

Official Visit to Ionic Lodge No. 549

October 4, 2006

Lecture

(Worshipful Sir, Right Worship Sirs, Very Worshipful Sirs and Brethren,)

One of the True Secrets of Freemasonry

We all have heard different points of view as to whether Freemasonry is a *secret society* or not. Of course, history teaches us that Adolf Hitler in Germany, Joseph Stalin in the U.S.S.R., and Saddam Hussein in Iraq all outlawed Freemasonry in their respective countries. Membership, in these countries was punished by arrest and/or death. It would be safe to assume that throughout the World today, there are Freemasons who live under restrictive regimes where the association to a Masonic Lodge may be considered a subversive action. Being caught attending a Lodge or being part of a Masonic meeting, could have negative financial and, perhaps even, physical repercussions. Secrecy of association, in a situation like this, is of the utmost necessity for survival. But, in most of the Free World where Freemasonry is active today, we have become quite casual as to our presence and participation in our communities. Modern technology, in particular the Internet, has made it virtually possible for anyone to access information about any subjects imaginable which, in the past, was only available to the few. As a secret society, Masonry has done a pretty bad job in keeping secrets. As Christopher Hodapp, in his book “*Freemasonry for Dummies*”, comments, quote (p. 13): “*as secrecy goes, Freemasons need a refreshers course in Camouflage 101*” end of quote. Looking into the history of our fraternity we learn that, almost simultaneously after forming the first Grand Lodge in England in 1717, books, disclosing the secrets of the Lodge, began to be published in large numbers. During the 1700’s, it became quite profitable to write books about secret societies. They were the sort of thing everybody wanted to read about. Even today; the word “secret” has a tremendous appeal, The fact is that, at that time, no written text of the ritual existed. So, what these books were saying about Freemasonry, In many cases, would become the status quo of what Freemasonry was all about and how the ritual was done. It has been also reported that even the ritual practised in some Lodges in those days, had been influenced by these books. It was not until the early 1800’s when the ritual began to be written by Masons, that a standardized version began to be used in Lodges around the World. Today, any non-Mason, who has the interest to look it up, will find that Freemasonry is a charitable,

benevolent, educational and philosophical fraternity which does not hide its principles and believes. It is not a secret society, it does not hide its locations, and it does not require its members to hide their participation. In recent times, we have noticed that new young Masons joining the Order possess a level of knowledge about the Fraternity and its principles which is quite more advanced than the level of knowledge a candidate had some years ago.

Sure, there are ceremonies and methods of recognition such as passwords, handshakes and others, which the Lodge wants to keep private. This is not any different than the methods used by multinational business organizations or manufacturers who, in order to survive in the world of finance and competitive markets, are required to keep secrets of how their products are made. One of the best kept secrets around the world today is, believe it or not, how the soft drink Coca Cola is made. Even then, patents and licenses on these products are a necessity. Freemasons, can not write patents or licenses on its secrets because Masonic principles and believes are Ancient and Universal. Anyone with a computer and with access to the internet can read about these principles and believes. And, not only that, but also the passwords, handshakes, and other so called "secrets", can also be easily found in many websites.

So, what is so secret about Freemasonry?

I believe there is something which is quite secret about Freemasonry. It is a secret which is only known by a few. It only has been disclosed to those who have experienced it, those who have lived it. This secret can only be acquired after a Mason has made a commitment to the practises, principles and believes the fraternity professes. This secret is founded on the individual interpretation of three simple universal concepts: **BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF AND TRUTH.**

Let us quickly define these three principles:

Brotherly Love: *Love for each other and for all mankind*

Relief: *Charity for others & mutual aid for fellow Masons.*

Truth: *The search for answers to the universal questions of morality, and the salvation of the soul that only a man's individual faith and relationship with his God can provide.*

We seldom hear Masonry being described as an institution which takes good men and makes them into better men. Is that really true? Well I believe it is. It is here, my Brethren, that one of Freemasonry's most valuable and ancient secrets lies. It is by the teachings of the true meaning of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth that the secret is learned. It is by the personal interpretation of these principles, filtered by the unique and personal relationship every Mason has with his own God and creator that this secret reveals itself to us. It is by the faith with which each individual Mason practises those principles, that the Fraternity takes a good man and makes it into a better man.

(Benjamin Franklin quotation.)

I leave you Brethren with one thought. It has always been my experience that, it doesn't matter what group, club, affiliation or relationship you may join; you get back from it as much as you put into it. This can also be said about life in general. The teachings of Freemasonry are vast; and they are there for you to discover. Careful studying, understanding and practicing of the concepts of just and moral conduct described in our book of the ritual can change a good man into a better man. That is, in my opinion one of the greatest secrets of Freemasonry.

Written by:

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