



True charity1

Royal Arch Masonic Home2

Mystery plays2

Lodge notes2

Pearl of great price?2

More on the Kabbalah4

The Affinity Insurance Programme ..4

Grand Master's itinerary4

True charity

by MW Bro. Dwight L. Smith

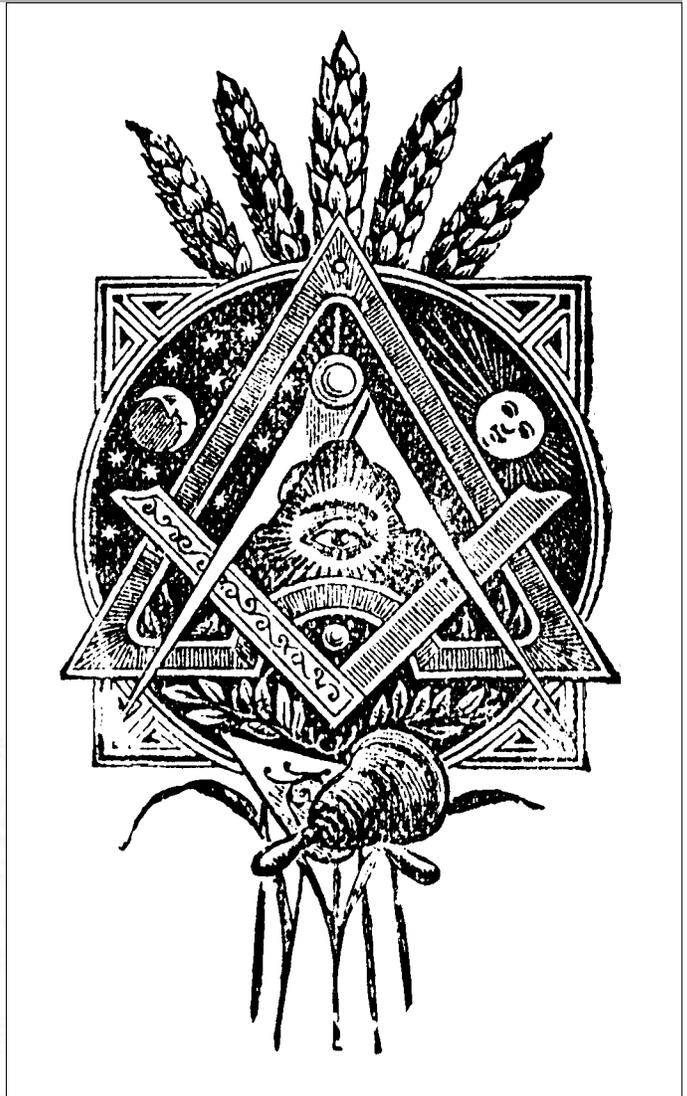
What has happened to true masonic charity? Time was when it was one of the sweetest by-products of the teachings of our gentle Craft. I recall reading in the minutes of my mother lodge how the brethren got together and built a modest house for the widow of a member, and on another occasion donated a cord of wood to the widow of a man who was not a freemason. Such acts were common. They were not accompanied by any fanfare of trumpets, but the community knew all about them just the same, and the prestige of Freemasonry reflected that knowledge.

Only occasionally do we hear of an example of genuine masonic charity at its best, but when we do, the impact upon both individual and community is tremendous. Why, then, do we neglect that phase of our masonic life that can have the

most gratifying results? What has happened? Two things, I should say:

One: We are Americans, you know, and we don't want our benevolence on an individual basis, quiet and modest, from one heart to another, even if that is the most effective manner. We want the right hand and everyone else to know what the left hand is doing. We want our charity to be well organized with campaigns, slogans, quotas and a great hullabaloo. We want super-duper institutions with bronze plaques on the walls to say, like Little Jack Horner, "What a great boy am I!"

Two: When Freemasonry is operating properly, it does things the hard way. We want none of that. We want efficiency. We don't want to be bothered by anything that will require more time and effort than the writing of a cheque.



Originally used as a leadcut in Gould's *History of Freemasonry in 1883*, this illustration adorns the altar of the Richmond Masonic Hall—as fine a piece of parquet craftsmanship as your editor has ever seen.

Now, let no man throw up a smoke screen with a charge that the Grand Secretary is attacking organized masonic charities. I am doing no such thing. What I am attacking is the laziness, the complacency, the lack of vision with which we pour great sums of money into organized benevolences, and then, with self-righteous

congratulations to ourselves, let it go at that.

We are missing a golden opportunity for a great masonic renaissance when we continue to let our American passion for bigness and efficiency dull the spirit of true masonic charity. There simply is no substitute for the personal touch on the local

continued on page 2



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True charity from page one

level where it counts.

Don't tell me how many hundreds of thousands of dollars freemasons contribute annually to organized benevolent projects. That is not the question at stake. And don't give me the old excuse that lodges are prohibited from using their funds for purposes not masonic. That, too, is avoiding the issue.

Freemasonry, if it operates as such, is a relationship with individuals, and I insist on talking about the personal efforts of lodges and individual freemasons. I want to know what individual freemasons are doing to relieve distress—in their own communities, by their own efforts. ■

Excerpted from Sounding Brass and Tinkling Cymbal, by MW Bro. Dwight L. Smith (1909 - 1993) who was Grand Secretary for the Grand Lodge of Indiana and a member of the Society of Blue Friars. Published by The Masonic Service Association, June 1964.

Lodge notes

Prince of Wales Lodge No. 100, Vancouver, will be holding a special meeting on Wednesday, 20 June, to give those arriving early for the Grand Lodge Annual Communication an opportunity to see the Emulation Work as practised by the Emulation Lodge of Improvement in London, England.

The meeting will be tyled at 7:30 pm at 2146 West 41st Avenue in Vancouver. There is parking in the lane in the rear of the building.

This past December **Landmark Lodge No. 128** held their third annual Christmas Festive Board and Family Education evening with members of the Job's Daughters Bethel 31, Mizpah Chapter Order of Eastern Star and Golden Ears Chapter

DeMolay, in Maple Ridge. As a result of this event, Golden Ears Chapter returned the favour by holding a *Masons' Dinner* in February.

Union-Solomon Lodge No. 9 will be hosting the 100th *Interchange of Trowels with Bellingham Bay Lodge No. 44*, Washington on 4 April 2007 at the Freemasons' Hall, 508 Agnes St., New Westminster. Dinner at 6:30pm, lodge tyle at 7:30pm.

Our Grand Master, MW Bro. Issac Brower-Berkhoven will be in attendance for this celebration of what is believed to be one of the longest-standing programmes in promoting international visitation.

Reservations are required: tickets are available, at \$10 each, from Bro. Ray Gallagher at 604-526-2330, or email rbgallagher@msn.com. ■

Royal Arch Home

The Royal Arch Masonic Home will be celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary on Saturday, 28 April.

The Board of Directors and staff request the pleasure of the brethren's company at the celebrations, to be held at the Royal Arch Masonic Home, 7850 Champlain Crescent, Vancouver, 10:30 am. Ladies are welcome; regalia is optional. ■

Mystery Plays

Some years ago the pages of an English masonic research journal contained the following opinion on the source of our Third Degree ritual, and a rebuttal:

'It may be of interest to quote the opinion of Bro. Edward Condor given in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, volume vii, page 68, where he is referring to the existence of the "grade" of Master Mason in

the London Company of Masons in 1622. He says:

For myself the ritual of the third degree takes me back in imagination to the pre-reformation "miracles", and I personally have little doubt that our modern third degree was built up in the early eighteenth century from the ruins of a very early trade mystery.'

The following points may be considered in connection with the Mystery (or Miracle) Play:—

Period:—The Plays were still being performed in the reign of James I, shortly after which time we have evidence of the existence of Speculative Freemasonry.

Organisation:—The Craft Gilds were primarily local organisations, whereas, with the exception of a comparatively small number of centres, the mason organisation must have been on something of a regional basis.

Masons as Caterers of Plays:—The part played by the masons in the presentation of Miracle Plays does not appear to have been a great one, and they were occasionally combined with some other trade. There is no trace of any play bearing on King Solomon's Temple or anything suggestive of the Hiram Legend.

Public:—The Miracle Play was designed or developed for presentation in public. After public performances had come to an end there were private performances before some of the Companies, but there does not appear to have been anything of an esoteric nature in these.

Although a certain amount of additional information has come to light since Bro. E. Condor, Junr., read his great paper before the Quatuor Coronati Lodge in 1901 (*AQC*, xiv), it does not seem to be possible today to establish any more satisfactory case for direct connection between the Miracle Play and our ritual, and the "no thoroughfare" remark

of Bro. Speth has not lost any of its force.

The Hiram story and the Noah story as given in the Graham MS. suggests something of a necromantic nature, and one may recall a number of old stories. The following quotation from Canon Westlake's *Parish Gilds of Mediaeval England* is apposite:—

p. 19. If a brother of the gild (Ludlow) desired to keep watch by the body of the dead he should be permitted to do so, but he must not put on hideous masks nor attempt any mockery of the dead man or his reputation, nor play any other indecent game! The phrase which is here translated "put on hideous masks" is in the original, *monstra larvarum inducere*, and is hardly capable of the translation "call up the shapes of demons", as given by Mr. Toulmin Smith (E.G., p. 194). In any case the Rule hints at revelries of an improper nature." ■

Miscellanea Latomorum.

February, 1943. *Margate*. p. 92-93.

Pearl of great price?

By MW Bro. Dwight L. Smith

Some three months ago when this series of articles was introduced, I took advantage of a fifty-year presentation occasion to write a masonic editorial. The recipient of the Award of Gold had petitioned a Southern Indiana lodge in 1911 when he was making \$10 a week as an apprentice printer. The fee for the degrees was \$20. He thought enough of Freemasonry to empty his pay envelope twice.

A century ago it was not uncommon for men to pay what amounted to a month's wages to become a freemason.

We know without challenge that today petitioners are paying a fee which represents a week's wages at the most—sometimes only two or three days!

When we compare the nominal dues paid to a lodge of freemasons with those paid to a service club, a labour union, a trade or professional organization or a country club, we begin to get a faint idea of the source of some of our troubles.

And when we compare the ridiculously low fees paid to a Craft lodge with the aggregate fees paid to other masonic bodies and appendant groups, we begin to see clearly what is wrong. Men are willing to pay for the privilege of Freemasonry, but we distribute the fee they should be paying to a Craft lodge among all the relatives, the in-laws and the step-children. We place such a cheap value on the basic degrees that it is no wonder newly raised freemasons end up having little or no respect for the symbolic lodge.

Before we are in a position to tackle some of the difficulties that beset us, we must re-establish the premise that Freemasonry is a *Pearl of Great Price*, worth a great deal of effort, a great deal of sacrifice, a great deal of waiting to obtain. We need to do a little preaching, perhaps with a certain *New Testament* passage as the text: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Has Freemasonry become too easy to obtain? I am one who believes it has. And I am not the only one. My old friend Arthur H. Strickland, of Kansas, recently wrote a thoughtful article for *The Philalethes*, entitled, "Who Killed Cock Robin?" Calling attention to the old axiom that what is easy to get is not much appreciated, he observes that "we have done everything that we can think of to cheapen Freemasonry. We have

cheapened the fraternity to the point that it is seriously reacting against us."

Has Freemasonry become too easy to obtain? To me, the question is not even debatable. For example:

Our fees for the degrees are so low to constitute an insult to the fraternity. When I petitioned for the degrees in 1933 the fee was \$20. That was a good-sized chunk of anybody's money in 1933, but I would have paid three times that amount. Our economic standards of today can hardly be compared to 1933, yet the minimum fee in Indiana still is only \$30—and one lodge in five charges the absolute minimum. There is not a lodge in Indiana whose fee should not be at least twice its present amount.

For a long time I had the uneasy suspicion that the period of accent on quantity rather than quality may have started during those cut-rate years of 1933 to 1944 when the minimum fee was only \$20.

Everything is geared to speed, as if a deadline had to be met. Freemasonry is no longer worth waiting for, nor working for, nor sacrificing for. Too often it is only a badge of respectability, a prestige symbol, to be obtained with the same hurry-up zeal that would be assumed in acquiring a Cadillac or a yacht. Candidate A must be rushed through the degrees before he leaves for service in the armed forces (he has heard it might be helpful to him.) Candidate B must be rushed through because he is about to move to a distant point to take a new job. Candidate C must hurry through so he can join a class in some other organization.

Proficiency? Nonsense! A friendly coach can take care of that. Comprehension of the underlying philosophy of Freemasonry, its symbolism and ethics and traditions, what it is and what it seeks to do? You know the answer to that

question as well as I.

And we not only permit such a situation—we actually encourage it. How, in heaven's name, can we so cheapen Craft Freemasonry and expect anything other than contempt for the parent body?

The privilege of courtesy work has been so abused that it actually has become a detriment to all Freemasonry. What was once intended as an occasional pleasant arrangement for the benefit of a lodge has been liberalized to the point that it now is only for the convenience of the candidate. Do you realize that a candidate for the three degrees may become a Master Mason without ever having attended a single meeting of the lodge which has elected him? He can be initiated in one jurisdiction, passed in another, raised in another. And yet we expect him to become a loyal and devoted freemason, with a strong sentimental attachment to a lodge he knows nothing about, and which has done nothing for him except to elect him! We crave for faithful attendance, but we do about everything in our power to create a situation in which his loyalty has no place.

The incident in Montana in which a brother received his fifty-year button without ever having attended a meeting of his own lodge is not as far-fetched as we would like to think.

We can learn a great deal from our mother Grand Lodge of England and from the jurisdictions of Scotland and Ireland, Australia and Canada, where a candidate must receive the Entered Apprentice degree in the lodge that elected him, and in no other. It was a sad day for Freemasonry in Indiana when that regulation was repealed.

One of the worst offenders in the cheapening process is the well-meaning father who is too eager for his son to become a freemason. Those are

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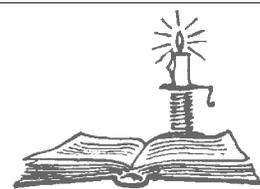
Masonic & Shrine Spring Dinner-Dance



Music by
Strait Shooters
**Saturday
April 28**

Cocktail s: 6:00 PM
Dinner: 7:00 PM
Dancing: 8:30 PM
Gizeh Shrine Centre
3550 Wayburne Drive,
Burnaby

Tickets:
R.W. Bro. Wali Y Turko
604-465-9238
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hard words, but I have seen the story repeated over and over again. Sonny must be pushed through because Pop wants him to join the class in another body; because Pop wants him to receive the degrees in Germany, or France, or South America. Sonny may not even have lived within the jurisdiction of the lodge for years and years, but Pop wants him to join if the lodge has to violate all the laws in the book to accomplish it.

So Pop comes to the Grand Lodge office with a plea that the residence laws be set aside; that the period of investigation be waived; that Sonny be advanced without regard to proficiency. You have known him; so have I. His name is legion.

What a contrast to the spirit of that great and good Past Master of an Indianapolis lodge who waited years upon years for his son to become a freemason—and who, even then, did not offer to pay the son's initiation fee because he wanted the boy to appreciate what he was getting.

And then there are the ill-advised church parishioners who pay the fee for their minister. I have met quite a number of those ministers in my day, and have become rather cynical after working long hours trying to unravel their record of suspensions for NPJ. But I must not get started on that subject.

When we downgrade Craft Freemasonry, submit it to all sorts of indignities, look upon it with contempt, label it as something hardly worth mentioning, permit it to have only the crumbs that fall from the table, what can we expect if Master Masons no longer give to their lodges their full measure of loyalty and devotion?

MW Bro. Dwight L. Smith (1909 - 1993) was Grand Secretary for the Grand Lodge of Indiana and a member of the Society of Blue Friars. Published by The Masonic Service Association, June 1964.

Kabbalah

by Bro. Rob Bell-Irving

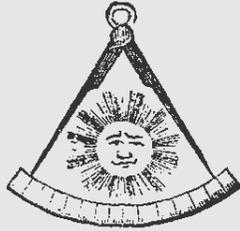
The November 2006 *Chaplain's Corner* and articles on the Kabbalah, Mithraism, and Working Tools were curiously inter-connected, in a spiritual sort of way.

The Spanish Kabbalah movement initiated interest in a Christian Kabbalah; and then, leading to the Renaissance, a larger movement featuring Bruno, Ficino, Mirandola, and so on; later carried through the middle ages by various rosicrucians and alchemists.

If you study the mystical Eastern Orthodox "Philokalia," one sees that in fact, that this mystical Christian sect, was already well versed in Kabbalah—even as early as the third century—and adapting it to Christian use. The Renaissance Kabbalists actually sought even to replace the *Old Testament* Tetragrammaton, with the "name" of Jesus in Aramaic-Hebrew (JH - Shin - VH; rather than just JHVH), as the spiritually dominant word of power.

But they all faced one very perplexing and interesting problem. The Kabbalah is based on Hebrew, because the *Old Testament* was written in Hebrew, with all those specific numeric and other correspondences. The *New Testament* is written in Greek. Should Christian Kabbalists, somehow translate the *New Testament* "back" into Hebrew, from the Greek, as it were—in order to apply the well known Hebrew correspondences—or does the Greek *New Testament* have its own set of correspondences and numerical values, specific to Greek, but differing from Hebrew? Because clearly, the *New Testament* as well, shows all the same indications of being potentially interpreted, and worked with, in the same Kabbalistic way.

There is an excellent recent modern book, of great scholarship; which assists modern



Grand Master's Itinerary APRIL 2007

4	Wed	Enterchange of Trowels	Union-Solomon 9	New West.
5	Thu	Maundy Thursday	A&ASR	Langley
8	Sun	Rekindling of the Lights	A&ASR	Langley
13-15	F-S	Seminar	DDGMs	Abbotsford
14	Sat	Visit Schara Tzedek Synagogue		Vancouver
14	Sat	District No. 24	Capilano No. 164	North Van
20	Fri	Vancouver Lodge of Education and Research		Vancouver
21	Sat	Vancouver Grand Masonic Day		Vancouver
21	Sat	Shrine-Masons Dance	Gizeh Shrine	Burnaby
22	Sun	Districts 13, 14, 16	Church Parade	Vancouver
24	Tue	Concordant Bodies and Foundation meeting		Vancouver
26	Thu	District No. 10	Penticton No. 147	Penticton
27	Fri	Coffee with the Craft		Penticton
28	Sat	International Day	Creston No. 54	Creston
28	Sat	Table Lodge	Hedley No. 43	Keremeos
29	Sun	Church Parade		Creston

freemasons in discovering potential geometric-technical, and spiritual insights, hidden in potential, *New Testament* Christian Kabbalah interpretations. I believe freemasons would enjoy reading *Jesus Christ: Sun of God* by David Fider. Non-Christian freemasons will also feel comfortable reading this book as it is a well researched and scholarly history.

Lost history

Our Grand Historian, VW Bro. Trevor W. McKeown, urges all lodge secretaries to carefully preserve their lodge minutes. Archiving or storing them in an electronic format is a bad idea. A very bad idea.

There is one lodge in this jurisdiction that has learned this lesson the hard way—losing all lodge minutes from 1922 to 1950 because paper records were destroyed to save space and floppy discs were mistakenly overwritten.

Affinity programme

At our Annual Communication in 2005 an Affinity Insurance Programme was approved with Johnson Inc. This is similar to programmes enjoyed by Shrine members with Accent Inns, and York Rite members with Travelers Inns.

Intended to save our members money, as well as generate revenue for Grand Lodge projects, the Affinity Insurance Programme unfortunately has failed to spark an interest amongst the brethren.

The Cancer Car Project receives \$10 for each request for a quote for home insurance. Details of the programme, and the financial rewards, were forwarded to all lodge secretaries some time ago.

Further information can be had by contacting Johnson Inc. at 1-800-563-0677 or www.johnson.ca and providing our Group ID Code: GU.