end of our Country to the other and around the world. Many of my best friends, associates, and fellow Christians are Freemasons and good churchmen as well.

In my travels at home and abroad a goodly number of Freemasons notice my Masonic ring, which I always wear. With pride they say: "I, too, am a Freemason."

To me, Freemasonry is one form of dedication to God and service to humanity. I too was a Freemason in my heart and so I will remain. I am proud of my involvement. I am proud to walk in fraternal fellowship with my Brethren. Why am I a Freemason? Simply because I am proud to be a man who wants to keep the moral standards of life at high level and leave something behind so others will benefit. Only as I, personally, become better, can I help others to do the same.

