

Forcing Change



Examining Freemasonry: Part 1 - The Question of Religion

“This is what the Lord says – Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and the last; apart from there is no God... Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.” – Isaiah 44:6,8.

“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’.” – John 14:6.

[Jesus speaking] “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” – Revelation 22:13



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Carl Teichrib, Editor.

The water was a bit choppy, the air mattresses were leaking, and the boat traffic was oblivious to two low-lying objects bobbing in the waves. But our destination was so close. Another 500 feet to doggy-paddle, and we'd land on the mysterious island.

The evening before a group of church youth – myself included – had canoed to the west side of a wooded isle in Lake Metigoshe, a State Park and recreation lake that bridges North Dakota and Manitoba. Here, on the far side of the island, was a strange sight; two blue pillars, a series of three-five-and-seven steps, a star embossed in the landing and other symbols imprinted in the staircases, and a well-trod pathway that disappeared into the forest. Docking our canoes, we followed this trail to the interior where an opening in the trees revealed an altar, mortared stone chairs, and a prominent symbol: the Square-and-Compass with the letter “G” in the middle. After poking around for a few minutes, we left, perplexed by what we had found.

Early afternoon the following day, with all the canoes taken by others, a young friend and I dragged a couple of limp air mattresses from our tents. We changed into swimming trunks, mouth-inflated the mattresses, and struck out under a hot summer sun. Over 1400 feet later we waded through the reeds to the wooded shoreline, trudged through the underbrush and poison ivy, and spent the better part of the afternoon exploring this peculiar place. Then, returning to our now-flat mattresses, we re-inflated and paddled back to camp.

After supper, with my back glowing cherry-red, I had the chance to ride with a local park warden in his patrol boat. The warden had docked close to our tent site, so a group of us boys decided to walk over and talk with the officer. The result was an early evening tag-along, a chance to enjoy a cool breeze while the warden zipped from boat to boat, checking for life jackets and fishing licenses.

Pointing to the mysterious island now in the distance, I asked the officer, “What’s the story with that place?”

The name, he explained, was Masonic Island, and it was a meeting place for Freemasons. Without missing a beat the warden stated that Masons are people of importance. Many American presidents had been Masons, along with prominent business leaders and police officers. “And if

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you want to advance in business or government,” he pitched,” “then you need to join the Lodge when you reach the age of majority.”

I was sixteen years old at the time, yet the experience stayed with me. It was my first encounter with the Craft.



Top left: Mason Island, North Dakota.
Top right: The island on the west side.
Bottom left: Docking at the pillars.
Bottom right: Some of the stone furniture in the clearing.



Years later I bumped into the Lodge in a more personal way as certain local Masons pressured me to join. At the time I was employed under a community-run healthcare program whose board of directors was comprised of Masons and members of the Eastern Star, an auxiliary body made up of men and women with family ties to the Order. Initially I responded to their invitations with disinterest, as I didn't want to add another meeting to my already busy schedule. But the requests continued, so I started asking questions about the organization. And what did I find out? Nothing. The answers I received were so vague as to be meaningless.

"We're not religious or political," I was told. "We make good men better." Pardon my flippancy, but whifty-do.

Finally, during a supper meeting, one Mason made such an outlandish and troubling statement that I had to pursue some meaningful knowledge of the Craft *without entering the Lodge*. While this is a story to tell another time, it's sufficient to say that I pursued to obtain their rituals, historical books, and philosophical texts. Ultimately, this study propelled me down paths I never considered before: mysticism and esotericism, occultism, universalism, internationalism, and a host of transformative movements, ideas, and perspectives. And most Masons, I learned, rarely read their own historical or philosophical literature.

Many years later I returned to Masonic Island on a motorcycle trip with my wife and a friend. We rented a canoe – as opposed to my teenage experience – and took pictures, examined the symbols on the stairway, and left with a perspective I didn't have as a youth. The meeting site was still being tended, and from what I understand, it remains in use today.

On our way home we stopped at the International Peace Gardens, a beautiful park commemorating the longest unfortified international boundary: Canada and the United States of America. Set on the Manitoba/North Dakota line, and only a few miles from Lake Metigoshe, this place is a reminder of close friendship. We decided to stretch our legs.

Walking past the sunken gardens and the lofty Peace Tower we came to the Chapel of Peace. It is the only building spanning the international border at the Gardens, a symbolic bridge of goodwill between two neighbors, and it was built and dedicated by the General Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star.

This squat chapel with its V-shaped, "open-square" landscaping captures your attention. Rich amber windows imported from St. Gobain in France forms a glowing façade, a unique waffle-slab concrete roof rests on simple columns, and a small cylindrical fountain sits in a square pool of water. All of this spoke to a meditative atmosphere.

Chapel of Peace,
International Peace Gardens



But it was the inner wall-space that held my attention. Here, skylights directed sunshine on sixty quotes engraved in the fossil-pitted Tyndall stone walls; various Biblical passages with messages of peace, words from Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi, St. Francis of Assisi, Vatican II, the *Union Prayer Book for Jewish Worship*, and some lines from *The Sanskrit* and Confucius greeted my eyes. Inscriptions from others marked the limestone too; Abraham Lincoln, Ralph Waldo Emerson, former United Nations' leaders U Thant and Dag Hammarskjold, Fabian-member George Bernard Shaw, Lester B. Pearson (the Canadian Prime Minister who fathered UN Peacekeeping), and John F. Kennedy. One quote in particular grabbed me.

“There Are No Religions Which Are False. All Are True In Their Own Fashion; All Answer, Though In Different Ways, To The Given Conditions Of Human Existence.” – Emile Durkheim.¹

What Secrets?

Freemasonry has long been called a “secret society.” But that’s a misnomer.

In its strictest definition, a “secret society” is an organization or association that remains virtually unknown to all outside the group. Not so with the Lodge. Its existence and the location of its buildings are public knowledge. Moreover, the Craft’s internal “secrets” of recognition – its grips, signs and symbols – have long been circulating outside of the Lodge. This is also true of its ritualistic texts, constitutions and monitors, handbooks and memorization aides, commentaries, encyclopedias, books of history, the writing of its scholars and philosophers, and its works of jurisprudence.

In 1914, Joseph Fort Newton, an eminent Masonic historian, wrote the following.

“There is a common notion that Masonry is a secret society, and this idea is based on the secret rites used in its initiations, and the signs and grips by which its members recognize each other. Thus it has come to pass that the main aims of the Order are assumed to be a secret policy or teaching, whereas its one great secret is that it has no secret. Its principles are published abroad in its writings; its purposes and laws are known, and the times and places of its meetings.”²

Bernard E. Jones’ *Freemasons’ Guide and Compendium* basically says the same thing.³ As does Foster Bailey, who was a Masonic lecturer and the National Secretary of the Theosophical Society: “There is little that is not known today about the Masonic work, and nothing that cannot be discovered by anyone who diligently seeks it.”⁴

However, Newton and Jones hinted there was something more at play. In a footnote, Newton suggested a deeper reality; “...the real secret of Masonry remains hidden to many.”⁵ Later he explained the secret as a highly spiritual position. Jones too touched on this, commenting that the real secret was more religious in nature.⁶ And Bailey’s book, *The Spirit of Masonry*, was devoted to this advanced Masonic purpose – a spiritual endeavor that spans the breadth of human

history. Other scholars and philosophers have also highlighted the mystical and spiritual aspect of the Craft.

And here is a point where the Brotherhood clashes: What is the core of Freemasonry? Is it essentially religious and spiritual in nature, or is it anything but that?

Upfront, it must be noted that Masonry does not have an authoritative “scriptural text” to bring clarification or direction in the way a “religion” does. In using religion as a comparison, Christianity has the Old and New Testament, Judaism the Torah and Talmud, Islam the Quran, the Baha’i faith has the writings of Baha’u’llah, and Hinduism rests on the Vedas. But a Masonic “scriptural” authority does not exist.

Again, using “religion” as a basis of comparison, where does the Mason receive his knowledge of the Craft’s meaning if no higher-authority undergirds the Lodge? The answer is straightforward: from Grand Lodge constitutions and monitors, from the writings of noted Masonic historians and philosophers, and from his own ritual and degree experiences. And in this, the Mason legitimately claims that every man interprets the Craft in his own way - irrespective of religious or spiritual considerations or connotations.

But herein lies the rub: The claims about Freemasonry are many and diverse *from within the Brotherhood itself*.

Masonry is religious – it’s not religious at all, only an ethical and moral way of living. It’s a “Christian” institution – no, it’s the repository of the ancient Mystery cults. The Craft is esoteric in nature – impossible, there isn’t a select group in the Order who holds special spiritual knowledge. Masonry’s rituals are founded upon occult practices – no, the rituals are symbolic enactments with life lessons. Membership in the Lodge can open the gate to participation in advanced occult societies – this is nonsense and rings of paranoia. Freemasonry is meant to bring progressive spiritual enlightenment first to its members and then to society – incorrect, it is a benevolent and philanthropic Order that does good works and makes “good men better.” Individualism is replaced with group identity and universal synthesis – no way, Freemasonry itself exemplifies diversity from degree to degree, Grand Lodges, branches and concordant bodies.

So which way does the hammer fall?

1. Is the Craft only a beneficial and benign society of good deeds, self-improvement, and social ethics?
2. Or is it an extension of the Mystery religions and occult schools, carrying within it a deeper spiritual seed?

In reading their literature and discussing the Lodge with Freemasons I have come across both lines of thought. Interestingly, the argument from the *first position* eventually takes a line of reasoning that goes something like this: “You can’t claim Freemasonry is [place label] because each person interprets it differently.” Or, you can’t explain the Craft’s symbols *this way* because every individual sees them from a unique point of view.

In many respects this leaves the observer of Freemasonry at a loss. How then will I know what the Craft is about if, after hearing opposing sides from the Brotherhood, I discover that everything is subjective?

This leads to an observation I've made when discussing this religious-spiritual identity problem with Freemasons: Local Masons and the public voice of the Lodge, be it through openly distributed literature or public announcements, inevitably proclaim the *first position* - it's a benevolent body with no religious overtones and no deeper spiritual meaning.

Conversely, the *second stance* is more often admitted by men who have achieved significant stature within the institution, such as a Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, the literature of prominent Masonic historians and philosophers – often written with an internal audience in mind, those who have shaped the rituals, and Freemasons who have been personally attached to an outside esoteric order.

So in returning to the subjective nature of interpretation, that it rests upon individual observations and experiences, then fine, I can live with that rule. Therefore, I choose to interpret the Craft through the second group, and not the local Mason whose experience has been channeled through a narrower framework.

Writing on this internal debate about the religious nature of Freemasonry, Arthur Edward Waite – a Masonic leader, Christian mystic, esoteric philosopher and occultist – sounded flabbergasted that this was still a point of contention.

“...the Religion of Freemasonry is not only an unsettled question but one the determination of which offers grave difficulties... A very usual course is to affirm that true Masonry is neither a religion nor consisting of religious aspects and supposing religious experience. A more muddled point of view is scarcely within range of conception. In such case, why does it insist on that root of contention, faith in a Great Architect of the Universe? Why does it require an intellectual adherence to the notion of resurrection to a future life – however resurrection is to be understood? Why are its Rites and Degrees and under all systems in reality neither more nor less than pageants of prayer and aspiration. Can the Third Degree of the Craft, apart from religion, teach a man how to die – as it claims to do? What does the lesson of the Mystical Lecture in the HOLY ROYAL ARCH, by its own claims, impress on its members concerning the ROYAL ARCH DEGREE? The answer is (a) that it inspires its members with the most exalted ideas of Deity, and (b) leads to the practice of the purest and most devout piety. What is this but religion? And what is reverence to the incomprehensible Jehovah? Is it less of the root-matter of religion than the search for the Lost Word in the Grade of ROSE-CROIX, which Word is Christ...?... apart from religion Masonry has no title to existence, because its much-lauded ‘system of morality’ is either a gate which leads to religion or a gate which leads nowhere.”⁷

Manly P. Hall, arguably one of the most important Masonic thinkers of the last century, put it this way,

“In fact, there are actually blocs among the brethren who would divorce Masonry from both philosophy and religion at all cost. If, however, we search the writings of eminent Masons, we find a unanimity of viewpoint, namely, that Masonry is a religious and philosophical body.”⁸

So what are the religious and spiritual views that need to be considered when contemplating this side of the Masonic debate?

Remember, Newton and Jones couched these religious/spiritual aspirations as a deeper secret. Therefore, the best way to grasp this spiritual/religious component is to read their explanations, taken from their writings, which has always been meant - first and foremost - to be studied by members of the Lodge.

Here are examples from various esteemed and influential Masonic authors and personalities.

Religion and Universalism

Henry C. Clausen [pictured below], *Clausen's Commentaries on Morals and Dogma* (The Supreme Council, 33°, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, USA, 1974).

“...the One Supreme God has been known by many names to many races of men. The Sumerians, the Egyptians, the Medes and Persians, the Hebrew Kabbalists, the Druids and Norsemen, the Brahmans, the Moslems, the Buddhists and the North American Indians all believed in God as the One Supreme Ruler and Creator of the Universe. This belief, held by the earliest guilds of operative masonry nearly six thousand years ago, is the same belief held by modern Freemasonry today.” (p.161).



Melvin M. Johnson, *Universality of Freemasonry* (The Masonic Service Association, 1957).

“Masonry is not Christian; nor is it Mohammedan nor Jewish nor to be classified by the name of any other sect. The power which has held it together, the chemical which has caused its growth, the central doctrine which makes it unique, is the opportunity it affords men of every faith, happily to kneel together at the same Altar,

each in worship of the God he reveres, under the universal name of Great Architect of the Universe.” (Forward)

[Regarding religious universalism] “Thus, and thus only, can we furnish to the world at large a common base upon which all civilized mankind may unite.” (p.10).

Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry* (The Torch Press, 1914/1916).

“It is true that Masonry is not a religion, but it is Religion, a worship in which all good men may unite, that each may share the faith of all.” (p.250-251)

Albert G. Mackey, *A Text Book of Masonic Jurisprudence* (Redding and Company, 1859).

“Masonry requires only a belief in the Supreme Architect of the universe... Masons are only expected to be of that religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves... the Christian and the Jew, the Mohammedan and the Brahmin, are permitted to unite around our common altar, and Masonry becomes, in practice as well as in theory, universal. The truth is, that Masonry is undoubtedly a religious institution – its religion being of that universal kind in which all men agree, and which, handed down through a long succession of ages, from that ancient priesthood who first taught it, embraced the great tenets of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul.” (pp.95-96).

Allen E. Roberts, *The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism* (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1974).

“Freemasonry calls God ‘The Great Architect of the Universe.’ This is the Freemason’s special name for God, because He is universal. He belongs to all men regardless of their religious persuasion. All wise men acknowledge His authority. In his private devotions a Mason will pray to Jehovah, Mohammed, Allah, Jesus, or the Deity of his choice. In a Masonic Lodge, however, the Mason will find the name of his Deity within the Great Architect of the Universe.” (p.6).

Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (The Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction, A.A.S.R. USA, 1871/1944).

“The Holy Bible, Square, and Compasses, are not only styled the Great Lights of Masonry, but they are also technically called the Furniture of the Lodge... The Bible is an indispensable part of the furniture of a Christian Lodge, only because it is

the sacred book of the Christian religion. The Hebrew Pentateuch in a Hebrew Lodge, and the Koran in a Mohammedan one, belong on the Altar; and one of these, and the Square and Compass, properly understood, are the Great Lights by which a Mason must walk and work.” (p.11).

“It [Masonry] is the universal, eternal, immutable religion, such as God planted it in the heart of universal humanity. No creed has ever been long-lived that was not built on this foundation.” (p.219).

“Masonry, around whose altars the Christian, the Hebrew, the Moslem, the Brahmin, the followers of Confucius and Zoroaster, can assemble as brethren and unite in prayer to the one God who is above all he Baalim...” (p.226).

“It [Masonry] reverences all the great reformers. It sees in Moses, the Lawgiver of the Jews, in Confucius and Zoroaster, in Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Arabian Iconoclast, Great Teachers of Morality, and Eminent Reformers, if no more: and allows every brother of the Order to assign to each such higher and even Divine Character as his Creed and Truth require.

Thus Masonry disbelieves no truth, and teaches unbelief in no creed, except so far as such creed may lower its lofty estimate of the Deity...” (p.525).

Manly P. Hall [pictured right], *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry* (Macy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1923/1954).

“No true Mason is creed-bound. He realizes with the divine illumination of his lodge that as a Mason his religion must be universal: Christ, Buddha or Mohammed, the name means little, for he recognizes only the light and not the bearer. He worships at every shrine, bows before every altar, whether in temple, mosque or cathedral, realizing with his truer understanding the oneness of all spiritual truth... No true Mason can be narrow, for his Lodge is the divine expression of all broadness.” (p.65).



Foster Bailey, *The Spirit of Freemasonry* (Lucis Trust, 1957/1996).

“Is it not possible from a contemplation of this side of Masonic teaching that it may provide all that is necessary for the formulation of a universal religion? May it not be true, as has been said, that if all religions and Scriptures were blotted out

and only Masonry were left in the world we could still recover the great plan of salvation? Most earnestly should all true Masons consider the point...

The study of this position will reveal to any earnest Mason that if Masonry is ever to achieve this ideal it will be impossible for him to be against any man or any religion. He will be for all true seekers and light, no matter what their race or creed.” (p.109).

Spiritual Applications

Allen E. Roberts, *The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism* (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1974).

[Regarding the Entered Apprentice Degree] “You have entered a new world. Symbolically and spiritually you have been reborn. This started the moment you were prepared to become a Freemason.” (p.3).

W.L. Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry* (Gramercy Books, 1980).

“The Ceremony of our first degree, then, is a swift and comprehensive portrayal of the entrance of all men into, first, physical life, and second, into spiritual life; and as we extend congratulations when a child is born into the world, so also we receive with acclamation the candidate for Masonry who, symbolically, is seeking his spiritual re-birth...” (p.35).

Henry C. Clausen, *Emergence of the Mystical* (Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, 1981).

“...science and religion will be welded into a unified exponent of an overriding spiritual power... The theme in essence is that the revelations of Eastern mysticism and the discoveries of modern science support the Masonic and Scottish Rite beliefs and teachings.” (p.xi).

“Science and philosophy, especially when linked through mysticism, have yet to conquer ignorance and superstition. Victory, however, appears on the horizon. Laboratory and library, science and philosophy...outstanding technicians and theologians are now uniting as advocates of man’s unique quality, his immortal soul and ever expanding soul.” (p.92).

Manly P. Hall, *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry* (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1923/1954).

“Yet if the so-called secrets of Freemasonry were shouted from the housetops, the Fraternity would be absolutely safe; for certain spiritual qualities are necessary before the real Masonic secrets can be understood by the brethren themselves.”
(p.69)

Foster Bailey, *The Spirit of Freemasonry* (Lucis Trust, 1957/1996).

“Later, when the nature of the rhythm to be established through the rituals is grasped and Masons are trained to work along the lines of united thought, united action and united ideals and objective, a Lodge will then work as a group for humanity as a whole. They will create a focal point for spiritual light, and will organise themselves into a body of conscious custodians of the mysteries, acting as a distributing agency for knowledge and for the awakening of the immortal spirit... When this aspect of the Masonic work is grasped, the activities of a Lodge, assembled for work, will take on a true and deeply spiritual significance. Masons will meet to serve humanity.” (p.96)

“Masonry is a quest. Not a material quest, but a spiritual quest, a mystic quest. Not only an individual quest, although as individuals we strive to learn and achieve, but basically a group quest.” (p.122).



George H. Steinmetz, *The Royal Arch: Its Hidden Meaning* (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1946).

“Here is the PRINCIPAL SECRET of Royal Arch Masonry, or for that mater, ALL MASONRY. The supreme fact concerning man’s being. That the physical and mental are but passing phases of his evolution toward perfection, that basically and intrinsically he is inherently and OF NECESSITY, if he actually be in the image and likeness of his Creator, ESSENTIALLY A SPIRITUAL BEING!” (p.73, capitals in original).

The Secret of Human Ascension

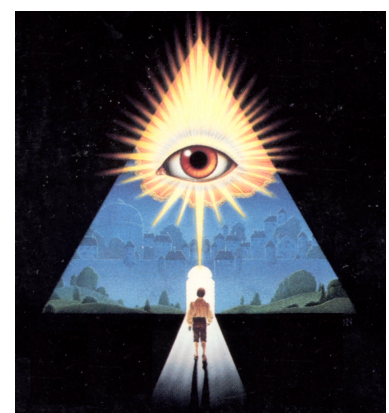
W.L. Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry* (Gramercy Books, 1980).

“...it is clear, therefore, that from grade to grade the candidate is being led from an old to an entirely new quality of life. He begins his Masonic career as the natural man; he ends it by becoming through its discipline, a regenerated perfected man. To attain this transmutation, this metamorphosis of himself, he is taught first to purify and subdue his sensual nature; then to purify and develop his mental nature; and finally, by utter surrender of his old life and losing his soul to save it, he rises from the dead a Master, a just man made perfect...” (p.46).

“This – the evolution of man into superman – was always the purpose of the ancient Mysteries, and the real purpose behind modern Masonry is, not the social and charitable purpose to which so much attention is paid, but the expediting of the spiritual evolution of those who aspire to perfect their own nature and transform it into a more god-like quality. And this is a definite science, a royal art...” (p.47)

George H. Steinmetz, *The Royal Arch: Its Hidden Meaning* (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1946).

“...when the Master of the Lodge has completed his term of office, the square, emblematic of the COMPLETE MAN is taken from him and he is presented the jewel of a Past Master, a compass open to sixty degrees, symbol of the PERFECT MAN. This is placed upon a quadrant to emphasize the thirty degrees which he has progressed from the ninety degree right angle of the square to the sixty degree angle of the equilateral triangle, of which the compasses are but a substitute. It is symbolic of his ‘REBIRTH’ on the spiritual plane.” (pp.54-55, capitals in original).



“MAN IS IMPELLED TOWARD PERFECTION! There is that within man – his innermost divinity – which informs him of the possibility of attaining completeness of being and urges him on to strive for that attainment.” (p.84, capitals in original).

[Regarding the Royal Arch symbolism] “Constant, repetitious reminder that man is divine and that the place to seek that divinity is WITHIN HIMSELF!” (p.123, capitals in original).

Foster Bailey, *The Spirit of Masonry* (Lucis Trust, 1957/1996).

“Masonry, therefore, is not only a system of morality, inculcating the highest ethics through which result, if followed, the conscious unfolding of divinity, but it is also a great dramatic presentation of regeneration. It portrays the recovery of man’s hidden divinity and it bringing forth into the light; it pictures the raising of man from his fallen estate to Heaven, and it demonstrates, through which is enacted in the work of the lodge, the power to achieve perfection latent in every man...” (p.105).

Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry* (The Torch Press, 1914/1916).

“Here lies the great secret of Masonry – that it makes a man aware of that divinity within him...” (p.293).

J.D. Buck, *Mystic Masonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity* (Regan Publishing, 1925).

“It is far more important that men should strive to become Christs than that they should believe that Jesus was Christ. If the Christ-state can be attained by but one human being during the whole evolution of the race, then the evolution of man is a farce and human perfection an impossibility... Jesus is no less Divine because all men may reach the same Divine perfection.” (p.62).

Manly P. Hall, *The Lost Keys of Freemasonry* (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company, 1923/1954).

“Man is a god in the making, and as in the mystic myths of Egypt, on the potter’s wheel he is being molded. When his light shines out to lift and preserve all things, he receives the triple crown of godhood, and joins that throng of Master Masons who, in their robes of Blue and Gold, are seeking to dispel the darkness of night with the triple light of the Masonic Lodge.” (p.92).

Conclusion

Wrestling with the issue of Masonry, religion, and spirituality reveals two important points:

- 1) It demonstrates that the Lodge and its teachings represents much more than just “making good men better,” and that this statement is a type of window-dressing obscuring the bigger spiritual picture.
- 2) The Christian man, that is, the person who holds to the exclusivity of Jesus Christ and His grace and mercy – the gift of salvation by faith and not by works, “that any man should boast” – finds himself in contradiction to the secretive-spiritual teachings of the Craft; that man can attain perfection and obtain divinity through the works (rituals and degrees) of the Lodge. *FC*

This concludes the Part 1 in a multi-part series on Freemasonry.

Carl Teichrib is the editor of *Forcing Change* (www.forcingchange.org)

Endnotes:

¹ All of the wall quotes have been printed in a small brochure titled *Chapel of Peace*, and published by the General Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star at the International Peace Garden (Boissevain, Manitoba and Dunseith, North Dakota: No date available).

² Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry* (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1914), pp.243-244.

³ Bernard E. Jones, *Freemason's Guide and Compendium*, (London, UK: George G. Harrap and Company, 1956), p.281.

⁴ Foster Bailey, *The Spirit of Masonry* (London, UK: Lucis Press, 1957/1996), p.77.

⁵ Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry* (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1914), pp.243.

⁶ Bernard E. Jones, *Freemason's Guide and Compendium*, p.282.

⁷ Arthur Edward Waite, *A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Volume II (Wings Books, 1996), p.329. A.E. Waite died in 1942.

⁸ Manly P. Hall, *Lectures on Ancient Philosophy* (Philosophical Research Society, 1929/1984), p.434.

The Larger Fabric of Masonry: Some Short Historical and Domestic Dimensions

By Carl Teichrib

“...it [Freemasonry] covers the whole globe from Egypt to India, from Italy to England, from America to Australia, and the isles of the sea; from London to Sidney, from Chicago to Calcutta. In all civilized lands, and among folks of every creed worthy of the name, Masonry is found...” - Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry*.¹

No matter where you go in the Western world, if you're observant, you'll notice that Freemasonry has left its mark. It seems every village, town, and city has some connection to the Craft – and that is because, in fact, many do.

I grew up near a town whose population has historically stayed around 850 people, and where the outlying municipality hosts a population of 2000 in a district that covers 784 square miles. In other words, there's a lot of space and not many people. Nevertheless, the local Lodge register shows some impressive numbers; 74 members in 1900, almost 200 by 1920, and in 1940 the count stood at 275. From 1961 to 1980 the Masonic Lodge showed 425 men on the roster.

Although my town's Lodge disbanded a few years ago, its impact on the community was palpable. Over the decades, mayors and town councilmen have taken part in the rituals, as had a significant number of businessmen. In conversations with a few old timers, including Freemasons, it was clear that my town's existence had been greatly influenced by this group; sometimes through acts of benevolence, other times by quiet agreements between Brothers, and occasionally under clouds of controversy. Most men in my district, I believe, joined out of social or business interests, and it's unlikely that more than a handful grasped the deeper principles of the Craft – and not one, as far as I know, ever became a nationally recognized Masonic figurehead, philosopher, or historian.

My town was representative of hundreds of similar communities, with its Lodge being a tiny part of a worldwide fraternity - a “Brotherhood” of men from every corner of the globe and every walk of life. This larger Brotherhood extends backwards in time too, as English Freemasonry has its official beginning in 1717 and French Freemasonry in 1733. And according to some Masonic philosophers, its history reaches into the distant recesses of early-European and Middle Eastern cultures. Indeed, the ancient roots of the Craft have been discussed and debated, with many prominent Masons pointing to linkages between their Order and Old Testament personalities and events, mystical Jewish legends, and Egyptian belief systems.² During the 18th century it was widely held that “Masonry was instituted at the Tower of Babel by Nimrod and thence spread to the Chaldeans.”³ Speculation abounds, yet one cannot ignore the symbolic linkage with the ancient world.

The role of Freemasonry as an historical driver for internationalism is important too. Jessica Harland-Jacobs, author of *Builders of Empire*, demonstrates the bond between British

colonialism and Freemasonry, noting that wherever the Empire went the Masonic Lodge was sure to go. In this imperial-Masonic ballet and its subsequent world-spanning network, Harland-Jacobs sees the beginnings of modern globalism.

“Examining the history of Freemasonry, I argue, presents an excellent way to evaluate the contribution of cultural institutions to the historical process of globalization. Freemasons established one of the first global institutional networks that not only linked farflung Britons to one another but also brought Britons into contact with other European imperialists as well as indigenous men throughout the formal and informal empires.”⁴

She goes on to say, “An analysis of Freemasonry makes it possible to identify various characteristics that enable institutions to function on a worldwide basis and promote globalization.”⁵ Another point she makes is that Freemasonry’s tie with Empire building allowed for the solidification of a supranational identity, the transcendence of “national distinctions... even in a climate of intense international rivalry.”⁶

Going beyond the British colonial experience, the idea of supranational identity fits with what Albert Pike famously wrote in 1871. Pike, the American father of the modern Scottish Rite branch of Freemasonry (Pike’s work with the existing Scottish Rite began in earnest in 1855), penned the following; “The whole world is but one republic, of which each nation is a family, and every individual a child.”⁷ This line has been repeated by other Masonic personalities, including J.D. Buck, who viewed this as one of the geniuses of the Craft.⁸ Many other Masonic scholars, authors, and philosophers speak to the internationalism of the Brotherhood and the subsequent quest for world unity, including Manly P. Hall, who voiced the need for global interdependence; “For this age we must have a doctrine of synthesis, a code actuated and dominated by the spirit of unification.”⁹

Freemasonry’s influence at the national level is another significant aspect of the Craft’s reach, and the British historical experience is rife with domestic examples.¹⁰ Furthermore, important and often controversial Masonic connections are observable throughout the nations of Europe, including France and Italy.

In the Western Hemisphere the Lodge has been an important player too. Brazil and Venezuela are historically tied to the Craft. Mexico has a long Masonic past, with a Masonic War between the Scottish and York Rite,¹¹ and then the Civil War with opposing Masonic and Catholic lines during the first part of the last century. But it’s in the United States of America where we see the grandest examples of the Lodge working within the early domestic story.

First, we need to be clear. It has loosely been said that “all” of America’s founding fathers were members of the Masonic Lodge. Wrong. Some were, it is true, and many were not. Nevertheless, it must be noted that Freemasons were involved in the founding of America, including the first celebrated act of British resistance: The Boston Tea Party.

“The revolution against the British oppressors had begun in a warehouse owned by a Mason,” explains historian David Ovason, “and the group which had participated in the Boston Tea Party, in 1773, had been composed largely of Masons.”¹² This isn’t to say that Freemasonry ruled the Revolution, just that members of the Lodge played an important role in

fermenting the rebellion. At the same time, we need to keep in mind that Masons and non-Masons alike both supported and condemned America's split from England.

In noting the above, it's interesting to see the documentable numbers regarding those who signed America's founding documents, and the composition of George Washington's staff in the Continental Army. Consider the following breakdown given by the Masonic Service Association. Note: "Confirmed" means the person was a verified member of the Lodge through official documentation. "Unconfirmed" means that the person's status is in question, yet the possibility of membership exists as hints are found in family sources, non-verified records, or tradition. "No affiliation" means that the Masonic Service Association discovered no personal connection with the Lodge during its research.

	Confirmed	Unconfirmed	No Affiliation
Generals of Continental Army: ¹³	33	15	26
Cont. Army Aides and Secretaries: ¹⁴	6	1	22
Articles of Association: ¹⁵	10	9	34
Declaration of Independence: ¹⁶	8	24	24
Articles of Confederation: ¹⁷	7	8	33
Constitution of the United States: ¹⁸	13	5	19

The Masonic membership of George Washington, the first US President, is also noteworthy. Again, the following data is extracted from the work of Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the General Officers of the Continental Army* (The Masonic Service Association, 1960).

- Received his first three degrees in the "Lodge at Fredericksburgh," Virginia. November 4, 1752, Entered Apprentice.
- "On December 20, 1779, Washington was proposed as Grand Master of the United States, by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, and a second proposal was made on January 13, 1780. On December 27, 1779, the American Union Lodge, at Morristown, New Jersey, led a convention to organize a National Grand Lodge, with George Washington as Grand Master." (p.3) Apparently George Washington turned down this request.
- "Washington was named the first or Charter Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 39, on April 28, 1788, to serve to December 20, and was re-elected, serving in all twenty months. This Lodge No. 39 was then under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania; it is now Washington-Alexandria Lodge No. 22, of the Grand Lodge of Virginia." (p.3)

- “On March 6, 1789, Washington was made an honorary member of Holland Lodge (now Lodge No. 8) of New York, ‘in consideration of the Masonic virtues which distinguished him’.” (pp.3-4)

- “On September 18, 1783, Washington laid the cornerstone of the National Capitol in Washington, in what has been said to be the greatest public Masonic occasion in American history. Washington, Master Mason, President of the United States, and America’s first citizen, laid the cornerstone of the Capitol of the United States, with full Masonic ceremonies, in concert with the Grand Lodge of Maryland, several lodges under its jurisdiction, and Lodge No.22, from Alexandria, Virginia.” (p.4)

James R. Case, whose report *Freemasons at the First Inauguration of George Washington, April 30, 1776* was published by The Masonic Service Association in 1964, noted the following.

“...the incidents connected with the first inauguration ceremony, one in which the principal [Washington], a Mason, took an oath administered by a Grand Master of Masons, upon the Bible of a Masonic Lodge. It has sometimes been asserted that... Samuel Allyne Otis, the Secretary of the Senate who held the Bible, was also a Mason.” (p.22)

The city of Washington DC likewise has historical connections to Freemasonry, enough that at least two books have been recently published on the facts and speculation surrounding the layout and design of the city - with one forwarded by the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite.¹⁹

Further imprints of Masonry are scattered throughout America’s heritage, including the Statue of Liberty - designed by Freemasons from France and dedicated with a full Masonic ceremony. And speaking on the role of the Craft in the making of America, historian Steven Bullock writes,

“Masonry’s mysterious world, seemingly so alien, was intimately intertwined with the central themes of American history. As a secret organization that sought public honor and attention, Freemasonry is an especially sensitive indicator of the changing boundaries between private and public.”

All of the above demonstrates, in a brief fashion, the complex and undeniable role of Masonry in Western history, and its widespread influence in society - from small villages to the flavoring of American public institutions. **FC**

Endnotes:

- ¹ Joseph Fort Newton, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry* (The Torch Press, 1914/1916), p.231.
- ² Some scholarship points to the time of the Templars as the birthing of the Brotherhood, and other historians point to the era of King Solomon. Some, such as Manly P. Hall and Albert Pike, reveal tightly embedded esoteric connections back to Egyptian and Babylonian ages, while J.S.M. Ward takes the Craft back to “the primitive initiatory rites of pre-historic man, and from those rites have been built up all the ancient mysteries, and thence all the modern religious systems. It is for this reason that men of all religious beliefs can enter Freemasonry...” (J.S.M. Ward, *Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods*, p.viii).
- ³ Albert Mackey and Robert Ingham Clegg, *Mackey’s History of Freemasonry, Volume One* (Chicago, IL: The Masonic History Company, 1921), p.62.
- ⁴ Jessica L. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism, 1717-1927* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p.11.
- ⁵ Ibid., p.11.
- ⁶ Ibid., p.11, 74.
- ⁷ Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry* (Charleston, SC: The Supreme Council of the Thirty-Third Degree, Southern Jurisdiction of the United States, 1871/1944), p.220.
- ⁸ J.D. Buck, *Mystic Masonry and the Greater Mysteries of Antiquity* (Regan Publishing Corporation, 1925), p.16.
- ⁹ Manly P. Hall, *Lectures on Ancient Philosophy* (Philosophic Research Society, 1984), p.470.
- ¹⁰ An interesting book that delves into the Masonic influence within British society is Adrian Gilbert’s work, *The New Jerusalem: Rebuilding London – The Great Fire, Christopher Wren and the Royal Society* (London, UK: Bantam Press, 2002).
- ¹¹ For a short introduction to the Mexican Masonic Wars, see the research paper, *Brothers Divided: Mexico’s Masonic Wars*, by Edward N. Thompson of the Jacques DeMolay Lodge, No. 1390, Houston, TX, September 2, 1989.
- ¹² David Ovason, *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation’s Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington DC* (New York, NY: Harper, 2000), p.76.
- ¹³ Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the General Officers of the Continental Army* (Washington, DC: The Masonic Service Association, February 1, 1960).
- ¹⁴ Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of Washington’s Aides and Military Secretaries* (Washington DC: The Masonic Service Association, May 15, 1961).
- ¹⁵ Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the Signers of the Articles of Association* (Washington, DC: The Masonic Service Association, September 15, 1961).
- ¹⁶ W. Eugene Rice, *Masonic Membership of Signers of the Declaration of Independence* (Washington, DC: The Masonic Service Association, December 15, 1958).
- ¹⁷ Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the Signers of the Articles of Confederation* (Washington, DC: The Masonic Service Association, March 15, 1962).
- ¹⁸ Ronald E. Heaton, *Masonic Membership of the Signers of the Constitution of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Masonic Service Association, September 17, 1962).
- ¹⁹ The two books are, David Ovason, *The Secret Architecture of Our Nation’s Capital: The Masons and the Building of Washington DC* - forwarded by C. Fred Kleinknecht (Harper, 1999), and Nicholas R. Mann’s book, *The Sacred Geometry of Washington DC: The Integrity and Power of the Original Design* (Barnes and Noble, 2006).

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