

Evolution of the Ritual

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Virginia Research Lodge

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Editor's Note: Although the author stipulates the ritual work quoted herein is hundreds of years old and does not resemble our modern ritual, in our judgement, it does. Certain sections of this paper that could be considered secret work have been removed.

Worshipful Master, Distinguished Visitors, and my Brethren: As I always say on such occasions, thank you for that lovely introduction. I wish my parents could have heard it; my father would have enjoyed it; my mother would have believed it.

Let me say what a very great honor it is for me to be back in your midst, here in Virginia Research Lodge, No 1777. It was almost exactly nine years ago, on 23 June 1984, that I was privileged to address you. At that time I spoke on "The Sufferings of John Coustos," and my talk was published in the Transactions of the Lodge for 1984, on pages 21-33, and subsequently elsewhere.

There are two preliminary observations that I want to make; two observations that are peculiarly appropriate to a research lodge, dealing with matters that might be the topic of further research.

First, we can all agree that every grand lodge should have an up-to-date history. Many jurisdictions do make an effort in this direction. Let me remind you of a few familiar examples. We think of Freemasonry in the Province of Quebec (1960), written by the great historian, a full member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge, Jack Milborne. And Goodly Heritage (1968), Masonry in Indiana, by one of my heroes, the incomparable Dwight L.

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Smith, who died just three months ago, 27 March 1993. And *Stalwart Builders* (1971), the story of Masonry in Massachusetts, by the magnificent Thomas Sherrard Roy, the man who founded the Commission on Information for Recognition. And (dare I say it?) *Whence Come We?* (1980), the story of Freemasonry in Ontario, which was edited by me. And *Kentucky Freemasonry* (1981), by the editor of the *Philalethes* magazine, our friend Charles Snow Guthrie. And *Freemasonry in Iowa* (1989), by Keith Arrington, the man who for so many years ran the Iowa Masonic Library. And Masonry in Ohio has a splendid history, which is called *Frontier Cornerstone* (1980). It was written by – guess who? Allen Earl Roberts. One wonders why Virginia does not have a decent up-to-date history. William Moseley Brown wrote one – that came out fifty-seven years ago (1936). Since then, nothing. Is there a history in the works somewhere? You have a great historian here. Why has he not been invited to tell the story of Masonry in Virginia?

On to the second point. The official *History of The Supreme Council, 330, of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite . . . for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America*, by George A. Newbury and Louis L. Williams, was published in 1987. And there, on page 233, we are told that "The 33° . . . is . . . conferred upon selected Scottish Rite Masons, chosen because they have distinguished themselves in Masonic or community endeavor." I read in *The Scottish Rite Journal* for June 1993, on page 22, that Bro. Allen E. Roberts is a 32° Scottish Rite Mason of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. And so I find myself wondering, just what do they mean by "distinguishing oneself in Masonic or community endeavor"? Clearly they don't mean intensive activity in the area of Masonic education for over thirty years; or writing a dozen hardcover books that should be on the bookshelves of every serious Mason, as well as a dozen slimmer volumes; or producing prize-winning moving pictures on the subject of Freemasonry. I read of estimable brethren, I am sure, who have received the 33°. Their "distinguished endeavor" seems to have consisted in toeing the party line, and in not rocking the boat.

I should tell you that, in many ways, I prefer visiting a lodge, rather than a grand lodge or a society. The individual constituent lodge is the level at which the important functions

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of Freemasonry are carried out. *That* is where candidates are initiated; *that* is where new members learn the nature of the Craft; *that* is where they have a chance to observe Masonry in operation; *that* is where they acquire an affection for the Fraternity; *that* is where they have their first opportunity to meet Masonic challenges, and respond to them, and thereby grow -- where they learn to deliver The Work in rehearsal, and then in Open Lodge, to offer a toast at the banquet hour, to present a committee report at the business meeting; *that* is where officers are trained up through the ranks; *that* is where they obtain the highest honor that is in the power of the Lodge to bestow; *that* is where they find the satisfaction and fulfillment of ruling and directing their lodge and of employing and instructing the Brethren in Masonry; *that*, in short, is where the action is. The most important person in Masonry at any given moment is not the Grand Master, but the newest Candidate. Those of us who are Grand Lodge Officers can keep on joining penguin parades all over the jurisdiction ("Blessed are they who go around in Big Circles, for they shall be called Big Wheels"), but the craft will not *survive* without properly instructed Candidates, and without Lodges for them to meet in.

We're often taught that Freemasonry is immutable, and that no one is allowed to introduce innovations; but of course that is not true. Enough records exist to show that Masonry is constantly changing --- not in its essentials, but in the externals, the trappings, of the Order. *That* is what I want to talk to you about for a few minutes today --- changes in Freemasonry. These changes are most frequently reflected, and most readily traced, through the ritual. (I must add here that, even though people think of Masonry as a secret society, actually a great many documents survive, that let us see in fair detail how the ritual evolved. Just to cover myself, let me say that we shall not be dealing with the Masonic ritual as it is today; we shall be referring to early documents, more than 200 years old; and of course many changes have been incorporated since those days.)

Every Masonic traveler soon becomes aware that there are divergences in ritual. Before he gets into the lodge in a foreign jurisdiction, he will probably have to undergo a Board of Trial. He will recognize the look of frustration on the faces of the Examining Committee,

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and he will see them awkwardly trying to fit two different systems of work together without going into long explanations. He will realize that, while both he and they are confident of themselves, something is very wrong. This comes out in a matter as fundamental as the modes of recognition. Some jurisdictions letter and divide or syllable the word and divide or syllable the password. In other jurisdictions the pass is given at once but the word is divided or syllabled. And if our Masonic traveler were to visit the continent of Europe, he would meet an unfamiliar substitute word. But, even if he stays in America, when he gets into the lodge he will probably find more or fewer officers than he is used to at home, he will be sure to find differences of detail here and there in the work.

One could go on and on. Is the word "willingly" or "wittingly"? Should one say "wayfaring man" or "seafaring man"? Precisely what are the details of the search by the Craftsmen? All this within the confines of the United States. And then, of course, if you should happen to visit a lodge in my mother jurisdiction, you will find even greater differences. In Ontario we do not make use of the Due Guard; we have *two* Adopted Substitute Words; our Master Mason's Degree is for the most part narrated rather than dramatized. I just glance through Bro. Roberts's book, *The Craft and its Symbols*, and I am struck by the fact that, in my mother jurisdiction, we do not retain the symbolism of Chalk, Charcoal, and Clay (38), or the Celestial and Terrestrial Globes (47), or the Five Senses (51), or the Broken Column (67), or the Pot of Incense (72), or the Beehive (73), or the Book of Constitutions guarded by the Tiler's Sword (74), or the Sword pointing to the Naked Heart (76), or the Anchor and the Ark (76), or the Hourglass (79), or the Scythe (79), or the Spade (79).

The Master in our lodges does not wear a hat, and the brethren are at perfect liberty to pass between the Master and the Altar. We do not open our Sacred Volumes at the 133rd Psalm, or recite the words, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity..." (*Manual of Work* 14). For us, the seventh chapter of Amos, where the Lord stands upon a wall made by a plumbline, is a part of a different ceremony, and not of the Degree of a Fellowcraft (*Manual* 31). Our Working Tools for the Entered

Apprentice Degree include the *Chisel* as well as the Twenty-four Inch Gauge and the Common Gavel (*Manual* 16). Our Working Tools for the Master Mason are the Skirret, the Compasses, and the Pencil, but not the Trowel (*Manual* 43). For us, the Square, Level, and Plumb are Movable Jewels, and the Rough Ashlar, the Perfect Ashlar, and what we call the *Tracing* Board (rather than Trestleboard) are Immovable Jewels, rather than the other way around (*Manual* 21-22). We have the Point within a Circle, but it is not bordered by two Perfect Parallel Lines, or surmounted by the *Book of Constitutions* (*Manual* 23). Your *Manual of Work* (page 23) says that Masons, as professing Christianity, dedicate their lodges to the two Saints John; I should think that, at one level, this profession would make it very difficult for non-Christians in good conscience to become Masons, whereas in my jurisdiction we have Jewish brethren, and even a few Moslem Masons. This year one of the Junior Officers of my mother lodge is from Trinidad in the West Indies, and I am not sure that he would be welcome in a lodge here. Your *Methodical Digest*, at least the edition I have, (Section 2.03) also says that "Every Lodge is required to hold its sessions in the Master Mason's Degree, except for the purpose of work or instruction in the First and Second Degrees;" in Ontario the business meeting takes place in the E.A. Degree.

In fact, after hearing this list, you may be tempted to wonder whether we are even entitled to be called Masons. Yet we are recognized as such, and if you do visit our lodges you will find much that is familiar.

Where we differ, it is tempting to ask "Which one of us is right, and which is wrong?" But that is the wrong question, because any Grand Lodge has absolute power to legislate the procedures and ritual for its own lodges; and whatever it has decided, is right for that jurisdiction. In fact, not to "conform to every edict of the Grand Lodge" is a Masonic offence. The proper question to ask is rather "Why are we so different?"

Well, there are several reasons. First, we know that in the 1700s, when the Craft was being transplanted to North America, the Masonic ritual was evolving rapidly (*WCW*, page

189). Brethren who came to the New World brought their own local variations of the work. As the ritual evolved in the old land, successive versions would find their way across the Atlantic. Faulty memories caused further divergences since verbal accuracy was not the fetish it is today (*WCW*, page 190). In fact the insistence on uniformity seems to be a North American aberration. Certainly in England today there is no single authorized form of ritual. There are dozens of printed versions, and theoretically any Mason is at liberty to devise his own ritual, so long as he observes the basic outline. Even beyond these factors, we can say that Masonry did not come to America from any single source. There were different governing bodies in the Craft, and each of them no doubt had its own distinctive idiosyncrasies. Moreover, new Grand Lodges were formed by the union of lodges chartered from different sources, and these unions gave rise to all sorts of different combinations. For example, the Grand Lodge of Virginia was originally founded by lodges that had been warranted by both the Grand Lodges of the Ancients and the Moderns in England, as well as by lodges that had been founded by immemorial right, without being subject to any external authority. No doubt their rituals were slightly different from each other, and the new grand lodge drew a bit from each. Each new grand lodge was of course independent, and either preserved the ritual as it had received it, or made it over by way of compromise, or revised it in accordance with its own ideas (*Pound*, page 203).

Now I want in particular to talk about the way in which our ritual has developed. I still subscribe to unfashionable notion that our modern Freemasonry is descended in some sense from the operative stonemasons, the cathedral builders of England in the Middle Ages. They gave us our symbolism, and much of our language. These workmen wore aprons to protect their garments from spot and stain, and they used hammers and chisels, square and compasses, level and plumb rule. They drew the design for the building on a tracing board. They cut the rough ashlar from the quarry, and transformed them into smooth ashlar. These operative stonemasons were mostly skilled journeymen, Fellows of Craft; there were a few Apprentices, signed on to learn the trade; and on each job there was the head man, the Master of the Works. These Masons took their meals, and

kept their working tools, in a small shed set up on the south side of their project, that was known as a lodge. They were highly trained, and when they moved on to a new job, it appears that they had secret modes of recognition, to show that they belonged to the trade. In every large centre there was an incorporation or a guild, a sort of union, that controlled all the stone building there, and carried out periodic inspections of the work. This union was a closed shop, and you could not work at the trade in the town unless you were recognized as a member of the guild. The Unions had a set of rules, and a traditional history, that were supposed to be read to every new Mason when he was made; they are known as The Old Charges, or the Old Gothic Constitutions. They were usually in the form of a scroll, and we have a number of copies. They reveal a bit about the ritual of those days. The earliest version of the Old Charges, the Regius Manuscript of about 1390, actually closes with the words:

Amen, Amen! So mote it be!

So say we all for Charity!

The later versions all begin with an invocation, the most common form runs like this:

The might of the Father of Heaven, with the wisdom of His glorious Son, through the grace and goodness of the Holy Ghost, that be three persons in one God, be with us at our beginning, and give us grace so to govern us in our living, that we may come to His bliss that never shall have ending. Amen.

Then they go on to talk about the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, particularly Geometry. They include a traditional history which tells, among other things, about the first metallurgist, Tubal Cain, and the two great pillars, and the building of King Solomon's Temple. Then, before we come to the actual regulations, we are told that the candidate had to place his hands on "The Book" and hold them there while the rules were read to him. And after all this he was given an obligation, that runs something like this:

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These charges that we have now rehearsed unto you, and all other that belong to masons, ye shall keep, so help you God and your halidom, and by this Book in your hand, unto your power. Amen.

This particular obligation was familiar to the operative masons in England not too long after 1550; no penalty, no secrets; the candidate simply swears to abide by the regulations. And here's another obligation, 100 years younger, from about 1650:

There is several words and signs of a freemason to be revealed to you, which as you will answer before God at the great and terrible day of judgment, you keep secret, and not to reveal the same in the ears of any person but to the masters and fellows of the said society of freemasons. So help me God. (*Harleian* 2054; *BTP* 74)

These operative lodges lasted about 300 years, from about 1350 to 1650. Then for some reason or other in the years after 1600 the organized building trade collapsed. Perhaps the Reformation had something to do with it. Perhaps the great fire of London was another cause. So much new building was needed after the fire that the authorities allowed anyone who could hold a hammer to help with the rebuilding. The union's closed shop was broken. In order simply to survive, the old guilds, incorporations, and lodges began to admit non-operatives as members, people who belonged to the gentry, who had never held a hammer and chisel, who were for some reason interested in the building trade, and cared enough to pay a fee to join. The earliest examples are in the 1630s and 1640s in England and Scotland. This ushered in the Transitional period. Lodges would apparently consist of mixtures of primarily operative masons with a few gentlemen attached. As time passed, it appears that they came to include fewer and fewer operative masons in their members. They had to do something else to justify their existence, and first they turned into drinking clubs. Then they began to engage in good works, and moral improvement. We have some documents that tell us about the ritual that was used in those days, particularly in Scotland. These are the series of papers that are usually called

the Old Masonic Catechisms, because they consist of questions and answers. The oldest of them all is the Edinburgh Register House Manuscript, which is dated 1696. It tells how a visiting brother of those days was received into a lodge where he was not known. We might run through it.

Some questions that Masons use to put to those who have the word before they will acknowledge them:

Question 1: Are you a Mason?

Answer: Yes indeed, that I am.

Q. 2: How shall I know it?

A.: By Signs, Tokens, and other Points of my Entry.

Q. 3: What is the First Point?

A.: Tell me the First Point, I'll tell you the Second.

Q. 4: The First is to hele and conceal.

A.: Second, under no less pain than cutting of your throat.

Q. 5: Where was you entered?

A.: At the honorable Lodge.

Q. 6: What makes a true and perfect Lodge.

A.: Seven Masters, five Entered Apprentices, a day's journey from a borough's town, without bark of dog or crow of cock.

Q. 7: Does no less make a true and perfect Lodge?

A.: Yes. Five Masons and three Entered Apprentices, and the rest as before.

Q. 8: Does no less?

A.: The more the merrier; the fewer the better cheer.

Q. 9: What is the name of your Lodge?

A.: Kilwinning.

Q. 10: How stands your Lodge?

A.: East and West, as the Temple of Jerusalem.

Q. 11: Where was the first Lodge?

A.: In the porch of Solomon's Temple.

Q. 12: Are there any Lights in your Lodge?

A.: Yes, three: the Northeast, Southwest, and Eastern Passage. The one denotes the Master Mason, the other the Warden, the third the Fellow Craft.

Q. 13: Are there any Jewels in your Lodge?

A.: Yes, three: Perpend Ashlar, a Square Pavement, and a Broached Ornel.

Q. 14: Where shall I find the key of your Lodge?

A.: Three foot and a half from the Lodge door, under a Perpend Ashlar and a Green Divot.

Q. 15: What mean you by a Perpend Ashlar and a Green Divot?

A.: I mean not only under a Perpend Ashlar and a Green Divot, but under the lap of my liver, where all the secrets of my heart lie hid.

Q. 16: Which is the key of your Lodge?

A.: A well hung tongue.

Q. 17: Where lies the key?

A.: In the bone box.

Q. 18: I see you have been in the kitchen, but I know not if you have been in the hall.

A.: I have been in the hall as well as in the kitchen.

Q. 19: Are you a Fellow Craft?

A.: Yes.

Q. 20: How many Points of Fellowship are there?

A.: Five . . .

This same Edinburgh Register House Manuscript also includes the Obligation that was used by these transitional Masons of 1696. It runs like this:

By God himself — and you shall answer to God when you shall stand naked before him at the Great Day — you shall not reveal any part of what You shall hear or see at this time, neither by word nor write, nor put it in write at any time, nor draw it with the point of a sword, or any other instrument, upon the snow or sand, nor shall you speak of it but with an entered mason. So help you God. (*BTP* 75)

By now there are secrets, that is, signs and tokens; and something that sounds like the original of our "write . . ." but still no penalty.

Now, in the year 1717 four of these lodges in the city of London banded together, and formed the first Grand Lodge in the world. Within a generation independent Grand Lodges were formed in Scotland and Ireland; and from them, all Masonry in the world is descended. This mother Grand Lodge was clearly non-operative. But I hardly think that it should yet be called speculative. This period lasts until 1770.

We begin to have more information about the ritual now, both published in newspapers, and preserved on handwritten sheets of paper. One might imagine that they would all be suspect. But in general they show such consistent evolution, that we can be almost certain that they reflect reality. The most popular version was provided by Samuel Prichard in his *Masonry Dissected* of 1730. It was very widespread during the early days of the first Grand Lodge, and in fact we know it was used even in America, for the obligation that it gives was quoted in a newspaper, the *New York Gazette* for November 28, 1737 (quoted McClenachan 1.124.). Prichard's exposure is still in the form of question and answer, but the answers describe some of the procedures in considerably more detail. Here is the first portion of the Entered Prentice Degree as it appears in Samuel Prichard.

Enter'd 'Pentice's Degree (From Masonry Dissected, 1730)

1. Q. From whence come you?

A. From the Holy Lodge of St John's.

2. Q. What recommendations brought you from thence?

A. The recommendations which I brought from the Right Worshipful Brothers and Fellows of the Right Worshipful and Holy Lodge of St John's, from whence I come, and greet you thrice heartily well.

3. Q. What do you come here to do?

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A. Not to do my own proper will,

But to subdue my passion still;

The rules of Masonry in hand to take,

And daily progress therein make.

4. Q. Are you a Mason?

A. I am so taken and accepted to be amongst Brothers and Fellows.

5. Q. How shall I know that you are a Mason?

A. By Signs and Tokens and perfect Points of my entrance.

6. Q. What are signs?

A. . . .

7. Q. What are Tokens?

A. Certain . . .

8. Q. Where was you made a Mason?

A. In a just and perfect lodge.

9. Q. What makes a just and perfect lodge?

A. Seven or more.

10. Q. What do they consist of?

A. One Master, two Wardens, two FellowCrafts and two Enter'd 'Prentices.

11. Q. What makes a lodge?

A. Five.

12. Q. What do they consist of?

A. One Master, two Wardens, one FellowCraft, one Enter'd 'Prentice.

13. Q. Who brought you to the lodge?

A. An Enter'd 'Prentice.

14. Q. How did he bring you?

A. . . .

15. Q. How got you admittance?

A. . . .

16. Q. Who receiv'd you?

A. A Junior Warden.

17. Q. How did he dispose of you?

A. He carried me up to the North-East Part of the Lodge, and brought me back again to the West and deliver'd me to the Senior Warden.

18. Q. What did the Senior Warden do with you?

A. He present'd me, and shew'd me how to walk up (by three steps) to the Master.

19. Q. What did the Master do with you?

A. He made me a Mason.

20. Q. How did he make you a Mason?

A. . . .

21. Q. Can you repeat that Obligation?

A. I'll do my endeavor . . .

Now *that* Obligation is getting to sound a bit more familiar; except of course that the penalties are piled up together in a terrifying way.

I said a minute ago that the direction in which the ritual is evolving is plain and consistent. From time to time a phony exposure is published, and it discloses its falseness because it is so far off base. Here is one published in 1726, under the title of "The Grand Mystery Laid Open."

Question. How many signs has a true Free Mason?

Answer. Nine, which are distinguished into Spiritual and Temporal.

Q. How many temporal signs are there?

A. The first is a grip by the two first fingers . . . The second is a grip by the wrist . . . The third is a grip by the elbow, and is called Thimbum and Timbulum.

Q. Have the six spiritual signs any names?

A. Yes, but are not divulged to any newly admitted member, because they are cabalistical....

Q. Who is the Grand Master of all the lodges in the world?

A. INRI

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Q. What is the meaning of that name?

A. Each distinct letter stands for a whole word, and is very mysterious.

Q. How is the Master of every particular lodge called?

A. Oakecharing a Tochology.

Q. By what name are all the members distinguished?

A. By the name of Istowlawleys.

Q. Who is your founder?

A. God and the Square.

Q. What is God called?

A. Laylah Illallah, which is, There is no other God but God.

Q. What is the Square called?

A. Whosly Powu Tigwawtubby, which signifies Excellency of Excellencies . . .

Q. Who invented the secret word?

A. Checchhabeddin Jatmouny.

Q. What is it?

A. It is a Cabalistical word . . .

Q. What are the Tools requisite for a Free Mason?

A. The Hammer and Trowel; the one to separate, the other to join.

Q. What names are given to them?

A. Asphahani and 'Palagaica . . .

With so many exposures being published, anybody who wished could learn the secrets of Masonry, and could gain admission to lodge, or claim charity. Grand Lodge got so upset about this that at some date close to 1739 it actually changed the modes of recognition! Prichard's Masonry Dissected had said that the Entered Apprentice used two pillar words, while the Fellow Craft used one of them. But Grand Lodge arbitrarily decreed that henceforth the word for the 1° should be the one formerly used for the 2°, and the other should designate the 2°. This created a tremendous uproar, because of course it was tampering with the landmarks. A group of Irish Masons in London said that the Grand Lodge was making innovation in the body of Masonry, and so they formed their own

independent Grand Lodge. And for the next sixty years England had these two rival Grand Lodges, known as the Ancients and the Moderns. They used the words in different order in the two first degrees, and they had different words for the 3°.

Meanwhile, the ritual continued to evolve. The wording was still pretty threadbare, and there wasn't too much for the mind. Three exposures were published around 1760, and they show us the working of that time. It remained in use in England right up until the Union of 1813. Here is the way in which lodge was opened about 1760.

1760 Opening (Reconstructed from J&B)

W.M. [to J.D.]: What is the chief care of a Mason?

J.D.: To see that the Lodge is tyled.

W.M.: Pray do your duty.

J.D.: [knocks: * * * .]

Tyler: [knocks: * * * .]

J.D.: Worshipful, the Lodge is tyled.

W.M. [to J.D.]: Pray, where is the J.D.'s place in the Lodge?

J.D.: At the back of the S.W., or at his right hand, if he permits him.

W.M.: Your business there?

J. D.: To carry messages from the Senior to the J.W., so that they may be dispersed round the lodge.

W.M. [to S.D.]: Pray, where is the S.D.'s place in the Lodge?

S.D.: At the back of the Master; or at his right hand, if he permits.

W.M.: Your business there?

S.D.: To carry messages from the Master to the S.W.

W.M. [still addressing S.D.]: The J.W.'s place in the Lodge?

S.D.: In the South.

W.M. [to J.W.]: Why in the South?

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J. W: The better to observe the sun, at high meridian to call the men off from work to refreshment, and to see that they come on in due time, that the Master may have pleasure and profit thereby.

W.M. [still addressing J.W.]: Pray, where is the S.W.'s place in the Lodge?

J. W.: In the West.

W.M. [to S.W.]: Your business there, Brother?

S. W: As the sun sets in the West to close the day, so the S.W. stands in the West to close the Lodge, to pay the men their wages, and dismiss them from their Labour.

W.M. [to S.W.]: The Master's place in the Lodge?

S. W: In the East.

W.M.: His business there?

S. W: As the sun rises in the East, to open the day, so the Master stands in the East, to open his Lodge, and set his men to work.

W.M. [taking off his hat]: This Lodge is open, in the name of Holy St John, forbidding all cursing, swearing, or whispering, and all profane discourse whatever, under no less penalty than what the majority shall think proper. [W.M. knocks: * * * , and puts on his hat.]

Up till now the ritual was pretty threadbare. About 1770 something new was added. The men who are called "the three great expounders" took a hand in the evolution of the ritual: Wellins Calcott, William Hutchinson, and William Preston. They wrote longer charges and for the first time gave us something for the mind. The earliest of the three was Wellins Calcott. His *Candid Disquisition* first came out in 1769. Here is a charge that he wrote.

Right Worshipful SIR, BY the unanimous voice of the members of this lodge, you are elected to the mastership thereof for the ensuing half-year.... What you have seen *praise-worthy* in others, we doubt not you will *imitate*; and what you have seen *defective*, you will in yourself *amend*.... For a pattern of imitation, consider the great luminary of nature, which, rising in the *east*, regularly diffuses light and

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lustre to all within its circle. In like manner it is your province, with due decorum, to spread and communicate light and instruction to the brethren in the lodge.

Do these words sound familiar? (Part of this paragraph is incorporated into the address to the Master at Installation, *Ceremonies* C10. In my mother Grand Lodge, the other part of it is in the address to the Wardens.)

In the same way, William Hutchinson's *Spirit of Masonry*, of about the same date, includes some "Moral Observations on the Instruments of Masonry," that run like this.

The Plumline admonishes us to walk erect and upright...; to observe the just medium between temperance and voluptuousness; ... and to make our several passions and prejudices ... coincide with our line of duty.... The level should advise us that ... we are all descended from the same common stock, partake of the like nature, have ... the same hope...; and though distinctions necessarily make a subordination among mankind, yet eminence of station should not make us forget that we are men, nor cause us to treat our brethren, because placed on the lowest spoke of the wheel of fortune, with contempt; because a time will come, and the wisest of men know not how soon, when all distinctions, except in goodness, will cease, and when death -- that grand leveller of all human greatness -- will bring us to a level at the last.

What is that? (Parts of it are in the Addresses to the Junior Warden and the Senior Warden at Installation, *Ceremonies* C11-12.)

And here is a prayer that appears in William Preston's *Illustrations of Masonry* in 1775.

Vouchsafe thine aid, Almighty Father and supreme Governor of the world, to this our present convention; and grant that this candidate for Masonry may dedicate and devote his life to thy service, and become a true and faithful brother among

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us. Endue him with a competence of thy divine wisdom, that, by the secrets of this Art, he may be better enabled to unfold the mysteries of godliness, to the honour of thy holy name. Amen.

What is that? (Prayer, 1^o, *Manual of Work*, 14.)

Clearly a good deal of the work written by these men was incorporated into the ritual. Many of our longer lectures today go back to these men.

Finally in 1813 the two rival Grand Lodges were united. Since they to some extent had different modes of recognition, some compromises were necessary. That is why in England, and in the authorized Ontario ritual, we have two words in the third degree. And while the authorities were at it, they took the opportunity to rewrite the whole ritual, cutting it down and removing the Christian allusions. In England it has hardly been changed since. The pre-Union ritual had been brought to America in the days when it was being settled, and it was never revised in the same way. The post-Union English ritual was introduced and promulgated in British North America in 1825. And that is why the Working in my part of Canada differs so much from that with which you are familiar. Yours is basically pre-Union, and ours is post-Union.

That's probably enough, or more than enough, to say for now. We see that Masonic ritual has been evolving for 600 years, and that to some extent it has evolved differently in different parts of the world. Can we draw any useful lessons from all this? Well, I think we can. To begin with, as you travel around you will see that the ritual differs from place to place. This serves to remind us that Freemasonry is not absolutely immutable; it *does* change, though only slowly, and because of this evolution, each grand lodge is a little bit different from all others. Secondly, and more importantly, *despite* these differences, you will observe in your travels that the ritual is basically similar, and that it clearly goes back to a single prototype. Although the Craft has been spread over different parts of the globe for some 250 years, no matter where it is, it still clings tenaciously to those features that

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it values – and not just the outline of the ritual, but also certain intangibles. It is still an affinity group of brethren who have gone through some of the same experiences, and who share some of the same ideals.

Others may if they choose proclaim that God is dead, but Freemasonry still believes in the existence of a Supreme Being. Others may subscribe to what am called situational ethics, but Freemasonry still holds to absolute moral standards. Freemasonry still proclaims that all men are created equal, and are worthy to meet together upon the level. It still adheres to the tenets or fundamental principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. It still asserts that Faith, Hope, and Charity are more than mere words. It still exhorts as to unite in the grand design of being happy and communicating happiness. In short, Freemasonry continues, as it has been in the past, to be an unchanging moral force for good in this changing world.