

*Grand Master's
From
Widow's Sons'
No. 60*

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF WIDOW'S SONS' LODGE NO. 60
A. F. & A. M., CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA, U.S.A.
CHARTERED DECEMBER 10TH, AD 1799, AL 5799

HIRAM'S JOURNAL

Stated Communications August 17th, 2020 (CANCELLED)

[Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60 Website](#)

[Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60 Facebook Page](#)

MESSAGE FROM THE EAST

Brethren,

Because of the continuing COVID-19 challenge, we are cancelling our August Stated. We had really hoped to be able to have our Stated Communication this month, but with the presence of the virus still here, especially in Charlottesville and Albemarle County, we decided that the safety and health of our brothers is the most important thing. We are going to have another Zoom get together on the third Monday (August 17) at 6:30 pm. We have had one of these "get togethers" in both June and July. It has been fun to see and chat with brethren utilizing the Zoom technology. I want to thank our Junior Warden, Adam Buffington, and RW William Reinhold for getting this set up for us. We would love for every brother to join in our get togethers. Contact Brother Adam for direction on how to be involved in our Zoom chats. His email is adam_buffington@hotmail.com. His cell phone 319-461-6850.

Our Lodge picnic is still scheduled for Saturday, September 26, at Ole Creasy Farm. We will announce that it is still on for sure in the September Hiram's Journal.

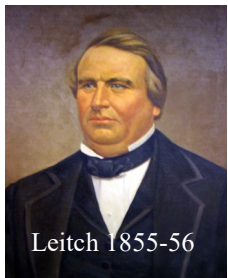
As for our September Stated, we hope that we will be able to do it. This, of course, depends on the status and risk of COVID-19. We will announce our decision in Hiram's Journal concerning our September Stated.

I know this COVID-19 will be gone at some point. The sooner the better!! Continue to be safe and take proper precautions. Continue to check on our brothers and our widows. If we can help you with anything, please let me know and we will try to assist. Email or call me: hlw@comcast.net 434-960-6776

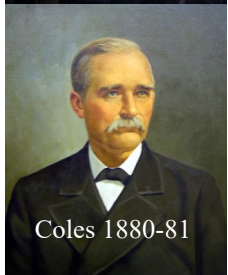
I look forward to getting back to normal as soon as possible.

Fraternally Yours,

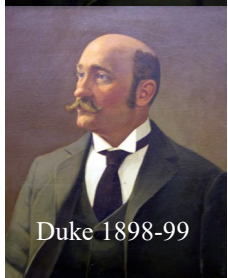
Harry Walker, 2020 Worshipful Master



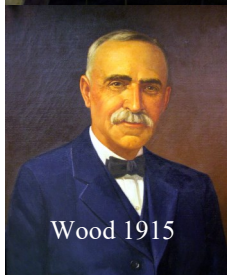
Leitch 1855-56



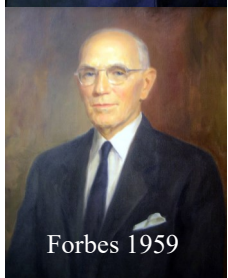
Coles 1880-81



Duke 1898-99



Wood 1915



Forbes 1959



Hodges 2009





Masonic Birthdays!
Call a Brother and wish him a
Happy Masonic Birthday.

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Master Mason Degree:</u>
Michael L. Arnold	08/30/2004
Alexander Banks, V	08/26/1968 (52 Yrs)
Robert L. Bishop, Jr.	08/29/2015
Stephen J. Blair	08/29/2015
Dale R. Blosser	08/29/1988
Joseph F. Brown, III	08/12/1992
Brian E. Campbell	08/28/1990
Robert M. Carlisle	08/18/1956 (64 Yrs)
William W. Clark, Jr.	08/27/1951 (69 Yrs)
James E. Craig	08/16/2008
David S. Davidson	08/07/1967 (53 Yrs)
Steve E. Fetcho	08/27/2005
George P. A. Forschler	08/03/1967 (53 Yrs)
Charles M. Hale, Jr.	08/09/1977
Robert A. Harrison, Jr.	08/19/1953 (67 Yrs)
Robert A. Harrison, III	08/27/2005
Jason E. Hodges	08/27/2005
Jeffery E. Hodges	08/26/1985
James E. Holler	08/27/1984
Gregory D. Hosaflook	08/22/1998
Douglas D. Hudson	08/20/1951 (69 Yrs)
Patrick M. Kelly	08/27/2005
Ian C. Kelly	08/27/2005
Boyd L. Knott	08/24/1970 (50 Yrs)
Daniel T. LaPlume	08/27/2005
John Coulter Maddox	08/02/1971
Brady L. McLane	08/04/2004
James T. O'Kelly, Jr.	08/04/2018
Timothy B. Parent	08/27/2005
Stewart A. Plemons	08/29/2015
William F. Reinhold, III	08/26/1996
William E. Rose	08/26/1972
Larry B. Saunders	08/27/2005
Anthony C. Schienschang	08/31/2010
Kent Schlusel	08/07/1990
Steven R. Thomas	08/28/2008
William D. Vincent	08/27/2005

UPCOMING EVENTS

Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60 Events:

WSL60 Stated Communication: CANCELLED
Virtual Social Hour via Zoom—August 17th—details in email
WSL Officer Meeting: August 24th—6:00 pm
Officers meeting will be through Skype. Contact the Secretary if you need to get Skype set up.

2020 DUES:
Brethren, the Secretary would like to remind all the members that we still need to pay 2020 dues. During these hard times we still support charities and need to pay expenses for the continuing operations of Lodge and Grand Lodge.

GRAND LODGE GOING FORWARD INFO
—see note on page 5.

GRAND LODGE OF VIRGINIA
MASONIC RELIEF FUND



Brethren, many of our brothers throughout the world have experienced hardships due to COVID-19. In times like these, our Charity means more than anything. The Grand Lodge of Virginia's Masonic Relief Fund's purpose is to make funds available to Virginia Master Masons, their widows, and orphans, wherever a bona fide need exists.

Donations can be made by check or credit card. Send checks to the following: **The Masonic Relief Fund, c/o the Grand Lodge of Virginia, 4115 Nine Mile Road, Richmond, Virginia 23223-4926.**

To donate by credit card, see the following website:
<https://grandlodgeofvirginia.org/relief/>



We announce with deep sadness the passing of WSL60 Brother Thomas Frederick Wilson. Brother Wilson was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on February 11, 2011. He was born February 17, 1968 in Royal Oak, Michigan and served as a US Army officer. Brother Wilson was called to his Celestial Lodge above on July 10, 2020.

His Spirit to God; His Memory in our Hearts; His Body to the Earth.

HAPPY 50TH MASONIC BIRTHDAY BROTHER Boyd L. Knott!!!

Brethren, this month celebrates the 50th Masonic Year anniversary of Brother Boyd L. Knott. Next time you see him or able to talk to him, congratulate him on his 50 years of service to the Craft and to being one of our Brothers.



Why Freemasonry has Enemies ~ Bro. Carl H. Claudy



WILLIAM MORGAN

Say "Anti-Masonry" to the average American Mason and he will think you speak only of the Morgan Affair of 1826. So many books have been written on this, so many speeches made about it, so many study clubs have discussed it, that it is pretty much in the class with political oratory - interesting once, but a bore when much repeated! Anti-Masonry neither began nor ended with the Morgan affair. The fraternity has always had its enemies and, unless the world reforms spiritually, doubtless always will. BUT WHY?

Doubtless there are many answers. Many roads may wind around a mountain - they must meet at the top. No matter how many separate causes for the hatred, dislike, enmity which men have conceived - and some still do - for the Gentle Craft, all these mistaken ideas may be referred to one cause. Examine just a few of the exhibitions of anti-Masonry, other than the Morgan affair - which was a sporadic explosion, not a deep - rooted and poisonous plant.

Mussolini, Hitler, Franco, Stalin could not permit the existence of a society which is predicated upon the brotherhood of man; they were, and are, too much committed to a society predicated upon a police power which knows no mercy and has but one object; the destruction of people, ideas, and organizations which do not believe that man is nothing,

the State (and its ruler or rulers) everything. Mussolini's anti-Masonic feeling was expressed in his doctrine of conflict, which does not even mention the Craft:

"Humanity is still and always an abstraction of time and space; men are still not brothers, do not want to be and evidently cannot be. Peace is hence absurd, or rather it is a pause in war. There is something that binds man to his destiny of struggling, against either his fellows or himself. The motives for the struggle may change indefinitely, they may be economic, religious, political, sentimental, but the legend of Cain and Abel seems to be the inescapable reality, while brotherhood is a fable men listen to during the bivouac and the truce."

General Erich Ludendorff wrote a booklet against Freemasonry of which more than a hundred thousand copies were sold. Too long to quote here, the reader may get an idea of its contents from some of his words. "Masonry brings its members into conscious subjection to the Jews..... it trains them to become venal Jews.... German Masonry is a branch of organized international Masonry the headquarters of which are in New York.... there also is the seat of Jewish world power...." Ludendorff blamed Freemasons for bringing America into the World War I, helped by the Jesuits, B'nai B'rith and the Grand Lodge of New York! This, he stated, was done to destroy Austria Hungary, a Catholic world power. Had it not been for Freemasonry, Germany would have won the war - Kaiser Wilhelm and Czar Nicholas lost their thrones because they were not Freemasons - and so on and on and on for eighty-two pages of Annihilation of Freemasonry Through Revelation of its Secrets!

Not all anti-Masonry has had causes so fundamental [and] which lie so deep; small jealousies and little rascals have started anti - Masonic movements; several religions have fought and, indeed, now fight the Craft, as sinful and un-godlike. The opposition of the Catholic church, based on the Papal Bull of 1738, many times renewed, expanded, explained and emphasized, is well known. The Lutheran church as a whole has been unfriendly to the Craft and certain Synods rabid against it. The Mormon church has been anti-Masonic ever since hundreds of Mormons were expelled from Masonry by the Grand Lodge of Illinois. Even the Gentle Quakers have opposed Freemasonry and not always gently!

When organized religion has disputed with Freemasonry, it is largely because of the thought that Masonic teaching of "that natural religion in which all men agree" might take the place of that which it espoused; knowing that the Fraternity operated by means of a secret ritual, obligations, religious beliefs and the doctrine that all men of whatever faith might worship a Great Architect of the Universe around a common Altar, Freemasonry became a rival! Just as science disputes with no religion, so Freemasonry does not now and never has questioned any man's faith. There has never been an anti-clerical party composed only of Masons; there have been anti-Masonic parties in many clerical circles. As late as 1896 an anti-Masonic party convened at Trent. In The Builder, April, 1918, George W. Baird, P.G.M. District of Columbia, reports that the general and particular aims of this council were to wage war on Masonry as an institution; on Masons as individuals, in all countries and places where the order exists; to wage war on Masonry as a body, by collecting supposed documents and facts; assertions of perjured Masons as evidence and thus bring to light or rather to coin, by means of the press or special publications, all the misdeeds of the fatal institution; all the demoralizing influences it exercises; through obscene or sacrilegious rites, corruption and occult conspiracies of man and civilization; to wage war on individual Masons by opposing them in every phase of their existence, in their homes, in their industries, in their commerce, in their professional vocations, in all their endeavors to participate in public life, local or general, etc.

Why Freemasonry has Enemies ~ *Continued*

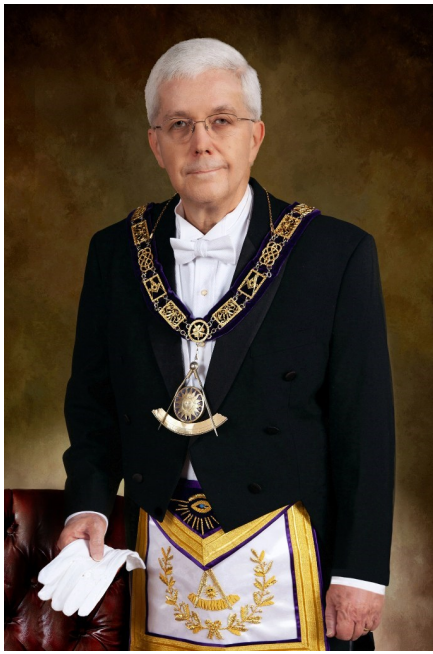
The first anti-Masonic campaign - if it can be called that - in the American Colonies occurred in 1737. According to an account published in the Pennsylvania Gazette (Benjamin Franklin's paper) an apothecary duped a young man (Daniel Reese) who had expressed a desire to be a Freemason, into a false and ridiculous ceremony, ending in a scene in which the devil was supposed to appear. When the young man refused to be frightened, the "devil" became angry and threw a pan of flaming spirits on the candidate, who died of burns three days later. Freemasons, though innocent, were blamed and the incident spread far and wide to the serious but not too lengthy embarrassment of Masons of the City of Brotherly Love. There were a few sporadic attacks in the Colonial press against Freemasonry, including one in Boston in 1751, but no real opposition of any moment in this nation until the Morgan affair of 1826. (See Short Talk Bulletin of March 1933 and February 1946.) But the Colonies were not to escape prejudice, even if unorganized, for Pritchard's *Masonry Dissected* (1730) and *Jachin and Boaz* (1762) both had wide circulation, the latter pamphlet being reprinted here more than a dozen times; one edition was printed in Spanish in Philadelphia as late as 1822. These "exposes" purporting to print the ritual, ceremonies and "secrets" of Freemasonry (invaluable now as giving clues to practices and words otherwise lost in the mist of the years) were then intended as body blows at the Ancient Craft. In early days all Freemasonry was kept secret; place of meeting; men who belonged; candidates proposed, were all considered to be "esoteric." Hence there was a great curiosity on the part of the public and a large circulation of pamphlets designed to injure the Fraternity by "exposing" its charter, ritual and secrets. Today, few would look at and less would buy such a pamphlet on a newsstand - then, the public demanded these in quantities. Like all such, the motive of their publication--whether revenge for fancied slights or avarice - kept them from being too seriously considered by the better educated and thinking class.

In England, Pritchard's *Masonry Dissected* raised a storm when it was published, and was reflected even in the songs of the day. An actress in 1765 offered the following, as coming from the anti - Masonic Scald Miserable Masons: "Next for the secret of their own wise making, Hiram and Boaz and Grand Master Jachin; Poker and tongs-the sign-the word-the stroke 'Tis all a nothing and 'tis all a joke! Nonsense on nonsense! Let them storm and rail Here's the whole history of the mop and pail* For 'tis the sense of more than half the town Their secret is-a bottle at the Crown!" [The "mop and pail" is an allusion to the tiler's implements with which he erased the designs drawn upon the lodge floor for the instruction of candidates.] Although inspired by the Morgan affair, the letters of John Quincy Adams had an anti-Masonic effect long after Morgan was forgotten. President Adams was never a Freemason; we have his own words as proof of that. That he was an implacable enemy of the institution is shown by his *Letters on the Masonic Institution* published in book form in Boston in 1847. His enmity of the Fraternity sprang from his belief in the reality of the "murder" of Morgan, the activities of the anti-Masonic party and his own great credulity and strong prejudice. His character as a man, his service to his country, his exhaustless energy made serious his attacks on Freemasonry, even though he displayed a woeful ignorance of the Order, its principles, practices, history and accomplishments. John Quincy Adams is long gathered to his fathers. His "letters" remain largely unread in libraries and in the minds of historians. He did the fraternity harm once, but, judged by the perspective of a century, it was without permanent effect.

These are but the slightest thumb-nail sketches of a few of the outbreaks against Freemasonry. In all countries since the organization of the Mother Grand Lodge, there have been these ebullitions of passions and prejudice; in some lands, tortures and burnings; destructions of Masonic property, imprisonment of Masons, especially in World War II. These persecutions have had a hundred underlying causes; avarice, jealousy, desire for notoriety, disappointment, envy, the belief that he climbs high who climbs ruthlessly, the need for a scape-goat: the list is endless. But all, in the last analysis, boil down to one cause. as the greater swallows the less, the large encompasses the little, the race includes all its blood strains, so the reason for the enmity of Freemasons and Freemasonry, encompassing all of many causes, is simple. There is always a conflict between any two opposing beliefs, doctrines, dogmas, religions, philosophies, political systems. For hundreds of years organized religion fought science; the doctrine of the divine right of kings ran headlong into the doctrine of the equality of man; today we see democracy and communism in a cold war to the death; less spectacular but none the less real has been the split of Lincoln's famous words, resulting in the opposition of those who believe in government by the people, to those who believe only in government of the people, by the governor!

Freemasonry is a philosophy which cannot exist side by side with certain ideologies. Either the latter must sink or Freemasonry must be banished. Wherever men have believed that one man or some men are above the law which applies to the many; wherever as government is by men and not by law, Freemasonry is anathema, must be persecuted, thrown out, dispersed, done away. Freemasonry stands and has always stood for freedom of political thought; for freedom of religious thought; for the dignity, importance and worth of the individual. In Freemasonry there is neither high nor low-"we meet upon the level." In Freemasonry is no compulsion; a man must come to it and be of it "of his own free will and accord." In Freemasonry is no religious sect: men of all religions or of no religion, join hands in kneeling about a common Altar erected to the Great Architect of the Universe, by which name each can worship the God he knows. Such a plan, such a doctrine, such a brotherhood, cannot but be inimical to the selfish, the crooked, the power-hungry, the dictator, the religion which opposes any doctrine but its own, the self-seeking, the envious, the coward, the prejudiced, the passionate and the dishonest. The reason for all the attacks on Masonry, no matter how attempted or by whom accomplished, can be expressed in a word... The word is FEAR. Fear of what? OF FREEDOM OF THOUGHT!

Reprinted from "The Short Talk Bulletin", Volume 27, Number 5, May 1949, presented in "The Short Talk Bulletins Volume Bound Set II", Volumes 16-30, 1938-1952, pages 575-578.



CORONAVIRUS AND THE CRAFT, GOING FORWARD

*“TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON,
A TIME FOR EVERY PURPOSE UNDER HEAVEN”*

Brothers, it has been agreed upon by the Grand Lodge, Grand Officers, District Deputy Grand Masters and Past Grand Masters that every Grand Line Officer and District Deputy Grand Master will remain in their station throughout the rest of 2020 and 2021. The Grand Master’s Masonic theme will continue into 2021 and all visitations and District Deputy official visits will be rescheduled in 2021.

We will have the honor of Right Worshipful Jason Pattison, Junior Deacon of Widow’s Sons’ Lodge No. 60, to represent the 10th Masonic District again in 2021. All previous voting for the 2022 District Deputy Grand Master for the 10th Masonic District will be held over until 2021 for the year 2023.

While subordinate lodges around Virginia have the option of the line holding throughout the next year as well, Widow’s Sons’ Lodge No. 60 will hold its elections and installations this year at the December Stated Communication.

CHARLOTTESVILLE WALK TO END ALZHEIMER’S

Brothers, this year’s Charlottesville’s Walk to End Alzheimer’s will be on October 24th.

Contact the Lodge secretary (Widowssons60@gmail.com) for information about this event and/or register online for the Charlottesville Mason Team at

https://act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk2020/VA-CentralandWesternVirginia?team_id=612896&pg=team&fr_id=13696

For fundraising ideas for the Alz Walk see link:
<https://bit.ly/Alzwalkfundraising>

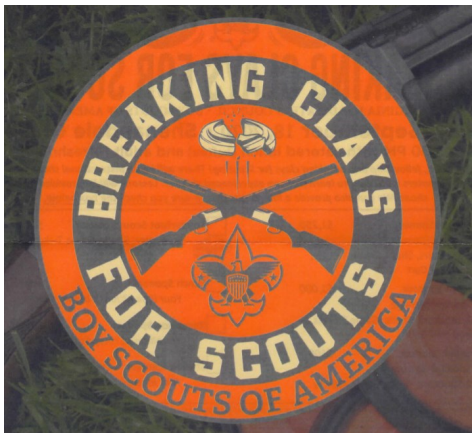


Breaking Clays for Scouts—Boy Scouts of America

Brothers, it is the time of year again for the Breaking Clays for Scouts. This event is for fun and fellowship and to hang out with some of the Boy Scouts of America in shooting clay pigeons. There is an instructional shooting practice for first time shooters and novices.

Contact RW Jim Dickerson (ph. 434.466.4663) to join the WSL60 team he is organizing for the event.

Friday, September 18th, 2020
Shenandale Gun Club
RR 42, Swoope, VA 24479
11:30 am to 3:00 pm

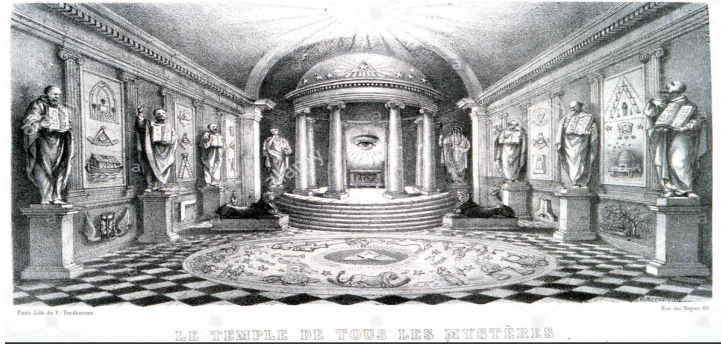


ESOTERICISM—A MATTER OF DEGREES

~ Bro. Arturo de Hoyos

Is Freemasonry esoteric, or not? The short answer is “Yes, no, maybe.”

By definition, esotericism is any topic “intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest.” This certainly applies to Masonry; but on a deeper level, and in a Masonic context, it’s usually taken to mean that our ceremonies and rituals allude to realities and/or truths not generally understood, or which may have a spiritual component to them.



The term is tainted to some people, and acceptable to others; hence, it may not be easy to wholly accept or discard the term “esoteric Masonry.” Like an onion, each “esoteric” layer successively builds upon the other. We can all agree that Masonry is intended to be understood by few, and that it’s a kind of specialized knowledge.

But the questions are—what kind of specialized knowledge, and are they real “secrets?” Depending upon one’s inclinations, the Master Mason Degree has been interpreted in a variety of different ways by different persons. For some, it’s a story of fidelity; for others, it teaches hope in the immortality of the soul; for still others, it’s a lesson in alchemy; and yet for still others, it alludes to the discovery of entheogens. Some see it as multi-faceted, or a combination of various things. But we should avoid trying to enshrine our interpretations as the “true” one.

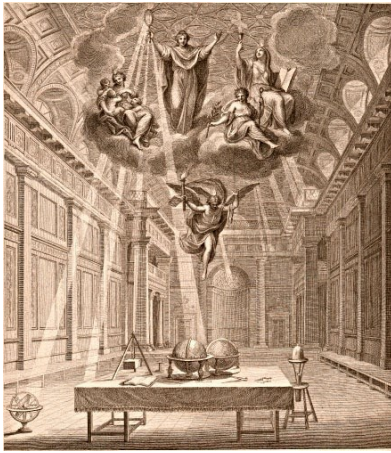
Since 1717 there have been more than 1,000 “Masonic” degrees created. The most popular survived and are included in many of the Rites, Orders, Systems we know today. Like a meal, each degree is only as good as its creator. The recipe may include many of the same ingredients as other meals, yet taste completely different. By analogy, we may see many of the same “ingredients” (features) in a number of degrees, which teach completely different things.

The predilections of a degree’s author affect the content as much as the taste buds of a chef. Hence, the “flavor” of the foundational Craft Degrees in various rites, orders and systems (Webb working, Scottish Rite, York Rite, Swedish Rite, R.E.R., etc.), differs immensely, and in the “higher degrees,” the differences are even more dramatic and pronounced: some are philosophical, others practical; some present allegory, and others offer discourses on symbolism or (quasi-)historical themes. In something like the Scottish Rite, the same degree may have dramatically different rituals, depending upon the jurisdiction (compare, for example the 20th degree in the Southern Jurisdiction and Northern Masonic Jurisdiction — they are nothing alike).

But, when someone describes himself as an “esoteric Mason,” it quite often means that he sees, and embraces, what appear to be aspects of the “Western Esoteric Tradition” in our rituals; i.e., some affinity to the symbolism of Hermeticism, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, Kabbalah, etc.

Freemasonry is an eclectic organization and, at various times, we have borrowed the language and symbols of these and other traditions. The question becomes, “Do our rituals teach these things as ‘realities’ or do we use them to stimulate thought—or both?” We are wisely counseled not to mistake a symbol for the thing symbolized but, in some cases, I believe that is what has happened. In other cases, I believe we do indeed have vestiges of other traditions. But even when they are there, they may be only one layer thick on our Masonic onion.

ESOTERICISM—A MATTER OF DEGREES ~continued



The problem is twofold: some deny any esoteric influences at all, or assert they are just used symbolically, while others claim it's the main part of the onion. If the matter is open to interpretation (not defined by the ritual itself), who has the right to decide?

This much we know: many of Freemasonry's symbols were used before the modern fraternity existed (1717), and appeared in a variety of books. Some were educational and philosophical (such as the Choice Emblems books), others were indeed Hermetic (e.g., Alchemical texts). As I said, we're an eclectic organization. How many times have you seen the Square and Compasses or All-Seeing Eye used and abused in Hollywood and elsewhere because it looks "cool?"

Well, I'm willing to bet that at least some of our symbols migrated into the fraternity the same way. An unknown degree maker in the 1700's saw something that looked cool to him, and dropped it into the ritual. Not necessarily bad, but 225 years later his personal predilection turns into a debate. Certainly, there are clear examples of borrowings from esoteric texts. For example, I am aware of an older version (early 1800's) of a Scottish Rite degree, which includes a large portion extracted from Cornelius Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia* (1531-33). If asked if that degree was esoteric I would say "yes," while to its counterpart in a later version or in another Supreme Council, I would say, "no."

My point is to quit quibbling over such things, and find the common ground where we "can best work and best agree." If esotericism interests you, that's fine; if not, that's also fine. My personal library is well-stocked with enough material on both sides to make anyone think in favor of, or against, any position.

The important thing is to be well educated, and understand what we know first. Before you reach for the stars, make sure your feet are firmly planted on the ground. Make yourself into someone who can be taken seriously. Learn the facts about our origins based upon what we know.

I sometimes speak about "historical records" versus "hysterical documents." Before you buy into such fantasies as "Freemasonry descended from the ancient Egyptians," get a quick education. Here are three books to give you a reality check: (1) Harry Carr, *World of Freemasonry*, (2) Bernard E. Jones, *Freemasons Guide and Compendium*, and (3) David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century 1590-1710*. When you can speak intelligently about the Old Charges (Gothic Constitutions), early Freemasonry in Scotland, the formation of the first Grand Lodge, and how and when the degrees developed, people may be inclined to listen to you, when you start to talk about more exotic things. Educate yourself well enough to argue both sides of the argument.

Take due notice thereof and govern yourselves accordingly.



Reprinted from "The Short Talk Bulletin", Volume 94, Number 4, April 2016, presented in "The Short Talk Bulletins Volume Bound Set VI", Volumes 81-95, 2003-2017, pages 471-472.

Elected Officers for 2020

Worshipful Master: Wor. Harry Lee Walker, Jr.
Senior Warden: Bro. Eddie O'Hare Creasy
Junior Warden: Bro. Adam Lee Buffington
Treasurer: RW Mike Daniel Griffin
Secretary: Wor. Mark Stephen Chapman

Senior Deacon: RW Gerald William "Bud" Hogan
Junior Deacon: RW Jason Andrew Pattison
Chaplain: RW Philip Harding Nelson, Jr.
Marshall: Bro. Anthony Curtis Schienschang
Tyler: Bro. Bobby Cameron, Jr.

Widow's Sons' Lodge No. 60
A.F.&A.M.
P. O. Box 6262
Charlottesville, VA 22906

1799—2020
The 221st Year of Service to the
Charlottesville Community and beyond.
“Freemasonry, a way of life”

Return Service Requested



**DATED MATERIAL
PLEASE PROCESS**

Hiram's Journal

MASONIC BOOK REVIEW

Freemasonry: The Esoteric Tradition by Fabio Venzi

First—just to get it out of the way—the book's title is misleading. Out of 280 pages, only about 40 have Masonry as their principal subject, more mention Masonry in passing. But a far more accurate title would have been something like *The Esoteric Tradition: A Background for Some Esoteric Elements in Freemasonry*.

Chapter One, “Esotericism, Interpretations, and Fabrications,” defines esotericism, contrasting it with other mystical traditions, notably theosophism. Venzi, in his first sentence, quotes René Guénon that Freemasonry is the only living heir of the Western esoteric tradition, shortened for the rest of the book to *Tradition*. Venzi concedes the decline of the Tradition in Masonry but finds it alive in Masonic initiation. He notes correctly that many Masons think of esotericism as residing only in the “higher” degrees, but he argues persuasively that it exists in Blue lodges as well.

Chapter Two, “Tradition,” the book's longest (using more than 100 pages), provides an excellent scholarly survey of modern scholarship on esotericism. The chapter lays out clearly the contributions of Guénon, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Fritjof Schuon, Julius Evola, Karl Jaspers, and Carl Jung. It ends with a discussion of science and the Tradition, especially in the work of biologist Rupert Sheldrake.

Chapter Three, “Working the Rough Stone' and Attainment of Self,” makes Freemasonry its focus, taking a Jungian look at ritual, at symbolism of the circle, and at the Royal Arch Degree.

The final chapter, Chapter Four, “Loss of the Centre,” continues Jungian analysis as a way of understanding modern consumer culture, with its “dissociation from nature,” under the “dictatorship of time,” and the “inhomogeneity of space.” The chapter, and this the book, ends with a discussion of “secularization and nihilism.”

Freemasonry: The Esoteric Tradition is a mine of insights into its subject (I took three pages of notes for my own research), and I can vouch that the digging is hard. But for the individual reader or study group that is ready for the hard work of exploring the Western esoteric tradition, Venzi would make a good textbook.

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Freemasonry
The Esoteric Tradition



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