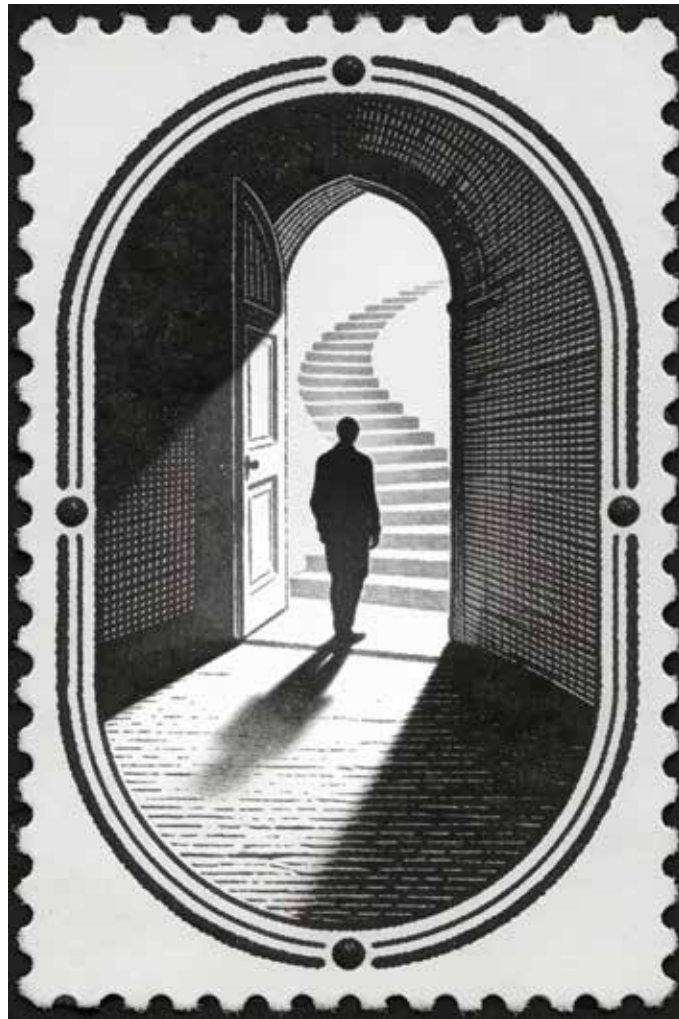

The Lyceum



A Publication of
The Committee on Masonic Education



Contents

From the Editor-In-Chief.....	3
RW Robert H. Johnson, FILOR	
From the Chairman.....	4
WB Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman - Masonic Education GL Illinois	
Giving Back.....	5
Committee on Masonic Education, IL	
The Midwest Conference of Masonic Education.....	6
Committee on Masonic Education, IL	
Masonic Education: The Key to Unlocking Self Improvement...7	
Juan Sepulveda, FL	
Transformation.....	8
WB:. Napoleon Sneed-Janczak, WI	
Esotericon 2026.....	10
Committee on Masonic Education	
The Complete Transmission.....	11
Bro. Erik Marks, MA	
You Can't Touch This.....	13
RWB:. Chad M. Lacek, 33°	
Did We Make Them Better?.....	15
Bro. William Aemisegger	
Learning to Improve Myself in Masonry.....	17
Bro. Russel Dickson	
The Archetypal Temple: The Completion of the Great Work....18	
Darin A. Lahners, FILOR	
Masonic Study: How Can I Become A Better Mason?.....	26
WB:. Ira Gilbert †	
Is A Better Man a Leader or Is A Better Man A Better Leader?...28	
RWB Raymond J. Babinski, PS	
Put It Into Practice / Listen To It.....	31
Committee on Masonic Education	
Masonic Conferences.....	32
Committee on Masonic Education, IL	



Find us Online @
www.ilmason.org/masonic-education



Your Publication Staff & Contributors
Robert H. Johnson - Editor-In-Chief, Darin A. Lahners -
Editor, Chad Lacek, 33°, Bernard Davis, Chairman

FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Brethren, as we gather around this month's issue, we are reminded that initiation was never meant to be the end of anything—it was the beginning of everything.

This issue turns our attention to Initiation as Transformation—not as a single night in lodge, but as a lifelong work of rebuilding the inner man. From the opening reflection, we are reminded that the obligations we assumed were a starting line, not a finish line, and that each return to our ritual and symbols is an invitation to see them with new eyes.

Bro. Erik Marks' "The Complete Transmission" reminds us that no single facet of our Fraternity is enough on its own—history, fellowship, charity, administration, symbolism, and truly transformative experience all belong together if we hope to receive the full inheritance of the Craft. When we neglect any of these, we risk passing along a partial, weakened version of Masonry to those who come after us. Bro. William Aemisegger asks whether we have actually made our new Brothers better, or merely given them a dues card and a calendar. His call to return to the working tools, to conversation after lodge, and to intentional mentoring is a reminder that the 24 inch gauge, the charges, and the allegories were never meant to be "one time use" pieces of ritual, but a living curriculum for daily life.

From the Wisconsin Grand Lodge piece on passion and self discipline, we are reminded that improvement begins in the quiet work of checking our passions, accepting good counsel, and standing upright and true on the mosaic pavement of life. Bro. Juan Sepulveda's reflection on Masonic education invites us to move beyond "just attending" stated meetings and to rekindle a genuine hunger for Light by sharing what we read, learn, and contemplate with one another. RWB Chad M. Lacey's article challenges us to re-examine how we interact with the world through the sensation of touch, inspiring us to use the Liberal Arts and Sciences to increase our sense

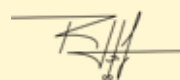
of curiosity regarding the universe. WB Darin Lahners explores the journey of life viewed through the lens of Masonic initiation, to become a "Archetypal Temple".

Bro. Russell Dickson opens the question, "What does it really mean to subdue my passions and improve myself in Masonry?" and answers it with the simple but demanding disciplines of repetition, memorization, and reflection upon our ritual. Bro. Ira Gilbert then puts tools in our hands, offering a bibliography of accessible works to help any Brother build a serious habit of Masonic study and move from curiosity to a true Masonic way of life.

Finally, RWB Raymond Babinsky reminds us that a "better man" must eventually become a better leader if our lodges are to thrive. Goal setting, planning, mentoring, and thoughtful work in membership, ritual, and education are not optional extras—they are practical ways of answering that first desire we had "to be made better" when we knocked.

Brethren, my prayer is that this month's Lyceum does more than inform—it provokes. May it move each of us to ask, in the quiet of our own hearts, "Am I changed?" and then to take up once more the working tools of self examination, discipline, and brotherly love. May the Great Architect of the Universe bless your labors, keep you and your families in health and peace, and guide your steps as you continue that life-long initiation which began the night you first stood at the door of Masonry.

Fraternally yours,
R.H. Johnson,



Editor-In-Chief
The Lyceum
The Grand Lodge of Illinois,
Committee on Masonic Education



From the Chairman's Desk

by WB.: Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman- Masonic Education Committee



In the life of every Mason, initiation is often remembered as a single moment, an evening marked by solemnity, anticipation, and the first steps taken upon a new path. Yet the deeper truth of our Craft

teaches that initiation is not an event completed, but a work begun. It is a transformation that unfolds across years, shaped by discipline, reflection, and the steady labor of improving both ourselves and the world around us. The ritual experience introduces us to symbols, principles, and obligations, but their meaning is not fully grasped in that first encounter. Understanding grows through repetition, through study, and through the quiet trials of daily life. Each time we return to the teachings of the Craft, we are invited to see them with new eyes, eyes shaped by experience, humility, and the desire to build a better version of ourselves. In this way, initiation becomes a continuous process of awakening.

Transformation in Masonry is rarely dramatic. It is the slow refinement of character, the strengthening of moral courage, and the cultivation of habits that align our actions with our ideals. It is found in the Brother who chooses patience over anger, service over convenience, and truth over comfort. These small victories, repeated over time, are the true signs that the work of initiation is still active within us. As we reflect on this month's theme: Initiation as Transformation, we are reminded that every Brother, newly raised or seasoned by decades, remains a work in progress. No one is finished. No one is beyond growth. The Craft calls each of us to remain teachable, to remain open, and to remain committed to the inner work that gives meaning to our outer labor.

It is my hope that this edition of the Lyceum will encourage us to revisit our obligations with renewed sincerity, to examine the quality of our thoughts and actions, and to recommit ourselves to the transformative journey that began the night

we first knocked at the door of Masonry. May we continue to shape ourselves into instruments of brotherly love, relief, and truth, and may our ongoing initiation be evident in the lives we lead and the example we set, and may the Great Architect of the Universe guide our steps as we labor in this lifelong work of becoming.

Fraternally,

Dr. Bernard Davis Jr.

Dr. Bernard Davis Jr., Chairman
Grand Lodge AF&AM Illinois



GIVING BACK TO OUR MEMBERS IN NEED AND MORE

Charities

Charity is a core part of our duty as Freemasons. The Grand Lodge of Illinois A. F. & A. M. and Freemasons of our state are proud to support life-changing efforts for the most vulnerable in our communities. Learn more about our charitable initiatives below.



ILLINOIS MASONIC OUTREACH SERVICES (IMOS)

IMOS allows Illinois Freemasons to fulfill their Masonic path of coming to the aid of a Brother, their spouse, widow, and orphans in times of necessity.



Illinois Masonic Children's Assistance Program

ILLINOIS MASONIC CHILDREN'S ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (IMCAP)

IMCAP partners with Illinois Masonic Lodges to provide assistance to children and young adults in our communities.



ILLINOIS MASONIC STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (IMSAP)

IMSAP is a school-based early intervention approach designed to enhance educators' skills in identifying and assisting at-risk students.



ILLINOIS MASONIC FAMILY IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

Every year in the U.S., thousands of children become lost. A few are victims of abduction. The Freemasons of Illinois hold and fund identification workshops for families all around the state to help them find and prevent victims of abduction.



COINS FOR CHILDREN

Support our mission to provide relief to those most in need.



Illinois Masonic Academic Bowl

ILLINOIS MASONIC ACADEMIC BOWL

This annual scholastic tournament, sponsored by the Freemasons of Illinois, aims to provide positive recognition for academic excellence.

76th MIDWEST CONFERENCE ON MASONIC EDUCATION



SCOTTISH RITE CATHEDRAL, 20th AND DOUGLAS STREETS, OMAHA, NEBRASKA

A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

APRIL 24-26, 2026



**SCOTTISH RITE
MASONIC CENTER,
OMAHA, NEBRASKA**

LOCATION
202 South 20th Street,
Omaha, NE 68102

Educating Masonic Educators - Providing practical tools
for lodges, grand lodges, and other bodies

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

www.mcme1949.org

MASONIC EDUCATION: THE KEY TO UNLOCKING SELF-IMPROVEMENT

by Brother Juan Sepulveda

Originally published on The Winding Stairs Blog
(thewindingstairs.com)



When we join Freemasonry, most of us do it for the opportunity to improve ourselves. You have probably heard the claim made by some Masonic Organizations, "We make good men better," and it is quite attractive, but one thing we insist on ignoring is the word "Self" in Self-Improvement.

Yes, Freemasonry contains lessons that have been passed from generation to generation, making Men around the world better. However, this improvement must begin from within, from a genuine desire to acquire new knowledge and the desire to help others in the process.

What good is it to attend a Stated Meeting and leave feeling exactly the same as when you walked in? Although fellowship before and after the meeting is irreplaceable, we can do a better job at imparting knowledge to our Brethren. Instead of just going through the motions of the meeting, with a tolerant attitude, let us become energized and share some bits of Light with the Brothers. If you read something the night before that you found helpful, would it not be helpful to your Brethren? Of course it will! Take the initiative to offer your contribution to the W.M.: and ask to share it with the Brothers.

Attending the meeting is not enough; we have to become active participants of this great organization, which can do great things when its members

are actively contributing. Just Listening to the meeting minutes is not enough to help you grow. Masonic Education must play an integral role in the meeting's agenda.

So, I encourage everyone to join me in taking one of those Masonic books from the bookshelf. Dust it off a bit and begin to rekindle a burning desire for Light. Knowledge attracts knowledge. Therefore, if we do a little to improve our minds today, we will be better men tomorrow, which is the reason we joined this great fraternity after all.

"Improve thyself and through instructive tongues, inspire others to follow."

~Juan Sepulveda is an award-winning artist, public speaker, and host of The Winding Stairs Freemasonry Podcast. A former Scenic Artist at Walt Disney World, his work combines symbolism and visual storytelling to explore the practical lessons of Freemasonry and personal development. His artwork is collected internationally and has been exhibited in the Florida Governor's Mansion as part of Florida's Hispanic Heritage Month celebration.

A co-founder of The Masonic Roundtable and an active Masonic leader, Juan currently serves as Junior Warden of Orange Blossom Lodge No. 80 in Kissimmee, Florida, and holds membership in numerous Masonic bodies including the Scottish Rite, York Rite, Knight Masons, and the Florida College S.R.I.C.F.

Juan continues to inspire and positively impact others with both his voice and his brush



Transformation

by WB.: Napoleon Sneed-Janczak, WI

Reprinted from the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin AF&AM Website

The newly initiated Freemason, upon receiving his first degree (Entered Apprentice), is given a strong foundation and a “cornerstone” to build upon in his Masonic journey of self-improvement. This is taught through lectures, symbols, tools, ritual, and general fellowship.

The second question of the EA degree/ ritual in opening and closing the Lodge is the perfect place to start. We begin to understand what Freemasonry does for its members, and by extension, the communities in which they reside, by understanding this particular part of our lessons. Brother David Hullinger, in 1998, in one of his research essays, asks a question, and this question is arguably one that will ultimately summarize every Entered Apprentice Freemason, and beyond. He asks, “*What is the first lesson taught in masonry?*” I will share with you at the end what the answer is, and how to find it if you do not remember. (Hint: most of us don’t remember.)

What does it mean to improve yourself, to learn, and check your passions? Many Brothers you will talk to often view this as a positive, and a negative intertwined to understand the importance of balance, and harmony. It starts with discipline. You must reflect on your past labors, the mistakes, and successes to improve on your future. The ability to temper your actions is the most difficult step, and there are many ways to do this. One way is peer review or due examination. This involves listening to good counsel when offered and finding the truth in that counsel.

No matter your station, you must realize that you will always have room for improvement

in some form. In Freemasonry, this could be learning a new position, a new part of our ritual, etc. You can do more of the Lodge outreach to see what is needed in your membership or your community. If you go beyond the words in Lodge and get to a deeper understanding of what they mean to you, and how they will change you for the better, you will come to realize that the rest of the second question of the EA degree will test you in how well you are doing as a Brother in the Craft.

Passion is an emotion that evokes a strong response. Overindulgence in any facet of life can be detrimental to one’s growth; and the many responses related to our passions can also be more harmful than good if not kept in check. This includes the seemingly positive interactions and notably the negative ones. Foundationally proper etiquette within the Lodge, and good manners without it, are the mechanisms to practice subduing your passions. Saluting, waiting to be addressed before speaking, proper debate, good counsel, the ability to accept it, and using the lessons of the working tools to address issues that arise from time to time to achieve temperance for future interactions. Asking yourself, ‘how could you have done something differently to achieve a more optimal outcome.’ It’s a constant challenge chipping away the rough edges so that you may stand upright and true, but if you are following these principles you will exemplify to your brethren, and community that you are worthy.

Self-Discipline and self-control are the epitome of our understanding upon entering the lessons taught in our fraternity. We become

better men through trials of many kinds.

We as Freemasons are encouraged to control our emotions, desires, and impulses, so as to lead a more balanced and virtuous life. This is taught symbolically while learning about the Masonic mosaic pavement, or black and white checkered floor, in many lodge rooms. In short, it is about using the tools of Freemasonry to master one's behaviors; do our best to control our excesses or uncontrolled emotional reactions to any given subject matter.

Having discussed passion, its possible effects on us personally, and some of the ways of working toward a better balance, we can now learn about that part which deals with improving ourselves.

It is a long-held belief and tradition for Masons to seek self-improvement and personal growth. We set ourselves on a pathway to achieve these goals by developing morals and ethical character. These lessons are found in the “*four cardinal virtues: Fortitude, Prudence, Temperance, and Justice.*” We see this challenge as a way to create a better version of ourselves and become able to better contribute to society at large. Searching the true meaning of these virtues will lead you to our core principles: Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. Understanding the need to be open to the concerns of your Brothers with an open mind will remind you that your own education will be enhanced by not being discouraged from hearing them out, but taking care to help them achieve their goals through reflection and solutions for improving themselves, and at the same time, yourself. Helping others will help you improve yourself in Masonry.

Relief is in this context; to aid an assist in all things good for the betterment of Freemasonry, and by proxy yourself while sharing in the education you have been able to share for, and with a brother who may be struggling with what it is he came here to do. By helping in this way, we improve more and more.

Truth is the ability to see inwardly, and understand we personally have our faults and flaws, but then be willing to self-reflect and renew ourselves to do better. The inadvertent affect is that you will be-

come more of a leader, and others will seek you out while you are on your journey; particularly when your journey is successful in the growth of others' improvement also. Be mindful of your actions, your reactions, and how your passions can better serve you as a man and a Mason. Remember, Brothers, “*To be good men and true,*” after all, it's the first lesson we are all taught as Freemasons.



ESOTERICON 2026

The Premier Esoteric Conference



Saturday, June 20, 2026

Manasseh Lodge No. 182, Manassas, VA
In-Person & Virtual Attendance Available

www.esotericon.net

Tickets Available Now

THE COMPLETE TRANSMISSION

Bro. Erik Marks, MA

In studying as an apprentice in any field, the teacher, or master, knows to give the student only the tasks for which they are ready. Further, to only give the hard-learned lessons to someone who has worked diligently, consistently, over time, showing both dedication and integrity. Over time, the apprentice will prove worthiness and will gain a complete transmission of all the teacher/master's secrets of the trade. If all goes well, the new adept will carry on the tradition and train subsequent apprentices in like fashion, perhaps adding lessons and updated knowledge for changing codes, new building techniques, etc., keeping it a living tradition.

What areas of Freemasonry would be needed to be transmitted to a budding apprentice, like me, to give a complete transmission of the craft? We might disagree on the titles or groupings, though my guess would be we would end up covering much of the same territory, over time. To some extent, Brethren may get overly focused on one of these, seeing it as the only aspect of Freemasonry that matters. Though they may be content in this rarefied approach, they will not be getting a full transmission, nor will they propagate one to the uninitiated or the general public.

I intentionally tried to narrow the complete transmission categories to seven:

History and thorough historical perspective: understanding the origins, innovations, adaptations, splitting and merging, and enacting a historically relevant presentation of the craft.

Fraternal engagement: meals, Scottish Rite family events, Royal Arch and Shrine functions, impromptu dinner conversations with brethren, etc.

Charitable conduct or acts.

Freemasonic operation: The exoteric administrative. Ritual, protocol, jurisprudence; moving through line chairs/roles, running a lodge, grand lodge, investigation committees, and delegation.

Universality and tolerance: Learning to live harmoniously in and out of lodge.

Symbolic meanings: Esoteric depth and spiritual breadth:

And what I will call **Transformative experience:** Through being in close contact with other men, becoming co-laborers and friends, we necessarily have experiences that meddle with our preconceived notions about life and being together in the world. By first in Lodge and then a masonic career, we agree to work together to keep things harmonious. This social contract aids in our development by helping everyone work to stay calm when things get heated. Sure, we don't achieve this all the time, but our goal is to remain harmonious and charitable, even when vehemently disagreeing. I see this as one of masonry's greatest gifts to its participants, and by extension, the world. When brethren engage fully in the tasks and take in the esoteric and exoteric lessons, we are transformed and made better as we work to implement seemingly opposite strategies: for instance, encouraging a sitting master and officers to implement more

education (when that was never their plan) in the lodge without a coup d'état. How? Turn to the trivium and make the most solid and effective argument you can. Coalition build with brethren and bring it into the lodge yourself, during a meal or petition the master for you to speak during a lodge meeting.

What constitutes a complete transmission of Freemasonry to you? What do you think is the most important aspect of Masonry? A handful of brethren have written with questions or opinions and its been wonderful getting to know them. Please consider dropping me a note with your thoughts.



Can't Touch This

by Chad . Lacek, 33°

Freemasonry has long encouraged the study of the Liberal Arts and Sciences. This is not simply an appeal to education for its own sake, but an invitation to understand the world more deeply. Geometry teaches us about proportion and structure. Astronomy reveals our place in the cosmos. Logic sharpens our reasoning. Each discipline opens a window through which we glimpse something true about the universe and, by extension, about ourselves.

Following that path of curiosity can lead us to some rather unexpected places. Modern physics, particularly quantum field theory, has revealed something that sounds almost absurd when first stated plainly: You have never touched anything in your life. Not once.

Every time you shake a hand, lean against a wall, pick up a working tool, or close the door to your home, you are not making contact in the way your senses suggest. What you are feeling instead is resistance. The sensation of touch arises from the interaction of invisible fields, specifically, the electron fields that surround the atoms in your hand and the atoms in the object you are “*touching*.”

Atoms are mostly empty space. If you were able to zoom in far enough, you would find a tiny nucleus surrounded by a cloud of electrons. Those electrons are not solid particles orbiting like miniature planets. They are excitations of fields, distributed presences that do not have sharp edges. When two objects are pressed together, the electron fields of each resist occupying the same space. This resistance is governed by the electromagnetic force.

When you place your hand on a table, the electrons in your skin repel the electrons in the wood. The closer they are pushed together, the

stronger that repulsion becomes. Your nervous system interprets this resistance as pressure. Your mind interprets that pressure as touch. But no actual contact occurs.

There remains, at every scale, a tiny gulf, an infinitesimal space, between what seems to be touching surfaces. The solidity we experience is not solidity at all, but a balance of forces. It is strange to consider. The handshake of friendship, the grip of a working tool, the warmth of a loved one's embrace, each of these is mediated by a dance of fields rather than a collision of substance. The world feels solid, yet at its foundation it is structured by emptiness and interaction.

This insight does not diminish the reality of our experience. The table still supports your weight. The stone still resists the chisel. The level still rests upon the surface it measures. Yet it does invite reflection. Freemasonry often reminds us that appearances do not always reveal the underlying truth of things. The rough ashlar appears to be merely a stone, yet within it lies the potential for refinement. The working tools appear to be instruments of construction, yet they also instruct us in conduct.

Likewise, the world appears to be made of things that touch and press against one another. Physics suggests instead that what we perceive as contact is really the manifestation of unseen principles operating with remarkable consistency. This is not entirely foreign to the Masonic way of thinking.

We are accustomed to the idea that what binds us together is not always visible. Brotherhood itself is not a material connection. Obligation cannot be weighed. Honor cannot be measured with a ruler. Yet these intangible realities exert a force in our lives that is as real as any physical pressure.

The fact that we do not truly touch anything does not mean we are isolated from the world. Quite the opposite. It means that everything we experience is the result of relationships, fields interacting, forces balancing, structures responding to one another. The firmness of the ground beneath our feet is not a brute fact, but an agreement between countless particles governed by elegant laws. The stability of the world arises not from solidity alone, but from harmony. In this way, the findings of physics echo a familiar lesson: the visible world rests upon invisible foundations.

We may never perceive these fields directly, just as we cannot see the moral forces that shape our character. Yet we observe their effects constantly. The resistance that allows us to grasp a tool is no less real for being unseen. The integrity that allows us to keep our word is no less powerful for lacking physical form.

Freemasonry encourages us to study the Liberal Arts and Sciences because they expand our sense of wonder. They remind us that the world is deeper than it appears, and that understanding often begins with questioning what seems obvious. It certainly seems obvious that we touch the things around us. Yet physics suggests otherwise.

Between your hand and the page you hold, between your foot and the floor beneath it, there exists a tiny but persistent space. You live your entire life within a web of interactions rather than collisions. It is a humbling thought. The solidity we rely upon emerges from something far subtler than we imagine. The world holds together not because its parts crash into one another, but because they respond to one another with perfect consistency.

Freemasonry invites us to study the world in order to better understand our place within it. Sometimes, that study reveals that even the most familiar experiences, like touch, are more mysterious than they appear. Yet we are still capable of touching each other, even at a great distance. A phone call out of the blue, just to ask, "How are you?" Some words of advice, before they were sought. A silent nod in acknowledgement suffering. No force or field in the universe

can interfere with this process. We are at once in contact with everything and nothing. Our universe is an interesting place to live, even though we can't lay our hands on it.



Did We Make Them Better?

by Bro. William Aemisegger

Originally Published on the Midnight Freemasons Blog



Did we really make our new Brother better? Have we prepared them for the new knowledge and growth which our great fraternity has to offer? We say we make good men better, but did we do that in the best interest of the new Brother or for a dues card? I firmly believe our early brethren did not join for business meetings and halfhearted Masonic Education. Once we open the eyes of our Brothers, we fall short on showing them how to use and apply the knowledge of the lessons and working tools of the Craft. They are either exposed to the officer line and administrative committees, or they are bombarded by the allure of the appendant bodies. From my experience, sitting after Lodge with Brothers more senior in experience than I, taught me more than any business meeting. I learned about life, business, etiquette, and much more.

There is a significant deficit in teaching the great lessons and applications of the ceremonies through which they have just passed. How can we make good men better if we don't give them a foundation to expand their minds and thirst to be better? Sure, the appendant bodies offer an enlarged view of

the Masonic Education, and that is great. I sometimes get the chance to ask Brethren more senior than me about how they manage to have time for all the events they attend. Their answers make it clear that they are not effectively using the 24-inch gauge. I usually inquire why they don't use this tool, and the response is often "*I never thought about the gauge like that.*"

Simply put, I find they know the words but have forgotten to stop and contemplate the meaning and application. This fails to build the foundation for any further progress in becoming better. We are making the road harder to travel and setting ourselves up for failure.

Here is my simple view. Our more ancient Brethren are heralded as some of the greatest thinkers of their time. Why? It's because they studied the lessons in the degrees and applied them to their worldly pursuits. They understood the meaning of the working tools and how to apply them to daily use. They contemplated the charges and the allegory within the degrees. We would do well to educate our new and established Brothers on how to use

the working tools--how to contemplate the lessons in the degrees to better themselves. If effectively done, it prepares them for the exploration of other appendant bodies, be they Masonic or otherwise.

Teach the speculative uses of our working tools to manage our lives better--help them reflect on the moral lessons within the lectures. Engage the Brothers in discussion regarding our teachings. We opened their eyes; now, let's teach them to use those "secrets." It seems we focus on getting them to the degree of Master Mason, but not on making sure they are duly and truly prepared to work as a Master Mason. We are setting ourselves up for failure by not building the foundation of the Education we received in our degrees.

Our lectures and tools are not one-time-only use. Have we failed the appendant bodies by not indeed preparing the Brother for what lay ahead? Or did we blindly give tools and knowledge and expect them to figure it out themselves?

The solution to this is far simpler than one may think with a huge impact. This impact will be felt locally at first, but will spread like wildfire when we awaken the true Mason within. The Search for more light will show you the way.

For the individual Brother looking for your own education, ask questions. Go back to basics, get in the habit of asking why. The question of "why" is a great place to start. Why is that working tool important? Why is that verse quoted in the degree? You are the master of your own education.

To the Brothers bringing a candidate from darkness to light. This is a serious responsibility. You are responsible to communicate our greatest knowledge in the best way you can. Be mindful of what and why you are doing this. You are their first impression of the Fraternity; make it a great experience.

Furthermore, any Brother interacting the new Brother is responsible for mentoring and leading him in the Fraternity.

To the Lodge Officers, simply be mindful of your Brothers. Engaging the Brothers in active conversation is the best way to nurture education. Engage them in the masonic education presented. Host a Q&A after the presentation or after the meeting. Really take the time to know the Brothers that are members. Take the time to make sure they understand what is going on with legislation, education opportunities, committees, or other local activities. Remember, you are the Officer for the Lodge; you have a responsibility for the care and stewardship of the Brothers within.



Learning to Improve myself in Masonry

by Bro. Russell W. Dickson

Originally Published on the Craftsman Online Blog, NY

I've often wondered since progressing through the degrees what "subdue my passions and improve myself in Masonry" truly means. What labors must one undertake? Does it mean from that moment until my last, I should spend my time reflecting on the history, philosophy, and symbolism behind the degrees I have undergone? I suppose those are a part of it. As humans, we never truly stop learning, so I am sure that is the way it goes on our Masonic journey.

As an Entered Apprentice Mason, I was given a strong foundation to build upon as I continued from darkness to the Light of Masonry. A lot of this is accomplished through fellowship, the study of, and participation in, ritual. By studying, listening to lectures, and contributing to my degree work when I could, I learned the importance of the Working Tools and symbols in a more meaningful way. What is it about going to the lodge that makes us better people? The meals, the Opening and Closing, the Secretary and Treasurer reports?

As I progressed through the degrees, certain phrases struck me because they sounded archaic and unusual. They were hard to understand, like a new language, but as I heard them more, my comprehension improved, and I realized I was learning every time I went to lodge. This is why it is important to attend and to memorize the work. Repetition and memorization help us comprehend the Masonic vocabulary. When the ritual is performed brilliantly, the words sound beautiful and poetic. In the beginning, many of us think memorization is either for the proficiency needed to advance through the degrees or for helping with the lodge's ritual work. There must be more to it than that. The prose must be more than just pretty words.

I have heard that the ritual's real purpose is to pro-

vide us with a roadmap to the East. I think the words and phrases are designed to pique our interest and encourage us to research their meanings. The floor work is also important, as officers discover in their respective stations and places. Sometimes, when performing my officer part, I'd feel discouraged because no matter how hard I'd try, I'd always have a Past Master correcting me. This, too, is part of the learning process, whether I like it or not. Sometimes, two Past Masters approach me while disagreeing with each other — or worse, correct me when they were wrong, and I was right. No one ever said the road East was easy, but I'm learning every day how important that lesson is.

These brothers were taught from the beginning of their own journeys the importance of these things, and they were just trying to help me, so I try to listen and reflect, no matter how hard it can be sometimes. To subdue our passions is another upright step in our journey, a means to be better men and to control ourselves by not taking things to excess—food, drink, smoking, gambling, our relationships. These things, if taken to extremes, fill our lives with darkness instead of Light. Each of us must learn what in ourselves to subdue. What we learn in Masonry will help us identify which passions we need to control. As we say, if our faith in God is well-founded with prayer and self-reflection, then success is ours for the taking. Each upright step helps us improve ourselves through life.

Bro. Dickson was the Senior Deacon in St. Patrick's Lodge 4 and is at labor in Collabergh-Radium 859, both in New York. He is a Royal Arch Mason in Hiram Union Chapter 53, and is a 32° Scottish Rite Mason at the Valley of Schenectady, where he served as Senior Warden of Sigma Council Princes of Jerusalem.



The Archetypal Temple: The Completion of the Great Work

by Darin A. Lahners, FILOR

“*Who comes here?*” These are the first words that a man hears after knocking, standing hoodwinked, and cable-towed, before a door in the perpetration room of a Masonic Lodge. Anxiously waiting to receive his first degree in Freemasonry, they are received on the point of a sharp instrument, and their initiation for the Entered Apprentice Degree begins. They come away with an assumption that once their initiation is completed that they are a “*Mason*”. Technically, this is correct. They received the grip and word of an Entered Apprentice Mason. They can now attend their lodge. Ultimately, as they make their progress through the degrees, they are passed to the degree of Fellowcraft and finally raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason. If at this point, they believe that their Masonic journey is complete, that they have been transformed into the perfect ashlar, that all the secrets of Masonry are now known to them, then, quite frankly, we should have guarded the west gate a little better.

W. L. Wilmshurst, writing in *Masonic Initiation*, states: “*It may be a surprise to some members of our Craft to be told that our ceremonial rites, as at present performed, do not constitute or confer real Initiation at all, in the original sense of admitting a man to the solemn mysteries of the human soul, and to practical experience in divine science.*”[1] We are taught that Freemasonry is a progressive Moral Science. I view them personally as a Magickal working. If the brethren’s intentions are pure, if the words are correct, if the movements are precise, and most importantly, if

the candidate is receptive to them, then the three degrees plant a seed within the candidate.

A seed, which if properly nurtured, can grow that man into a fantastic Mason. While the candidate’s intender, the officers, and every other member of the Lodge can do their due diligence to nurture the candidate; if the candidate himself does not put in the work, if he lacks an understanding of the importance of the ceremonies he’s taken place in, or worse yet; if he believes them to be just some drama that he’s been put through, then the candidate will most likely not grow, but rather wither on the vine.

Masonic initiation, when properly understood, is not a discrete series of ceremonies undergone in rapid succession over a matter of months. They are the comprehensive project of every Mason’s lifetime. While the three degrees are the ceremonial part of the initiatic experience, it will be the decades of our personal interior labor, our moral tests, our psychological development, and ultimately our work on expanding our consciousness that must follow if the ceremonies are to bear any fruit at all.

The ancient Mystery schools of Egypt, Greece, Chaldea, and Persia — the traditions from which speculative Masonry directly descends in spirit — did not regard initiation as a ceremony lasting a few hours. They regarded it as a rigorous, extended process of transformation that might consume years or

even an entire lifetime.

Wilmshurst describes this process in Masonic Initiation: "*Their great buildings, which still survive, were assuredly not erected at such immense labour and skill merely to provide convenient meeting-places, like our modern Lodge premises, at which to administer a formal rite at the end of a day devoted to business and secular pursuits. The mass of Initiation literature and hieroglyphs available to us reveals how drastic and searching was the work to which candidates were subjected under the expert guidance of Masters who had previously undergone the same discipline.*"[2] This was, Wilmshurst argues, nothing less than "*the highest, greatest and holiest of all forms of science — the science of the human soul and the art of its conversion from a natural to a regenerate supernatural state.*"[3]

J. D. Buck, writing in *Mystic Masonry*, identified this same principle from a different angle: "*Just as all life is an evolution, so is all real knowledge an initiation; and it proceeds in a natural order, and advances by specific degrees.*"[4] In the ancient world, the candidate did not pass through a sequence of ceremonies as a formality. He passed through them as a living demonstration that he had already, in fact, accomplished the inner work each degree symbolized. "*Proficiency in the preceding degree,*" Buck notes, "*is everywhere made a reason for advancement in Masonry*" — and in the ancient systems this proficiency meant not the recitation of memorized words, but the actual, verifiable transformation of the candidate's character and consciousness.[5]

For Wilmshurst, initiation should be demanding: a preparation period of twelve years was standard before the final great illumination of Mastership was permitted. Wilmshurst explains his arithmetic in terms that carry practical weight: the first seven years were devoted to the work of the En-

tered Apprentice — detachment from the outer world, purification of the physical and sensual nature. The following five years were devoted to the Fellowcraft's work of disciplining the mind and the psychic faculties. Only at the completion of this twelve-year preparation was the candidate said to be "*mystically twelve years old*" — purified, balanced, and ready for the supreme ordeal of the Master's degree.[6] And even then, Mastership itself was not the end but a new beginning: "*He will continue to live in the world for the remainder of his appointed span, no longer for his own sake, but for the uplifting and advancement of his fellow-men to his own high degree.*"[7]

Every genuine system of initiation, Wilmshurst argues, has always been divided into exactly three stages, because the nature of human transformation requires exactly three fundamental labors. These are not stages that can be rushed, combined, or ceremonially bypassed. They are stages of being — of actual interior change which manifests in the candidate through sustained effort over sustained time.

The first stage — corresponding to the Entered Apprentice degree — is "*the turning away from the attractions of the outer world, involving detachment from the allurements of all that is meant by money and metals, and the purification and subdual of the bodily and sensual tendencies.*"[8] This is learning to distinguish between what one truly is and what one has been conditioned to believe they are. In the language of MacNulty's *Way of the Craftsman*, it is the work of learning that the ego — the "*Inner Guard*" of the psyche — is not a reliable master but only a doorkeeper, and that one's real identity lies deeper within, at the level of the Self represented by the Junior Warden.[9] This work does not happen in a single evening. It is the work of years.

The second stage — the Fellowcraft — is

"the analysis, discipline and obtaining control of one's inner world — of the mind, of one's thoughts, one's intellectual and psychic faculties." [10] MacNulty describes this as work conducted entirely within the psychological world, in the "Middle Chamber" of the psyche — the domain of the Soul. It is here that morality in its deepest sense is encountered: not the morality of following rules, but the morality of aligning one's choices with an absolute inner standard that the Craft symbolizes by the Perfect Ashlar. "The work of the Second Degree has to do, in part, with proving the tools of the individual Mason's character against the criteria represented by this perfect stone." [11] This alignment, too, is not achieved in a ceremony. It is the result of years of honest self-examination, of repeated trials and what MacNulty calls "approbations" — the constant testing that Providence provides in the form of life's daily events and temptations. [12]

The third stage — the Master Mason — is the most demanding of all: "the breaking and surrender of the personal will, the dying down of all sense of personality and self-hood, so that the petty personal will may become merged in the divine Universal Will and the illusion of separate independent existence give way to conscious realization of unity with the one Life that permeates the Universe." [13] Wilmshurst places the mystical "age" of Mastership at thirty years — not a chronological age, but a symbolic measure of the soul's maturation, corresponding to the point at which the Great Exemplar "began to be about thirty years old" and commenced his work as a Master. [14]

All three of these stages are "epitomized dramatically in our three Degrees." Every Mason, in taking those degrees, "identifies himself ceremonially with what they signify; he also solemnly obligates himself to put their significance into actual practice in his subsequent

life." [15] When Wilmshurst insists that "our ceremonial rites, as at present performed, do not constitute or confer real Initiation at all," he is not disparaging the ceremonies. He is arguing for their proper function. They are not the work. They are the trestle board. They lay before the candidate, in compressed and dramatic form, a "clear chart of the process of spiritual self-development which he can follow up by his own subsequent exertions." [16]

MacNulty arrives at the same conclusion: "The degrees themselves represent discrete events in each of which the consciousness of the candidate is seen to expand to embrace a new level in the Temple of the psyche. Although those events actually occur in the experience of one who pursues the Masonic Tradition in the way we are examining it here, they do not usually occur at the time the Degrees are conferred." [17] The ceremonies confer a symbolic title — Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, Master Mason — and establish the general idea of the labor to be done. The expansion of consciousness that is symbolized by each degree is achieved not at the altar but through the individual Mason's experience of life, during their countless hours of private reflection. "Then the individual Mason who chooses to do so works through the Degrees again, this time actually in the process of living. During this latter process, which may require an entire lifetime, the ceremonies of the Degrees provide references and explanation for the actual experiences of the individual." [18]

Every degree contains depths that a newly made Mason cannot understand at first, because he has not experienced enough to recognize what the symbols mean. The third degree, for example, depicts the great trial of Mastership, which is the death of the ego and its resurrection as divine instrument. It is reaching the point of understanding that we have each been tasked by the Great Architect to fulfill its great purpose.

Depending on one's level of maturity, one can understand the third degree intellectually as having this idea of Hiram Abiff's raising representing a hope in an immortal life after death. Conversely, one can also understand the third degree through a connection on a deep emotional level. Someone who has experienced hardships in life, who has worked through trauma, who know what it means to stand on the precipice of surrender, embrace god's will, stare into the abyss, and walk away, will have a deeper understanding.

Each degree's obligation deserves particular attention in this context, because each is not merely a promise to keep secrets. It is a commitment to a set of moral instructions to help you become a living embodiment of Masonic ideas of relating to oneself, to one's fellow creatures, and to Divinity. MacNulty notes that in the first degree, *"the candidate's status as an Entered Apprentice is confirmed by his obligation."* An obligation requiring not merely ceremonial secrecy but the maintenance of a container within which interior growth can occur.[19] Secrecy, in this context, is not concealment for its own sake. It is the psychological concept of containment: *"Creative artists regularly apply this principle by containing their work, holding it close until it is ready to be manifested. Such people have learned by experience that a failure to contain their work drains off their energy and destroys their creativity."*[20] The obligation to secrecy is ultimately an obligation to protect one's spiritual development from the forces that cause it to decay or dissolve.

Each subsequent obligation deepens this development. The Fellowcraft swears fidelity to the work itself, which is revealed to be the pursuit of self-knowledge through an understanding of the curriculum of the liberal arts and sciences. The Master Mason's obligation corresponds to the heaviest interior demand: the complete surrender of the personal will.

"The Worshipful Master... is qualified to do so because, at this level of consciousness one sees past one's personal considerations to perceive the needs and aspirations of one's tribe, one's nation or perhaps of the race, as a whole."[21] It is to become a state of being that may take decades of genuine labor to approach.

No symbol in the Craft more clearly expresses initiation as a lifelong process than the rough ashlar, the unworked stone fresh from the quarry, which the Mason is charged to smooth and perfect over the course of his labor. *"The candidate in the Entered Apprentice Degree is about to separate himself out, and to undertake to live his life as an individual, to be a separate stone,"* MacNulty writes. *"It is a step which only he can take and he can take it only for himself. When he has done it, when he has recognized himself to be an individual, like the Rough Ashlar cut from the mountain which will never be part of the bedrock again, the Entered Apprentice can never go back."*[22] It is an existential moment when a man first genuinely recognizes himself as an individual soul responsible for his own development. Once that recognition has occurred, it cannot be forgotten.

The actual work of the Entered Apprentice degree, as MacNulty describes it, is the establishment of what he calls the *"Command Relationship"* which is the reorientation of the ego (Inner Guard) so that it genuinely acknowledges and responds to the authority of the Self (Junior Warden) rather than pursuing its own agenda. This is work that the Craft allocates, symbolically, seven years to accomplish. And it is not accomplished by attending lodge meetings. It is accomplished by using every situation in daily life as an opportunity for honest self-observation: *"Masonic Labour starts with work on the ego... The first task for the Entered Apprentice is to establish this command relationship... It is also a difficult task, because the Inner Guard/*

ego enjoys its role as boss even though it is not particularly good at it, and it will devise all sorts of distractions to prevent the loss of that status."[23]

An important theme in MacNulty's explanation of the Entered Apprentice degree is the role of testing and temptation in the process of Masonic growth. "*These trials which test the integrity of the Apprentice are as frequent as they are subtle. They are the repeated trials and approbations by which the ritual says one knows oneself to be a Mason; and once they start, they continue throughout one's life.*"[24] This is a statement that Masonic initiation is a lifelong process.

The second degree's work is conducted in what MacNulty calls the "*Middle Chamber*" of the psyche, or the domain of the Soul. "*Much of the major work of the Craft understood from the perspective we have adopted here is to be accomplished in this Degree,*" MacNulty writes, contradicting the common experience of the Fellowcraft degree as a brief interlude between the drama of the first and third.[25]

The Soul, in this model, is the level of consciousness that sets absolute moral standards against which all Fellowcraft's work is to be tested. This labor is developing the capacity for genuine moral self-examination, the ability to measure one's choices and motivations against the unflinching standard of the three great lights in Freemasonry. "*The work of the Second Degree relates to morality and the absolute standard for that morality is to be found within each individual, in his Middle Chamber — his Soul.*"[26] The Fellowcraft's work is the labor of bringing one's entire life into alignment with the inner moral standard that the degree symbolizes.

Of the three degrees, the third symbolizes a continuing orientation of the whole person. The death and raising of Hiram Abiff is exper-

rienced in lodge as one of the most moving and memorable of the Masonic ceremonies. But Wilmshurst is clear that the actual transformation it symbolizes, the death of ego and its resurrection as an instrument of the Divine Will is not accomplished in a single evening.

"*Real Initiation means an expansion of consciousness from the human to the divine level,*" he writes.[27] It is a progressive opening of what Wilmshurst calls the "*central Light*" at the very heart of the Mason's being. The moment of the Third Degree ceremony is, at best, a first glimpse of what this feels like: "*It is something, however, to have felt that a veil has been suddenly withdrawn from his previously darkened sight and that he has become able to distinguish between his former benightedness and the goal lying before him.*"[28]

This goal requires, as we covered above, the mystical age of thirty years of "*soul-development: the full completion of all three stages, the arrival at what the hour of high twelve, when "all the parts of his organism were now equalized and balanced, and all his gates or channels of intercourse with the divine world, no longer shut and clogged by the darkness of his former impurities, lay open for the passage through them of the true Light.*"[29] The Master who has truly achieved this degree of development no longer works for himself but for the benefit of humanity.

MacNulty introduces a concept for understanding initiation as an ongoing process: the east-west dimension as "*the Dimension of Consciousness.*" On the First Degree Tracing Board, East is toward the heavens, toward Divinity; West is toward the chequered pavement, toward the physical world. The entire journey of Masonic initiation is a progressive movement from West to East or from identification with the physical and temporal to identification with the spiritual and eternal.

[30]

This movement is not achieved by advancing through degree ceremonies. It is achieved by degrees of consciousness, by the gradual expansion of one's awareness from the realm of physical sensation and ego-driven reaction, through the middle chamber of moral discernment and soul-consciousness, toward the Holy of Holies where "one can touch the hem of the Robe and one can come, if it be the Divine Will, into the presence of the Most High." [31] This can be best understood in terms of what Jamie Paul Lamb identifies as the archetypal temple.

The Masonic Temple, which we know from our ritual in the First Degree when we are instructed regarding the forms and supports states: "*The form of a lodge is an oblong rectangle, extending from East to West between North and South, from the earth to the heavens and from the surface to the center.*" [32] And later that: "*Lodges are situated due East and West because King Solomon's Temple was so situated. King Solomon's Temple was situated because Moses, after safely conducting the children of Israel through the Red Sea when pursued by Pharaoh and his hosts had erected by Divine command, a tabernacle, dedicated to God, which was placed due East and West to perpetuate the remembrance of that mighty East wind by which their miraculous deliverance was wrought, and to receive the rays of the rising sun. This tabernacle was an exact model for King Solomon's Temple, of which every lodge is a representation. So, all lodges are, or ought to be, situated due East and West.*" [33]

What is this telling us?

1. That the lodge is a representation of a space that extends from the earth to the heavens (or above), and also from the surface to the center (below).

2. The lodge is a representation of King Solomon's Temple, which was a consecrated space designed to hold within itself the essence of the Divine which was contained within the Ark of the Covenant.

As Bro. Lamb states: "*The English word temple comes to us from the Latin templum, which is defined as 'a piece of ground consecrated for the taking of auspices, building for worship of a god'. It is also noteworthy to mention the etymological link to the word template, which is a pattern or mold used for standardization in production – a prototypical design plan; this alludes to ideas such as the sympathy between like objects and the essential unity of things in a category. In its most basic sense, we may say the temple represents physical and/or meta-physical space dedicated to the concentration of sanctified energy – a battery of sorts – tending towards unification or sympathetic resonance.*"

[34] Furthermore, the temple is described as a representation of a Jungian archetypal image: "*The archetypal temple is represented by many disparate expressions on various planes and in various domains.*" [35] Bro. Lamb goes on to argue that: "*In the second half of the Master Mason degree ceremony, the Lodge room is transformed into the backdrop for the extra-scriptural Mystery play by which the Craft's central allegorical teaching is transmitted. It is in this sense that King Solomon's Temple may be seen as the template for the Masonic Temple.*" [36] I would argue, however, that given the ritual quoted above; the template is already established in the first degree.

What Bro. Lamb correctly points out, is that: "*the standard Masonic Temple is oriented in opposition to descriptions of King Solomon's Temple. We read in Ezekiel that, if one stood with their back toward the Temple's door, they would be facing the rising sun in the east. This would allow the Sun to penetrate the Temple through the east gate, illuminating the Holy*

of Holies – a common orientation in ancient temple architecture.” [37] And that the reverse orientation of the Lodge room as King Solomon’s Temple “*may be an allusion to Freemasonry’s cryptic Hermeticism, in that it seems to point to the Lodge room as representing man, the microcosm, and his station vis-à-vis the House of God’s macrocosm. This sympathetic resonance is made particularly clear by the orientation of the candidate (head in the west, feet in the east; at the “brow of a hill, near Mount Moriah”) when interred during the second half of the Master Mason’s degree, which alludes to the mirroring of a microcosmic temple in man.*” [38]

Furthermore, it is through the labor of Freemasonry that has been discussed in earnest above, that the individual Freemason “*incrementally develops this inner temple and gains a peculiar spatial – temporal orientation through the visualization of their parts in the ritual. In time, these memorized passages and their imagined corresponding choreography are concentrated and organized into an inner, microcosmic replica of the outer, macrocosmic temple.*” [39] While Lamb’s idea is akin to that of a memory palace, the idea remains valid. Furthermore, the repetition of the ritual and floorwork, done by: “*thousands and thousands of Freemasons, over the course of several centuries, each contributing to this Idea (capital “I” denoting the Platonic context) of a temple, one might begin to understand what is meant by an “egregorical” or “astral” temple.*” [40]

An egregore can be defined in many different ways esoterically, but in this context, Lamb defines in terms of being: “*a collective thought-form that is thought to have its own autonomous existence, independent of any particular individual or physical manifestation; much like a collective projection or “thoughtform”. Similarly, in occult theory, an astral object is thought to exist on the rarified, aetheric planes above the sublunary sphere,*

beyond the dense material/elemental plane we physically inhabit.” [41] He argues that due to this constant repetition of the visualization of so many Freemasons over an extended period of time has “*contributed to the concentration of a metaphysical temple, having its own sort ontology.*” [42]

It is my view, that true ontological shock comes at the point of death, which is when each individual Freemason learns if their labor has been successful. I have discussed at length the metaphor of the rough ashlar and the journey of life being a continuation of the initiatory degrees to shape it into a perfect one. The idea being that: “*After having dressed and fitted their “rough ashlar” for the builder’s use (a project which is symbolic of their moral and ethical development), the Freemason is entitled to inhabit his place in the very architecture of the Cosmic Temple.*” [43] The Freemason becomes a living stone in the great Celestial Temple, or “*that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*” [44]

As Lamb states: “*the archetypal temple is hermetically mirrored from the smallest microcosmic scales (the human heart and mind), to the mesocosmic planes (the terrestrial building and the temple of memorization), all the way to its loftiest and most rarified macrocosmic expressions (the egregorical, astral and cosmic “house not made with hands”). The temple simultaneously exists and is fractally expressed at the terrestrial and celestial scales, as well as on the physical, mental, and spiritual planes; united in a manner reminiscent of Posidonius’ “cosmic sympathies”, Galen’s and Paracelsus’ “signatures”, and Marsilio Ficino’s “Chains of Being”. This is the doctrine alluded to by the Hermetic axiom: “that which is above is like that which is below” as well as by the clause of the Lord’s prayer “on Earth as it is in Heaven”; that the microcosmic expression of the archetypal temple resonates with the most remote and ethereal macrocosm – and that the central project of the Freemason is to sequentially*

ascend the various rungs of this metaphysical ladder.” [45]

At this point, the idea of Wilmshurst’s soul development comes to center stage, which was expanded upon by MacNulty’s degrees of consciousness blend seamlessly into Lamb’s concept of the Archetypal Temple. It is only at the true point of surrender of the ego, at death, and the acceptance of the resurrection of the soul as a divine instrument, as this living stone, that the work is complete. If our soul is developed enough, if it is pure enough, if we have refined ourselves enough on all planes (the physical/mental/spiritual), then and only then will we become the completion of the great work. The philosopher’s stone. The perfect ashlar. The living stone in the archetypal temple.

Notes

1. W. L. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation* (London: William Rider & Son, 1924), 17.
2. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 23.
3. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 23.
4. J. D. Buck, *Mystic Masonry, or the Symbols of Freemasonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity* (Chicago: Indo-American Book Company, 1897), 59.
5. Buck, *Mystic Masonry*, 59.
6. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 19–20.
7. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 52.
8. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 19.
9. W. Kirk MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman: A Search for the Spiritual Essence of Craft Freemasonry* (London: Central Regalia, 2002), 68–70.
10. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 19.
11. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 75.
12. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 82.
13. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 20.
14. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 32.
15. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 20–21.
16. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 21.
17. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 87.
18. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 87.
19. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 91.
20. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 91.
21. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 80.
22. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 90.
23. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 95.
24. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 96.
25. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 103.
26. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 104.
27. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 18.
28. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 44.
29. Wilmshurst, *Masonic Initiation*, 32.
30. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 62.
31. MacNulty, *The Way of the Craftsman*, 80.
32. Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Illinois, *Manual for Officers of Lodges Ancient Free and Accepted Masons State of Illinois* (Springfield: Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Illinois, 2005), 51.
33. Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Illinois, *Manual for Officers of Lodges Ancient Free and Accepted Masons State of Illinois*, 55.
34. Jamie Paul Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism* (Phoenix: Tria Prima Press, 2021), 1-2.
35. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 2.
36. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 2.
37. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 3.
38. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 3-4.
39. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 4.
40. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 4.
41. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 4.
42. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 5.
43. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 5.
44. *The Holy Bible*, KJV, 2 Corinthians 5:1
45. Lamb, *The Archetypal Temple And Other Writings On Masonic Esotericism*, 6.



Masonic Study: How Can I Become A Better Mason?

by RWB.: Ira Gilbert †

On many occasions, I have been asked by a newly raised brother, "What can I read to become a good Mason"? I knew that becoming a good Mason is accomplished, in part, by embarking on a program of reading the books that can give a new Brother the information that will guide him along the path toward a Masonic lifestyle. In order to help a Brother learn this Masonic lifestyle, I decided to devise a list of the books that I have read that I felt were influential in guiding me in Freemasonry. The Bibliography below are books that I felt could be helpful to my Brethren. One of my criteria was that the books had to be easily accessible. Therefore, the books below are all listed in one of three catalogs and can be readily obtained.

These catalogs are from: J. P. Luther & Co., Macoy Masonic Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., and Lauterer. The catalogs can be found online, and the books can be ordered. I have listed the cost of each book and made some comments that are my personal feelings regarding the books. It is my hope that these books will make your Masonic experience as rewarding as I have in my years in Freemasonry.

A MASONIC BIBLIOGRAPHY:

American Freemasons, by Mark A. Tabbert
- One of the best histories of American Freemasonry.

The Builders, by Joseph Fort Newton
- A must-book for all newly raised Masons.

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia, by Henry C. Coil
- A good comprehensive encyclopedia of Masonic knowledge.

Comprehensive View of Freemasonry, by Henry C. Coil
- One of the best histories of Freemasonry.

The Courts and Freemasonry, by Alphonse Cerza
- An outstanding book by one of the best of the Masonic authors.

Freemasons for Dummies, by Christopher Hodapp
- A good overview of Freemasonry for non-masons and masons alike.

The Freemasons, by Jasper Ridley
- An excellent history of Freemasonry. Ridley is not a Mason. He writes from the perspective of a historian.

Great Teachings of Freemasonry, by H. L. Haywood
- Haywood is one of the most prolific and outstanding Masonic authors.

The History of Freemasonry, by Albert Gallatin Mackey
- This is a one-volume version of the comprehensive multi-volume history by this author. It is a must-read for new Masons.

How To Become a Masonic Lodge Officer, by H. L. Haywood
- A must read by an excellent author for all who aspire to become a Lodge officer.

Introduction to Freemasonry, by H. L. Haywood
- Another must-read by this author.

Landmarks of Freemasonry, by Bede

- A short exposition of the Landmarks of Freemasonry in a short pamphlet.

Little Masonic Library, by various authors

- A five-volume overview of Masonic subjects.

The Lodge and The Craft, by Blackmer

- An excellent compendium of lectures on Masonic subjects.

Mackey's Jurisprudence, by Albert Gallatin Mackey

- The best exposition of the laws of Freemasonry. A must-read for Masons.

Masonic Addresses & Writings of Roscoe Pound, by Roscoe Pound

- This outstanding jurist and Masonic author is a must read for all who wish to become a Masonic scholar.

Masonic Dictionary

- An excellent small pamphlet giving basic definitions of Freemasonry.

Masonry and Its Symbols, by Percival

- An excellent rendering of Masonic symbolism.

The Men's House, by Joseph Fort Newton

- Another must-read for new Masons

More About Masonry, by H. L. Haywood

- Another book by this prolific and readable Masonic author.

More Light, by H. L. Haywood

The Newly Made Mason, by H. L. Haywood

- This is the best book that I have read, and a must-read for all new Masons.

A Pilgrim's Path, Freemasonry and The Religious Right, by John Robinson

- After reading The Newly Made Mason, this is the next book that should be read. Robinson is a historian and not a Mason.

Solomon's Builders, by Christopher Hodapp

- A book about the founding fathers and the Masonic influence in Washington, D.C.

Sources of Masonic Symbolism, by Horne

- A good exposition of this topic.

What Masonry Means, by Hammond

- The philosophy of Freemasonry in easy-to-understand terms.

Worshipful Master's Assistant, by Roberts

- Helpful hints for the Worshipful Master.



Is A Better Man A Leader? (or) Is A Better Man A Better Leader?

by RWB Raymond J. Babinsky, PS

The areas of investigating (membership), mentoring (education), and leadership (leadership) can evoke a lot of different meanings and viewpoints from various individuals.

In the Masonic sense, the unified focus on the areas of membership, education, and leadership should be to improve the individual Masonic experience at the local level. If we do this as a fraternal organization, we will have growth, retention, and profound community impact.

Getting our lodge leaders to use the tools that are already available to them is the best way we should start. We do not necessarily need to invent a new Masonic order but rather invigorate the fraternity that is already ancient, free, and accepted. (See the Handbook for Officer Advancement, Illinois Grand Lodge A.F. & A. M.)")

Each year I see the new line officers of the lodges that I am a member of, or those that I visit, commit the same mistakes, over and over again, time after time. These failures usually boil down to weak and ineffective leadership and, more importantly, a lack of preparation.

I believe that the reason for these continued mistakes and failures is primarily due to a lack of proper planning and implementation:

Failure to create viable and realistic goals and a plan to achieve them.

Failure to follow the plan and make the adjustments needed to succeed.

Failure to evaluate success and non-success and set

new goals and plans for the subsequent year.

The failure to set goals and the failure to create plans apply equally to the areas of membership, growth, retention, education, and lodge activity programming. In the main, most newly installed lodge officers want success but are simply ill-equipped and are not using the skills and tools necessary to succeed in a meaningful way. Alternatively, annual goal setting and planning will make each year better than the last.

Following initiation, nearly all of our brothers want to be "better" men. Unfortunately, most do not have a vision or a plan to follow on how to get there. By what standards will they know they are "better" men? Knowing how to do goal setting and planning will establish the guidelines and standards that will allow the proper evaluation of both successes and failures. Matthew Nelson of the MWGL F. & A. M. of Utah has written a good book entitled: Lodge Leadership - A Five Step Guide to Masonic Reform.

Nelson's five steps for lodge success are:

- Membership
- Masonic Education
- Ritual Proficiency
- Code Proficiency
- Leadership

Regarding Membership, Nelson suggests that it starts with the marketing and promotion of our fraternity to the public. When a potential petitioner presents himself, the lodge needs to have an implementation program for a proper meet and greet. Such programs should include some type of presentation of the core principles and purpose of our fraternity, and what benefits these are to its members. If an interested individual decides to petition the lodge, the mem-

Reference Chart ⁵
The Ritual Can Guide Us

1st Degree	Investigation (Membership)	Mentor (Education)	Leadership
Explanatory	Ask and it shall be given Your character is vouched for Importance of relationship to Deity	Building your temple	South, West & East Guards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect • Lead • Follow
Forms and Supports	Form of a Lodge Universality	Covering, furniture, ornaments, light, jewels, and the Lines Parallel.	Certain number of Masons Duly assembled with great lights to guide and a (legal) charter to do work. 3 great pillars are Wisdom, Strength, & Beauty. learned in progression by the JW, SW, and WM as leaders.
T&CV	Core Principles are: Brotherly Love, Relief & Truth	Explains the importance of the symbols of the 4 cardinal virtues	Describe the practical application of the 4 cardinal virtues
1 st Degree Charge	Strong reasons to believe in the fidelity and honor of the fraternity	Describe the meaning of the charge	Describe the practical application of the charge
2nd Degree	Investigation (Membership)	Mentor (Education)	Leadership
SD Lecture and Middle Chamber	Search for knowledge and understanding of the world around us	The rules and numbers are explained Describe to symbols of lily work, network, and pomegranate Describe the symbols of wages and jewels	Describe the proper application of rules and numbers. Describe the practical application of the peace, unity, and plenty Describe the practical application of the science of architecture, which leads us to plan, execute, arrange, & delineate. Describe the practical application of the nourishment, refreshment, + joy, attentive ear, instructive tongue & faithful breast.
2 nd Degree Charge	Progressive "moral" science Deep and lasting impressions	Inculcate and instill the importance of the Arts and Sciences.	Describe the practical application of a good reputation, discretion, virtue, and dignity. Describe the application of using candor, admonishing with friendship, and reprimanding with justice when judging others. Describe the practical application of apply the Liberal Arts and Sciences
3rd Degree	Investigation (Membership)	Mentor (Education)	Leadership
Historical	Rituals and ceremonies teach spiritual lessons with great dignity.	Describe the nature of the historical symbols	Describe the qualities of Hiram as a good leader Describe how the application of time, patience and perseverance will accomplish all things Describe how a division of labor and duties creates a common effort to succeed. EA, FC, and MM with different assignments and tasks to complete a common goal.
Emblems	Teaching basic moral and spiritual truths	Describe and explain the meaning of the emblems and symbols	Describe the practical application of the attributes of the emblems and symbols
Charge to Candidate	Making Good men better	Describe the responsibility for the unique mark of favor as a MM. The Journey is not complete, it continues without end.	Describe the practical application of the charges as a Master Mason & as an officer (leader) of the lodge.
Charge to Lodge	Providing an opportunity for brotherhood, fellowship and unity.	Regulate our deportment as a common band of brothers and Masons by applying the lessons of our three degrees in all our actions and deeds.	Describe the practical application of the charges in every aspect of leadership and brotherhood..

bers who "vouch" for him should really "know" him rather than have "just met." Nelson emphasizes the importance of getting a valid petition with valid signatures for the "vouched for by." He also suggests that the lodge be prepared to assign a "mentor" to the petitioner when the petition is received and further suggests that the mentor should be the last line signer. Finally, the investigation of the candidate should follow a uniform procedure that is used for all new petitions. Such a procedure has long been implemented by our Grand Lodge. (Investigation Committee Guide, rev 2015, Illinois Grand Lodge A.F. & A. M.

Referenced Works:

Handbook for Officer Advancement, Committee on Masonic Education, Copyright © 1991, MW Grand Lodge of Illinois A.F. & A.M., Springfield, IL.

Lodge Leadership - A Five Step Guide to Masonic Reform, Copyright © 2012, Matthew R. Nelson, Starr Publishing, Colorado Springs, CO.

3 Investigation Committee Guide, Illinois Grand Lodge A.F. & A. M., Copyright © 2015, MWGL of Illinois A.F. & A. M., Springfield, IL.

Intender Program, Illinois Grand Lodge A.F. & A. M., Copyright © 2011, MWGL of Illinois A.F. & A. M., Springfield, IL.

The Ritual Can Guide Us - Chart, Copyright © 2015, Why-How-What, Raymond J. Babinsky, New Horizons Consulting, LaGrange, IL.





OUR HISTORY

Formed as a charity of Illinois Freemasonry, the Illinois Masonic Student Assistance Program (IMSAP) has been dedicated to a school based early intervention approach to identify and assist at risk students.

IMSAP now impacts thousands of students throughout the state of Illinois through its multiple programs and initiatives.

HOW TO HELP

We always welcome and encourage any assistance. Whether through your monetary contributions or by reaching out to your district to bring IMSAP to your local schools, you can be a part of the change we work to instill in our youth. Be a part of an incredible impact on our students and their futures.

CONTACT

IMSAP Coordinator
217-529-8900 ext. 219 
imsapeilmason.org

3731 Wabash Avenue
Springfield, IL 62711-6261
www.imsap.org

IMSAP is an Illinois Freemasonry Charity



ILLINOIS FREEMASONRY



PUT IT INTO PRACTICE:
WWW.MLS2026.COM



THE MASONIC LEGACY SOCIETY

LISTEN TO IT



EPISODE: 0433
APOTHEOSIS & FREEMASONRY

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/TMR433](https://tinyurl.com/TMR433)



EPISODE: 0570
THE FOUNDATION OF
FREEMASONRY

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/WCY570](https://tinyurl.com/WCY570)

Masonic Conferences

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education – April 24-26 - 2026, Omaha, NE,
www.MCME1949.org



Esotericon - June 20th, 2026, Manassas, VA at Manasseh Lodge



Yes! Masonic Con Chicago will be back in September of 2026.



For more visit, MasonicConferences.com

If your lodge or organization is having an Educational Event (not related to instruction or charities), please let us know. Email the details to: Admin@wcpodcast.com

Please give us at least a month notice so that we can ensure it is added.





חִדְשָׁנוּת הַיּוֹסֵף



The Lyceum