
The Lyceum



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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Brothers,

Time is flying by this year, and Grand Lodge Annual Communications is approaching! I look forward to seeing all the Brothers as we gather for the annual pilgrimage. This issue is a little more significant because it is a compiled August/September issue.

This issue is full of great content, as usual. A Brother from Pennsylvania penned an excellent and enlightening article for the Midnight Freemasons Blog, which we reprinted here for our readers. The author explores what many interpret as the reason for the Craft--Mysticism.

Then, world-renowned business turn-around expert Bro. Mark St. Cyr gives us the no-holds-barred strategy for beating the progressive line- something many view as a hindrance to progress and excellence.

Does your lodge go dark? If it does, have you ever thought about the Brothers who need lodge to stay in a positive mental state? How can we assist them? Brother Jim Stapleton of New Jersey has some ideas. We've also got RWB:. Chad Lacek who has another practical example of how to apply Masonic tenets to our lives that ultimately give us more (seemingly) of what we all value most--Time.

If you find science as fascinating as I do, check out a compiled article on the History of Blue. Historically speaking, Blue is a "new" color, which cannot be from "time immemorial." And finally, perhaps nothing makes people more uncomfortable than the truth. It's hard to manage, yet Mark Twain once said, "Always tell the truth so you don't have to remember anything." Darin A. Lahners discusses the concept and how we use it...or don't within our fraternity. If we're uncomfortable--we're growing. We have something for everyone this month, and I genuinely hope you enjoy the magazine. If you do, let the Grand Lodge know.

The next issue will be in October, featuring some recaps and extraordinary happenings from GLAC. I hope to see you there!

R. H. Johnson,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. H. Johnson".

Editor-In-Chief, The Lyceum



Featured Article

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Understanding the Mysticism in Freemasonry

by Bro. Joseph Covell, Pennsylvania

Many great historians of Freemasonry, and those concentrated on The Mystery Schools in general, have hypothesized that the G in Masonry represents Gnosis, or simply The Soul. Naysayers from the profane and non-profane worlds may say Gnosis means knowledge. The meaning behind the “G” is not meant to serve as debate, only to set the wheels in motion for understanding the Mysticism in Freemasonry.

The source material to serve as the foundation for the points presented comes from R. Swinburne Clymer, MD's *The Mysticism of Masonry* and J.D. Buck, MD's *Mystic Masonry*, with the latter serving as a huge influence for the former. Both men were heavily involved in Freemasonry, in their respective eras achieving prestigious accolades and recognition, and held offices within various fields of study. The two works will be cited in a way to serve as a high-level esoteric (and exoteric) overview of various symbolism within Initiation and degree work and will then encompass the overall Philosophy of Freemasonry.

“All Masonry of the past dealt largely with the ethics and symbolism of the Ancient Mysteries. If the Masons of the present age will but seek for the spirit of the symbolism upon which the degrees are based, the grandest achievements in knowledge and reconstruction will be possible, and the mysteries concealed in the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity will be recovered to them.” **The Mysticism of Masonry**, Page 36.

In ancient days, what was the relationship of Masonry (or the equivalent predecessor of its time) to other schools of both the Lower and Greater Mysteries (Mystery Schools)? Masonry might arguably be considered as the Outer Guard to The Inner Temple. *“Among all the ancient, there was both a public and a secret worship. The secret worship did not originate in Egypt but in Atlantis and from thence was carried into Egypt. This secret worship always was known as the ‘Mysteries’, and all of these Mysteries were the same in substance or spirit, and in the religious philosophy, their legends and fundamentals were identical with only a variation of characters. These mysteries could be obtained in no other manner than by Initiation, and the*



members of these Priesthoods were not known by outward signs and tokens but by the color of the spiritual fire with which they were enveloped and which easily was recognized by all true Initiates. The secrecy of the Initiation was not because the Priests did not want the people to know the Inner Mysteries but due to the fact that they would not receive them in the spirit in which they would be given. The masses could not comprehend the application of material and even gross substances toward divine ends and would degrade the most sacred functions of God's divine creation to gross purposes. The masses never were ready to receive the Mysteries nor are they today, much as the Initiates wish to confer them upon all of God's children.” **The Mysticism of Masonry**, Page 131.

When the term initiation is nonchalantly tossed about, the profane might become entrenched with the act of pledging a college fraternity or sorority during rush week. As time has gone by and Freemasonry's numbers have continued to dwindle from that great peak in the 1960s, many Grand Lodges operating in the United States (and elsewhere) have had to compromise long-standing traditions and adapt new recruiting methods such as the one-day class. The one-day class is a trend for an incoming candidate to receive all three degrees of “Blue Lodge” Masonry within the same day. The format has also been adopted by many other appendage bodies. There has existed the “Man to Mason to Noble Program” to bring men into the Shriner's organization. Although it may be convenient to not only receive all three degrees within the same day and helpful to those brothers conferring the degrees, especially those coming from

lodges that struggle to have enough qualified brothers to execute properly, it has been contested whether this method has been a success regarding retention. Whether or not this is the right way to confer degrees is inconsequential for purposes here, but no sincere ritual purist brother can make the argument that this does not hinder the intent of the rituals, for the degree, in general terms, is an invocation meant to be experienced in its original format. Dr. J.D. Buck had this to say regarding Initiation, "*All real Initiation is an internal, not an external process. The outer ceremony is dead and useless only so far as it symbolizes and illustrates, and thereby makes clear the inward change. The ceremony instructs, but it can not transform.*" **Mystic Masonry** pg. 86

To expand on the concept of Initiation even further, Dr. R.S. Clymer has the following to add to the subject at hand, which all good Masons can, of course, relate to the self-Freemasonry of fortifying that inner temple, "*Initiation is not what it is generally supposed to be. All Masons are familiar with the ceremonial form of Initiation, but in reality, this is no more than an outward symbolization of an inner, esoteric work, which should take place within each man seeking the Mysteries. A man may have received the degrees of the Blue Lodge and may be an honor to that Lodge and yet be wholly unfamiliar with the method of procedure which would bring into manifestation the results of the personification of the life as symbolized in these three degrees. It is this outcome of which not only Masons but the entire human race are now so very in need.*" **The Mysticism of Masonry**, Page 6

The Topic of Initiation has held the focal point long enough for this piece. Let's now bring up the tall cedar in the room and address the whole secret society element that non-masons reading this may have previously developed preconceived notions. As to why certain information can only be received in ways and much must remain secretive (although you can google anything), Dr. Clymer offered the following support, "*It never was the intention of the Priest-Initiates that the Mysteries should be profoundly secret as they ultimately became. The initiates were only too willing to accept the Aspirants who applied in sincerity. Moreover, they were willing to teach the people all of the profound truths they would accept. Then, as now, the people were more ready to place their own interpretations on the symbols and what they believed – erroneously – to be the inner teachings of these Masters than they were to accept the actual truths from the Priests. The people, then as now, were wholly unwilling to obey*

the Law in the right spirit and condemned the initiates for having other than the letter, in other words, for reaping the fruits of their) the Initiates') obedience." **The Mysticism of Masonry**, Page 35

A fellow brother once said that most of our Blue Lodge Rituals can be found in printed form without needing to look very hard for it. Dr. Buck may have agreed with these sentiments in the following, "*It is in the ancient symbols of Freemasonry that its real secrets lie concealed, and these are as densely veiled to the Mason as to any other unless he has studied the science of symbolism in general, and masonic symbols in particular. In place of the term Mystic Masonry, the term Symbolic Masonry might have been used alone, but just here lies the whole secret, a profound mystery, and few Masons up to the present time have had the interest or the patience necessary to such investigation.*" – **Mystic Masonry** pg. xxv. To expand further on that thought, "*The most profound secrets of Masonry are not revealed in the Lodge at all... these secrets must be sought by the individual himself.*" – **Mystic Masonry** pg. xxvi

At this point, one may be ever more fueled to question further the secretness of the craft. After all, who gets to determine what information should be withheld, and who should even administer such information? Occultists believed and practiced that within man lay many unrealized abilities to utilize thoughts and harness certain partials out of the very air breathed. Dr. Buck summarizes, "*There are latent powers and almost infinite capabilities in man, the meaning of which he has hardly yet dreamed of possessing. Nor will leisure and intellectual cultivation alone reveal these powers.*" – **Mystic Masonry** pg. 2.

If he was around today to ask to explain the reason why a greater number of people in the current era aren't pursuing the quest for more knowledge, or as we Masons relate to as Light, Dr. Buck might state, "*We have neither the time, the energy, nor the disposition to discover the real meaning and aim of life because all our energies are absorbed in the bare maintenance of existence.*" **Mystic Masonry** pg. 5.

Freemasonry is often labeled as a secret society and henceforth has drawn various degrees of criticism, with those of the most extreme spawning offspring of some very imaginative and far-fetched conspiracy theories and concepts. In the age of 5G Internet connectivity where, one can quickly learn all the secrets of a "secret society" with no sweat broken

as only the fingertips are doing the heavy lifting, and through the medium of various perspectives of “whistleblowers” or “infiltrators,” it can be asked what truly secrets are left? Dr. Buck’s writings might support the ideas picked up from one’s favorite podcast here, “The real secrets of Masonry lie concealed in its Symbols, and these, constituting as they do a Picture Language or Art Speech, are made to carry a complete philosophy of the existence and relations of Deity, Nature, and Man.” *Mystic Masonry* pg. 140. In response to those students of the Esoteric variety out there searching for the hidden or occult meaning to the symbolism of Masonry, Dr. Buck has the subject covered, “Freemasonry, though not a lineal descendant of the ancient mysteries, may justly be regarded as a connecting link between the ancient wisdom and modern times”... “The grips, signs, and passwords, by which a Mason recognizes a Brother, pertain to the Lesser Mysteries. The real Master knows his fellows by other signs. It has been elsewhere shown that the true Adept is both clairvoyant and clairaudient.” *Mystic Masonry* pg. 123.

If Dr. Clymer was here to address a gathering of historians in the field of Ancient symbolism, he might have ascertained the idea in this, “The one thing in which historians make their great and inexplicable mistake is to accept the symbol for the spirit. Few races, even among the heathen, have worshiped idols. They worshiped that which these idols represented. In future centuries, the Christmas of the present will be accused with equal justice, of worshiping pictures and images of Jesus and the Virgin Mary.” **The Mysticism of Masonry**

Freemasons experience all sorts of interrogation from the profane, and many can get entertaining, especially when asked about the various “levels” (an intrigue one who has known a Mason having held such degree or level may offer as a platform to relate in conversation). In the days of the Mystery Schools, degrees were not experienced as a formality. They were the achievement to be attained after a long epic of trials and tribulations were endured. Dr. Buck had this to say, “It must not be supposed that in the Ancient Mysteries, every Initiate became a Master in the sense outlined in the preceding chapters. There were the Lesser and the Greater Mysteries. To the Lesser, all were eligible; to the Greater, very few’ and of those few, fewer still were ever exalted to the sublime and last degree. Some remained for a lifetime in the lower degrees, unable to progress further on account of constitutional defect or mental and spiritual incapacity.”

Mystic Masonry pg. 107.

Taking a break from how Freemasonry and its symbolism can intellectually and spiritually stimulate the student or candidate, the examination zooms in on the granular and broader meanings of various Masonic symbols. Dr. might have opened up the floor with, “The triangle in the square symbolizes potential Being before evolution: Man in the Garden of Eden. The square in the triangle symbolizes regeneration, the purification of the lower earthly nature so that it may “ascend to the Father;” return to Paradise. This is symbolized by the careful position of the compass and square in relation to the Holy Bible, while the three Greater lights and three Lesser lights again make a double triangle; one greater – because, above, one lesser -because below, which every Mason will understand.” *Mystic Masonry* pg. 74.

On an even broader scale of the symbolism, Dr. Buck explains regarding the first degree, “The first lesson we are taught in Masonry is to be good men and true.’ And the first declaration made by the neophyte in Masonry is that he comes to the Lodge to ‘learn to subdue his passions and improve himself in Masonry.’ i.e., to engage in the building of a fit temple for an indwelling soul.” *Mystic Masonry* pg. 112.

The ante can be increased even further in respect to those transformations that are occurring in our subconscious selves, i.e., that inner temple we are constructing within as the master builders that we’ve been taught to be. Dr. Clymer offered the following, ““The “bringing to Light” in the third degree is synonymous with the “finding of the Light” in the process of development taught and practiced in the true Fraternities but with this difference: in the Masonic Initiation, it is symbolic or ritualistic, in the true Initiation, it is an actual growth or development within the Aspirant, and when this Light is found, he is not told of it but himself informs the Master-Teacher. To become a Master Mason, one must pass through the ritualistic Initiation of the Third Degree. This is again symbolic of the initiatory work of the Secret Fraternity when one finally has reached the Third Degree – which is the finding of the Light of the First Degree and is known as Soul Illumination – the unraveling of the Mystery of the Serpent in the next degree, and finally the attainment of Mastership which is synonymous with becoming a Master Mason in the exoteric organization. There is this difference: when the candidate finally has become a Master Mason, he is given a substitute word for the Word, but having attained the Third Degree in

the Secret Fraternity, he also has found the Word.” **The Mysticism of Masonry** pg. 50 – 51.

As many concepts in Masonry and, for that matter, life in general often come full circle, it cannot be stressed enough that not only is there a transformation from within while taking an oath and obligation while receiving a degree as a candidate, but there is also an inward transformation on the part of those participating in such work as an officer, guide, or other position on the floor and including those on the sidelines.

Dr. Clymer, too, felt passionately on the matter and offered, *“When we assume an obligation, we call certain forces into being. These forces are held in suspension – or under control – so long as we act in harmony with them. If we betray the spirit, then all control ceases, and the created vibrations held in suspension become malicious toward the creator of them and return to rend and destroy. One who is false to an obligation has loosened a destructive force that can return only to the creator of it. God does not punish man. So-called punishment is the return to himself – ‘chickens come home to roost’ – of the forces created by himself, which, on betrayal, return to destroy. In other words, man is not punished for his deeds but by his deeds. It is for this reason that almost forty percent of those who enter the Secret Fraternity ultimately bring about their own destruction, entering as they do for utterly selfish, though hidden, reasons. Then, because of their inimical spirit, betray the spirit and purpose of their obligation and so bring upon themselves swift and undefiable punishment.”* **The Mysticism of Masonry** pg. 52

Elaborating on the subject even further brings yet another example from the Ancient Mystery Schools of past ages, with the central theory of what might have been racing through the candidate for Initiation’s mind. Dr. Buck perhaps often struck a nerve amongst Freemasons with the following, *“In the Ancient Mysteries, Life presented itself to the candidate as a problem to be solved, and not as certain propositions to be memorized and as easily forgotten. The solution to this problem constituted all genuine Initiation, and at every step or degree, the problem expanded. As the vision of the candidate enlarged in relation to the problems and meaning of life, his powers of apprehension and assimilation also increased proportionately. This was also an evolution.”* – **Mystic Masonry** pg. 14

Having been heavily influenced by Dr. Buck’s **Mystic Masonry**, Dr. Clymer’s following quote could serve as the perfect complement to the prior quotation from Dr. Buck from the following excerpt, *“All basic reli-*

gious systems and all true secret societies teach, in some way and to some degree, concerning the attainment of the Immortality but most of them fail clearly to indicate that Immortality must be won – that is a personal achievement and can be attained only through the Spiritual evolution (Soul Development) of each person.” **The Mysticism of Masonry** pg. 178.

When studying mysticism and the ancient mystery schools, time and time again, the conversation ends up with a discussion on the role of the Pineal Gland. The Egyptian Eye of Horus is widely hypothesized to have been a symbolization of this little gland, and its usage and origin are, to this day, hotly contested and debated. Dr. Buck goes on to support, *“The action of this little gland” may be likened to the bridge of a violin. It renders the nerve chords more tense and thus raises the vibrations of the brain tissues. It is atrophied and, therefore, dormant in the average individual because the relaxed chords (using a symbol) correspond to the vibrations on the physical plane; it is one of the well-known laws of physiology that every organ will become atrophied from disuse.”* **Mystic Masonry** pg. 90.

Having made a brief layover in Pineal Gland-ville, the path further leads to the invisible forces which all are capable of cultivating for higher purposes, the highest being sole consciousness. Dr. Buck would make the following point with conviction, *“This force is the universal Life agent, as Bro. Pike says, ‘Wherein are two natures’ and a double current of love and wrath. This ‘ambient fluid penetrates everything. Hence, it is the “First Matter” of the Alchemists. It is concentrated in man as the magnetic living force directed by the Will. He who knows its ‘chord of mass, or the “keynote” of its vibrations, can, by his Will, waken it. From Space and send it in mighty waves to do his bidding. The real Word of the Master, therefore, in a scientific sense, is this tone-key by which the ‘Principalities and Powers of the Air; can be made to do his bidding.”* **Mystic Masonry** pg. 93.

It is the intent to stimulate the reader to dive even further into the subjects presented in this piece. The following will serve as Dr. Clymer’s parting gift, *“Due to the unwillingness of many of these seekers to forget the self and to obey those who know, progress is necessarily slow and uncertain, and most of these attempts have given rise, more or less, to fantastic flights of the imagination resulting in confusion rather than enlightenment and, in many cases, ending in downright, soul-destroying frauds of the worst and*

most criminal type. The gross result has been to bring the whole subject under contempt and to make the term "mysticism" mean something vague and uncertain, frequently foolish and questionable, to those ignorant of what the term embraces in its true meaning."
The Mysticism of Masonry pg. 37.

Drawing it all to a whimsical finale, the focal point of the Mysticism within Masonry or simply Mystic Masonry will conclude with this final Dr. Buck quote, *"There is a Grand Science known as Magic, and every real Master is a Magician. Feared by the ignorant, and ridiculed by the "learned" the Divine Science and its Masters have, nevertheless, existed in all ages, and exist today. Masonry in its deeper meaning and recondite mysteries constitutes and possesses this science, and all genuine Initiation consists in an orderly unfolding of the natural powers of the neophyte so that he shall become the very thing he desires to possess."* - **Mystic Masonry pg. 34**



THE PROGRESSIVE LINE STRATEGY: HOW TO USE IT - TO BEAT IT

BY BRO.: MARK ST. CYR, OH

If there's one topic within the Craft that elicits more biased arguments for or against than the "Chamber of Reflection," it's the idea behind progressive lines. So what I would like to argue differently in this missive is something I feel many don't truly think through, which is this...

Rather than allowing the progressive line (PL) system to work against change. i.e., allowing for bad policy implementations or weak management accountabilities to remain calcified. How can it be made to work as to both effect change, but more importantly, solidify that change?

Think it can't? Then let's buckle up and dive-in as I'll explain how to do just that. But as usual, first, the disclaimer:

This is not intended to denigrate the idea of a PL, nor the brothers that dedicate themselves to the tasks they bear. What this speaks directly to is how to instill a necessary change into any management practice (our example will be the PL) that has allowed itself to calcify, for whatever the reason.

Many times those within it (PL) may not be aware to just how hindering the practice has become. The following is a respectful roadmap for those that do, yet, just haven't been able to decipher a way through.

So, with that out of the way, here we go...

Rather than go through the details of what a PL is and how it works. I'm just going to assume everyone reading this knows and spare with the mundane for brevity's sake. i.e., It's basically a known-known throughout the Craft.

One of the very first fundamental processes any change agent needs to fully grasp that I've extensively opined on: is to ditch the idea many other so-called "business gurus" regurgitate ad nauseam, which is "think outside the box."

This scholastic platitude to any self-respecting entrepreneur is a limiting concept from which to start from (it's almost as bad as the brain-dead 'right brain/left brain' tripe, but I digress).

The more effective starting point you need to begin with is this: What if there is no box?

If this sounds a lot like the famous line from the Matrix movie e.g., "There is no spoon." That's great, and understanding that metaphor may be more consequential than you think at first blush.

Note: I know there are many out there reading this thinking "Just who does this guy think he is saying stuff like this?!" And it's a fair point. So I offer the following for you to think about. Most so-called "business gurus" beg to get speaking gigs at \$5K. I start at \$50K+. I'm not saying that to brag, I'm stating it for context only to those that usually mock first - ask repeat questions later.

So now let's begin to bend some rules as the idea implies.

First...

Rather than contemplate all the ideas and mechanics that make up the current model of any PL that we've taken as a hindrance or obstacle. Let's flip it on its head, and think from the standpoint that the PL, is in fact, the very vehicle to both bend and serve the will of a group of change agents for the betterment of a bad situation. Meaning: to not only facilitate that needed change but to enable it to perpetually carry forward.

In other words, rather than trying to bend it, or change it via sheer willpower ("That would be impossible" as you remember also from the movie). Let's use it as currently constructed to both solidify and perpetuate new and better applications. Doing this, suddenly not only the viewpoint changes but so to will it be easier to manifest the wanted effects.

So what's the first step?" Great question...

There is a myriad of stand-alone, along with inter-connected variables and more, that would take up a library wing on each. However, for simplicity, I'm going to keep this general in tone so you get the idea and can adapt to what will be one's own myriad of circumstances for efficacy, which is by far the more important point.

For reference, we're going with a PL consisting of seven members. e.g., WM, SW, JW, SD, JD, SS, JS. I am not including the Tres. nor Sec. on purpose, for in most instances these two figures, more often than not, have to be overcome separately regarding change than any other. And yes, I used "overcome" intentionally. But that's for later. Right now let's just concern ourselves with the seven concerns of the PL.

It all starts with seven...

To effectively begin the process of change there needs to be a minimum of seven brothers aligned and dedicated to the proposed change. It doesn't matter if they're currently serving officers, past officers, or simple members. But you need seven. Why?

Because if everything went your way (hey, it can happen), you need to be able to fill the entire line for true success. If not? (Cue the scary music here.)

Now that I have your attention. Let's continue:

We've laid out the premise that to begin, in earnest, you need seven other like-minded Brothers within your Lodge. Doesn't matter if they're current, past, or never held office. It's the amount that's important.

The number is important not for some symbolic attribute, but rather, if everything went to plan you and your contemporaries could potentially fill every seat simultaneously during a year in office. e.g., WM, SW, JW, SD, JD, SS, JS. This would be the ultimate resolution if realized and should be the collaborative goal of all those involved. (secretary and treasurer are for another discussion)

Now let's get down to 'brass tacks' as they say while mincing no words or obfuscation of premise...

What you (e.g., seven) are going to embark upon is a very legitimate strategy for a tactical takeover (or coup, if you will) of the current working structure

of your Lodge to both instill change and install a fundamental transformation for a new working paradigm going forward.

However, let's also now be clear on something else...

Not only must (repeat: must!) every single item, agenda, _____ (fill in the blank) you now propose to implement adhere both by/to the letter of your Grand Lodge code and rule books, it must also be seen to be adhering to masonic values of anything unwritten. The reason why should be self-evident, but for those that may not see it clearly, here's why...

Because when you are challenged (and trust me, you will be relentlessly assailed) the only arguments that will withstand said assailing will be those which are precisely that. e.g., to the letter, by the code, and adherence to Masonic ideals and principles.

There can not be any wavering on these points, both in your pledge for adherence, as well as your steadfastness to standing behind them when trouble comes your way, which I'll remind you most surely will, usually from places (or persons) you least expected. Trust me on this.

Only by doing things both by the book and in accordance with masonic values will any success be plausible. If not - you'll not only gain the ire of your Lodge Brothers but also the G.L. and almost assuredly charges. So think about this very carefully before you even begin.

This ain't kid's stuff, nor should it be.

Let me give a relevant hypothetical as to the reason why something like the above should even be considered. Again, this is just one example, for there are myriads, yet it sets the example tone for relevancy...

Your Lodge assembles for typical 'green bean' paper plate dining, does nothing more than read minutes at a meeting, ritual, and degree work is shoddy at best, and you appear to lose more members a year than raise, with no one seeming to desire anything for improvement.

I know some of you right now are saying "That's

more than one!” Yes, but in reality, that’s about the most common response or set of responses you hear when this issue is brought up.

So for this exercise - it’s one, OK? Let’s keep going.

For your seven...

Although it doesn’t matter if any are serving as officers or have, if one is, currently? It is a bonus, just not necessary. What is necessary is that the seven of you are completely committed to this endeavor and are giving each other your sacred honor to see it through as a team - not a committee.

If you think of this in any shape manner or form from a committee viewpoint - you will fail. Period. No matter what you’ve read or heard from some “management guru” book or audio tape series. Again, period, full stop.

“Why?” is the next question in case you don’t know (and most of these gurus don’t either) for it is this...

On a team (think baseball, football, soccer, etc., etc., etc.) the members of a team will do whatever it takes to win for the sake of the team. i.e., an all-star hitter batting .400 will sit out a championship game at bat for a rookie batting .200 if the team has decided that is the strategy and tactic for the best chance to win the game. They may not like it, but they will do whatever it takes, regardless.

A committee on the other hand will argue (actually the argument will eventually devolve into) why their argument for the .400 batter deserves to be chosen over the argument for the .200 batter. For in a committee structure, it’s not about winning for the team - it’s about the players constructing the committee winning their argument over the other committee members or arguments. Winning the game is secondary. It’s only winning their argument that counts.

Don’t let that point be lost upon you. Think about it very carefully for true understanding. It’s an insight that alludes most, yet is a primary cause of why most can’t fix what they know is broken.

So now you begin, and here are the parameters you should all now agree to. They need to be concise and deliverable, and best practice is to limit it to no more

than three, while simply one or two is perfectly acceptable.

Example...

An allotment of time no less than 30 minutes but no more than an hour will be set aside for a full presentation of masonic education (M.E.) at every stated meeting and will not be allowed to go unfilled or canceled other than extreme emergencies or true degree work.

Now that’s only one and you can have more, however, that one alone can be a very big one all on its own.

In some places, all that may be needed is to sure up an already M.E. schedule in place that’s just fallen adrift, so you could add another like: And we will call for all Brothers to be dressed in a dark suit and tie for all stated. But just like the first, this second itself in some places is a major one all on its own. So choose accordingly, but I’m sure you get the gist.



Save The Date



November 18,
2023



Double Eagle Con Bloomingtondale, IL

Get ready to mark your calendars with a big, bold circle around November 18th, because that's the day when an all-new and incredibly talented lineup of speakers will converge to delve deep into the fascinating realms of Scottish Rite History, Pageantry, and Teaching.

What makes the Double Eagle Con truly unique is that it stands alone as the first and only event of its kind, dedicated entirely to the exploration of all things Scottish Rite. The Valley of Chicago has meticulously curated a stellar group of speakers who are at the forefront of the Masonic world, ready to share their knowledge on fresh and exciting topics. Whether you're a seasoned Scottish Rite Mason or just starting to explore our rich tradition, there will be something here to ignite your curiosity.

In the coming weeks, we'll be announcing the full list of speakers, each of whom brings their own special flavor to this extraordinary event. And that's not all – ticket holders will be in for a treat with an array of fantastic goodies that will grant them exclusive access to even more Masonic treasures. Stay tuned by clicking the link below, and let the countdown to the Double Eagle Con begin!

Sincerely,
Valley of Chicago Education Committee

Summer Time Blues

by Bro. Jim Stapleton, New Jersey



In some jurisdictions, Masonic Lodges do not hold their Regular Meetings during the hot summer months. This time period is often referred to as Lodges going dark. The break from business meetings is a welcomed respite for a number of Brothers. The recess allows them to spend precious time with family and friends. They might choose to go on vacation, go for a hike, or maybe even enjoy a drink with an umbrella on a sunny beach.

However, what about those Brothers who rely on a packed schedule of Lodge meetings to keep busy? There could be Brothers amongst us that have limited social networks outside of Lodge. They might be divorced or widowed. Perhaps they don't have many family members nearby. Their lifeline is the fellowship that they share when spending time with their Brothers. Without the Fraternity, they might experience loneliness and isolation.

People who are lonely might have a hard time expressing how they feel. They might be embarrassed to admit that they feel isolated. So, it might not be readily apparent that they are distressed. There are Brothers out there that need help but won't ask for help.

We can assist the Brothers who are struggling to get through the summer slowdown of Masonic activity. A simple check-in phone call to see how the Brothers are doing could be helpful. Even a brief visit might be a welcomed gesture. If you have some people over for a barbecue, perhaps you can extend an invitation.

The summer break from Masonic Lodge meetings is a well-deserved respite for many Brothers. However, it is essential to remember those who rely on the fellowship and structure of the gatherings to counter loneliness and isolation. As Masons, it is our duty to be mindful of our Brothers in need. Together, we can strengthen the bond of Brotherhood and positively impact each other's lives.



You Have More Time Now Than Ever Before

by RWB.: Chad Lacek, 33°, Committee on Masonic Education

You don't have time. You need to make the time. You wish you had the time. Sound familiar? Guess what? You've got the time! You have all 24 hours of each and every day. We all do. It's not enough? Nonsense!

Before the widespread availability of washing machines, doing the laundry took 15 hours...and it was HARD WORK. Now, it takes about five minutes and the push of a few buttons. Need hot water? You'll need to chop down some trees first. A family would need about 40 cords of wood per season for their heating and cooking. An experienced woodsman would need 240 hours (a month of 8-hour days) to make that much. Wait, you'll need to fetch the water first. Before indoor plumbing (just four generations ago), your water came from a well or spring, which may or may not be near your home. That's another few hours a week carrying a bucket. We could go on and on. Want some veggies? Start tilling the soil. You get the idea.

The point is that human beings, especially us Americans, have never had more time to work with. Most of our chores have been completely eliminated. The remaining few require so little of our time and effort it's embarrassing to complain about them (but we still do!). Our necessities, our travel, our communication, our shopping, our entertainment...they all take mere fractions of the time that used to be required.

So, how is it that so many of us feel like we don't have time for anything? It could be that nature hates a vacuum. If you remove all the vegetation from an area, leaving a patch of bare soil, before long, it will be full of other plants. If you remove the animals from a section of forest, it won't be long until that space is filled with more of them than you took out. These empty spaces represent opportunities for other things to fill them. I know how hard it is to keep unwanted plants from growing in a garden, and I've battled in vain to keep squirrels out of my attic. It seems hopeless. Luckily, we have greater control over the hours and minutes of our lives.

It's difficult to prevent tasks from leaking in and filling our schedules, but it's not impossible. All it takes is determination. Steadfast determination. It also means that you will have to unapologetically defend the precious windows of time that you preserve. Get used to saying "No" more often. Every "Yes" is someone dipping a ladle into your hourglass of available time. There's a big difference between being a nice guy and being a pushover. It's your time. If you let others take it from you or make decisions as to how it will be spent, you only have yourself to blame. I know it's almost impossible to explain that to your wife, your kids, your parents, your boss, your friends, your neighbors, and yourself. But if you want control of your time, you'll have to.

It starts with our language. The phrase, "I don't have time," says much more than those four simple words would suggest. The subtext is, "I would do that/ be there/ learn that/ help out if I only had time available, but my schedule is full." More often than not, it's a lie, and we all know it. The truth is that we will allocate our time to the things we prioritize highest, at the expense of the least. If someone shows up with free, front-row seats to your favorite performer or sports team, you're going. You will shuffle things around, and voilà, a couple of hours magically appear in your schedule.

You shouldn't have to make excuses. "That window of time is spoken for" or "I have made prior commitments" shows that you place a premium on your time and you are serious about how it gets consumed. It might be that you block out a little bit of time each day/ week to do absolutely nothing. You can do that, you know. You don't need permission. You can create a little space in your schedule that is just for you to take a deep breath, close your eyes, listen to the sounds outside the window, or better yet... go outside and connect with the natural world around you. It's yours.

Just because we can do so much more in one day than our predecessors doesn't mean we have to

or should. Is your life like a paddleless canoe in a fast-moving river or in the driver's seat of an automobile on the road? There's an accelerator AND decelerator pedal in the car. You're the only person that can do it. Most people won't, but you could.

What if you told everyone around you that you were going to do a time management experiment for one month? Just one. During that time, you can explain that you are going to be less 'available' than usual and invite them to participate in the results. By framing it as an experiment, you should get less friction from friends and family who otherwise have high expectations of your time. Two good things will happen. The first is that you will train the people who consume the majority of your time that they can function just fine with a little less of it. Second, you will see for yourself what a little bit of personal free time feels like and how capable you are of creating and defending it. By the end of the month, you should be in great shape to continue to expand your personal agency and take more control over your schedule.

You have more time now than anyone has ever had before. It belongs to you. Take it back. Spend it wisely. You don't get one minute more than your allotment, and no one knows how much is left.





A HISTORY OF BLUE

Compiled by RWB.: Robert H. Johnson, Member Committee on Masonic Education

The color blue holds great symbolic and practical significance in Freemasonry. Symbolically, blue represents fidelity, wisdom, loyalty, and truth, which are all key virtues cherished by Freemasons. The use of blue in Freemasonry can be traced back to ancient times, where it was associated with divine truths and spiritual enlightenment.

In the Western world Blue is associated psychologically with safety. Interesting when we consider how our candidates come into the lodge for their degrees.

Practically, blue serves as the primary color of the Masonic Lodge. The walls of the lodge are usually painted in various shades of blue, and the Master of the Lodge, as well as other officers, typically wear blue Masonic aprons. This use of blue creates a distinct atmosphere within the lodge, fostering a sense of unity and harmony among the brethren. It also serves as a visual reminder of the values and principles that Freemasons strive to uphold.

Furthermore, the color blue is integral to several Masonic rituals and ceremonies. For instance, when a candidate is initiated into Freemasonry, he is blindfolded and led around the lodge, ultimately approaching the “Blazing Star” in the East, which is often depicted as a blue star. This symbolizes the candidate’s journey from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge. The blue star also represents Divine guidance and signifies the pursuit of truth and wisdom.

In addition to its symbolic and practical significance

within Freemasonry, the color blue also holds historical and cultural significance. In ancient times, blue pigments were precious and rare, as they were obtained from naturally occurring minerals. This made blue a color associated with nobility and spirituality. The use of blue in European heraldry further emphasized its association with honor and virtue.

In the history of Mankind, Blue is almost brand new. And I mean this scientifically—Humans did not recognize the color blue until what we might consider semi-modern times. But the sky? The Ocean?

The following article is a wonderful journey into the human discovery of blue. It is lifted in bulk and placed within this piece to give full understanding. The article was originally published by **Business Insider** and was written by Kevin Loria.

No one could describe the color ‘blue’ until modern times

“In ‘The Odyssey,’ Homer famously describes the ‘wine-dark sea.’ But why ‘wine-dark’ and not deep blue or green?

In 1858 a scholar named William Gladstone, who later became the prime minister of Great Britain, noticed that this wasn’t the only strange color description. Though the poet spends page after page describing the intricate details of clothing, armor, weaponry, facial features, animals, and more, his references to color are strange. Iron and sheep are violet; honey is green.

So Gladstone decided to count the color references in the book. And while black is mentioned almost 200 times and white about 100, other colors are rare. Red is mentioned fewer than 15 times, and yellow and green fewer than 10. Gladstone started looking at other ancient Greek texts and noticed the same thing — there was never anything described as “blue.” The word didn’t even exist.

It seemed the Greeks lived in a murky and muddy world, devoid of color, mostly black and white and metallic, with occasional flashes of red or yellow.

Gladstone thought this was perhaps something unique to the Greeks, but a philologist named Lazarus Geiger followed up on his work and noticed this was true across cultures.

He studied Icelandic sagas, the Koran, ancient Chinese stories, and an ancient Hebrew version of the Bible. Of Hindu Vedic hymns, he wrote: “These hymns, of more than ten thousand lines, are brimming with descriptions of the heavens. Scarcely any subject is evoked more frequently. The sun and reddening dawn’s play of color, day and night, cloud and lightning, the air and ether, all these are unfolded before us, again and again ... but there is one thing no one would ever learn from these ancient songs ... and that is that the sky is blue.”

There was no blue, not in the way that we know the color — it wasn’t distinguished from green or darker shades.

Geiger looked to see when “blue” started to appear in languages and found an odd pattern all over the world.

Every language first had a word for black and for white, or dark and light. The next word for a color to come into existence — in every language studied around the world — was red, the color of blood and wine.

After red, historically, yellow appears, and later, green (though in a couple of languages, yellow and green switch places). The last of these colors to appear in every language is blue.

The only ancient culture to develop a word for blue was the Egyptians — and as it happens, they were also the only culture that had a way to produce a blue dye.

If you think about it, blue doesn’t appear much in nature — there are almost no blue animals, blue eyes

are rare, and blue flowers are mostly human creations. There is, of course, the sky, but is that really blue? As we’ve seen from Geiger’s work, even scriptures that contemplate the heavens continuously still do not necessarily see it as “blue.”

In fact, one researcher that Radiolab spoke with — Guy Deutscher, author of “Through the Language Glass: Why the World Looks Different in Other Languages,” tried a casual experiment with that. In theory, one of children’s first questions is, “Why is the sky blue?” So he raised his daughter while being careful to never describe the color of the sky to her, and then one day asked her what color she saw when she looked up.

Alma, Deutscher’s daughter, had no idea. The sky was colorless. Eventually, she decided it was white, and later on, eventually blue. So blue was not the first thing she saw or gravitated toward, though it is where she settled in the end.

So before we had a word for it, did people not naturally see blue?

This part gets a little complicated because we do not know exactly what was going through Homer’s brain when he described the wine-dark sea and the violet sheep — but we do know that ancient Greeks and others in the ancient world had the same biology and therefore same capability to see color that we do.

But do you really see something if you don’t have a word for it?

A researcher named Jules Davidoff traveled to Namibia to investigate this, where he conducted an experiment with the Himba tribe, which speaks a language that has no word for blue or distinction between blue and green.

When shown a circle with 11 green squares and one blue, they could not pick out which one was different from the others — or those who could see a difference took much longer and made more mistakes than would make sense to us, who can clearly spot the blue square.

But the Himba have more words for types of green than we do in English.

When looking at a circle of green squares with only one slightly different shade, they could immediately spot the different one.

Davidoff says that without a word for a color, without a way of identifying it as different, it is much harder for us to notice what is unique about it — even though our eyes are physically seeing the blocks in the same way.

So before blue became a common concept, maybe humans saw it. But it seems they did not know they were seeing it. If you see something yet can't see it, does it exist? Did colors come into existence over time? Not technically, but our ability to notice them may have ...”

Our earliest art using the color is 1,500 BCE. Throughout the medieval period, blue was worn by poor commoners. But in the 13th Century, the nobility took a real interest in blue, and “red V. blue” was a real thing.

The earliest known blue dyes were made from plants – woad in Europe, indigo in Asia and Africa, while blue pigments were made from minerals, usually either lapis lazuli or azurite.

Overall, the color blue is deeply ingrained in Freemasonry’s symbolism and culture. It represents the virtues and principles that Freemasons strive to embody and serves as a visual reminder of their commitment to truth, wisdom, loyalty, and fidelity.



THE POLICY OF TRUTH

BY WB.: DARIN A. LAHNERS, AEO



“Policy of Truth” is the third single off Depeche Mode’s seminal album, **Violator**. It was released on May 7, 1990. It reached number 15 on Billboard’s US Hot 100, and number 1 on the US Alternative Airplay charts. The song is about living with the consequences of being untruthful. The song begins with the below lyrics:

*You had something to hide
Should have hidden it, shouldn't you?
Now you're not satisfied
With what you're being put through
It's just time to pay the price
For not listening to advice
And deciding in your youth
On the policy of truth*

In our First Degree, we are taught that the tenets of a Mason’s profession are brotherly love, relief, and truth. Furthermore, that *“Truth is a divine attribute, and the foundation of every virtue. To be good and true is the first lesson we are taught in Masonry. On this theme we contemplate, and by its dictates endeavor to regulate our conduct. Hence, while influenced by this principle, hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us, sincerity and plain dealing distinguish us, and the heart and tongue join in promoting each other’s welfare and rejoicing in each other’s prosperity.”*

If truth is so important to us as a Fraternity, why are we sworn to secrecy when it comes to not revealing our “Secrets”? Each degree obligation we take has some part within it where we swear to always he,

ever conceal, and never reveal any secret arts, parts, or points of the Hidden Mysteries of Freemasonry. In most jurisdictions, these “secrets” are our modes of recognition. However, how can we, as Masons, be “Good and True” after swearing to never reveal things from our ritual? Does our obligation supersede our first lesson?

From a very pragmatic point of view, assuming our ritual was heavily influenced by or directly borrowed by the rituals being practiced in the Operative Guilds from which Modern Freemasonry sprung, then the idea of secrecy becomes clear. During the Middle Ages, while our operative brethren were building Castles and Cathedrals throughout Europe, someone impersonating a Mason could, potentially armed with the knowledge of the modes of recognition, infiltrate a work site. This person called a Cowan, would usually be a stonemason who had not served an apprenticeship. It is possible that others who were completely unfamiliar with Stone Masonry could attempt to infiltrate the work sites as well. However, I think that their lack of knowledge would quickly show them to be imposters. A Cowan, however, would be harder to spot because they would be able to perform the work and thereby be entitled to wages. So, it was imperative for our Operative Brethren to ensure that their livelihood was protected from these individuals, as they would be a direct threat to their incomes.

Up until the dawn of the internet, there were various exposes which would be written where our secrets were revealed, and we have a Fraternity that suffered from the most famous, which was the Morgan Affair. We suffered not from William Morgan exposing our “secrets” but from the reaction to the mysterious disappearance of Morgan after he had threatened to do so. While many believe that the Morgan Affair

was the catalyst for Anti-Masonic rhetoric in the United States, Dr. Thomas S. Roy noted in his work, *Stalwart Builders: A History of the Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts, 1733-1970*, that there was already a tremendous belief in conspiracy theories regarding Freemasonry. He noted that in the 1820s, there was a belief that:

“Every untoward event that disrupted mankind was blamed upon Freemasonry. It was secret, and therefore, men said, must be conspiring against society. The Masons were considered responsible for the French Revolution and its terrors. They were supposed to be in collaboration with a society known as the Illuminati, which was accused of being conspiratorial in its designs...”

Isn't it interesting that almost 200 years after the Morgan Affair that the above is still perpetuated by those who believe that Freemasonry is some nefarious organization?

Many Grand Lodges will tell you that the best way to combat Conspiracy Theories is to be as public as possible, hold open houses, and be involved in your community. While I do not disagree with such, I think we must understand why we have secrecy. Since the only real value of having our “secrets” is that it is an exercise in Trust. We swear secrecy not to reveal the things that are used to identify us “in the dark as well as the light,” and we feel that we can trust a stranger because they have taken the same obligations as we have. In most cases, in my own experience, this is an absolute truth. Unfortunately, there are some cases where men will pretend to be a Freemason and use this for their own material gain by scamming brethren out of money for promises of goods, most often on social media.

Can Freemasonry be good and true when it purposely hides things from the rest of the population? Let's be honest. The things that we hide can easily be found on the internet. The thing that makes us Freemasons is not our secrets but rather our shared initiatic experience. It is an idea that every other Freemason that we have met has undergone the same experiences in their degrees that you have undergone in yours. Those who feel that these experiences are transformative and spiritual are those that I have found affinity with. Those who decide that Freemasonry begins and ends with a gavel are those that I feel are better served by demitting themselves from our Fraternity. Those who memorize the ritual but

don't think about the words and what they mean and who don't try to apply our lessons to their own lives are those that I pity. How can you memorize something but not practice it? Is not being good and true being someone who not only knows our ritual but tries to exemplify it in their daily lives?

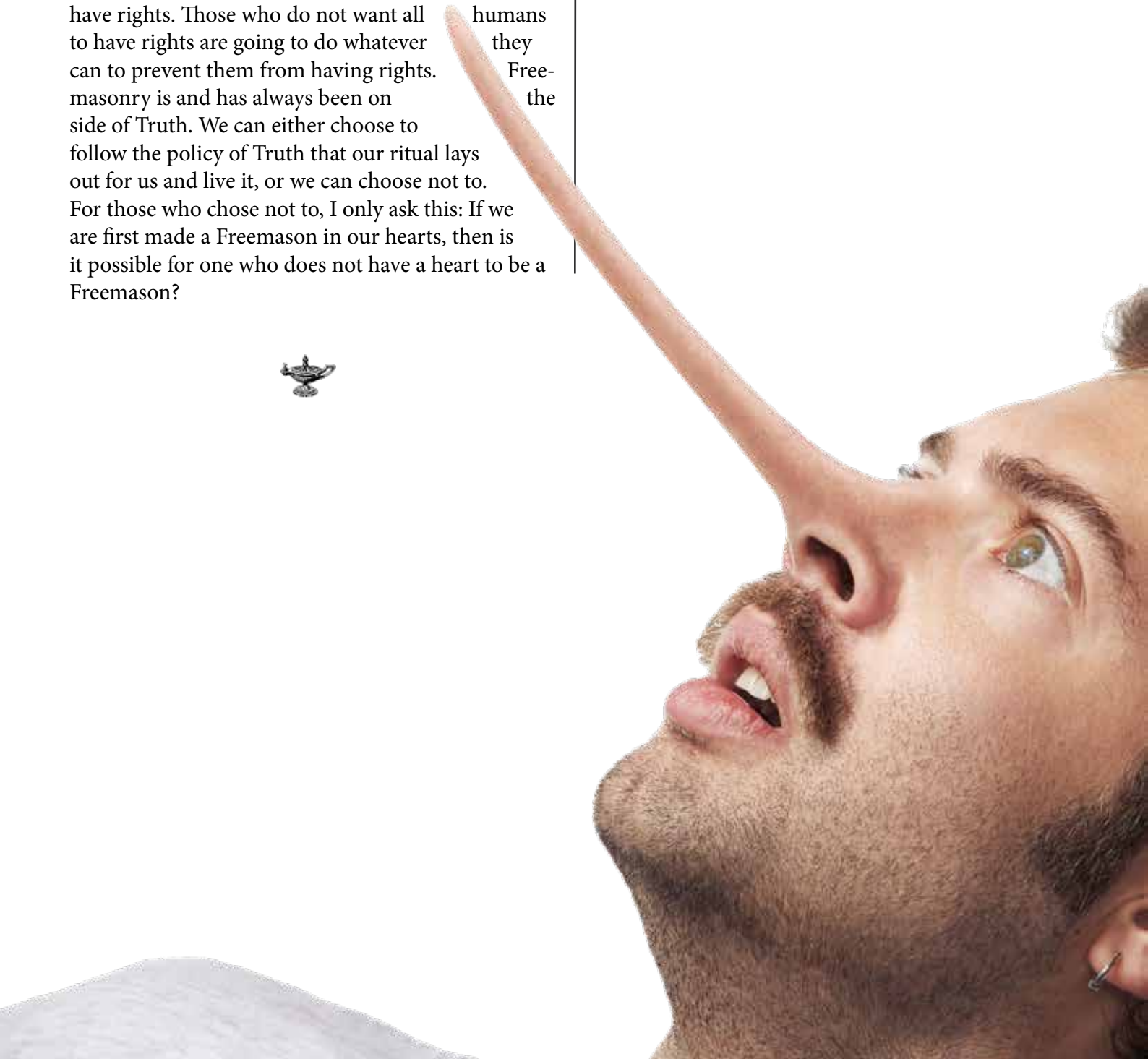
Yet, I can go on social media and see brethren that fit the above category. Raise your hand if you've seen a brother post something ignorant on social media about those women who want to be Freemasons, who dare to practice something that has value for all of humanity, to practice something that is as beneficial for a woman as it is for a man. I'm counting, and I see a lot of hands raised. Raise your hand again if you have seen a social media discussion regarding the subject of homosexual men being Freemasons or the idea of a transgender man becoming a Freemason, and the reactions are viler and, quite frankly, sometimes bordering on unmasonic behavior. I believe that when we do not act according to Masonic values when we do not treat those who are not Freemasons with brotherly love or what I would call empathy, we are not following the policy of truth.

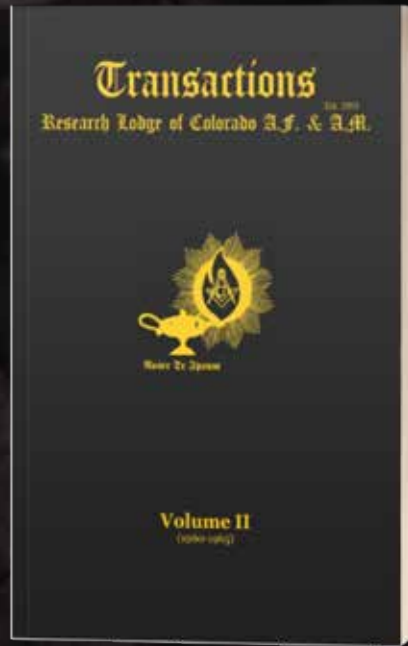
When we do not practice empathy, when we decide to hate others on the basis of their skin color, sexuality, or gender, we are not being Good and True. I believe that the Grand Architect has a design on the trestle board for everyone. My design is different than yours. At the end of the day, we are, regardless of our skin color, sexuality, or gender, still of the same stock. We are all human. Each of us has these inalienable rights as defined by the Declaration of Independence as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but most importantly, all men are born equal. Do you think that the authors of the Declaration of Independence meant that only men are equal? That women are inferior? I do not believe this for a moment. I believe that it means all of mankind.

Freemasonry has for over 300 years, for better or worse, been promoting the belief that all men are equal in the eyes of God, that we are all on the same level, that we have more in common than that which divides us, that we can operate in a lodge, govern ourselves and sit in harmony with each other without regard to color, religion, political affiliation, and sexuality. If you are unable to believe this, then I ask you to look at yourself in the mirror and ask yourself if you are following a policy of truth. If you are a Freemason who is incapable of empathy, if you are incapable of acting upon the square with

others who have a different color of skin, sexuality, or gender identity than we have, then do us a favor and demit. We don't want you, and we certainly don't need you. You are the real Cowan. Freemasonry is, at its essence, the practice of the Golden Rule. Treating others as we ourselves want to be treated is the core of being empathetic.

There are people who want to impose their will, beliefs, and morality upon others, and we, as Freemasons, need to understand that we will be in their cross hairs and continue to be in their cross hairs because we are a threat to them. It is the same reason why Freemasonry was targeted by the Nazis and Fascists because Freemasonry is antithetical to the beliefs of these regimes. There are those who are going to champion human rights, and those who do are a threat to those who do not want all humans to have rights. Those who do not want all humans to have rights are going to do whatever they can to prevent them from having rights. Freemasonry is and has always been on the side of Truth. We can either choose to follow the policy of Truth that our ritual lays out for us and live it, or we can choose not to. For those who chose not to, I only ask this: If we are first made a Freemason in our hearts, then is it possible for one who does not have a heart to be a Freemason?





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