

Restoration & Reformation

Insight & Outlook

Future Vision for Freemasonry

Masonry is a university, teaching the liberal arts and sciences of the soul to all who will attend to its words.

Bro. Manly Palmer Hall

R.W. BRO. RAYMOND S. J. DANIELS
DEPUTY GRAND MASTER



HANOVER LODGE A.F. & A.M. No. 432 G.R.C.
HANOVER – BRUCE DISTRICT

ANNUAL STEAK FRY
MONDAY, 30 JUNE 2008

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W. Bro. Brian MacTavish, Worshipful Master

M.W. Bro. Allan J. Petrisor, Grand Master

M.W. Bro. Terence Shand, Past Grand Master and Grand Secretary

M.W. Bro. Donald H. Mumby, Past Grand Master and Custodian of the
Work

M.W. Bro. Gary L. Atkinson, Past Grand Master

R.W. Bro. Robert J. Lesperance, District Deputy Grand Master Bruce
Masonic District

Grand Lodge Officers, Present and Past

In particular R.W. Bro. E. James Scarborough, founding father
Brethren

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It is the greatest honour and privilege to be invited to address the vast company of Brethren at the Hanover Steak Fry, and to join the roster of distinguished speakers that have preceded me. On this occasion a year ago, R.W. Bro. D. Garry Dowling inspired us with an eloquent discourse on the theme RENAISSANCE and RESURGENCE.

This evening, while I cannot hope to match his eloquence or equal his erudition, what follows may be considered as a sequel – picking up and continuing the theme where Bro. Dowling left off.

RESTORATION and REFORMATION – Insight and Outlook / Opportunity and Challenge – Future Vision for Freemasonry.

As Bro. Dowling assured us, we are making a comeback.

| <i>INITIATIONS</i> | |
|----------------------|-------|
| 2001 – | 1,106 |
| 2002 – | 1,133 |
| 2003 – | 1,136 |
| 2004 – | 1,138 |
| 2005 – | 1,313 |
| 2006 – | 1,380 |
| 2007 – | 1,262 |
| <i>TOTAL – 8,468</i> | |

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In the last seven years, 8,468 men have been initiated in Ontario lodges. Each year the statistics provided by the Grand Secretary show an increase. In many lodges, trestleboards are overflowing, emergent meetings and multiple degrees have become commonplace. However, these are merely statistics, and while a positive indication of revival, we must look closely at the quality and characteristics of the men we are initiating. One thing is certain; they are not the Freemasons of our fathers' days, and they are not joining simply because their father or grandfather was a Mason. One perceptive observer has noted: "*The only demographic group that is applying for membership in significant numbers is composed of young men who are passionately interested in the esoteric mysteries of the Craft.*" Now, words like 'esoteric' sometimes frighten an older generation of Masons. The word simply means 'within' and is defined as something '*profound, taught to, or understood by, only a select circle.*' That, to me, appears to be a fairly accurate description of Freemasonry. But, is that an accurate definition of the Freemasonry we experience and practice in many of our lodges today?

These words of W. L. Wilmshurst, penned more than seventy years ago ring true: "*Spiritual quality rather than numbers, ability to understand the Masonic system and reduce its implications into personal experience rather than the perfunctory conferment of its rites, are the desiderata of the Craft today.*" The Meaning of Masonry, 1927

The young men seeking admission and being accepted into our lodges in increasing numbers are not joining the Craft simply to discover the 'quaint

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and curious stuff' – passwords, odd gestures, or peculiar handshakes. They seek, expect, and deserve more – much more. They are seeking knowledge of the spiritual value of the rites of Initiation. These are 'the Millennial Masons' that will replace you and me when time passes, and so do we.

It is one of the privileges of my office to have many opportunities to enjoy converse with a significant number of these young modern Masons and benefit from their insights and outlooks. Their quest is for knowledge, wisdom, understanding – learning, culture, self-improvement. Too often, we confuse Masonic education with Masonic training – emphasizing form over essence. It is important to learn the basics, to deliver the ritual accurately, to perform the choreography of the floor work in strict conformity to our usage and custom. Of even greater importance should be what the symbols embody and the allegories enshrine, and what they mean in contemporary terms. From this perspective, these modern Masons are leading us back to our very roots when Speculative replaced Operative and Freemasonry emerged as a philosophical and occult science.

- Now, lest we become too serious, here is a short story to remind us to keep it simple. Holmes and Watson are on a camping trip. In the middle of the night Holmes wakes up and gives Dr. Watson a nudge. "Watson," he says, "look up in the sky and tell me what you see." "My dear Holmes" he says, "I see millions of stars." "And what do you conclude from that, Watson?" Watson thinks for a moment. "Well,"

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he replies, “astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. Theologically, I see that God is all-powerful, and we are small and insignificant. Uh, what does it tell you, Holmes?” “Watson, you idiot! Someone has stolen our tent!”

Yes, Brethren, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Holmes and Watson, was a Mason and the dialogue related above suggests that he sat through too many learned lectures in lodge. We too, must be reminded that while we must take Masonry seriously, we should not take ourselves seriously. Philosophy has been defined as “nothing but common sense in a dress suit.” Philosophy is not a subject to be confined in the ivory towers of academia. Every man who asks himself the question ‘why’ and seeks the answer ‘wherefore’ is a philosopher. “*Whence come you?*” and “*Whither are you directing your course?*” – two profound questions familiar to all Master Masons – form the basis of all philosophical debate.

Freemasonry has long established traditions and fixed Landmarks that we have all solemnly sworn to observe, uphold, and maintain. Just as Freemasonry has the innate capacity to change men, so men have changed Freemasonry by subtly shifting its focus. The most casual reading of history will prove that Freemasonry has evolved from the days of convivial Masonry when the lodges met in taverns and ale-houses where rum and tobacco were abundantly provided and freely used, as vividly and

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accurately portrayed in the performances of the Wellington District Eighteenth-century Degree Team from Guelph. We all know that the first Grand Lodge was formed on June 24th 1717, when four old lodges met in a London tavern, the Goose and Gridiron in St. Paul's Churchyard. Today, our members are more constrained, not only in open lodge, but also at the festive board. Even the most bibulous hospitality room at the Fairmont Royal York cannot compare with the bacchanalian revels enjoyed in the lodges of the early eighteenth century.

Restrained conduct is not the only reformation that has taken place over the last three centuries. The early history of Grand Lodge was marked by the division between the 'Ancients' and the 'Moderns.' Emulation ritual was a result of compromise and reconciliation in 1813. The declaration of independence that resulted in the formation of our Grand Lodge of Canada in 1855 "to provide for and promote the general welfare of the Craft" is the most obvious example of changing with the times and adapting to circumstances. "*True consistency, that of the prudent and the wise, is in the act of conforming with circumstances.*" (John C. Colhoun) Mercer Wilson and his brethren understood that precept and acted in accordance with it.

The Ancient Charges read from the Book of Constitution at every Installation remind the Master that he should "*promulgate the knowledge of the mystic art.*" That phrase, passed over without comment, and, I fear, without much notice, defines the essential difference between a fraternity and a social club. The devoted Freemason, through study, speculation and reflection, contemplation and meditation, is on a life-long personal journey

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of discovery. More than eighty years ago, Bro. Manly Palmer Hall wrote: “*Masonry is a university, teaching the liberal arts and sciences of the soul to all who will attend to its words.*” Each and every one of us must search for and achieve understanding of *the mystic art* and in so doing realize the transforming spiritual potential embodied therein.

In the 21st century, most would agree that the Craft has evolved (some more forthright observers might say degenerated) into a friendly social entity employed mainly for philanthropic purposes – in others words, a service club. The great work that Masons do in the community must always be encouraged, supported and commended, but surely fundraising for worthy causes and projects is a byproduct and extension of our Masonic beliefs, not the primary object or main purpose of our existence.

Let me be very clear. The social virtues are fundamental to our Order – *Fraternity, Liberty, Equality*. The popularity, success and longevity of this annual ‘must attend’ event in Hanover are proof positive. Sincere fraternal affection is the cement that binds us together. For many, fellowship and social intercourse are the main attraction and principal reward of membership in the lodge. Not everyone is absorbed in the study of the deeper philosophical aspects of the Craft. There are many rooms in the mansion of Freemasonry, and it has the innate capacity to be all things to all men. Every man has his own reason for becoming and continuing a Mason, and each is valid and legitimate. The social Mason is easily satisfied and readily accommodated. Just being there is often enough. Such men have made an immense contribution during a lifetime of social

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contacts and civic service. My concern is that we also make room and provide space for those men serious in their quest for the key to the inner chamber of Freemasonry.

In a Masonic lodge good men congregate as equals without regard to class distinction, socio-economic status, educational background, profession or trade, race or creed.

- Freemasons, as we know, do not recognize theological or sectarian differences, but rather respect the religious persuasion of the individual. However, a man's religion, it seems, is based on whom he does or does not recognize: *Jews don't recognize Jesus. Protestants don't recognize the Pope. Baptists don't recognize each other in the liquor store.* Another way of distinguishing one religious denomination from another is what is considered sinful: *For Catholics, it's missing Mass. For Baptist's, it's dancing. For Anglicans, it's eating your salad with your desert fork.*

Every candidate enters the lodge stripped of all money and status. He brings into the lodge only himself – who he is and what he hopes to become. As an initiatory Order we are in the business of transforming men, giving each man instruction in achieving a higher degree of self-awareness. That is the real meaning of what we promise every candidate by admitting him to “*the mysteries and privileges of ancient Freemasonry.*”

Earlier this year at the All Canada Conference of Grand and District Grand Lodges, one presenter challenged us: “*We must first get our own house in*

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order – Freemasons understanding Freemasonry.” I suggest that those experienced veterans, such as are here assembled, can learn much from these young serious-thinking men now knocking at our doors. As Masons of long standing and wide experience we must continually upgrade, expand, and enhance our knowledge. The admonition given in the Charge to the candidate in the First Degree ‘to make a daily advancement’ is not restricted to the Entered Apprentice. I, for one, consider myself an Apprentice, because I am still learning the secrets of the trade. The author of a recent book on Freemasonry observed that, “Esotericism is all but unknown to 90 per cent of the Brethren.” There is no shortage of books and internet sites available for a refresher course in the deeper meaning of Masonry. Then, when a candidate you have sponsored seeks guidance, or one to whom you have become a Mentor asks a question, you will be able to exchange insights and share opinions, respecting each others point of view. Our greatest asset is curiosity and our greatest blessing is tolerance – intellectual curiosity impels and excites us and tolerance enlightens and enlarges us. It is a regrettable reality that some of these keen ‘seekers after truth’ feel lonely, alienated – even shunned by their senior Brethren. This is not just a generational gap; it occurs because of discomfiture when engaged in or confronted by unfamiliar realms of thought. There is a fear of what is unknown and a suspicion of what is unfamiliar.

We must learn to listen, and listen to learn.

To counteract this, there are small study groups springing up where in-depth discussions of books and papers on diverse subjects energize those

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participating. Electronic resources allow these Masons to connect and communicate. 'Traditional Observance' lodges are being formed, based on the European model, where candidates are required to prove intellectual and philosophical proficiency before advancing to the next degree. In Ontario, the Grand Master has recently granted dispensation for the institution of Templum Fidelis Lodge in Frontenac District. The Charter Members are, for the most part, the highly motivated, intellectual, well-educated, widely-read articulate young Masons I have been describing as the new breed. It does not take much prescience to predict the success of this innovative approach in the decades ahead.

Opportunity knocks – and knocks loudly. Perhaps now we can restore our lodge to what it was originally intended to be – a place where like-minded men can enjoy each other's company, providing a forum where they may openly discuss and freely debate the basic questions of life. Perhaps Freemasonry can again become a gentleman's learned society where men are able to transform themselves into better men.

- The story is told of a man being interviewed on his 100th birthday. He was asked the inevitable question: "To what do you attribute your longevity?" Without hesitation, he replied: "I never smoked, I never drank liquor, I never overate, and I always rise at six in the morning." The reporter responded: "I had an uncle who did all those things, but he only lived to be eighty. How do you account for that?" "Well," replied the centenarian, "He didn't keep at it long enough."

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Through all the changing scenes of life, Freemasonry has remained constant – its teachings permanent and unchanging; its essence steadfast and immovable. Reformation is neither revolution nor rebellion. It is rather the means and process by which to reshape and renew, adapting our timeless principles to the day and age in which we live, move and have our being. I respectfully suggest that the strategy by which this may be accomplished: reclaim our inheritance as a modern mystery school and restore the original idea and ideal of Freemasonry.

The stonemason's art is three dimensional. So is Speculative Freemasonry – social, instructive and philosophical. Following the example of our ancient operative brethren, and by employing these three tools metaphysically speaking, we have the ability to reform and reshape our beloved Craft – taking the solid stone of its core principles and using all our skill and ability to reveal the beauty within. Ralph Waldo Emerson put it in these words: “What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters to what lies within us.”

There is no better statement of the Credo of Masonry than that given by M.W. Bro. Lou Copeland, Grand Master 1985-1986, in his Address to Grand Lodge delivered at the Annual Communication in 1987. Thirty years on, it is well worth repeating.

I believe in people and I especially believe in Masons.

I have found in Freemasonry;
a cause to be championed,

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a life to be lived,
a truth to be shared,
and a future bright with promise.

I believe in Masonry because I believe in its influence for good and to that influence I would give myself and challenge each of you to join with me in making our Freemasonry come alive during our allotted time.

The future is in our hands - yours and mine.

Let us be sure that those who follow us tomorrow can be forever proud of our achievements in Freemasonry today.