
The Lyceum



A Publication of
The Committee on Masonic Education





**MY BROTHER,
YOU ARE NOT ALONE**
FREEMASONS ARE...



Bound by Brotherly Love and Friendship, Our Mystic Tie is Real!



**MASONIC MEMBERSHIP
VISIBILITY DAY | SATURDAY
AUGUST 17 2024**



FREEMASONS INVESTING IN SELF-IMPROVEMENT & BEING USEFUL TO OTHERS

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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Dear Esteemed Brothers,

It is with great joy and a renewed sense of purpose that we welcome you back to our cherished Masonic magazine, *The Lyceum*. After a year-long hiatus, we stand ready to embark on this illuminating journey once more, fortified in our commitment to Masonic Education.

In this inaugural issue of our return, we have chosen to spotlight the Fundamentals of Masonic Education, a theme that resonates strongly within our Craft. Education, indeed, is the lifeblood of Speculative Masonry, and we are delighted to bring you a curated selection of articles aimed at deepening your understanding and appreciation of this vital aspect of our fraternity.

In this issue, you will find gems like, “What is Masonic Education?”—an article that seeks to demystify the core tenets and objectives of our educational endeavors. Understanding the significance and scope of Masonic learning is paramount for every Brother committed to personal growth and the betterment of our society.

“Education is the Foundation of Speculative Masonry,” which meticulously explores how the teachings and practices within our lodges form the bedrock upon which all Masonic work is built. This piece underscores the importance of continuous learning in achieving the principles we cherish.

Additionally, we present a thought-provoking interview titled “5 Questions with the New Chairman of Masonic Education.” Gain insights into the visions and strategies of our new leader in this crucial domain, and learn how his initiatives will shape the future of Masonic education in our Grand Jurisdiction.

As a nod to the timeless allure of our Craft, we’ve hidden Masonic codes within the pages of this issue. We invite you to have fun finding them—these cryptic inclusions are not just an intellectual exercise, but a testament to the enduring mysteries that make our journey in Freemasonry so captivating.

Our return could not be more fittingly timed than in August, a month rich with symbolic meaning. August represents Strength and Protection, qualities that echo through the tenets of our Fraternity and underscore the resilience and solidarity we share as Masons. It is truly apropos that we make our debut yet again at this nexus in time, ready to fortify the minds and spirits of our brethren.

As you immerse yourself in the writings and reflections contained in this issue, we wish you well in your readings and exploration of Masonic education. Together, let us continue to illuminate our paths and that of our communities through the wisdom and light of Masonic knowledge.

Fraternally yours,
R.H. Johnson,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.H. Johnson', written over a thin horizontal line.

Editor-In-Chief



5 Questions with the Chairman

by Bernard Davis & R.H. Johnson



It's no secret that over the last few years, the Masonic Education Committee in Illinois has had its ups and downs. Some wins, and some, well, let's just call them, "headwinds." At the beginning of Most Worshipful

Brother David Lynch's term as Grand Master, he appointed a new chairman for our committee to carry on the excellent work done by our Past Education Chairman, Worshipful Brother, Michael Overturf.

Bernard Davis Jr. is our newest Chairman of The Masonic Education Committee. After many talks, I have to say, that Worshipful Brother Bernard is the perfect choice to carry on this work. Our new committee consists of Worshipful Brother Bernard Davis Jr. as our Chairman, along with Worshipful Brother Darin A. Lahners, Illustrious Brother Chad Lacek, and myself.

You can expect many new things coming from this committee in the coming months, but we really wanted to get the ball rolling with our publication, The Lyceum.

To allow the Illinois Brothers to get to know our new Chairman, I sat down with Worshipful Brother Bernard and gave him five questions about Masonic Education in Illinois. It is my hope, that you enjoy reading the questions and answers, and that this gives you an insight into the mission of the Grand Lodge of Illinois Masonic Education Committee and our work. We are, after all, your committee on Masonic Education, which is driven by the needs of our Brothers.

What is your vision for Masonic Education in Illinois, and what are your primary goals as the new Chairman?

My vision is for Masonic Education to become a primary principle and starting point for all Masonic activities we participate in. Over time, the Grand Lodge



of Illinois will be recognized as a leader of educational initiatives that serve our members as well as the communities we interact with. As the new Chairman, my goals are to work with a team of education-focused Brothers to lay the foundation of creating a framework and identify and provide the necessary tools and resources to educate all members of this jurisdiction. This starts by going back to the basics and ensuring that current reference material is consistent, accurate, and relevant to our mission and goals.

Can you share with us your personal journey within Freemasonry and what led you to take up the role of Chairman for Masonic Education?

My journey into Freemasonry began as a member of a non-recognized "lodge," that ironically focused heavily on Masonic Education. I joined at a time before a plethora of information was available on the Internet to be able to research the way that exists today. I also joined because my father was a member. As I began to learn about regularity, I worked to find ways to convert my lodge into a regular lodge and as a result, I dove further into Masonic Education. Years of research and efforts finally culminated nine years ago when six other Brothers and I decided our best path to regularity was to become members of the Grand Lodge of AF&AM of the State of Illinois.

I was simply looking for a way to contribute to the order, not necessarily looking to sit as Chairman. I am an advocate of education in all aspects of life, working professionally in higher education. I hope that through my professional and personal education journeys, I will be able to positively contribute to the growth of Freemasonry.

What new educational initiatives or programs do you plan to introduce or emphasize to enhance Masonic learning and member engagement?

To enhance Masonic learning, we will provide a cen-
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tralized repository of Masonic Educational material that is easy for all members in the state to access. The goal is to make it clear to any member where they can find the answers they are seeking in a quick and safe manner. To ensure that our resources remain relevant we will work with lodges and members to collect regular feedback on the type of materials they want to see to enhance their educational experience.

What do you perceive as the biggest challenges facing Masonic Education in Illinois today, and how do you plan to address them?

I do not believe there is a problem specific to Illinois, but in general, Masonic Education throughout Freemasonry is often viewed as a “nice to have,” VS. it being a foundational element of the fraternity. The way to address this is by first defining Masonic Education, creating a framework, and regularly introducing and conversing on the topic. For this committee’s role, we will provide the reference material or instructions on how you can obtain it, easily, and keep all members of the jurisdiction regularly informed of educational activities and initiatives taking place or resources available to them through various sources including, print and Online publications, websites, email, etc.

How do you intend to align Masonic Education with community outreach activities to ensure that the teachings and values of Freemasonry positively impact the wider community?

Collaborating with local organizations such as local schools, community centers, and other non-profit organizations—having joint events that can extend the reach of Masonic Education while demonstrating our commitment to community service. We will also look to develop community-focused educational programs that emphasize the fraternity’s core values. These programs can be tailored to address the current needs of the community and can include programs for financial literacy, computer/technology literacy, mentorship, and health and wellness.



Education is the Foundation of Speculative Freemasonry

by WB Darin A. Lahners



I was searching for Masonic content on YouTube the other night, and I ran across this podcast, <https://benfranklinsworld.com/episode-329-mark-tabbert-free-masonry-in-early-america/>, Ben Franklin's world, whose guest was Mark Tabbert. (Mark is the

Director of Archives and Exhibits at the George Washington Masonic National Memorial.). I can't recommend the episode enough. Several things that Mark addressed on the podcast stood out to me and I wish to highlight them below. I will note that the below are based on notes I took during the podcast as well as additional research, so my interpretation of the information that was given is based upon this and is in no way supposed to speak for Brother Tabbert unless otherwise noted.

1. Freemasonry had no impact on the revolutionary war, and the Masons such as Franklin, Washington, and Revere had all joined Freemasonry for different reasons. There were at the time of Franklin, Washington, and Revere's raising a small number of lodges existed in the colonies (<https://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/freemasonry/freemasonry-in-colonial-america/>). So, the actual number of Freemasons during the war would have been quite

small. As Mark points out in the above article, it's ridiculous to think that it did, and for every Mason that was a revolutionary figure, there was a figure that was not.

Franklin actually had written an article for his newspaper ridiculing Freemasonry prior to being initiated in 1731. Franklin had joined because at the time, thirty-nine years prior to the Boston Massacre, colonial life was focused on the British Crown, and receiving patronage/honors or support from the crown was the goal of many upper-class men. Freemasonry was a way to achieve this much like joining the Navy, or Army or getting another government commission could be a way to achieve this goal. Of course, Franklin went on to get his commission, serving as Grand Master, Provincial Grand Master, and Deputy Grand Master during his Sixty year Masonic Career.

Washington was initiated into his rural lodge in Fredricksburg in 1752 because he was planning on becoming a tobacco farmer and the other farmers in his area were members of the Lodge. Tabbert didn't mention this, but the Fredricksburg Lodge that Washington joined did not have a charter at the time of his initiating, passing, and raising, so he would have been considered an irregular or clandestine Mason by today's standards. His lodge would ask for and

receive a charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland five years after Washington was raised (<https://lamason.com/shorttalk/charter-warrant/>). Washington viewed joining as a rite of passage, as well as a way to connect to the other farmers, but later during and after the revolutionary war, viewed it as an incubator for republican virtues (As a clarification, Republican is used in the classical sense and refers to the virtues built around concepts such as liberty and inalienable individual rights; recognizing the sovereignty of the people as the source of all authority in law; rejecting monarchy, aristocracy, and hereditary political power; virtue and faithfulness in the performance of civic duties; and vilification of corruption), as well as a way to improve men by giving them a liberal education. He also viewed Freemasonry as a way to improve individual communities.

Revere was initiated in 1760 at St. Andrews Lodge in Boston. Revere viewed Freemasonry as a way to grow his trade and encourage commerce. Revere was a silversmith by trade and later become the Grandmaster of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts from 1795 - 1797. He would have been representative of many of the middle-class and upper-middle-class men that would have joined Freemasonry during the mid to late 1700s. Interestingly enough, Revere joined a lodge that was chartered through the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Considering that you had at this time four grand lodges (Ireland, Scotland, the English Moderns and Ancients) granting charters, the English Grand Lodges would have thought the other ones irregular, and vice versa. The Moderns and Ancients considered each other irregular at this time. It could be argued that Revere also was a member of an irregular lodge depending on your point of view.

2. The revolutionary war did have an impact on Freemasonry. Historically, you can trace an increase in membership after armed conflict as the survivors turn to Fraternal Organizations to replace the camaraderie that they experienced in those conflicts. However, Freemasonry was also in line with the enlightenment ideals of the time which were the same ideals that were inspiring the non-Freemason revolutionary figures like Jefferson. This being said, the Revolutionary War allowed for westward expansion and you see the growth and expansion of Freemasonry as being one of the things occurring with this expansion. By 1790, there were 200 lodges and by 1800 this number doubled to 400 lodges.

As earth-shaking as the above points might be to

some, there are some other things that Bro. Tabbert said that I really wanted to focus on.

1. The writing rituals and initiation ceremonies is a literary genre that started around 1720 with the first printed exhibitions of Masonic Ritual. Much like opera, poems, and other entertainment genres were written about myths and legends, Masonic ritual was a form of entertainment and was enjoyed as a literary exercise.
2. Masonic Lodges were instrumental in teaching men to read, providing them a classical education, and teaching them about the liberal ideas of self-determination, the classical republican virtues, peaceful assembly of people, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.

First of all, the men who joined Freemasonry during this time would have been men who believed in self-determination, the classical republican virtues, peaceful assembly of people, freedom of the press, and freedom of religion. Many of those that would have joined during the transition of the Masonic Guilds into what would become the Grand Lodge system we know today were educated “gentlemen” like Elias Ashmole, who we know joined a lodge in 1646. However, the purpose of the lodge would also have been to educate those that were uneducated, and as more of the Middle Class joined, the lodges would have served to teach men how to read, provide them with a liberal education, and instill many of the liberal ideas listed above into them. Of course, the guilds would have been established to be not only a ruling body for the Stone Masons local to an area but also a trade school to teach the apprentices the knowledge of Stone Masonry, in order to advance them to the point where they could be Master Masons, and our degree system is a direct descendant of this.

One could also argue that one of the many reasons behind Prince Hall forming African Lodge No. 1 was to promote literacy amongst African American men, and given his efforts to promote and secure public education for African American children, I don't think this is an invalid argument. In fact, after his numerous attempts to secure public education failed, he started a program from his own home with a focus on the liberal arts and a classical education. I think it then stands to reason that both Prince Hall and English/Scottish/Irish Freemasonry had the same goal of educating their brethren as one of their

main goals at their foundations.

At this same time, you have Masonic Rituals being printed in the press and elsewhere starting around 1720, and you slowly begin to see “*hundreds upon hundreds*” of initiation ceremonies being written as a literary exercise and as a form of enjoyment. So there is the birth of a literary genre associated with the writing and creation of new initiatory ceremonies and rituals, which gave birth to the Scottish Rite and York Rite rituals of today, as well as many others that were used as a folkway for both men and women alike. You could then argue that sub-genres were created and that what I’m currently writing in this blog is a sub-genre of this literary genre. However, for many people, the bible was the only book that they might own, so to be able to write and act out the stories from the bible would have been a popular form of entertainment for them at the time.

Historically you can research and many instances where Freemasonry and Education were intertwined. Many Grand Lodges in the United States were instrumental in helping found Public Education within their state jurisdictions. In fact, one of the enlightenment ideals that many of the Freemasons of that time would have supported, would have been a free public universal education for children as it was necessary for them to grow into conscientious productive citizens. I think you see this belief continue into the mid to late 20th century when there was a sea change and the majority Masonic thought became that Public Schools were political institutions. This belief was popularized by Henry Coil in the 1960’s in his Encyclopedia of Freemasonry.

Is it then any wonder that we have seen a diminishing of Education pursuits in our lodges? How tragic is it that our Organization has gone from once being the only place a man might receive lessons on how to read or receive a classical education to a place where education is eschewed in favor of discussions over building repairs, the type of toilet paper the lodge is buying, and other banal items? The seven liberal arts and sciences which are grammar, logic, rhetoric (the verbal arts of the trivium), arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy (the mathematical arts of the quadrivium); and which we as Fellowcraft are charged to study, used to be an important part of one’s lodge experience. What once was the foundation of Speculative Freemasonry has now been discarded, much like the Keystone in the Mark Master Degree, into the rubbish.

While we no longer need to teach our members to read, or at least I hope this is the case, there are still lessons that can be discovered through the pursuit of the verbal arts of the trivium and the mathematical arts of the quadrivium. Discussions of a masonic nature using the above as a focus will not only strengthen each of us, but also hopefully open up new horizons for ourselves and our brethren. Perhaps we should also attempt to rediscover the classical republican virtues listed above, and discuss concepts such as civil society and civic virtue, both of which are lacking in today’s society.

Many will scoff at such a notion, or attempt to dismiss it as political in nature, all while we have already seen the influence of religion and politics creep into our lodges. Just a week ago, during our tiled Grand Lodge sessions, men stated their religious beliefs and used them in their arguments for being for or against an amendment that dared to state: “Masonry knows no distinction of race or color race, color, or sexual orientation. It is the mental, moral, and physical qualifications of the man that are to be considered.” Yet, they were allowed to state them. In my humble opinion, these men should have been gaveled down. Instead, our Grand Lodge without realizing it set a precedent for men to violate the declaration of principles of their own constitution which states: “This Grand Lodge affirms its continued adherence to that ancient and approved rule of Freemasonry which forbids the discussion in Masonic meetings of creeds, politics, or other topics likely to excite personal animosities.” within their own lodges.

How we got here is unimportant. What is important is that we must work to bring back this educational experience and hold ourselves accountable to our principles. We must fight back the influence of the profane world in our sacred spaces. We must return to basing the meeting experience around a classical liberal education to not only expand their knowledge of the verbal arts of the trivium and the mathematical arts of the quadrivium, as well as the concepts of civil society and civic virtue, so that they might think for themselves instead of parroting everything they read on social media or hear in the media. In doing so, perhaps they can go into their communities and improve them. Perhaps by working with their public schools to encourage reading, they might be able to have the generations behind them capable of individual thought. Perhaps in time, their children might be able to grow up in a world that is no longer polarized

by those things which divide us now. Many Grand Lodge charities have programs to promote reading in public schools now, and it should be every lodges goal to participate in these.

If we truly go back to our roots of actually improving the individual mason via education instead of saying that Freemasonry does this when it in reality does not, perhaps we can at the very least improve retention, or separate the wheat from the chaff. The men that want to learn and improve themselves will stay, while those who would rather not can go. I'd rather have a smaller, better educated Fraternity than have the one that currently exists. Quite frankly, the one that currently exists would rather rest on it's laurels, continue to act as if we are living in the 1950's and bury it's head in the sand to the reality that the grand leveler is going to take over 75% of it's population in the next 20 years. When the average age of our Master Masons is somewhere in the mid-60's, the writing is on the wall. My hope is that I will live to see the transformation of Freemasonry into what it once was, because it's coming. The brethren who are my age and younger will see to that.



The Do's and Don'ts Of Masonic Etiquette

by WB Todd E. Creason, 33°



I didn't write this, and I'm not exactly sure where it came from originally. I saw this originally on the Masonic Lodge of Education website and after reading it thought every Mason should read it. I've found various versions of this same piece a number of different places. So I'm not sure who actually wrote this or where it came from--my apologies if I haven't attributed it correctly.

Obviously customs and traditions vary (so some of them might apply, and some might not depending on where you are). I particularly enjoyed the explanations of why some things are to be done the way they are. I find that once I understand why something is done a certain way and it makes sense to me, it's easier to remember to always do it correctly. So enjoy. Hopefully you'll learn a few things as I did, and this piece will help you conduct your meetings with a greater understanding, reverence and respect for the traditions of Freemasonry. ~Todd E. Creason

Unfortunately, Masonic Etiquette ...or Blue Lodge Etiquette, (as it is called in the United States) is largely unpublished as well as unspoken, therefore, up until now, it has been more difficult to learn its rules and nuances.

You may study ritual work, degree work, floor work and know all Masonry's glorious history, Masonic

symbols, jewels, etc. but there is very little written about how to comport yourself so you do not look foolish or be regarded as disrespectful.

Some are small things, and some are not, but your Lodge conduct is continually on display. Few Masonic mentors include a list of proper Lodge behavior, as they have learned it, themselves, incident-by-incident, and usually learned by them after their having made an error and being kindly informed by another member as to the correct Masonic etiquette of the situation.

CONFORMING TO MASONIC ETIQUETTE

Over time, and by watching others, members conform themselves to exhibit proper Masonic etiquette behavior to learn lodge customs.

As a newly Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft or Master Mason, it is expected that you will exhibit the proper decorum and propriety in observance of the formal requirements which govern behavior in polite societies... BEFORE someone takes you aside to explain your errors...or you wouldn't be reading this.

RULES OF MASONIC ETIQUETTE

THE MASTER'S AUTHORITY:

During his term in office, the brother who has been

elected as Master is the most powerful member of the Lodge. He also shoulders all of its many responsibilities. The Worshipful Master has the authority to:

1. Rule any brother out of order on any subject at any time.
2. Decide what can and cannot be discussed. Should a brother believe that the Master is arbitrary, unjust or unfair or is acting in an illegal manner, he can appeal to the District Deputy Grand Master.

If that officer agrees that the appeal is a valid one, he will forward the complaint to the Grand Master. If, however, that brother insists on speaking after the Master has ruled that he is out of order, he may be committing a Masonic offense.

Courteous brethren accept the requests made by the Master to serve on various committees such as the examination committee, the investigation committee and other duties, as determined by the Lodge's needs.

The following items are not Masonic offenses, They are simply a lack of Masonic Etiquette...or in other words, considered to be "bad form" or bad manners.

So... Let's begin:

1. WALKING BETWEEN THE ALTAR AND THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER:

Brethren do not pass between the Altar and the East when the lodge is open.

Why? As a courtesy to the Master, it is necessary that the three Great Lights which shine their eternal light and wisdom upon the Master to help him govern the lodge should never be in shadow, not even for a millisecond, during the processes of an initiation or degree work.

2. SITTING IN THE EAST

Brethren do not take a seat in the East without an invitation... even if all other seats are full.

Why? While all Brethren within a tiled room are equal to one another, and the officers are servants of the brethren, all lodge officers have worked and studied long and hard for their lodge. It is, therefore, the Master's prerogative to recognize this devotion and their loyalty by inviting distinguished visitors or a special member whom the Master wishes to honor to sit with him in the East.

In other words, if you were in church, synagogue or mosque and the pews were full, would you go up and sit beside the Pastor, Rabbi or Imam (Muslim Priest)?

3. ALWAYS FULLY DRESSED

Brethren do not enter their Lodge room either without their apron nor while putting on that apron... not even the tying of its strings.

Why? In respect to the formalities of their Lodge, officers expect that the Brethren will have the courtesy to enter it fully dressed and ready for the labor.

They should not have to wait for a member to be fully "dressed", even just tying or adjusting their apron, to salute that member. It is expected that you will be properly and entirely dressed when you pass by the Tiler and enter your lodge room.

4. STAND WHEN YOU SPEAK

No man sits while speaking in the lodge room, no matter if he addresses an officer or another brother.

Why? All lodge activity is based on each man in the lodge as being a servant of the Brethren. This includes the Worshipful Master and his officers.

While the man, himself, who has been elected Worshipful Master does not gain any special honor, personally, as the Worshipful Master, it is to the Worshipful Master as the Master of the Lodge that a member stands to address.

It is simply a form of respect ...and no different than attending a shareholder's meeting or a City Council meeting.

It is expected that if you wish to address the audience, you will stand so all may see who is speaking.

5. TALKING

"Side" talk while a degree is being conferred is considered bad manners. Why? The lodge room is a Temple of the Great Architect of the Universe. The brethren within are working to make the best ashlar (stones) for His spiritual temple.

Just as it is impolite to talk in a church, synagogue or mosque service, so it is improper to distract the officers, the workers in the degree or the candidate.

Talking without asking to do so shows irreverence

for the proceedings. God's house is not for social conversation within the lodge room. It is for worship and learning the lesson of the day which is being taught.

Unless you have requested of the Master to speak, silence is the rule. This also means no whispering.

HOW? If you have something of interest to say, raise your hand. When the Master recognizes you, you must stand up, and be recognized by the Master to speak. To address the brethren, you should say: "Worshipful Master, Right Worshipfuls, Worshipfuls, Wardens and Brethren".

If the Most Worshipful Master is in attendance, you should say: "Worshipful Master, Most Worshipful, Right Worshipfuls, Worshipfuls, Wardens and Brethren.

6. SPEAKING

If you wish to offer a predetermined motion or matter for discussion, advise the Master beforehand.

Why? Advising the Master before the meeting that you intend to bring up a specific motion or a matter for discussion is an important courtesy.

You may, indeed, do it without advising him in advance, but the Master may have plans of his own for that meeting, for which your proposed motion or discussion may not easily fit into the allotted time frame.

As a courtesy to him, his work, and his dedication to the members, it is best to ask him privately, beforehand, if he will be able to recognize you to speak your purpose. This saves "face" for both of you.

You will not publicly be refused and he will not have to seem disagreeable or arrogant in his refusal of your motion. If you wish to speak, (see number 6.), above.

7. OBEY THE GAVEL

You must immediately obey the gavel.

Why? Failure to immediately obey the gavel is a GRAVE DISCOURTESY and VERY poor Masonic Etiquette.

The Master is all powerful in the lodge and his word is final.

He can put or refuse to put any motion.

He can rule any brother out of order on any subject at any time.

He can say what he will, and what he will not, permit to be discussed.

Brethren who think him unfair, arbitrary, unjust, or acting illegally have redress.

The Grand Lodge can be appealed to on any such matter. However, in the lodge, the Master's gavel, which is his emblem of authority, is supreme.

When a brother is rapped down, he should obey at once, without any further discussion. It is VERY bad manners to do otherwise. In fact, it is perilously close to the line between bad manners and a Masonic offense.

Masonic etiquette decries anyone who does not obey the gavel.

8. TURNING YOUR BACK

Never turn one's back on the Master to address the lodge without first receiving permission from the Master to speak.

Why? Any debates that are in motion must be conducted using proper Masonic etiquette. One always stands to order when addressing the chair.

Customs differ in various jurisdictions as to the method of salute, however some salute should always be given when addressing the Master.

Two brethren, both on their feet, simultaneously arguing a motion, who are facing each other and ignoring the Master is unacceptable.

9. SALUTE

Some lodges (not all) offer salutes to the Master. Each of the brethren will salute the Master when they enter and when they leave their Masonic Mother lodge room or any other Masonic lodge room. Some lodges offer salutes to the Senior Warden.

Why? The Masonic etiquette of saluting the Master is your renewed pledge of fealty and service. It is your public display of decorum before all other brothers of your obligation.

It shows your courteous respect for all that the Master stands for and shows that you acknowledge his authority.

Salutes should reflect your heart-felt respect for all that for which he stands.

The salute to the Master is your pledge of honor and service, your publicly shown obligation. A lazy, sloppy or improper salute is to be Masonically impolite and, thus, to exhibit poor Masonic etiquette.

10. BALLOTING

Do not enter or leave the lodge room during a ballot.

Why? It is discourteous to leave the lodge room during a speech, during a degree, etc. There are several natural periods, such as at the end of one section and before the next begins, or when the Master puts the lodge at ease until the sound of the gavel. Then, and only then, you may leave the lodge without being considered rude.

It is Masonic Etiquette that all brethren are expected to vote when requested to do so.

Failure to cast your ballot not only results in your failure to share in your duties, but is in direct disobedience of the Master's request.

11. VOTING IS MANDATORY

When an issue is put to a vote, all brethren should vote.

Why? A brother who does not vote is discourteous because he skews the ballot. He becomes the weak link in a strong chain.

No matter what the reason of his non-vote, he injures the lodge's ballot, its value and its secrecy. Failure to vote can injure a lodge's feeling of brotherhood, and by that injury, can injure the Masonic fraternity.

No matter what reason you may privately hold about voting, it is poor Masonic Etiquette to fail to vote when requested to do so by the Master.

12. SMOKING

No smoking in the lodge building.

Why? While there are lodges who allow smoking during the business meeting (and you must be guided by the customs of your Mother Lodge), the ceremonies you take part in and watch are solemn

occasions.

In most lodge rooms, it is considered VERY disrespectful to smoke while the ceremonies are taking place. Smoking may take place in other parts of your building or outside and during refreshment.

13. SHOULDERING THE WORK

It is good Masonic Etiquette to accept a request made in the name of the lodge if it is within your abilities.

Why? A lodge is a working "beehive of industry". A request made of you from your lodge acknowledges that the lodge trusts you to competently fulfill such a request based upon your knowledge.

14. CORRECTION OF VERBAL ERRORS

Lodge customs state that no one except for the Worshipful Master or his prearranged designee, may correct any mistake that may occur during the course of a Ceremony, and even he does so only when the error is a serious one.

Why? It is discourteous to point out others mistakes in front of the lodge brethren. If you are in possession of a mind which allows you to be able to perform each and every degree and ceremony, perfectly, please advise the Worshipful Master of such that he may take advantage of your services to mentor others.

15. EXHIBIT GOOD POSTURE

Why? Good posture is necessary while within the Lodge room. Lounging, leaning and slovenly attitudes should be avoided.

Poor posture is considered poor Masonic etiquette.

16. NO PRACTICAL JOKES NOR OFF-COLOR STORIES

Why? The great lessons of Masonry, which are taught by our ritual, should never be demeaned by levity or pranks.

The lodge room is not a proper location for the telling of practical jokes, pranks, horseplay nor off-color stories.

17. USE PROPER MASONIC NAMES

Why? It is common courtesy to be accurate in speaking a brother's name, so it is proper Masonic etiquette to address officers, members, and visitors by their correct Masonic titles and addresses.

18. ENTERING LODGE AFTER THE MEETING HAS BEGUN

If a brother should enter the Lodge after the opening ceremony is under way, he should go to the Altar to salute the Master.

If he must leave before the meeting is over, the correct Masonic etiquette of his departure is that he should salute the Presiding Master at the Altar before he departs.

The salute should always be given properly and not in a careless or perfunctory manner.

19. ALL PRAYERS AT LODGE FUNCTIONS ARE NON-SECTARIAN (*Secular*)

Freemasonry is worldwide and holds no sectarian views. Non-sectarian means not sectioned into one, specific religion. Freemasonry embraces all religions.

A Mason may choose the religion of his choice in his private life but should be aware and open to the fact that others among the brethren do not necessarily share nor were they brought up with the religious dogmas and beliefs that you, personally, embrace.

Why? Prayers at lodge functions should be scrupulously in keeping with Masonic teachings. The Masonic Etiquette of offered prayers is that they should never be an expression of specific sectarian views or dogmatic creeds.

It is a matter of courtesy that all prayers, speeches and discussions at Masonic affairs avoid sectarian, controversial or political tones.

Prayers are best directed to the Creator, the Master Architect of the Universe and not toward specific religious teachings such as Jesus Christ, Mother Mary, Muhammad, Jehovah, Allah etc.

To do so omits the religions of others within the brethren, which can cause conflict and therefore not be harmonious to the whole.

In the spirit of non-sectarianism, we must remember that since the day that our Creator found that Man created the Tower of Babel to glorify themselves; it is HE who changed man's language into the many diverse languages now spoken on Earth.

In so doing, our Creator has many names across the world.

20. TURN CELL PHONES OFF

All cell phones should be turned off before entering the lodge room so as not to disrupt the proceedings.

Masonic Etiquette Summary: Masonic etiquette is simply the rules of good manners which make lodge meetings pleasant for everyone.

The position of Worshipful Master in the East occupies the most exalted position within the lodge. A lodge which does not honor its Master, no matter how they personally feel about the man, himself, lacks Masonic courtesy.

The honor conveyed by the brethren in electing him, ...in other words, the historical traditions and the men who have gone before you must be given the utmost respect, if the traditions of the Fraternity are to be observed and proper Masonic etiquette is to be maintained.

Masonic etiquette comprises lodge courtesies and proprieties.

Good manners imply observance of the formal requirements governing man's behavior in polite society and a sense of what is appropriate for a person of good breeding with high morals and good taste.

The spirit of brotherly love and affection, by which we are bound together, will be exemplified in our conduct, our carriage and our behavior at all times. It is my hope that you will use your trowel to cement the stones of brotherly love for the "More Noble and Glorious Purpose" of exhibiting these rules of Masonic Etiquette toward one and all within the brethren.



Since 1949, the MCME has provided a forum for sharing best practices in Masonic Education



News



The 2025 Midwest Conference on Masonic Education will be held in Indiana

May 2 – 4, 2025



Mission

Since 1949 we have endeavored to:

Provide a communications and support network for our member jurisdictions.

Conduct an annual forum for Masons who have a vital interest in Masonic Education.

Offer the opportunity to share Masonic experiences, knowledge, and insights.

Publish occasional newsletters, communications, and the proceedings of its annual meetings.



Invitation to Join Us

Consider joining us in this work:

All Master Masons from recognized Masonic jurisdictions and Masonic-Affiliated organizations in the United States, Canada, or worldwide are encouraged to contact us and become part of our Conference on Masonic Education.

We also encourage recognized Masonic Jurisdictions to inquire on how to become a member jurisdiction of MCME.

[Join Now...](#)



About Us

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education

Since 1949, the MCME has provided a forum for sharing best practices in Masonic Education with each of its member jurisdictions.

Who We Are

The Midwest Conference on Masonic Education was formed in 1949 at a gathering of interested Masons from Illinois (including Alphonse Cerza) and Iowa.

The outcome was to continue getting together by establishing its first Annual Meeting which was held in December 1950 in Cedar Rapids IA. The organization is comprised of a loose and ever-changing collection of Masonic educators from Grand Lodge jurisdictions located in 12 north central States and the Province of Manitoba. Other participants frequently include chairs of Masonic Education as well as Grand Lodge officers.

What We Are About

The aim of the Conference is to promote Masonic Education, in part by providing a forum for educators to gather, freely discuss Masonic issues, socialize, and learn from sharing experiences while build-

ing beneficial relationships.

In addition, the Conference initiates special projects such as collecting data on educational practices across all North American jurisdictions, as well as encouraging Masonic research and writing by individual educators.

How We Function

The Conference meets once a year, usually in late April or early May, in one of the member jurisdictions. Responsibility for conducting the Annual Meeting rotates each year, eventually being hosted by all member jurisdictions before repeating.

A typical program schedule includes presentations by well-known Masonic speakers, experiential as well as scholarly participant presentations, roundtable discussions, and jurisdiction reports. Sufficient time is also arranged to provide informal chats among attendees. For more than a half century, our participants have expressed the view that our Conference is well worth the time, effort and cost in order to gain the many benefits from attending and participating.

For more information visit:

MCME1949.Org

Remember - Individuals and other orgs can join, that means YOU!



It's Just a Fraternity!

by WB C.R. Dunning Jr.



While I'm not very active on social media, I do occasionally wander through its twisting catacombs. Recently I was doing just that, and across two days I repeatedly saw presumably well-meaning Masons in different virtual

spaces making assertive comments like the title of this piece. Some of them even voiced frustration with people who are "trying to make it what it isn't." In almost every case, a more pointed complaint was made against Masons who regard the Fraternity as a contemplative, spiritual, or philosophical tradition. Some specifically grumbled that their brothers who want their lodge environments to be more sincere, reverent, and inspiring are taking the fun out of Masonry.

Interestingly, these complaining brothers didn't mention what they think the limits are to being a fraternity. Is this Fraternity only about fun fellowship? Does it concern itself with self-improvement? Is mutual support part of it? And, if it includes any of those things that are beyond simply making and hanging out with friends, then where exactly is the dividing line that separates them from spirituality, philosophy, and being contemplative? How is it that coming together for study and discussion of spirituality and philosophy interferes with good fellowship?

Another observation I made was that none of these brothers referenced the ritual of this Fraternity to support their claim. It made me wonder if they've ever listened to the actual words of the rituals that facilitate becoming a full member of this Fraternity. It's hard to not conclude that to them many of the



rituals' words are just fancy but meaningless paper, bows, and ribbons on the package of membership. Somehow these brothers haven't fully realized that the words of our rituals are meant to teach real lessons, provide real instructions, and urge real efforts to learn and grow spiritually and philosophically.

Similarly, it seems clear that the complaining brothers haven't studied the history of our Craft. They haven't been impressed with the fact that the rituals of this Fraternity were developed by men who were very interested in spirituality and philosophy. Those same men made sure that the shift from Operative Masonry to Speculative Masonry emphasized the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of the Builder's Art. These and later great leaders of Masonic thought have repeatedly stated in their own words how important a solemn and contemplative atmosphere is to accomplish the central intentions of our ritual. Heck, they even wrote such admonitions into the ritual itself! But I have digressed to the topic of the previous paragraph.

Another problem behind the scenes of those complaints is that many brothers don't know how to dif-

ferentiate spirituality from religion. So, being taught that Masonry is not a religion, and that there should be no religious contention in the lodge, has given some brothers the impression that spiritual topics and attitudes have no place in this Fraternity. This misunderstanding happens despite our rituals being filled with spiritual considerations and urging us to pursue them. But I digress again. Back to the point, another issue in this context arises with brothers who, for whatever reason, cannot imagine or condone, let alone engage, spirituality that is inclusive of religious views other than their own. This problem is most unfortunately demonstrated when brothers seek or create rules and regulations that effectively impose their own beliefs on others and even remove things from our rituals and official documents that they find uncomfortable. In effect, in their own religiosity, they try to turn this Fraternity into an extension of their own churches. In the face of such ignorance and intolerance, it's no wonder that, with the best of intentions, other brothers would scream "We're just a fraternity!"

The point about taking the fun out of Masonry makes a little more sense to me. Different people take joy in different things, and some of us obviously have our minds made up that there are irreconcilable differences between fun and anything that involves a sincere commitment to learning and growth. By the way, those closed minds can be on either side of the divide. There are "fun" folks resistant to learning and growth, and there are "learning and growth" types who avoid fun. But I'm mindful of how important play is as a means of assimilating information and developing skills, and how often the true masters of an art seem to be more at play than at labor with their creativity. It's also worth noting the staggering volumes of food and spiritous beverages consumed by Masons of the early Grand Lodge era while they considered profound issues and concepts! Surely there are activities that demand more solemnity and decorum, such as degrees, installations, and funerals. It is also right that some forms of humor and good cheer have their own places apart. It's a hallmark of human maturity, and thus of Masonic virtue, to recognize where one is among these territories and their overlaps, and to conduct oneself accordingly. I'm happy to say that I know many brothers who are very good at both sincere labor and lively refreshment!

Now, you might think that I would condemn the complaining brothers I've been referencing, but I don't. They deserve the benefit of the doubt and I

have no reason to question that their position is conscientiously rooted in Masonry as they know it. The "just a fraternity" attitude was demonstrated to them before they became members. The negligence of our history and of the meaning in our rituals was inculcated by the examples of their elder brothers. And their perpetuation of that attitude and negligence has been rewarded with advancement and even honors. They may also be reacting to religious zealots posing as Masonic purists. In short, they're the best Masons they can be given the circumstances of their fraternal experience. How can I hold any ire against them?

For me, all these observations and reflections point to three very important truths. First, if this Fraternity is to be what its founders intended, what its rituals say it is, and are very well-equipped to facilitate, then Masonic education is of utmost importance. In our efforts to ensure a future for this Fraternity, if we don't know what most deserves to be saved and passed on to future generations, then we risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Second, an examination of our history and ritual shows that the problem of "trying to make it what it isn't" began a long time ago with the rise of the "just a fraternity" attitude. Third, this Fraternity can be both fun and spiritually and philosophically meaningful; for brothers with open minds and hearts, the two don't need to be mutually exclusive.

But let's face it, fewer brothers will grasp any of these truths if we don't help everyone see them in our history and the words of our rituals. Without Masonic education, it really is just a fraternity, and that takes the meaning and the fun out of it for those who are actually seeking more light in all the colors our tradition offers. With good Masonic education, each brother knows he can appropriately enjoy whichever color he finds most attractive, and he can do so without preventing others from appropriately enjoying theirs. In the process, brothers might even discover some colors to be more attractive than they had expected, and in doing so benefit from a richer experience. That's just the fraternity this Fraternity is meant to be.



What is Masonic Education?

by WB Todd E. Creason, 33°

Originally posted to the Midnight Freemasons Blog in three parts. Printed here are all three articles.

Part I

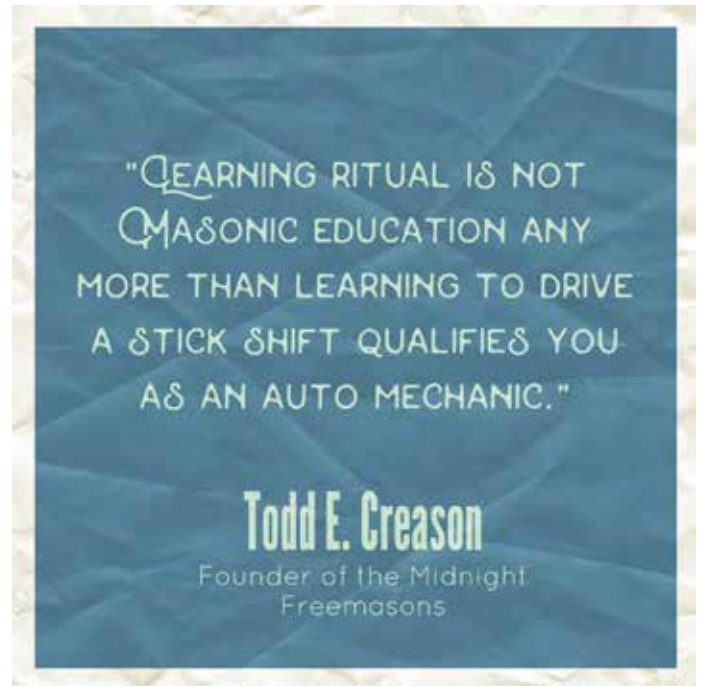
What is Masonic education?

It's a good question, and I can tell you exactly what it is. It's the answer to almost every problem Lodges are having today. Masonic education is why most of our new members joined in the first place, and one of the last things they'll find in a many of our Lodges today.

Men petition our Lodges because they are seeking something. They want to belong to an organization that shares their values. They want to be more active in their community. They want to learn to be a better man by improving their character. They want to take part in the time honored traditions and ancient teachings of the Freemasons. They want to live their life to a higher and more noble standard. And the expectation when they join is that they are going to receive instruction on these things from the Freemasons.

That's certainly why I joined. I even went through the traditional way, and spent months memorizing the catechisms and the obligations--I don't learn quickly, and it was a huge challenge. I saw beautiful degree work, heard wonderful lectures, and when I was finally raised a Master Mason I considered it one of the most important accomplishments in my life--right up there with baptism, marrying my wife, and the birth of my children. And then I attended my first regularly stated meeting. There were no deep discussions of Masonic principles at that meeting. Nor at the second, or third, or fourth meeting. I finally asked, and I was told there were meetings I could attend if I wanted to learn more about Masonry. I did, so I found out where and when those meetings took place, and I went.

I learned how to carry a rod, and how to turn a corner, and what hand I should use when I open a door



during a degree. I learned the proper way to open the Bible. I even learned in what order to turn on the lights beside the altar. It wasn't Masonic education, it was ritual instruction. Other than what was contained within the lectures of those three Masonic degrees, there was no additional Masonic education offered in my part of the world when I became a Mason 11 years ago. And that's exactly the way it is in many places. And that's why I've worked so hard to bring that education component back into the Lodges.

I said earlier that providing Masonic education was the answer to almost every problem Lodges are having. I can tell you without hesitation that's true. We need membership. The fact of the matter is there is no better recruiting tool than members who are enjoying themselves and learning new things. They talk about it. They get their friends to join. I've seen it over and over again.

Case in point is a brand new Chapter of the Royal Arch in Illinois I'm a member of--Admiration

Chapter. This is a chapter that focuses on Masonic education. Every meeting we have a very short business meeting, and then an education component--a speaker, a discussion on a topic of interest that is announced in advance, a table lodge, a presentation, etc. You know what Admiration Chapter doesn't have problems with? Attendance and membership. We have great turnouts, and we continue to add members--and we're not recruiting new members. We don't need to recruit, because they are coming to us. That's pretty impressive considering Admiration Chapter hasn't even received a charter yet--we're still operating "under dispensation" of the Most Excellent Grand High Priest of Illinois. We've completed the necessary requirements at this point, and we'll get that charter in the next few months.

Do you want to talk about member retention? Members just stop showing up, right? Or you get a new Master Mason in your Lodge, and he comes for awhile, and you don't see him again. Just drops out of sight, and your members wonder why. Sound familiar? I can tell you the most common reason why. Your meetings are boring. It's not what the new Mason thought it was going to be, probably because he thought he'd continue to be learning things instead of talking about how the Eastern Star ladies are using our coffee and not replacing it, and if we're going to resurface the parking lot or just fill in the potholes. That's not why those men became Masons, is it?

Money is an issue, too. There's two reasons for that--most Lodges dues are too cheap. That's a separate, but related issue--before you can jack up your dues you're going to have to offer more than getting to sit in a room once or twice a month and listen to somebody read the mail. But if we could fix some of these obvious problems and we filled our buildings with Masons, we'd have more money, wouldn't we? And the more members we have in our Blue Lodges, the more Scottish Rite Masons we have, and the more York Rite Masons we have, and the more Shriners, etc!

I've been beating this drum for a long time. New members want education. The success of the Midnight Freemasons in itself is evidence of that. The success of Lodges and bodies that are beginning to focus on education again is evidence of that. If we continue to do the same things, we can continue to expect the same results.

The ritual is an important part of who we are as Free-

masons--it's one of the things that make us unique. Learning ritual is not Masonic education any more than learning to drive a stick shift qualifies you as an auto mechanic. We talk a lot in Admiration Chapter about enhancing the member experience. What we mean by that is offering our members what they wanted to begin with--a place where we could learn from each other, talk about values, learn more about what Freemasonry has to teach us about how to become better men, better husbands, better fathers, better citizens.

So if you're where I was eleven years ago, seeking further light where none exists, what do you do?

Part II

There's a difference between education and instruction.

As I fully expected, the first installment of this series received a large number of cheers and a quite a few jeers as well. Most of the readers of the last installment understood what I was saying. Ritual is an important part of our Masonic tradition, and without question, there are aspects of ritual that are very critical to our education as Freemasons. I don't think anybody expressed it better than my good friend and Brother Brian L. Pettice who said, "Learning ritual introduces us to the lessons that, if internalized, will help us to be the better men we want to be. Learning ritual and floor work teaches us to be intentional in our thoughts, words, and actions." He went on to say, "The problem is when learning the ritual becomes the end. It is not the end." Brian was making the same point I was. Ritual is important, but it is only the beginning of what should be our ongoing and lifelong education and growth as Freemasons.

That being said, there is a lot in the ritual that IS education IF we teach it. I've seen several presentations that take the ritual and explain it in detail. They explained the history of the degrees and where they came from. They explored the deeper meaning of the words by putting those words into the context of the time in which they were written--instead of being merely memorized words, those words took on a different meaning for me once the context was explained. They explained why things are done in a certain precise way. They went back into history to explain what each chair in the Lodge actually represents. Likewise, I've seen (and given) many great presentations that go in much deeper detail on the ritual lectures, and explore the meaning of

the symbols introduced in the ritual. I give a pretty good twenty minute presentation on just one of the symbols we are introduced to in the 1st Degree, and believe me, I could easily go an hour.

So there is a lot there within our ritual that is education. And as Bro. Pettice pointed out, there is great value in the patience and effort it takes to learn the precise movements and memorize word for word the ritual as written in an arcane English. But the ritual is just the beginning of that journey Masonic education is what comes next.

So what is Masonic education?

Well, there isn't just one answer. One definition is that it involves teaching each other how to apply the principles of Masonry into our everyday lives. It's about our history as a Fraternity. It's about character development. It's about leadership development. I think today, that role in character and leadership development is more crucial than ever. We aren't teaching values to our children as well as we once did. They often don't learn them in the home. Fewer and fewer Americans are going to church. Our schools are far too busy teaching kids specific subjects so they can pass tests--there is no time to teach kids values that would be useful in helping develop their character. I see Freemasonry filling that critical role. Teaching young men positive character traits, ethics, and morals that they can apply to their everyday lives.

That's one area that our new Royal Arch Chapter, Admiration Chapter, is exploring. We have a particular focus on education, and twice now, we've had some very in depth discussions with our members. The first discussion was on the topic of civility. We talked about what we thought that meant. We talked about how we could improve ourselves in that area. And we talked about how we could apply it to our everyday lives. We followed that discussion up recently with another moderated discussion on honor. That discussion was even better than the first discussion. We talked about honor, respect, and tradition in that discussion. Our members enjoy those discussions, and they take something away with them when we have them. One of our members told me that he's thought differently about civility ever since that discussion several months ago--he's made changes to a couple areas of his life, particularly in his social media discussions, and in the way he reacts to opposing points of view. That is Masonic education in the

form of character development.

A few months ago, my Lodge hosted a Leadership Development Seminar put on by the Grand Chapter of Illinois. It was open to all Masons, and we had a good turnout. We had a couple excellent presentations, followed by some good questions, and meaningful discussion. We all left that event thinking about where we're strong in leadership, and where we needed to improve. I thought particularly about one comment made during that presentation about delegation--I tend to do too many things myself that others could help me with. I've made a few changes there since. Again, that's Masonic education in the form of Leadership Development.

I'm a student of history, and have been all of my adult life. I've written books, I've written magazine articles, and blog posts, and give presentations and speeches--almost always involving in some way history and Freemasonry. I'm fascinated with how Masonic values have influenced history. I'm fascinated by how famous Freemasons have changed our world. I'm fascinated by the ritual, by the symbolism, by the questions about where our Fraternity came from and how it evolved over time. I'm interested in the esoteric side of the Craft. And I love to share the things I learn. I'm not an expert. Not even close. I know more than some, but not nearly as much as others. I continue to learn, and I continue to share what I learn with others. What I do is Masonic education in the form of historical perspective.

These aren't the only forms of Masonic education. There are many more. Masonic education is a tool we share with our Brother than he can use in chipping away on that rough ashlar of his. And as we all learn together, we also all grow together. You'll find as I have, that Lodges and Masonic bodies that provide meaningful Masonic education to their members attract new members more readily than those that don't. I drew a lot of criticism in the first installment when I said providing training and education to our members is the solution to most of the problems we have as a Fraternity today. I stand by that. It is. Masonic Lodges are repositories of light. They are places of learning. If we're not going to teach those values we hold in such high regard then we're just a social club with a few ritual traditions.

So how do you get meaningful education started in your lodge?

Well, that's not always easy to do.

Part III

So in the first couple installments I've talked a lot about Masonic education. The difference between Masonic education and ritual instruction. I've talked about how providing meaningful Masonic education in your Lodges can solve a lot of the problems your Lodges are having with membership and money. But now we're down to the big question. **How do we get it going?**

Resistance

As with any new things you're going to want to do, you're going to encounter resistance to the idea. You're going to have that group that doesn't want to do anything differently than they always have. So go slow, don't ask for a help, and be willing to do the work yourself. Because when it comes right down to it, most of the resistance you're going to encounter are going to come from members that simply don't want additional work or expense. I'm sorry to say that so bluntly, but it is true.

Just ask for ten minutes at the end of the meeting. If you can't get that, ask for a few minutes in the dining hall before or after the meeting. Then put together really, really interesting topics to present. Don't waste that time by just reading an article from a Short Talk Bulletin, or from The Midnight Freemasons. Put something together they are going to enjoy. Something that is interesting to them. This is sell job, so sell it.

Have you got one member a little more resistant than the others to change? What's he interested in? If I were you, I'd be putting something together that he's interested in, and then during the presentation, ask him if there is anything he'd like to add. Do you see what I'm talking about now? Go slow. Start really small. Don't waste the time you have. Sell it.

Birds Of A Feather

You're going to find others interested in what you're doing. Recruit them. Get them interesting in helping. Get them interesting in presenting pieces during that ten minutes. Make that ten minutes the ten minutes in that meeting that everyone looks forward to. That's how the Midnight Freemasons started. Just me. Three days a week. Lucky to get two or three



hundred hits a day. Just doing my thing, and then I found others. There's now more than a dozen Midnight Freemasons, with over 2 million readers.

Expand

You've heard the expression, "you give him an inch, and he'll take a foot." That's me. Always has been. And if you want to get this going, that needs to be you as well. Ask for a little more time once you get it going. Ask if you can invite an outside speaker--maybe somebody from another Lodge. Ask if you can advertise your topics and invite other Lodges to join your meetings so they can enjoy the presentations. Again, don't waste that time, and take the time necessary to prepare really good presentations. Offer to do the same in other local Lodges. Let it be known you'll travel and do ten minutes wherever you're invited. And you will be invited--I promise you that.

What You'll Soon Discover

If you're successful, those critics in the beginning will become your biggest fans. They'll see more people attending meetings. They'll enjoy the education you're providing. You may even find the meetings go faster and are a little less tedious because the members will be focused on getting to the education portion of the meeting. That "education portion" of the meeting that was originally met with so much resistance will become the center of your meetings. Your members will be talking about it, and as a result you may even receive new petitions. Other members will begin having ideas about education in the Lodge. We had a Trivia Night and we invited other Lodges

to join us one evening--basically it was Jeopardy on Masonic topics. It was very fun to do. How about a symposium? How about a table lodge? Get ready, because if you can get through that initial resistance to change, you're going to find a very enthusiastic following, and no shortage of ideas.

Where Does It All Lead?

To better men--that's where. That's our purpose, and the world has never been more in need of men of good character. As a society, we don't teach values as well as we used to, and a Masonic Lodge should be a place where young men can come to learn those morals, values, and ethics that makes a young man a gentleman.

To a more prosperous Lodge. My Lodge has a museum. We put that together to share the history of our Lodge, our historic building, as well as Freemasonry in general. We have open houses every so often, and the community comes up and tours our museum and our building. We have a young college student interested in joining our Lodge. His aunt had arranged



for him to tour the building five or six years ago when he was still in grade school. He never forgot it. I think we'll soon get a petition from him.

In my opinion, the education officer in the Lodge has one of the most important jobs there is. If he does his job right, he can save a dying Lodge by bringing light back to the membership. He can bring new energy and interest to the members. There are libraries full of knowledge and teachings on the topic of

Freemasonry. It has intrigued and interested generations of men, and it still holds that power today if one person in every Lodge simply took an interest in it, and made it their job to bring it to their Brethren.

One Last Story

A few weeks ago, I was the keynote speaker at a symposium put on by the Illinois Lodge of Research. It was a well planned and well attended program. The purpose of that program was two-fold really. First, the Illinois Lodge of Research for all intensive purposes has been dormant for many years. So that program was kind of a coming back out party. The second purpose was to rebuild the organization by rebuilding a core group of strong Masonic authors, researchers, scholars, and presenters.

Now the Midnight Freemasons are not taking any direct credit for the resurgence of the Illinois Lodge of Research, but as I looked around the room, I realized the Midnight Freemasons influence was definitely there. There were three Midnight Freemasons there presenting topics, and three additional Midnight Freemasons guest contributors in attendance--one of those played an integral role in planning and putting on the event! The Master of the Illinois Lodge of Research, Jim Tome, is also the Most Excellent Grand High Priest of Illinois, and has been instrumental in helping us get a new education-based Chapter of the Royal Arch started in my Lodge in Homer, Illinois--Admiration Chapter. He's been involved in much of what we're doing with Admiration Chapter, and he's seen a lot of what we've been doing with our Masonic Temple in Homer, Illinois. And at the end of that symposium, Jim Tome announced where they'd like to hold the next symposium. I'm sure you'll never guess. At the Masonic Temple in Homer, Illinois. The home of Admiration Chapter!

So when I tell you to start small, don't think it's going to stay small. It won't. Like a snowball rolling down hill, you'll gain momentum, and the size will continue to grow. Others will see what you're doing, and be inspired to start their own projects. There is tremendous interest out there about Freemasonry, and if you teach it, and if you do a good job teaching it, you're going to find tremendous success. So if you want to see change, you can't sit around waiting for somebody else to do it. You have to be the change.

Good luck, my Brothers! Now get busy! There's work to be done!



Freemasonry and The Seven Liberal Arts And Sciences

by Brother Harold J. Spelman, IL

Candidates are often puzzled when they are charged in the Fellow Craft Degree to study the liberal arts and sciences. Are they actually expected to re-enter school to study these subjects all over again? Not understanding what is meant by studying the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, but noting the impeachability of such an idea, they completely forget about the charge and return to the next Lodge meeting where they become engrossed in planning the next golf outing or picnic. Once again, Freemasonry loses a student of the Craft and, more sadly, gains a Master Mason who has no idea what Freemasonry actually stands for. This, of course, is error enough. More importantly, the world has lost one more chance to make a good man a better person. As a result, an opportunity is lost to make the World a better place to live.

It is the thesis of this article that the injunction to study the seven liberal arts and sciences is one of the important keys to the true meaning of Freemasonry. It is a symbol of all Man's learning from the 14th century to the present time. In this scientific age, it provides a guide not only to the meaning of our civilization but also as a key to the true meaning of all religions, an insight into the philosophies that govern the thinking of Western civilization today. It also, when properly understood, provides a key to the problems of the world today. A careful reading and reflection on the material presented herein will assist in making a Master Mason cognizant of the great truths he has inherited as a member of this ancient and noble Craft. Read, study, and learn, my Brother, as you have been charged to do.

The dominant idea or philosophy found in society just prior and concurrent with the emergence of Humanism was Scholasticism which could best be characterized as the attempt to unite Christianity and Classical Greek thought, especially Aristotle's. Humanism reached its peak in the late 15th and early 16th Centuries just prior to the rise of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was a continuation of Humanism with the important addition of scientific

interest and knowledge. Humanism arose mainly as a result of the Crusades and the exploration of Western Europe; and the rediscovery of the classical Greek philosophers and their attendant popularity. The inability to bring Aristotle into alignment with Christian doctrine had long been a problem to the Christian church for, unlike Plato's teachings, Aristotle's philosophy was much more difficult to square with Christian teachings. Plato, on the other hand, had been reconciled with Christian doctrine from early times. Without becoming mired in philosophical discussions, we can state that it was much easier to assimilate the teachings of Plato with Christianity than it was to reconcile the philosophy of Aristotle. In order to claim the universality of Christianity, the church doctors realized that reconciliation emerging from the Cathedral school accepted this reconciliation as their main educational task. All of the advanced education was directed toward resolving that conflict. This resolution was attempted through arguments, debates, and writings concerning such erudite subjects as, "What was Adam's first sin?" or "Where is the wedding cup used at the marriage of Adam and Eve?" In these debates, the dominant thought in writing, speaking, and debating was precision. The concept held that one could advance an argument if words were not used precisely, and grammatically correct rules followed. The goal was to think clearly and for each to express himself in the same manner according to a uniform set of rules. This ability was considered the major accomplishment of the educated man. It can easily be seen that form was more important than substance!

The imitation of the writing of the classical Greeks was worth emulating. In doing that, they were following the examples found in their readings of the classical Greek scholars, and the Greek's precise and beautiful use of language. Lurking behind these requirements were the changes that would be gradually brought about by the invention and use of the printing press. It takes little explanation to realize that if arguments and theories were to reach the stage of a printed document those arguments and theories on

both sides needed to be expressed in views according to agreed-upon rules of expression. Otherwise, neither side would clearly understand the discussion, resulting in chaos. These events brought about a change in the Cathedral schools. This change placed the emphasis upon what originally was known as the Trivium. Later, in the early Enlightenment period, adding the Quadrivium that then became the "...seven liberal arts and sciences" expanded this concept. We will now proceed to examine the Trivium and Quadrivium, and their effect on the rise of Freemasonry.

Trivium

Grammar

The Trivium consisted of; grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic. To quote Sanctius, "God created man as the participant of reason; and as he willed him to be a social being, he bestowed upon him the gift of language, in the perfecting of which there are three aids, which rejects from language all solecisms and barbarous expressions..." Therefore, the most important reason for grammar is to aid men in their capacity to reason. You will note that this is also followed by the statement "...he willed him to be a social being..." Strange as it may seem, the ability to reason and sociability are not strangers to each other and are certainly not diametrically opposed. Human beings learn through social contact. Hearing the ideas of others, whether expressed in art, music, lectures, discussion or debates allowed an individual to sharpen and refine his thinking. We recognize this today when we put the idea into colloquialism and say to some person, "Let me bounce this idea off you," or "Well, let's run it up the flagpole and see how it will fly."

These are nothing more than a request for discussion or criticism; an attempt to see if we are right, to have our thinking refined. It must be remembered that in this period of Man's awakening, right reason and a search for the truth ranked high on his agenda. Social gatherings at this time involved serious discussion. It really raises an interesting philosophical or psychological question as to whether or not a person may obtain wisdom or reason in isolation or in solitude. This idea of sociability would later lead to the rise of the "club movement" in the Enlightenment period and may very well have had a great influence in the founding of Freemasonry, a topic that needs further exploration and research. We can see in tracing these ideas that the Trivium, and later the Quadrivium, were based on obtaining wisdom through communi-

cation among men. Grammar contained the basic or fundamental rules for proper writing and speaking and ensured that these men had reached an agreement on the meaning of words and their proper grammatical usage.

Rhetoric

Rhetoric has been defined as, "The art of embellishing the language with the ornaments of construction so as to enable the speaker to persuade or affect his hearers." It simply means knowledge of the rules and construction of an argument that will enable an orator to use his art and skill to win an argument. It coincides with obtaining wisdom in the same manner as grammar. It is a method of effective communication and a method of obtaining wisdom.

Dialectic

The last of the Trivium is dialectic. This is defined as the "...branch of logic which teaches the rules and modes of reasoning." Probably the best example of its use is in the arguments and dialectics of Plato. There is no need to explain how important this is to obtaining wisdom. The ability to reason is one of the hallmarks of Humanism and is that which separates the human being from the beast.

In concluding the explanation, the Trivium teaches subjects that are intended to instruct us to correctly and properly express our thoughts to others. We can state that the Trivium teaches us not what to think but how to think; not what to communicate but how to communicate. As has been stated, if right reason is to be gained it is not gained as a solo endeavor. Correct thinking requires communicating with others. Your thoughts can only be tested and corrected when exposed to the scrutiny of others. These are the rules for that communication. In addition, either written or spoken words must have a universal symbolic meaning. If we do not use this universal symbolic meaning in discourse, we have lied. A lie will always destroy the truth. If the speaker states that it is raining outside while it is not raining, the hearer on observing this error, purposeful or otherwise, has all the symbolism of the words destroyed thus rendering the truth uncertain. The Trivium is only the correct use of this symbolism or language in the art of communication, in the art of Reasoning, and in the art of obtaining wisdom. In the studies of the Quadrivium, the purpose is altogether different, as we shall now learn.

Quadrivium

The Quadrivium was a later addition to the Humanists' curriculum. It consists of four subjects: arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. Their purpose was entirely different than the Trivium and each has a more philosophical importance to Freemasonry than does the Trivium. The study of the Quadrivium in the order set out above must be continued in that order with arithmetic coming first and astronomy last. This order forms a prerequisite in that the student would be unable to grasp music without first understanding arithmetic and so forth. The Quadrivium was always taught in this sequence, a progression from the lowest to the highest. A progression with an attendant symbolic meaning of going from Man to God. It is still a part of religion. It still maintains the importance of theology but reason has now been substituted for dogma. This reason is the reasoning of Man rather than the Church. Those subjects comprising the Quadrivium are used for a different purpose than the subjects of the Trivium. Here, in the Quadrivium, we find a unification principle running through the curriculum, a principal whose purpose is to lead us to the mind of God. By so doing, we will be more able to understand the will of God, His laws, and His plan for the cosmos. It is also important to understand that we are not referring to these subjects in their practical application. In arithmetic, for instance, we are not referring to its practical use but rather to the philosophy of numbers. In the Humanists' period, the practical application of numbers was referred to as algorism.

Mathematics

Quadrivium mathematics has often been described as being the knowledge gained by the senses that is essential to the understanding of the ultimate knowledge or philosophy. Bacon held that philosophy could not be known without arithmetic. Arithmetic entered into and influenced music, art, literature, architecture, and astronomy. To properly understand this, it is necessary to understand that arithmetic, as understood in the Quadrivium, had a great deal to do with ratio and proportionality; hence with logic and philosophy. As an example consider the proposition that it takes 2 to create. This could be described arithmetically as $I \text{ plus } 2 = \text{tension from which you develop } 3$, or as in the proportion $1:2$ as $2:4$. This could be an arithmetical formula to prove that 'God is to me as I am to my children.' These are simple examples to show the use of arithmetical proportions

and to prove logical or philosophical propositions. Of course, these are simple examples of arithmetical proportions that when used in science create proportions that may become more complicated and lengthy. If we apply this theory of proportions and ratios to works of art, music, literature, and architecture we find beauty or aesthetics can be defined by size, properties, and relationships. Therefore, it was said that parts of a cathedral could be built according to abstract notions of intellectual beauty. "Numbers were at the basis of many medieval conceptions of the beauty full."

Numbers had a far greater impact on philosophy than this medieval conception of beauty. Numbers, or arithmetic, became the connection or the link between God and the created cosmos. This was the intellectual key, according to the Chartres' schoolmen, that unlocked the secrets of the universe. It takes only a moment's reflection to understand how important this "discovery" was. If this were true, it behooves man to study the entire universe; natural history, government, the history of art, and even the history of history. It becomes a universal yardstick or measure of all things to which Man's mind or learning would know no bounds. "The world was created according to a model in the Divine mind and there is a resemblance between the model and that which was created and this is seen in arithmetic." The argument continues with: "Since the world is an intelligible phenomenon understanding it, by and through mathematics, will allow us to understand the Divine mind."

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mind.”

In line with this reasoning, there is one last person to be heard from; a person who is important to Freemasonry, the well-known cathedral architect, Villard de Honnecourt, who will provide examples of geometrical and human proportions in his notebook. He will begin with the human figure and extend it to a model of a perfect Church. This will truly set the model for the third temple, the temple to last for all eternity, the temple not built with human hands but found in the hearts of men. Thus the way is now paved to understand Geometry, the “G” that is so important to our ancient Craft. Later, we will discuss this in detail.

Music

The Humanists’ idea of music may be summed up in one sentence, “The philosophers of antiquity and the Middle Ages were not interested in music and music making as an isolated and idle pastime but as music’s role as part of an integrated and divinely ordered universe.” The philosophers of the Humanists’ period did not feel it was necessary to play an instrument in order to understand music nor to qualify oneself as a musician. Dionysus the Areopagite, the person whose philosophy most influenced the concept and the construction of the Gothic cathedrals, felt that Music was a reflection of the Divine Harmony in the world and, therefore, the material world also was a reflection of divine harmony and beauty. To understand this theory of the importance of music to the philosophy of Humanism, we must trace back to the philosophy of Pythagoras. We must also bear in mind the importance of our opening quote; that music’s importance was to show an integrated and divinely ordered universe. This was the key to Humanism: to know the secret of the natural world was to know the will of the Divine mind. It was Pythagoras who pointed the way for this concept in both music and geometry.

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It is for this reason that Freemasonry refers to Pythagoras as “our ancient friend and brother”, and accords geometry a high place in Masonic teachings. From this, we learn that music is not only the basis of harmony but also the teacher of geometry. It is of great Mathematical importance as it teaches the laws of nature, and that those natural laws are God’s laws, the basis for the operation of the cosmos. We will discuss the importance of geometry in greater detail in the following section.

Geometry

As we had previously stated, music and geometry have much in common. Therefore, it is necessary to keep in mind the comments made regarding music as we consider geometry, especially that part concerned with the teaching of the laws of nature. Nevertheless, geometry has its own importance as far as the Quadrivium and Freemasonry are concerned.

Geometry and its study may be divided, as was all Gaul, into three parts. These parts consist of practical geometry, constructive geometry, and theoretical geometry. Of these, as far as our study of the seven liberal arts and sciences is concerned, we may dismiss the study of practical geometry with two exceptions. The first of these exceptions is the association that practical geometry has through the work of Euclid with classical studies. As has been said before, classical studies form the basis of the Trivium and the Quadrivium and, through a roundabout way, Euclidean geometry will have some interest for the study of the seven liberal arts and sciences. The second reason practical geometry should be considered important is because it is one of the subjects involved in the founding of the philosophy of Humanism. The Gothic cathedrals gave man the ability to begin to believe in himself and his ability to reason, to create,

and to increase his self-esteem. This developed into a feeling of the importance for, and an appreciation of, mankind that would lead to the development of Humanism. Therefore, with these brief remarks, we will dismiss these two exceptions.

The second branch of geometry that concerns itself with lines, angles and figures is known as constructive geometry. It is important to our study of the seven liberal arts and sciences. As we have stated, the study of natural law, or natural phenomena, was paramount in the philosophy of Humanism. It bears repeating that the Humanists believed that by understanding the workings of nature they could understand the mind of God. Two philosophers of this period, Grosseteste and Bacon, "perceived mathematical geometry as a fundamental technique for the investigation of natural phenomenon."

"The usefulness of considering lines, angles, and figures is the greatest because it is impossible to understand natural philosophy without these. They are efficacious throughout the universe as a whole and its parts all causes and in related properties, as in rectilinear and circular motionsFor all causes of natural effects have to be expressed by means of lines, angles, and figures, for otherwise, it would be impossible to have knowledge of the reason (proper quid) concerning them. Hence these rules principles and fundamentals having been given by the power of geometry, the careful observer of natural things can give the causes of all natural effects by this method. And it will be impossible otherwise, as is already clear in respect to the universal, since every natural action is varied in strength and weakness through variation of lines, angles, and figures. But in respect of the particular, this is even clearer, first in natural action upon matter and later upon the senses, so that the truth of geometry is quite plain."

What this teaches us is the differences that were understood in early Freemasonry between the geometry of music and constructive geometry. In the former, we are dealing with harmony as part of the mind of God. In the latter, our attention is directed to geometry in forms, angles, and figures. This principle, when properly understood, is set forth in the Senior Deacon's Lecture which reads: "Geometry is that science which treats of the powers and properties of magnitudes in general, where length, breadth, and thickness are considered - from a point to a line, from a line to a superficies, from a superficies to a solid ... geometry is the foundation of architecture and the

root of mathematics."

In the former we learn that music, when coupled with geometry, teaches us that harmony is a law of the cosmos; an important lesson that will help teach us the correctness of the doctrine of the brotherhood of Man. In the teachings of constructive geometry, we learn about the forms that compose the material properties of the universe. We learn that all matter must have a form and that geometry instructs us in the relationships between them. Together they teach us the mind of God and the laws that constitute the working rules of the cosmos. They help us to understand that form as well as harmony and substance are part of the mind of God. Thus, Plato teaches harmony, essence, and substance while Aristotle teaches form: or, by example, Plato teaches you cannot have a chair without the essence of a chair having been created by God (?). Aristotle teaches us the form of that chair. As far as Freemasonry is concerned, both of these philosophies are compatible with Masonry because they are founded on geometry.

There is one more lesson that will help us understand the relationship of all things as taught to us by the third form of geometry, theoretical geometry. Theoretical geometry teaches us what is known as the "Golden Ratio." To understand the "Golden Ratio", we must fully understand the above explanations about geometry which lead us to the conclusion that there is a sense of oneness throughout the cosmos, a sense that all things are related to each other. This is another example of the 3x4x5-triangle discovery that led to the confirmation of the theory of Universal Laws, the "...whenever you have ...you will always find" laws. This law of the right angle triangle also led to the discovery of proportional relationships or the "Golden Ratio."

Proportional relationships are not easy to understand on a mathematical level. We shall use a simplified explanation here to show their importance in understanding the cosmos. Scientists discovered that by measuring the spiral growth distances of a snail they would find that such distances are in direct proportion to the distance between the spirals of the Milky Way galaxy. They are not the same distance but they are in a proportional relationship. This relationship is true of each and every spiral in nature: the spiral of leaves around a branch, the spirals of flowers, and the spirals of water running down a drain. We can then state that all spirals found in nature bear a relation to one another. This is also true of the distance of bones

from each other and of all things found in nature. This, for Master Mason, proves the unification of all of nature including Man through that proportionality. Again, most important for all Freemasons, it proves one of the laws of God and the ability for us to know a portion of His mind and His plans for the cosmos. Probably the most important truth that it teaches us is that there is a plan!

Astronomy

The fourth and final member of the Quadrivium is astronomy. It was written earlier that to understand music one must understand mathematics, to understand geometry one must understand music, and to understand astronomy it follows that one must understand geometry. Each Quadrivium subject is dependent on the last Quadrivium subject so the final subject, astronomy, should act as a summary of all that has gone on before. It should lead us to a final understanding of God's plan for the cosmos. Astronomy does this well!

In many ways, the study of astronomy is a symbol of the thinking in the Cathedral schools. As their curriculums shifted from bringing ancient classical studies into agreement with Holy Scriptures to the philosophy of Humanism astronomy, the leading edge of the new studies and the center of future disputes would be found between the science found in Humanism and the Church. The battle that raged over Galileo and his theory of the Sun is a prime example. In the Humanist's world of education, astronomy became part of the curriculum with the other three Quadrivium subjects and was treated accordingly. It followed the natural history thesis that knowledge of the laws of nature would give us knowledge of God's plan for the cosmos and would, therefore, be most beneficial. Since astronomy covered a large part of all natural laws it was most favored to give Man a more complete picture of this plan. It was the summation of these studies or the center of natural history philosophy. Later, during the period of the Enlightenment with its great advances in science following the experiments led by Newton and others, we would find this natural law thesis to be the center of the philosophy of the 18th Century which brought forth new theories of government. These were not only the cause but also the result of the American Revolution, and were also philosophical cause for the formation of a new government termed Democracy. It also had the effect of overthrowing the political theory of the Divine Right of Kings.

Conclusion

The seven liberal arts ushered in the Age of Humanism, which is the forerunner of the Age of Enlightenment. Its story of natural laws being the basis for God's plan for creation was in direct opposition to the stories of creation set forth in the Bible. The age of the Humanist could not have begun without the Trivium. If man is to rule his own thinking, there must be rules concerning how individual thoughts are not only created but also what these thoughts represent, how others know them and subsequently build upon them. Rules of grammar were derived from the classical writers of Greece. While the written word remained constant, the meaning of words and their use required uniformity. Rhetoric applied the same idea of rules to the spoken word since most of Man's communication was oral. An agreed upon method of speech construction, based on classical speakers, was important.

To persuade you of the truths propounded, more was needed. The art of persuasion became important and dialectics entered the field of study. We may conclude that the Trivium taught "how to." "How to" present a man's ideas, not any preconceived dogma, to his fellow man. How did he obtain the knowledge to form these ideas? This is the subject matter of the Quadrivium in which a course of study was presented proceeding from the simplest form of reasoning, arithmetic, to the most complex, astronomy. The proposition was to teach man the ability to understand God and His plan as seen in the laws of nature. That allowed each individual man to be able to interpret God's plan for himself rather than blindly follow some religious dogma. The Quadrivium allowed the mind of Man to be opened to ideas to be promoted and discoveries to be made. All those resulted in that period which is a forerunner of the Scientific Age, the age in which we now live.

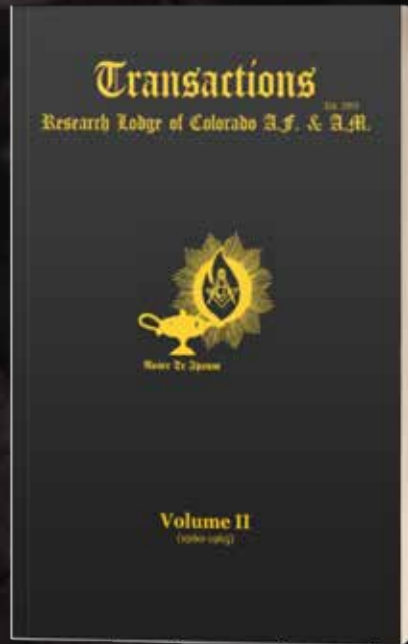
There is a deeper meaning to the Masonic injunction concerning the Seven Liberal arts and Sciences. First, by placing the teachings of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences in the prerequisite form we found above; astronomy requires knowledge of geometry, geometry of music, and music of mathematics. We learn that all the laws of nature, the laws that govern the cosmos are connected, one is inseparable from the other together they show the relatedness of all things. This is the basis of the "brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God." Secondly, the student

of that day balanced his success in worldly attainments with an equal belief in God and a faith in a Creative Power. His world was of God and Mammon. He kept these two diverse beliefs in harmony, in balance, or as Pike taught, in equilibrium.

It is this balance, this harmony, this equilibrium that is symbolized by all of Freemasonry. Man must keep in balance his worldliness and his faith. But this equilibrium seems forgotten in our society as all our directions are towards Mammon. This is the great teaching of our Craft. This equilibrium, the balancing of God and mammon, is the great teaching that Masonry not only preserves for all generations, but is the teaching which every Mason is bound practice himself and bound to teach others, to give it to the world. This is the lesson that society needs so badly today. This lesson is what makes "good men better men."

This entire period, this entire philosophy, all of this is symbolized in Freemasonry when the candidate in the Second degree is admonished that: "The impressive ceremonies of this degree are calculated to inculcate upon the mind of the novitiate the importance of the study of the liberal arts and sciences, especially the noble science of geometry..." Truly Freemasonry is symbolically the keeper of this knowledge and wisdom.





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