

Banks of the Euphrates



YEAR ONE

TERENCE SATCHELL

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Informative Articles.....	4
The Checkered Flooring.....	5
The Rite of Purification.....	6
The Portrayal of the Capitular Arch.....	8
What is the Lodge?.....	9
Wine, Kings, and Women.....	10
Thoughts on Philosophy and Religion.....	12
Two Schools of Masonic Thought: Part 1—Collectivism.....	13
Two Schools of Masonic Thought: Part 2—Individualism.....	15
Metaphysico-theologo-cosmonigology.....	17
An Allegorical Dream.....	18
The Seven Blunders of the World.....	20
The Seven Blunders of the Masonic World.....	21
Faith.....	23
In His Image.....	24
Freemasonic Fables.....	26
The Chronicles of Philosophus.....	27
The Chronicles of Philosophus: Violating the Sabbath.....	28
The Christian Mason.....	30
The Non-Christian Mason.....	31
Ol' Leroy McKrank and the Council of the Knights of the Royal Arch.....	33
Ol' Leroy McKrank and Lodge Donations.....	35
Ancients Versus Moderns.....	36

Introduction

In February of 2009, I was anonymously writing articles pertaining to Freemasonry on a Masonic blog called *The Middle Chamber*. My articles were often motivated by my own experiences and the website served as my personal soap box. I had produced a couple of research papers which were featured on *Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry*, but for the most part my Masonic musings were simply small-time blog entries intended for my own amusement. Little did I know that the outlet for my thoughts on Freemasonry was about to change.

I was surprised to receive an email on one cold February night, asking me if I would like to join a new internet effort which would combine a variety of Masonic media into one large website. At first, I wasn't sure that they had sent the email to the right address. But after several long conversations with my long-time friend Frederic Milliken and a new acquaintance Greg Stewart, I decided that I was willing to join the effort. That effort resulted in today's *Freemason Information Magazine*.

What excited me about the opportunity to join FmI was that it was an opportunity to leave the blog fodder behind. It gave me a chance to start producing the articles that I wanted to produce. I wanted to focus on creating short, informative articles on Freemasonry that could provide information or new perspectives to all Masons. I decided to name this new concept *The Banks of the Euphrates*. I explained the name in my very first article:

There is a large body of Masonic work out there which resembles a quarry and requires the reader to diligently attend to his work. Many of these are great works which deserve a wide readership and much discussion. However, I hope that this column may more closely resemble its title and serve as a place for the reader to sit in the shade, refill his canteen, and quietly ponder the teachings of Freemasonry.

During the first year of writing *The Euphrates*, my personal life turned upside down. No part of my personal life today is the same as it was one year ago, but Freemasonry was the one constant on which I could depend. So I turned my attention to Freemasonry for a much needed distraction from my personal situation. As a result of this turmoil, my focus shifted from purely informative papers on Masonic symbolism to personal examinations of philosophy and religion.

During the first year of *The Banks of the Euphrates*, I wrote forty articles, received hundreds of emails in response to my writings, and even had my stories appear in a few dozen Masonic newsletters. This book is a compilation of my best material from the year. It is intended to be a celebration of what Freemasonry means to me. The articles are separated into three categories: Informative Articles, Thoughts on Philosophy and Religion, and Freemasonic Fables.

I hope that you enjoy revisiting these moments from the past year as much as I have. Thank you for reading and keep those responses coming!

Your Brother,

Terence

The Euphrates

Informative Articles

I n f o r m a t i v e A r t i c l e s

The Checkered Flooring

March 7, 2009

The mosaic pavement of the lodge is discussed in the lecture of the first degree. This is commonly described as the checkered carpet which covers the floor of the lodge. The lecture says that the mosaic pavement “is a representation of the ground floor of King Solomon’s Temple” and is “emblematic of human life, checkered with good and evil.” In the account of King Solomon’s Temple in the Bible, the ground floor is said to be made of pine or fir, depending on which translation of the Bible that you read (1 Ki 6:15). It is hard to imagine that pine or fir flooring would be particularly mosaic in nature. However, it can be agreed that the mosaic pavement represents the ground floor of King Solomon’s Temple in the Entered Apprentice degree because that ceremony symbolically takes place in that location. While these facts may not be particularly intriguing, the symbolism of the checkered carpeting presents some interesting concepts.

Mackey’s *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* discusses the symbol of the the mosaic pavement.

“The mosaic pavement in an old symbol of the Order. It is met with in the earliest rituals of the last century. It is classed among the ornaments of the lodge along with the indented tessel and the blazing star. Its party-colored stones of black and white have been readily and appropriately interpreted as symbols of the evil and good of human life.”¹

So from this information, it can be understood that the concept of duality has played a part in Masonic symbolism since the early days of the fraternity. While duality is not often discussed in the ritual of the Blue Lodge, the Scottish Rite mentions this concept numerous times. The Rite makes the ideas of dualism, or opposition, in the universe an important part of its theme. Indeed, the ideas of the Kabbala and the Alchemists are used in the Scottish Rite to discuss this concept in several of the degrees.² The lecture pertaining to the 15th Degree, Knight of the East and West, discusses the idea of duality or good and evil as a conflict. Pike writes “God is great, and good, and wise. Evil and pain and sorrow are temporary, and for wise and beneficent purposes...Ultimately, Good will prevail, and Evil be overthrown.”³ But while this idea of duality and the conflict between good and evil are cause for contemplation, it can be confusing to understand how they apply to our actions as Masons.

When thinking about the idea of duality and the concept of good and evil, black and white, sacred and profane, an image that immediately enters my mind is that of the Yin-Yang. While this symbol has become a sort of pop culture icon in recent times, its symbolism is deep and its meaning applicable to this subject. While it has numerous interpretations, the yin-yang demonstrates the concept of duality and balance.⁴ The synonym *balance* is an important term because of the position of the checkered carpet: the floor, where the foundation of the erect human body may be found. The Mason is taught to avoid irregularity and intemperance and to divide his time equally by the use of the twenty-four inch gauge. These lessons refer to the importance of balance in a Mason’s life. Therefore, the symbolism of the mosaic pavement could be interpreted to mean that balance provides the foundation for our Masonic growth.

Maintaining balance allows us to adhere to many Masonic teachings. By maintaining balance, we may be able to stand upright in our several stations before God and man. The Entered Apprentice is charged

to keep balance in his life so that he may ensure public and private esteem. It is also very interesting that the concept of justice is represented by a scale which is balanced and that justice is described as being the foundation of civil society in the first degree of Masonry.

There is a vast variety of symbolism presented to the new initiate in the first degree. It is very easy for the symbol of the mosaic pavement and its several meanings to be lost in the sea of information provided upon our first admission into the lodge. But a deeper look demonstrates that this symbol serves to demonstrate ideals which form the foundation of our individual Masonic growth, the Masonic fraternity, and even the entire human society. Living in balance makes us healthy, happy, and just. If our feet are well balanced, both literally and figuratively, we may be able to serve the purpose of the fraternity faithfully.

1. Mackey, Albert. *An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences* p. 494.
2. Hutchens, Rex. *A Bridge to Light* p. 18.
3. Pike, Albert. *Morals and Dogma* p. 274
4. *Symbols and Their Meaning*. Kjos Ministries. <http://www.crossroad.to/Books/symbols1.html>.



The Rite of Purification

March 25, 2009

The other morning, I was enjoying my daily shaving ritual. As I lathered the shaving soap with my badger hair brush and spread the rich, white lather over my jaw, I thought about how my morning shave had become a daily routine of renewal and purification. When I took my razor in hand and removed the stubble of the previous 24 hours, I was not only refreshing the appearance of my face, but I was also symbolically divesting myself of the previous day's imperfections. This allowed me to begin the day anew, with a clean slate and a clean face. In many ways, this is my personal Rite of Purification.

The Rite of Purification has long been an important part of spiritual ceremonies. For those of us who have grown up in Judeo-Christian religions, this rite was most often manifested in the form of baptism or purification by water. In fact, in the book of Exodus we discover that purification by water was an important part of Jewish custom.

“Then the Lord said to Moses ‘Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall

wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the Lord by fire, they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come.’” (Ex. 30:17-21)

I found it odd that Masonic tradition dictates that the Tabernacle was a model for King Solomon’s Temple and that this temple was a model for Masonic lodges, and yet I had witnessed no such rite in the craft degrees. In fact, the first time I consciously took part in a Rite of Purification in Masonry was in the 14th Degree of the Scottish Rite where I was required to rinse my hands in a basin filled with water. However, that was certainly not the first time that I had been symbolically purified before taking part in a Masonic ceremony.

If we rid ourselves of the narrow view of purification being accomplished through some sort of baptism with water, we can see that the preparation of the candidates for each degree of Masonry is in fact a Rite of Purification. Wilmhurst says:

“Every system of real Initiation, whether of the past or present, is divided into three clear-cut stages; since before anyone can pass from his natural darkness to the Light supernal and discover the Blazing Star or Glory at his own centre, there are three distinct tasks to be achieved. They are as follows: first, 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... This work of detachment and self-purification is our Entered Apprentice work, and to it, as you know, is theoretically allotted the long period of seven years.”¹

Therefore, divesting ourselves of our outer apparel and removing our possessions of worldly value from our bodies is essentially a Rite of Purification. This symbolically removes the superfluities of the profane world and prepares us to enter the Tabernacle. But as we widen our view of the rite of purification, we can see that we are not only purified prior to receiving the degrees. In fact, we take part in a Rite of Purification every time that we step into the place that Exodus terms “the Tent of Meeting.”

The Mason’s apron is a lamb skin or white leather apron, which is described as “an emblem of innocence.” Its color is white, which is the emblem of purity. Every time that we adorn the Mason’s apron we are clothing ourselves with a garment which represents our symbolic purification. However, merely wearing the apron does not complete this action, we must also mentally purify ourselves. Much as the purification through water by the Hebrews before entering the Tabernacle was an admonition to keep one’s thoughts and desires pure in that Holy place, so should the wear of the apron remind us to keep our thoughts and desires pure within our Tabernacle, which is the tiled lodge room.

By doing so, we complete our own Rite of Purification every time that we proceed to enter the quarry and work for the benefit of the craft.

1. Wilmhurst, W.L. *Masonic Initiation*. http://www.freemasonsfreemasonry.com/Wilmhurst_masonic_initiation_fr.html

The Portrayal of the Capitular Arch

April 1, 2009

An important part of the capitular degrees is the completion of an arch found in King Solomon's Temple. In the Mark Master and Most Excellent Master degrees, the discovery of the keystone as well as putting it at the apex of the arch constitutes a large part of the ceremonies of those degrees. However, the arch is widely regarded as being a Roman invention. So one may wonder whether the presence of the keystone and the portrayal of the completion of the arch during the time frame of these degrees is historically accurate.

Historians generally agree that the reign of King Solomon began around 970 B.C.¹ The Old Testament states that Solomon began the construction of the temple in the fourth year of his reign.² This means its completion came circa 959 B.C. Could it have been possible that the ability to construct an arch would have been known unto a Phoenician builder at that time?

Sir Banister Fletcher's *A History of Architecture* states that the true arch was known to the Sumerian builders as early as the second millennium B.C.³ The term 'true arch' is an important detail. The true arch is distinctly different from the corbelled arch used by the Egyptians. The true arch is what the Romans are commonly lauded for creating. A definition of the word 'arch' says that "A true arch is curved. It consists of wedge-shaped stones or bricks called VOUSOIRS (vu-swar'), put together to make a curved bridge which spans the opening."⁴ The arch shown in art pertaining to the Capitular degrees displays this type of arch. Therefore, the theory that an arch constructed with wedge-shaped stones at King Solomon's Temple is plausible since the true arch was used in Mesopotamia a thousand years before the temple's construction.

However, there is a truly Roman characteristic to the arch as depicting in the Chapter. Banister says, "The really significant contribution of the Roman builders to the early development of the arch—and therefore the barrel vault—was to support it on freestanding piers."⁵ The depiction of the arch found in the Chapter degrees shows it supported by free standing piers. This evolution did not take place until the first and second centuries B.C.⁵ So the piers shown as supporting the arch in the degrees of the Chapter would not have been found at the building of King Solomon's Temple.

The idea that the completion of the temple was accomplished by placing the keystone in the arch could be historically plausible, if the piers of the arch were surrounded by masonry or earth in order to prevent them from moving laterally. So perhaps the the stone which the builders rejected did become the keystone of the arch in King Solomon's Temple.

1. Old Testament Chronology of the NIV Study Bible published by Zondervan in 1985.

2. 1 Kings 6:37-38

3. Banister, Fletcher and Cruickshank. *A History of Architecture* p.74.

4. Whitehead, Anne. "Index of all architectural terms." Utah Educational Network.

5. Banister, Fletcher and Cruickshank. *A History of Architecture* p.197

What is the Lodge?

May 20, 2009

Masons often work to improve lodges by performing a number of tasks. Many actions have been taken or proposed in order to create better lodges and much debate has taken place about the proper way to improve Masonic lodges. However, in order to improve a lodge it is important that Masons take a step back and consider just what the term ‘lodge’ means.

Mackey gives three definitions of the term ‘lodge’ in his *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*. The first definition is “a place in which Freemasons meet.” The second refers to the congregation of members which constitute the lodge. This definition compares the term ‘lodge’ to the term ‘church’ which refers to both the members of the organization and the building. The final definition that Mackey creates says that “the lodge, technically speaking, is a piece of furniture made in imitation of the Ark of the Covenant.” Mackey states that as the Ark contained the law of the Hebrews, the lodge contains the Book of Constitutions and the lodge’s warrant.¹

Mackey’s definitions are somewhat different than the definition given in Masonic ritual: “The lodge is composed of a constitutional number of Masons, duly assembled, with the Holy Bible, square and compasses, and a charter or warrant empowering them to work.” So perhaps the literal definition of the word ‘lodge’ may be: an assembly of Masons with a warrant to work by a recognized grand jurisdiction or a word which refers to the meeting place of a group of Masons.

However, the lodge also has a symbolic meaning. Carl H. Claudy says:

“The lodge is a symbol of the world. Its shape, the “oblong square” is the ancient conception of the shape of the world. The Entered Apprentice is taught its dimensions, its covering, its furniture, its lights, its jewels, and will learn more of it as a symbol as he proceeds through the degrees. Although a symbol of the world, the lodge is a world unto itself; a world within a world, different in its customs, its laws, and its structure from the world without. In the world without are class distinctions, wealth, power, poverty, and misery. In the lodge all are on a level and peace and harmony prevail.”²

Considering Claudy’s explanation of the lodge as a symbol, it is clear that the lodge has little to do with the brick and mortar of which the building is composed. The lodge is a peculiar society, a Brotherhood which is able to live by the Utopian ideals that the profane world can never realize.

Therefore, to improve the lodge is to improve the Brotherhood. It matters not where the lodge meets or the condition of its building. Filling the coffers of Masonic bodies or accumulating numbers will not necessarily improve the Brotherhood. Instead, the focus must be on improving the Brotherhood through the self-improvement of its members and the relief of its distressed.

A lodge is at least seven Masons with a warrant empowering them to meet and to practice Masonry. It is no more, it is no less. In order to improve the lodge, we must improve the Brothers which constitute that body. That is the only path to improving Masonic lodges.

1. Mackey, Albert G. *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and its Kindred Sciences*. p. 449-451.
2. Claudy, Carl H. *Introductory to Freemasonry—Entered Apprentice*.

K

Wine, Kings, and Women

May 25, 2009

Which is the greatest? The strength of wine, the power of Kings, or the influence of women?

Those of you that have been received in the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross will doubtless recognize this question. In the degree, Darius offers this question for discussion in his forum and a discussion ensues on the correct answer. This question brings some critical concepts to light for all Masons.

The foundation for this story is found in the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha is a collection of works that were considered for addition in the Bible, but were generally not included in canonical texts. Because these books are not in most Bibles, many Masons are unfamiliar with the content of these works. The story relating to the aforementioned discussion is found in the book of 1 Esdras.

“And when they had eaten and drunken, and being satisfied were gone home, then Darius the king went into his bedchamber, and slept, and soon after awaked. Then three young men, that were of the guard that kept the king’s body, spake one to another; Let every one of us speak a sentence: he that shall overcome, and whose sentence shall seem wiser than the others, unto him shall the king Darius give great gifts, and great things in token of victory... The first wrote, Wine is the strongest. The second wrote, The king is strongest. The third wrote, Women are strongest: but above all things Truth beareth away the victory.” (1 Esdras 3:3-12)

Throughout the rest of the third and fourth chapters, the discussion relating to these questions take place. Not surprisingly, the man which states that “Truth beareth away the victory” is considered the victor.

For the Mason, these four influences may be applied to the four cardinal virtues: temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice. The strength of wine leads to disregarding the concept of temperance. This virtue instructs the Mason to “avoid excess, or contracting any licentious or vicious habit.” However, the strength of wine encourages indulging in excess and creates vicious several vicious habits. The man who claims that wine is the strongest defends his thesis by saying:

“It maketh the mind of the king and of the fatherless child to be all one... It turneth also every thought into jollity and mirth, so that a man remembereth neither sorrow nor debt: And it maketh every heart rich, so that a man remembereth neither king nor governor; and it maketh

to speak all things by talents: And when they are in their cups, they forget their love both to friends and brethren, and a little after draw out swords...” (1 Esdras 3:19-22)

The power of kings requires that the virtue of fortitude be considered. The virtue of fortitude is described in Masonic ritual as “that noble and steady purpose of the mind whereby we are enabled to undergo any pain, peril or danger, when prudentially deemed expedient.” The man who claims that the king is the strongest states of the king:

“And yet he is but one man: if he command to kill, they kill; if he command to spare, they spare; If he command to smite, they smite; if he command to make desolate, they make desolate; if he command to build, they build; If he command to cut down, they cut down; if he command to plant, they plant.” (1 Esdras 4:7-9)

These sentences can describe only one thing: absolute tyranny. Fortitude is that virtue which admonishes the Mason to resist the efforts of tyranny to influence him to forsake his own morals. The strength of kings does not refer only the power of monarchs, but the power of any person who may use their influence for unscrupulous purposes.

The influence of women mandates that the virtue of prudence be observed. Masonic tradition states that this virtue “teaches us to regulate our lives and actions agreeably to the dictates of reason, and is that habit by which we wisely judge, and prudentially determine, on all things relative to our present as well as to our future happiness.” Does not the lust for women cause the Mason to momentarily consider forgetting the dictates of reason or sacrifice a happy future for a moment of pleasure? The man who makes this assertion says: “Yea, many there be that have run out of their wits for women, and become servants for their sakes. Many also have perished, have erred, and sinned, for women (1 Esdras 4:26-27).” Certainly, the lure of peculiar form and beauty will influence a man to disregard the virtue of prudence.

However, the third man who asserts that the influence of women defeats the strength of wine or kings also states that truth is the victor over all of these influences. This is consistent with the Masonic view of justice, which the ritual states “is the very cement and support of civil society.” For justice to be served, the truth must be ascertained. The man who introduces this argument to the conversation says that:

“As for the truth, it endureth, and is always strong; it liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards; but she doeth the things that are just, and refraineth from all unjust and wicked things; and all men do well like of her works. Neither in her judgment is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength, kingdom, power, and majesty, of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.” (1 Esdras 4:38-40)

Truth leads to justice and to overcoming the vices presented by the strength of wine, the power of kings, and the influence of women. Only through truth can the problems created by the influences be identified and corrected. It provides the support of civil society and is even symbolically represented by the feet, the foundation of the body. Therefore, truth is certainly the victor.

Blessed be the God of Truth.

P h i l o s o p h y

Thoughts on Philosophy and Religion

R e l i g i o n

Two Schools of Masonic Thought: Part 1-Collectivism

April 6, 2009

This is the first article in a two part series on how Masons believe that Freemasonry should be governed. There are essentially two schools of thought when it comes to how Freemasonry operates: collectivism and individualism. These are obviously the two extremes in the spectrum of Masonic philosophy. All Masons that are active in some aspect of the craft have adopted ideas from at least one of these philosophies and in order to understand modern Freemasonry, it is necessary to discuss these opposing ideals and how they relate to the fraternity. These articles are the opinions of the author of this column and they are presented so that Brotherly discussion about this subject may take place.

Robert Frost once wrote “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and sorry I could not travel both.” This opening line to his poem “The Road Not Taken” accurately describes the decision that Masons have continually had to make about how their fraternity operates. One road leads to Masonic collectivism and the other leads to Masonic individualism. These two paths are polar opposites and are rarely examined, even though they have become the prevailing philosophies which Masons champion in order to dictate the direction of the fraternity. The first installment of this series shall consider Masonic collectivism.

Masonic collectivism has been one of the driving philosophies of the fraternity over the past century. Collectivism is defined as being “the political principle of centralized social and economic control, esp. of all means of production.”¹ This is a philosophy which requires that Masonry has a single direction and a single goal which the craft as a whole must pursue. It requires that Masonry allows no man to be distinguishable in one characteristic from another man.

Perhaps the most apparent consequence of Masonic collectivism is the cost of Masonry. Collectivists believe in severely limiting the cost of their organization’s operation in order to make Masonry affordable to every man. The collectivist believes that the ego has no place in Masonry and opposes any elitist qualities that the fraternity may exhibit. The collectivist believes that Masonry should be paid for by fund raisers, because every man can work at a fund raiser and the monies deposited to the lodge’s coffer are then the collective product of a collective action.

Collectivism also requires that any mental discourse in Masonry be basic, because Masonic collectivism requires that all men have equal intellect. This leads to the same basic explanations of Masonic history, symbolism, and philosophy to be continually reiterated in Masonic lectures and literature. The individual is not encouraged to pursue studies which may result in distinguishing him from the rest of the fraternity by providing him with a greater knowledge of the order’s teachings. This inevitably leads to the disappearance of educational discourse in the lodge, lest one man become distinguished by being the teacher rather than the student.

Masonic charity is institutionalized so that a central authority controls the distribution of its funds. Rather than relying on the individual to contribute to the charity of other persons in need, the collectivist’s Masonic charity requires the craft to create a charity which contributes to society as a whole. This is to satisfy the requirements of a collectivist organization. Some of the members of a collectivist organization may actually need charity from others, but this would cause those who are in need of charity to be distinguished from those who are not in need. Therefore, it is best to contribute to

society as a whole and allow all Brothers to feel like they contributed to the charity equally. Institutionalized charity also creates the image of the fraternity existing for the good of society rather than for the good of its members which satisfies the collectivist's attitude as well. Ultimately, collectivism leads not to an organization of individuals, but to a society of dependents. Under this principle of Masonic operation, every Mason can only receive from the fraternity as much as his fellow Brother can give. Because of this, Masonic leaders do not develop their strength through individual talents, but rely on the power gained by being equal with every other member of the fraternity. They depend on the principle that all men are equal in ability and intellect to maintain their position and esteem. It requires that every Mason has the same intentions as every other Mason and that he is made a servant to the direction of the fraternity as a whole. It dictates that Masonry happen only in the controlled confines of the lodge in the manner as prescribed by the masses. If Masonry occurs outside of lodge on an individual basis, then the individual would benefit rather than the organization as a whole.

The collectivist is concerned with the perception of the fraternity in society. He lives only for the benefit of the craft and this requires that his fellow man has a favorable opinion of his institution. The collectivist believes in combating Anti-Masons because without their approval of his selfless endeavor, he can never be satisfied.

Masonic collectivism results in the creation of a lifeless fraternity that cannot fulfill its promise to take a good man and make him better. This is because that motto implies self improvement, but Masonic collectivism dictates that only the good of the whole craft is important and not the improvement of the individual through his personal pursuits. The individual must clip his figurative wings and become a servant to the craft. Collectivism is the model of operation by which Masonry is only concerned with the organization as a whole.

*“One country is dedicated to the proposition that man has no rights, that the collective is all. The individual held as evil, the mass—as God. No motive and no virtue permitted—except that of service to the proletariat.” Ellsworth Toohey in *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand*

1. <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

a

Two Schools of Masonic Thought: Part 2-Individualism

April 17, 2009

This is the second article in a two part series on how Masons believe that Freemasonry should be governed. There are essentially two schools of thought when it comes to how Freemasonry operates: collectivism and individualism. These are obviously the two extremes in the spectrum of Masonic philosophy. All Masons who are active in some aspect of the craft have adopted ideas from at least one of these philosophies and in order to understand modern Freemasonry, it is necessary to discuss these opposing ideals and how they relate to Freemasonry. These articles are the opinions of the author of this column, but they are presented so that Brotherly discussion about this subject may take place.

Masonic individualism is the philosophy by which every Mason pursues his own interests in Masonry. Individualism as a philosophy is defined as “the doctrine or belief that all actions are determined by, or at least take place for, the benefit of the individual, not of society as a whole.”¹ Individualism allows for every Mason to have his own goals and directions. It relies on the peculiar strengths of each individual Mason in order to improve each other and through this process, the society becomes stronger.

When a man becomes a Mason, he is professing his belief in the individualist idea of self improvement. “That **I** might travel in foreign countries, work and receive Master’s wages, being better enable to support **myself** and family, and contribute to the relief of poor, distressed, worthy Brother Master Masons, their widows and orphans.” (Emphasis added) The Mason is only asked to serve the fraternity in such a manner that its reputation may be upheld; the degrees regard the Mason only as an individual. This is because only a strong sense of individualism can serve to make a good man better and make the rough ashlar into a perfect ashlar.

The individualist Mason partakes in Masonry as much as his personal finances allow. He decides what the worth of his membership is and will decide for himself whether to sacrifice his other luxuries for his Masonic involvement or discontinue his membership. He does not expect the work of others to be modified for his needs. He refuses to deny the ego of man and is unapologetic about the elite nature of the Masonic fraternity. The individualist does not demand that the efforts of others in the fraternity be diminished in order to make him feel as an equal.

Individualism allows every Brother to pursue Masonic education as he wishes and to be distinguished by his particular studies. This concept realizes that some Masons may be the teacher while others may be the student. It encourages the individual to satisfy his own philosophical needs without regard for the interests of others. It allows the individual to accept or ignore the educational products created by other Masons and encourages educational presentations within the lodge because it accepts the individual nature of such a performance.

The individualist Mason desires to contribute to charity on his own terms and to the cause of his choice, regardless of the feelings of the other Brethren. He will create his own charitable endeavor if he desires to do so. He will accept the contributions of others, but only if it satisfies his intent. The individualist does not require the support of the masses for his charitable cause and will pursue his philanthropy with or without the assistance of others. He partakes in charity not for the good of the people, but to satisfy his own conscience.

Individualism dictates that Masonic leaders should be chosen by their individual merits. It requires that they possess leadership qualities in order to gain any sort of authority. This philosophy requires that Masonic leaders pursue the goals that they feel best as a leader, but it also requires that the leader does not encroach upon the pursuits of other individuals. It requires a working agreement of mutual respect between leaders and the individual Masons, but it demands that neither is forced into a form of servitude.

Masonic individualism requires that the Mason becomes the creator of the fraternity. It does not care where his Masonic pursuits take place or what they are as long as they maintain the reputation of the fraternity. It dictates that Masons should not be concerned with the opposition of those within or without Masonry. Because the individualist pursues his Masonic endeavors for his own pleasure, the disapproval of Anti-Masons is of little concern to him. He wishes to neither pay attention to them nor dispute their claims. He does not require the approval of others to feel that his individual goals are worth his time and dedication.

Masonic individualism creates a stronger fraternity. It enables each man to grow as an individual by pursuing his own interests and utilizing his peculiar talents. This fabric, woven with the strong threads of individuals, becomes a beautiful tapestry which intrigues and attracts men of the finest character. It allows them to find their own Masonic satisfaction and through their personal endeavors, the tapestry becomes stronger and more beautiful. Individualism is the model of Masonic operation which concerns each individual Mason and improves the fraternity through each member's personal evolution.

“Men have been taught that it is a virtue to agree with others. But the creator is the man who disagrees. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to swim with the current. But the creator is the man who goes against the current. Men have been taught that it is a virtue to stand together. But the creator is the man who stands alone.” -Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* by Ayn Rand

1. <http://dictionary.reference.com/>

b

Metaphysico-theologo-cosmonigology

June 1, 2009

“It is demonstrated,” he said, “that things cannot be otherwise: for, since everything was made for a purpose, everything is necessarily for the best purpose. Note that noses were made to wear spectacles; we therefore have spectacles. Legs were clearly devised to wear breeches, and we have breeches. Stones were created to be hewn and made into castles; His Lordship therefore has a very beautiful castle: the greatest baron in the province must have the finest residence. And since pigs were made to be eaten, we eat pork all year round. Therefore, those that have maintained that all is well have been talking nonsense: they should have maintained that all is for the best.” -Professor Pangloss in Voltaire’s *Candide*

Voltaire’s story *Candide* is an examination of the belief held by many that all is for the best and that we live in the best of all possible worlds. This philosophy is propounded by a professor—whom Voltaire describes as a teacher of metaphysico-theologo-cosmonigology—named Pangloss and is taught to the naïve protagonist of the tale, Candide. Throughout the story, Candide is the victim and witness of numerous atrocities and yet still attempts to maintain that his dear Professor Pangloss was correct that all is truly for the best.

The idea that all is for the best brings to mind the concept of predestination. Predestination in theology can be defined as “the act of God foreordaining all things gone before and to come.”¹ In modern western religions, this concept doesn’t seem terribly outrageous as God is viewed as a beneficent, merciful father figure. Surely if God is all powerful and all knowing then everything that exists and all events that occur must be for the best. However, when one considers some of the ugliest tragedies in history, the holocaust or acts of terrorism for instance, it is hard to believe that God as a merciful and all powerful being would permit something like that to happen. This has doubtless led many to forsake a belief in the Divine in order to pursue the practice of atheism; if man has no creator then it is easier to understand how mankind can commit great acts of evil. Still, many religious people in society blame Satan, Lucifer, or some other being that exists in opposition to God in order to come to terms with such events.

In Islamic countries, Insha’Allah is a term that is commonly used to give the probability of a future event. It means “God willing” or “if it is God’s will.”² This term takes a step back from much of the modern thought on religion as it does not express any idea that God wills events for the benefit of mankind to happen, but that he will permit those events to occur that he has chosen, good or bad. This harkens back to the Hebrew traditions where God was often a wrathful, jealous, and manipulating character. Exodus says that God hardened Pharoah’s heart when Moses tried to convince him to release the Israelites from the bonds of slavery.³ Was this hardening of Pharoah’s heart intended to allow God to inflict the plagues upon Egypt and therefore satisfy his anger with them? Or did God wish to bring hardship to his chosen people to prove to them that without their God, the Hebrews were but a meek group of humans?

These concepts, whether it be the idea that all is for the best, the doctrine of predestination, or the idea of Insha’Allah, have doubtless led to complacency in the human race. If all is for the best or happens at the will and pleasure of the Divine, then how are we to speed up the advancement of our society? One can only wonder how different our world would be if women had only been allowed to receive equal

wages for equal work when God willed it or if the genocide of Muslims in the Balkans was all for the best. Yet, society has come to accept sin as a natural part of the world as a consequence of the fall of man.

The Gnostic gospel of Mary Magdelene gives an unorthodox view of sin in the world. Chapter 4 of the partial scripture reads: “The Savior said there is no sin, but it is you who make sin when you do the things that are like the nature of adultery, which is called sin.”⁴ Therefore, sin is not inevitable, but is made by a man’s own act of free will. While it is easy for a society to proclaim the Panglossian dogma, it is a flawed philosophy. Man has the right to do what is moral and right in every situation. He chooses to sin and he chooses to cause the suffering of others. That suffering is certainly not for the best. Today, we do not live in the best of all possible worlds. There is pain to be alleviated and justice to be delivered. Free will requires the greatest responsibility from those that practice it. It is important to keep in mind the repercussions of our personal actions at all times and endeavor to act rightly in all situations. As the more experienced Candide tells Pangloss at the end of his travels, “we must cultivate our garden.”

1. <http://www.answers.com/predestination>
2. <http://www.answers.com/topic/insha-allah>
3. Exodus 10:20
4. Gospel According to Mary Magdelene 4:26 <http://www.gnosis.org/library/marygosp.htm>



An Allegorical Dream

June 29, 2009

The other evening I had a strange dream. Now, most dreams are rather odd, but every once in a while a dream gives us a bit of truth about life. The following is an account of my dream.

I found myself driving along a highway, following a gray pick up truck. I could see that we were nearing a storm on the horizon and it appeared to be a cloud burst. It was obvious that the rain was very heavy because the curtains created by the precipitation from the clouds had ceased to be translucent and had now become opaque, blocking out all light from the sun.

As I entered the storm following the gray truck, I thought to myself “As long as I stay behind that vehicle, I will be safe. The pickup will guide the way.” But while I turned on my head and tail lights so that the vehicles in front of and behind me could see my car, the truck didn’t follow suit. The gray color of the truck provided it with the perfect camouflage in the rain storm and without the rays of red

emanating from its tail lights it was nearly impossible to see. My windshield wipers struggled to remove the dense rainfall from my view and I feared that I would not be able to find the vehicle that was suppose to be guiding me through the rain.

In a moment of desperation, I pressed harder on the accelerator to find the gray truck. As I sped through the sheets of rain I wondered if it had pulled off of the road and I was lost forever. Finally, I saw the reflection of my head lights on the wet tailgate of the truck. I realized that if I could see my own reflection in my guide, that I could properly follow it anywhere.

I found this dream incredibly applicable to the idea of knowing thyself, which is an important part of a person's overall spiritual health. It is impossible to learn more about God without learning more about one's self. Self examination is essential to spiritual growth.

The idea of examining one's inner self in order to come closer to God is an ancient concept. In the Bible, it can be found in the very first chapter of Genesis: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27) This passage has long supported the idea that there is some sort of divine spark in man. Something that raises man above the animals and makes him god-like. If a man can look at his own reflection and see the part of the Divine which exists in him, he can unlock the mysteries of his Creator. As Oscar Wilde once said "The final mystery is oneself."

Masonry is a personal journey that leads us through the journey of knowing ourselves. It invokes the contemplation of our past, present, and current conduct, how we can better ourselves, how we view God, and even our own mortality. In order to truly understand Freemasonry, we cannot only look to the organization for our purpose; we must look inside and discover what role Freemasonry plays in ourselves. Through personal study, meditation, and devotion we can truly subdue our passions and improve ourselves in Masonry. This is how Freemasonry helps us to know thyself.

The Hindus use the greeting *Namaste*—or I bow to you—which is commonly used in religion to say "I salute the divine within you." I think that this salutation is a fitting way to end this article.

Namaste.



The Seven Blunders of the World

September 7, 2009

The Seven Blunders of the World

Wealth Without Work

Pleasure Without Conscience

Knowledge without Character

Commerce without Morality

Science without Humanity

Worship without Sacrifice

Politics without Principle

Mahatma Gandhi developed these seven blunders of the world. Gandhi was a man that believed in change through peace and his pacifistic rebellion in India inspired many other peaceful protests such as Martin Luther King's civil rights crusade. He was a man that lived in a century of unimaginable violence and let the regularity of his own behavior afford the best example for that of others less informed. His seven blunders of the world should certainly give Masons pause and the contemplation of their effects provides an excellent guide for their conduct.

Wealth without Work

A child that receives a toy as a gift will quickly lose interest in it and toss it to the side. But the child that does chores to earn his allowance in order to buy the toy that he wants will cherish it for an extended period of time.

Pleasure Without Conscience

There is certainly nothing wrong with enjoying life. While every person has a right to pursue what makes him happy, a lack of conscience will only lead to suffering. Pleasure without conscience leads to alcoholism, adultery, gambling addiction, and other personal injuries.

Knowledge Without Character

A wise man may be able to benefit society, but if he lacks a character worthy of emulation he will never have an audience. If a man has knowledge, but is conceited because of it or uses it immorally for his own gain he is worthless.

Commerce Without Morality

The man that cheats and defrauds his customers may make more money in the beginning, but he will lose everything when the truth is revealed.

Science Without Humanity

Scientific discovery used for the destruction of humanity rather than for its benefit, is a waste of man's reasoning skills. Nuclear power offers incredible benefits for those who use it properly, but has caused great anxiety because it was first used for violent purposes.

Worship Without Sacrifice

It is good to worship, but if worship is unaccompanied by sacrifice no self-improvement is made. This does not mean that lambs must be slain and burned as an offering, but that divesting ourselves of the

superfluties of life—which is a sacrifice—produces the fruit of worship.

Politics Without Principle

A firm understanding of politics will allow a man in office to accomplish anything he pleases. However, if it is used without principle it only serves to corrupt the government and enslave the masses.



The Seven Blunders of the Masonic World

September 29, 2009

The Seven Blunders of the Masonic World

Ritual without Meaning
Fellowship without Frivolity
Quantity without Quality
Education without Philosophy
Charity without Connection
Frugality without Discretion
Leadership without Competence

Ritual Without Meaning

Too many times, we are more concerned about performing the ritual perfectly without understanding what it means. I know many men that give great lectures, but will confide that they don't even know what something means. Ritual for the sake of tradition is worthless. Ritual for the sake of enlightenment is valuable. An understanding of the ritual's meaning is far more important than just memorizing it.

Fellowship without Frivolity

Whenever Masons decide to hold a function for fellowship, a discussion typically ensues about how to make the function have the smallest impact on the lodge's coffers and the wallets of the members. This results in paper plates, meager meals, and boring events. To spend money wisely in order to make fellowship a grand time is wise for the lodge that wants to be successful.

Quantity without Quality

A lodge with seven great men that believe in the Masonic ideals and actively labor to improve

themselves—and therefore the lodge—is far better off than a lodge with one hundred men that show up to lodge just to show up to lodge.

Education without Philosophy

Many times, we think of Masonic education as being a lesson on the local lodge's history, a famous Mason, the history of the world wide fraternity, or how to do the ritual properly. But if no philosophy is covered in Masonic education, then little self improvement is accomplished. Discussing Masonic lessons in terms of philosophy, ideas, and a man's conduct is what truly transforms men into Masons. It is important to discuss topics that are foreign to a lodge's membership and it is sometimes even necessary to challenge our preconceived ideologies through Masonic education.

Charity without Connection

Big institutional charities often require that fund raisers be conducted and large checks written to the people that actually perform the charity. This type of charity is devoid of self improvement because it has no real connection. If we extend our hands to our needed Brethren and devote our own skills and time to their problems, then we are engaging in true, meaningful charity.

Frugality without Discretion

Frugality is not a tenet of Freemasonry, a cardinal virtue, or a Landmark. It is okay for the lodge to spend its funds on worthwhile activities that will enhance the Masonic experience of its Brethren. Not everything should be done in the cheapest way, a habit to which we have become accustomed.

Leadership without Competence

A man does not deserve to be Master of the lodge solely because he has spent a certain amount of years in the lodge. We elect leaders without any regard for the skills that they possess to function in that capacity. Only competent, qualified men should be elected to preside over the Craft.

K

Faith

November 29, 2009

The LORD said to me, “Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. And I will call in Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah as reliable witnesses for me. Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, “Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. Before the boy knows how to say ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.” Isaiah 8:1-4

This passage will more than likely spark the interest of those who have taken the Order of the Temple of the Commandery in the American York Rite. When I opened up my Bible to examine this bit of scripture, I was not terribly excited. I find the book of Isaiah to be the Revelations of the Old Testament. Interpreting and understanding prophesies is something that I am very uncomfortable with and find that examining such writings typically results in a headache. But determined to find some sort of applicable meaning in this passage, I focused on the task at hand and forged ahead in a bit of Biblical research.

I thought that perhaps the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz might be the key to understanding this passage. This name is defined in the New International Version of the Bible as “quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil.” Considering the last part of the piece of scripture quoted above, this definition does not seem odd. But when considering its place in the Order of the Temple, this meaning does not seem to make much sense.

However, this passage from scripture is actually referring to information found in the seventh chapter of the book of Isaiah. In this chapter, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah, son of Ramaliah King of Israel, have decided to fight Jerusalem and overtake the city. Ahaz, the king of Judah, is troubled by these events, but God sends Isaiah to tell Ahaz:

“It will not take place, it will not happen, for the head of Aram is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah’s son. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.” Isaiah 7:7-9

These pieces of scripture are relevant to the period during the Order of the Temple when the candidate is symbolically serving his three years as a pilgrim warrior. A pilgrim is a person that is on a spiritual quest, a religious journey. He is a traveler who has humbled himself and whose piety has urged him to seek a holy destination. As a warrior, he is engaged in a cause or conflict. Therefore, the ninth verse of the seventh chapter of Isaiah couldn’t be more applicable: “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

But what is faith? Is it that blind belief of something that can not be proven? The eleventh chapter of Hebrews says “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” However, this makes the word faith, as found in Isaiah, seem rather worthless. Considering this definition, without an irrational belief in something with no empirical evidence, you will not stand at all. But what if faith is something more?

The Mason should exhibit wisdom, strength, and beauty in all that he does. If you have no faith in God, you have no wisdom; if you have no faith in yourself, you have no strength; if others have no faith in you, you have no beauty. Therefore, if you have no wisdom, strength, or beauty, you will not stand at all. Perhaps the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz really means that without this wisdom, strength, and beauty a Mason's life will be easily plundered and spoiled.

j

In His Image

January 30, 2010

Throughout my entire life, there has been one Biblical passage that has fascinated me more than any other. It appears early in the first book of the Bible in the first chapter of Genesis.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis 1:27)

The statements contained within this Biblical passage could provide every man with a lifetime of contemplation and could provide topics with which an endless supply of tomes could be created. I have no desire to discuss the last part of the passage which concerns the gender of the Almighty. Instead, I am going to focus on the first part of the passage which states that we (man) were created in His image. In particular, I want to discuss an esoteric and somewhat controversial subject: if we were created in His image, can we become Gods?

The reason that I ask this question is because there was a time that I would have loudly proclaimed “No!” The issue that brought this subject to light for me was gene therapy. According to the Oak Ridge National Laboratory website, “Gene therapy is a technique for correcting defective genes responsible for disease development.”¹ When I first considered the concept of correcting defective genes, I decided that the practice was nothing more than man “playing God.” The idea frightened me and I was uncomfortable with the subject.

Years later, I began exploring the meaning of the previously mentioned passage from Genesis. While I was struggling with the concept of being created in God's image, another scientific concept came to my attention. A laboratory in Switzerland has been working on recreating the Big Bang in order to understand how the universe was created.² It was at this point that I started asking the question: what if we are just understanding how God created the universe?

This inevitably led me to link science with religion. Through science we better understand the universe

and all things therein contained. Therefore, we enhance our knowledge of God's creation and also are empowered with that knowledge to become creators ourselves. Ultimately, we must ask ourselves "If we can recreate the conditions that created the universe, if we can cure and eliminate genetic diseases, and if we can manipulate all of nature to suit our will, have we become more like God?" For me, the answer has shifted from a firm "No!" to a contemplative "Perhaps."

Yet, while I ponder the connections between science and religion and between man and God, the truth is that these are questions which cannot be answered. There will always be the scientist who says that there is no God. There will always be the religious leader who believes that science is blasphemy. There will always be those that believe that God is an untouchable entity and there will be those that do actually believe that men can become Gods.

Everyone has an opinion. The important thing is that we ask the question.

1. Oak Ridge National Laboratory
2. Mong, Adrienne. "Teams Toil Underground to Recreated Big Bang."



The Euphrates

Freemasonic Fables

Freemasoni c Fables

The Chronicles of Philosophus

March 14, 2009

At that time in the land of Gebal, the builders would gather at high twelve on the day before the sabbath. They would meet in the temple to discuss the work of the craftsmen and to study the ancient arts. The master builders filled the higher offices, with the craftsmen joining them on the floor. The quarrymen were to witness the deliberations from the audience gallery.

In the year of the reign of the Venerable Master Enoch, a man was accepted among their number by the name of Philosophus. He was a man from the eastern lands who claimed to be among the ranks of the builders. His work was inspected and he was found to be proficient in his craft and was accepted amongst the Brethren of Gebal. He had distinguished himself as a man of the utmost skill in the operative profession of construction as well as particularly knowledgeable in the ancient speculative arts.

At the rap of the gavel, the Brethren would come to order and at that time it was the custom to take up the pass from the several divisions of builders in order to ascertain their rank. The masters would elect from their number nine to take up the pass. Five were to collect the pass from the quarrymen, three to collect it from the craftsmen, and one to collect it from the masters. The elected officials would pass through the ranks of men and request of them the pass, which was whispered into the official's ear.

While one of the officials was collecting the pass from the masters, he came upon a particularly well known Brother. He was an elderly man who had long served to build the magnificent edifices of the kingdom. However, on that day he was unable to properly communicate the password and the official announced to the assembly that there was a Brother without the pass. The Brethren were shocked and began to cast insults at the elderly master. The masters of the higher offices gathered to determine the fate of the Brother. To have a well known master without the pass was unprecedented and the outrage of the assembly pressured them to pass judgment on the man. The Master agreed that he must be removed from the Chapter.

The Venerable Master Enoch spoke saying "Due to the lack of proper knowledge by this Brother, we must remove him from our Chapter in order to maintain our established regulations."

At that time, there were no regulations to deal with such an event. In order to make the judgment more fair, Enoch asked of the assembly "Does any Brother present at this assembly have anything to say in defense of this fellow?"

The Brethren were silent and refused to talk, even amongst themselves. The foreigner, Philosophus, stood to address the craft.

"Do not disparage this man for succumbing to the difficulties of old age. He has served his Lord, his masters, and his kingdom well for many years. There has never been a time when a fellow builder in need did not receive a contribution from his boundless charity. Yet, while he has been known unto you and you have benefited from his brotherly love, you are willing to remove him from this Chapter because of the unwillingness of his tongue. I say unto you, the pass of a master is found not upon the tongue, but upon the heart."

The Brethren waited for the response of the Venerable Master. He spoke after a period of silence, “Our Brother from the east is correct, for the arts of a builder are revealed by his hands. We have no reason to expel a Brother who has used his hands in a manner so befitting of his title.”

And the Brethren were amazed at this chain of events and said amongst themselves, “Who is this man that calls himself Philosophus?”

h

The Chronicles of Philosophus: Violating the Sabbath

April 24, 2009

On the day of the Sabbath, the builders were exiting the temple after they had worshiped to return to their homes. It was the law among the Jewish builders that they could not work on the Sabbath, but they noticed one of their fellow craftsmen, a man named Amon who was born in Gebal, mixing mortar in order to proceed with work on the judge’s house which was being constructed at that time. They became incensed that he was ignoring the law of their religion and approached him in numbers in order to rebuke his desire to work on a holy day.

“Why do you insult God your Father by rejecting his day of rest?” yelled one of the members of the mob.

“Perhaps he should be employed to build the temples of the pagans!” shouted another.

Amon spoke saying, “I have no quarrel with you or your Lord, I only subscribe to the religion of my land which has created no ordinance against working on this day. For is there any law by which I am to abide which requires that I rest on the Jewish Sabbath?”

The craftsmen talked amongst themselves before one spoke. “Have you not heard the commandments which Moses has received upon Mount Sinai? Do you deny the very commandment of your Lord?”

The craftsmen became even more excited as some began to suggest that Amon should be brought before the priest. Others said that he should be stoned. Finally, they decided to fetch one of the master builders from their assembly. Zachariah was sent to the temple of the builders, where the master builders were and approached Philosophus, who immediately followed him to the angry mob of craftsmen.

Hearing their cries for Amon’s prosecution, Philosophus shouted “Silence my Brothers! What charge

do you desire to bring against your fellow craftsman?"

The most vocal of the group replied, "He denies the commandments of our Lord and is performing work on the Sabbath which has been forbidden."

Philosophus asked of Amon, "Do you worship as your father did?"

"Yes."

"Was he a Jew?"

"No, he was raised in Gebal and worshiped the God of that land as his father had done before him."

"When you were obligated as a builder, did you take your obligation in the name of Jehovah, the God of the Jews?"

"No."

"Were you ever informed that under the law of the order that you must conform to the laws of their religion?"

"No."

Then Philosophus asked of the group of craftsmen, "Were you obligated in the name of Jehovah, the God of the Jews? Were you ever informed that under the law of the order that you must conform to the laws of the Jewish religion?"

The group was silent. Philosophus said, "You were only instructed that it is required that you to follow the tenets of your personal religion, for the name of the God you worship does not determine whether you are an able craftsman. The order does not regard a man for his personal religion, but for his desire to be industrious, to improve his craft, and to assist his fellow Brethren."

One of the craftsmen then inquired, "But who will inspect his work? For the master builders all follow the Judaic law."

Philosophus walked over to the work station of Amon, picked up a trowel and spread a layer of mortar over one of the perfect ashlar to examine its consistency. The Brethren questioned this action in whispers among themselves, for they believed that Philosophus was now in violation of his religion. One shouted, "Master, you violate the commandment of your God!"

Philosophus once again spoke. "Did I come from your home land? Have I ever been circumcised or accepted in your temple?" The Brethren were silent for none of them had ever seen Philosophus worship at their synagogue. "Neither this Brother nor myself are children of Abraham; I will inspect his work. Now return to your homes and attend to the duties of your religion."

The craftsmen agreed and apologized to Amon for their accusations. Before returning to their abodes, they saluted him as a Brother. From that time it became a custom among the builders to tolerate the laws and customs of their Brother's individual religion.

The Christian Mason

May 13, 2009

“Boy, am I perplexed!” said the young Brother as he sat down on the bench outside of the lodge building. Ferris Thompson, a Past Master who spent most of his time mentoring his younger Brethren was sitting on the bench contently puffing his bent bulldog pipe.

“What has you confused? Not that I’m promising that I can help, but I sure can listen.”

“Well, I just get so frustrated with some of the folks from my church, they really believe all of that stuff about how Freemasonry is evil. It just frustrates me so much because I’m certain that our fraternity has made me a better man.”

“So why are you so upset? If you are happy with Masonry, then damn those who mock it,” Ferris gave a little grin as he took a draw from his pipe. Something about swearing while he gave Masonic advice seemed humorous to him.

“Its just that I know it isn’t evil and I can’t stand them mocking the organization that I love. I tried to show them that we weren’t anything to be worried about, heck I even showed them what idiots those anti-Masonry folks on the Internet are. They just told me that I needed to repent or I’d be condemned.”

“Is that really such a bad option?” Ferris chuckled.

“How can you find this so humorous! This is serious stuff we’re talking about!” The Brother said incredulously. He was quite unnerved and beginning to perspire in the sultry summer evening.

“I apologize for upsetting you, my Brother,” Ferris turned toward his protege and removed his pipe from his mouth in order to initiate a more serious conversation. “Let’s get to the heart of the matter then. Just what did they specifically say to you that makes you so upset?”

“Well, they said that we are not a Christian organization.”

“And we’re not.”

“But, they said we commune with non-believers!”

“Which we do.”

“But...well...they said that we allowed men of other faiths to have their book open upon the altar!”

“And we do.”

“Well...geeze Ferris...are you trying to make me feel better or not?!” The young Brother proceed to mop his forehead with his handkerchief and paced back in forth of Ferris who resumed smoking his pipe.

“Perhaps the real question is whether you believe that Freemasonry is compatible with Christianity or not. I believe it is. I have been a Freemason a long time and a Christian longer. I have never found any reason to believe that Masonry is in conflict with my religion and I enjoy the company of my Brethren from other faiths. When some Christians make statements like those which you have just specified, I think of the story of the four chaplains in World War II. To me, Freemasonry is an organization built upon the very spirit of that story. But it isn’t about what I think, the question is do you believe that your Masonic involvement is compatible with your religion or are you just trying to prove to yourself that it is by arguing with the other members of your congregation?”

The young Brother was silent and sat down on the bench with his hands in his pockets. He stared at the cracks in the concrete. “I guess I don’t know.”

“Well, only you can answer the question which I have just proposed. I might suggest that you forgo attending this evening’s meeting and do a little personal reflection. Perhaps you should meet with your preacher as well. It’s unfortunate that you must deal with this after becoming a Mason, it is best to deal with this problem during the petitioning process, but your personal faith needs to come before the fraternity.”

The young Brother nodded his head. “Goodnight, Ferris. I think that I do need to go home and think a bit.”

Ferris smiled. No matter what decision the young man came to, the fraternity would benefit.

f

The Non-Christian Mason

July 13, 2009

Ferris Thompson was sitting on a bench outside of the lodge building, enjoying a pipe full of Marlin Flake. One of the younger, more progressive members of the lodge, Sean, came out of the building and sat by him.

“I hear that Brian dimitted from the lodge,” he said, “he gave some reasons including the fact that he determined that since Masonry wasn’t solely Christian in nature, he didn’t feel he could belong.”

“Is that so?” asked Ferris. “Well, if that’s what he has decided then it is what is best for him.”

“Yup. I just don’t get guys like that. Christians—especially church goers—are just so ignorant. Don’t

they know that the Jesus story has been told a million times before? Or that the origins of their religion are just as pagan as the origins of any other? I think that any Mason that still considers himself a devout Christian has no place in the organization.”

Ferris puffed on his pipe for a couple of moments, composing his thoughts.

“So who convinced you to come to that conclusion?”

“Well, I did. I studied Christianity and spirituality a lot and it didn’t take long for me to realize it was worthless.”

“Hmmm...that is interesting indeed. But did you ever consider the early Christians that closely examined their religion like Paul and John? What about Martin Luther or John Calvin? There certainly have been men that studied Christianity much more thoroughly than you have, so thoroughly that it consumed their entire lives and yet they still subscribed to the Christian religion. What do you do for a living?”

“I’m a computer programmer.”

“So would you say you have devoted the majority of your life to the study of Christianity?”

“No.”

“So who are you to tell these men that they are wrong? Who are you to tell any man who has devoted the same amount of time that you have to such study that they have come to the wrong conclusion?”

Sean became defensive, “Well, do you believe that Christian stuff?”

“Some of it, yes. Some of it, no. But it is my decision and my faith. In a Masonic lodge, no dogma is greater than any other. Christian, Jew, Muslim, Hindu, or even personal, independent worship are perfectly equal in the lodge. Our symbolism is applicable to every religion and no religion at the same time. No one can look at the faith of his Brother and say ‘Mine is better.’”

Sean thought for a second and then said, “You can if they have developed an incorrect image of God.” He had a smirk on his face, he thought he had fooled his senior Brother.

“Have you ever met God?”

The smirk left Sean’s face. Ferris emptied the contents of his pipe bowl.

“My Brother, you have taken great steps to find the destination of your personal spiritual journey and I commend you for that. But you cannot degrade those that have taken another path. Are they not still traveling toward the same destination? A Mason must be tolerant, he must accept that others may disagree with him. Do Christian Masons have the right to tell you that you are wrong and that Masonry is a Christian organization?”

Sean swallowed, as though he was digesting his pride. “No they don’t...I suppose I have been a little

hard headed about this, huh?”

“Sure you have, but now you’ve learned. Now suppose you give me your interpretation of the symbolism of the Third Degree based on your religious views and later we can discuss it from my perspective.”



Ol’ Leroy McKrank and the Council of the Knights of the Royal Arch

July 26, 2009

A couple of decades back, Ol’ Leroy McKrank decided to join the York Rite. Now this was the only other body of Masonry that Ol’ Leroy had ever joined, mainly because he refused to fork over the cash required to join any additional bodies. But at the time, each York Rite body’s dues were only five bucks a piece, so Ol’ Leroy thought it was a pretty good deal. Fifteen smackers for three organizations? Who could pass that up?

Leroy sat through all nine degrees, held over the course of a few months, with an expression of awe on his face. The Brethren of the York Rite took his expression to mean that he was thoroughly impressed with the degrees. However, Ol’ Leroy was actually in a state of shock. Everywhere he looked he saw extravagant sets for the degrees, various aprons with different designs upon them, and the most dumbfounding thing that Leroy noticed was the impressive uniforms of the Knights Templar. Shiny swords? Custom made chapeaus? This was surely the most wasteful display that he had ever seen in Freemasonry. Besides, Ol’ Leroy figured that you didn’t need three bodies to tell the whole story of the York Rite.

So after Ol’ Leroy McKrank had received the Order of the Temple, he went home and started to do some thinking. He was determined to create a less wasteful order for those that were interested in the York Rite, but he would also need a chance to implement it. He got the chance when the York Rite came to the Blue Lodge a few years later in dire straights. They needed help with the rent and Ol’ Leroy jumped at the opportunity.

“Well I’ll tell ya what your problem is,” Leroy told the High Priest of the Royal Arch Chapter, “too much go’ dang waste! I got a plan that will save you all kinds of money and you won’t have to ask the lodge for nothin’!”

That is when Ol’ Leroy told them about the Council of the Knights of the Royal Arch. It was a single degree that enveloped all the teachings of the York Rite. It was like a book made into a movie. Sure,

you get the general story line, but where is the content? Ol' Leroy McKrank explained the degree in detail to the members.

“You see, you get your candidate to start off over here and then he goes and gets his work inspected and then can't get paid, so he talks to the boss man and gets paid and to apologize for his not gettin' paid the boss man makes him the Master of the Lodge. Then its time to dedicate the temple and then we tear it down and throw the candidate into the rubble to find some stuff and he does find some purdy important things.” Leroy proceeded to fly around the lodge room, giving a demonstration of the floor work for the degree. It looked as though he was running sprints from the west to the east and back to the west again. “Then we remind him of his last conversation with good ol' Hiram who shows him where he'll leave some important tools and when he goes to find what Hiram was tellin' him about... well...the guards stop him and just about put him to death. But luckily, some other fella' was nappin' on the job so we'll kill him instead and take it easy on the candidate this time.” Leroy cackled about his little joke before continuing. “So then he has to go to Persia and talk to that fella' Darius and ask to build the temple. He gets into an argument about whether a beer, a purdy lady, or some ol' duffer is more powerful and says that truth is better than all of them. Then he goes to Malta for some reason to become a Knight and then he winds up here and we read him the book of Matthew and take a few shots. You don't need no swords or nothin', just a couple of aprons and a couple of guys that can tell a story.”

Ol' Leroy had a smile of pure satisfaction with his creation on his face. The members of the York Rite stood with their mouths open in disbelief. It is unknown whether they were so confused and awestruck by what they had heard or whether they were in such a destitute situation that they had no other options, but they accepted Ol' Leroy's proposal.

Leroy slapped his knee and cackled, “Now this is a Masonic degree!”

To this day, Ol' Leroy McKrank's York Rite body operates the only Council of the Knights of the Royal Arch.

g

Ol' Leroy McKrank and Lodge Donations

November 15, 2009

Earl Sunderman had belonged to the local Masonic lodge for nearly fifty years. As his health had become increasingly frail in his waning years—he was eighty-seven—he had decided to move into a nursing home and wanted to supervise the division and apportioning of his estate himself. Earl desired to leave a considerable sum to his Masonic lodge and he met with Ol' Leroy McKrank to discuss the details.

Ol' Leroy McKrank showed up at Earl's residence in his trademark overalls and rang the doorbell. Earl invited him in and shook Ol' Leroy's hand.

“Alright, so how much we talkin' about Earl?” asked Leroy.

“Well, Brother, I have decided that I'd like to give about two thousand dollars to the lodge and I would like the lodge to...”

Ol' Leroy gave a long, high pitched whistle. He had never personally spent, donated, or considered any transaction involving that much money at one time. “Shucks! You're practically fixing to buy the lodge, eh?”

“The lodge has been very important in my life, but I would like the lodge to use the money for the purpose of...”

“Boy, this will sure help out our savings account. Nothin' feels better than adding to the lodge's savings account.”

“Savings account? Oh no, Brother Leroy, I want this to be spent right away!”

The last statement stopped Leroy dead in his tracks. “Spent you say?”

“Yes. I want the lodge to take the money and buy new aprons, collars, jewels, gavels, and whatever other materials and regalia need replacement. The last time I saw our Deacon's staffs, the paint was practically gone. The lodge's cotton aprons are more yellow than white. I would like the lodge to replace all of it.”

“Ahhhh, I see, I see. But don'tcha see what's wrong with your little idea? You see, we can repaint the staffs, bleach the aprons, use a little metal cleaner on our jewels to get the corrosion off, and even put some cardboard over the broken window in the fellowship hall, and still put a lot of your money into savings. Don'tcha see how much better that plan is?”

Earl was caught off guard by this statement. He had never imagined that someone would not be completely thrilled to take his donation and spend it as he wished.

“I think I'd just rather have the lodge buy new things.”

“Well, I can sure try to tell the lodge to do that, but you know we'll have to draw a warrant on that. I'll

tell ‘em that’s what you wanted, but they gotta vote on it. No tellin’ what they’ll want to do. Now if you’ll gimme that check I’ll go deposit it in the lodge’s account.”

Earl gave up and handed Ol’ Leroy the check. He could only hope that the lodge spent it as he had wished. He was starting to think that he should have given the money to the United Way, where it might actually do some good.

d

Ancients Versus Moderns

February 14, 2010

Lynn stepped outside of the lodge building to have a cigarette. It was a cold winter night, the temperature had dipped below freezing and there was snow on the ground. The entire town seemed to be silent. There was no wind and the light from the full moon was reflecting off of the snow and softly illuminating the world around him. The cold air on his skin was refreshing and the beautiful scene made him feel at peace.

This peace was a welcomed feeling. Lynn had joined this lodge because they brought in Masonic historians and lecturers quite frequently. This evening’s speaker has chosen to expound upon the origins of Freemasonry. In particular, he had discussed the histories of the Ancients and the Moderns and had attempted to prove which Masonic movement was the “true” Masonry. The subject had produced a fairly heated discussion among the Brethren who believed that they were experts on the issue. Lynn hadn’t wanted any part of it and so he made a point to escape for a few moments before dinner was served and further discussion ensued.

What made the subject somewhat bothersome to him was that he wasn’t unfamiliar with the argument. Lynn had read several papers and even a couple of books on the history of Freemasonry. He had read works on the subject which had been written by a plethora of authors. Some of those authors were Freemasons and others were not. He had found it frustrating that the only conclusion that he could develop was that the number of theories about the origins of Freemasonry was directly proportional to the number of authors that created them. Only one thing was for certain: the jury was definitely still out on the subject.

Lynn puffed on his cigarette and stared at the red light which was being emitted from its end. Then he looked up to see the blue glow of the moon highlighting the white stones which composed the lodge building. The building was well built and all of the stones were nicely hewn and sat square in the edifice. The structural integrity of the lodge building seemed to be a monument to the solidarity of the

order which it represented. A visual manifestation of the fraternity which it housed.

Lynn thought about the men that had built the lodge. He wondered how they had raised the money to construct it. He thought about the time that it took to quarry and hew the stones and assemble the structure out of those perfect ashlar. He wondered what men had been employed in this noble and glorious undertaking. How did they learn to perform their craft so proficiently?

Suddenly, he had an epiphany.

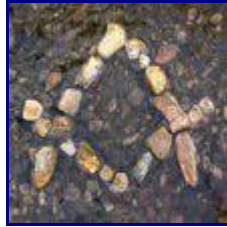
It didn't matter how those men learned their craft. Some had probably learned how to construct such a building without any formal training. They had went to work for a mason or a carpenter early in their lives and had learned through experience. Perhaps some were professionally educated and trained and had earned prestigious degrees in their particular vocation. Regardless, they were able, they were competent, and they were experts. Their education did not matter, but the product that they were able to provide did.

"Maybe it doesn't matter how the Brothers before us learned to be Masons or who was responsible for teaching them," he thought, "maybe all that matters is what the institution has become and what it represents now.

Lynn put out his cigarette and reentered the lodge building. He noticed that he was a bit peckish and wondered what they were serving for dinner.

e

About the Author



Bro. Terence Satchell

Terence became a Mason after discovering its intriguing role in American history and its deep tradition of symbolic instruction. Since joining the Universal Brotherhood, Terence has focused primarily on the operative arts of lodge improvement through developing educational courses and revitalization programs for lodges in his locale. His love for Masonic history and research has also led him to the speculative study of many works on those subjects. Recently, he has turned his attention to producing papers on the subjects of symbolism, ritual, history, and lodge improvement. His column, *The Banks of the Euphrates*, is intended to provide all Masons with short, informative papers which may enhance their Masonic experience.

Terence is a member of Mt. Rushmore Lodge #220 under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of South Dakota. He also belongs to Black Hills Chapter #25, Black Hills Council #3, Schrader Commandery #9, and the South Dakota Lodge of Masonic Research.

You can e-mail Terence at euphratesblog@gmail.com