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The Chevalier Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743) was once widely credited with introducing the Knights Templar lineage into what has been termed the Orders of Chivalry, and for creating several such degrees. In fact Ramsay did nothing more than deliver an oration in Paris on 21 March 1737 in which he expounded a Crusader transmission of masonic teachings. He never mentioned the Templars and he never promoted the creation of additional orders or degrees. The true origins of the Knights Templar degree may be found in the Rite of Strict Observance created by Karl Gotthelf, Baron von Hund (1722-1776) in Germany, or the Rite of Seven Degrees of Lambert de Lintot (b. 1736). Masonic historian Henry Coil notes: "For one who reached such notoriety, Ramsay's masonic career was unusually obscure." Other than his initiation into the Horn Tavern Lodge, Westminster, in 1730, and his appointment as Grand Orator in France, little else is known. The portrait—not a life study—appeared as the frontispiece to Arthur Edward Waite's *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry*, published in 1921.

Our original purpose

by MW Bro Lord Northampton, Pro Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England

We spend too much time worrying about "when" rather than "why" we were created. What was in the minds of those men who started Freemasonry and what was the purpose behind it?

We are the inheritors of an important initiatory system containing universal truths, some form of which has probably been in existence for thousands of years. During that time it has been a beneficial guiding influence on the evolution of humanity, and our present day Freemasonry is no exception. The three degrees of Freemasonry are like symbolic rehearsals for those major initiations that we must all take on our journey of self-discovery. Thus, Freemasonry is a system which guides man in his search for the sacred. The three degrees equate to body, mind and spirit, the three essential parts of man. In the first degree, the emphasis is on

the physical and its objective is "from darkness to light". It is symbolized by the rough ashlar, and the working tools are those implements needed to work on the unshapen stones brought to light from the darkness of the quarries. The consciousness of the first degree is at the level of instinct and its pillar represents physical strength and is therefore crowned with the terrestrial globe.

In the second degree, the emphasis is on the powers of the mind and its objective is "from ignorance to knowledge". It is symbolized by the smooth ashlar and the working tools are designed to perfect and prove the stone after rude matter has been brought into due form. The consciousness of this degree is at the level of intellect and its pillar represents wisdom and is therefore crowned with the celestial globe. In the third degree, the emphasis is on

spirit and the objective is "to build the Temple, not made with human hands, eternal in the Heavens". Its symbol is the blazing star, its consciousness is at the level of intuition, the voice of Nature, and its pillar is that of Beauty. Beauty depends on balance and harmony. The objectives of the three degrees—illumination through the

search for light, wisdom through the increase in knowledge, and transformation through the process of death and renewal—portray the story of the evolution of human consciousness leading ultimately to enlightenment.

For most people enlightenment is a process of imparting
continued on page 2



VOLUME 69 / NUMBER 4

EDITED by Trevor W. McKeown for the Grand Secretary's Office and published by the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of British Columbia and Yukon. The VIEWS AND OPINIONS expressed in the *Masonic Bulletin* are those of the individual authors and writers, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of this Grand Lodge. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions. CORRESPONDENCE: 1495 West Eighth Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia V6H 1C9 Canada. WEB: <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca> TELEPHONE: +1-604-736-8941. FACSIMILE: +1-604-736-5097. EMAIL: editor@freemasonry.bcy.ca

Our original purpose
from page one

or acquiring information or knowledge about something, like "That was an enlightening speech you made." Historians call the Enlightenment that period in 18th century Europe, when a group of philosophers promoted a rational and non-theological approach to the problems of philosophy and society. This is not, however, the meaning of enlightenment in the Eastern and Western mystery traditions, where light is not an abstract symbol but a living experience that is felt in the heart, the mind and the body. Enlightenment is not just a metaphor but rather an experience of one's own inner essence, and the realization of the Self with a capital "S". When defined as the rational acquisition of knowledge it deals with a very limited aspect of human transformation. The enlightenment we are dealing with in Freemasonry is that of ancient teachings. It is a process of seeing more clearly and having a more lucid awareness. This aspect of transformation, through which Freemasonry guides us, is a gradual process of moving from a state of unknowing to an ever increasing knowledge of one's Self and one's true potential.

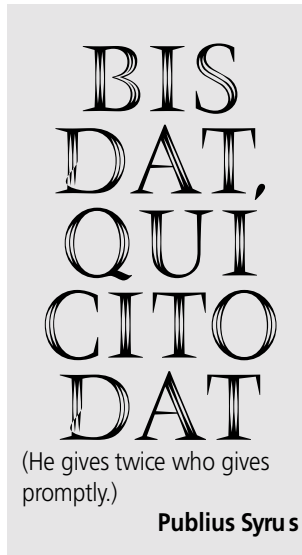
Freemasonry has strayed from its original purpose and

no longer teaches its candidates the fundamental truths which underpin the Craft. That is why I support the initiative to start an Orator scheme, to provide well-written papers describing this masonic journey, for delivery in lodges.

Educating our members about the purpose of Freemasonry should be a priority regardless of whether or not they wish to deepen their understanding of it. Much continental Freemasonry, which continues to thrive, and Latin American Freemasonry, which is the fastest growing Freemasonry in the world, insists on the candidates becoming proficient in and having an understanding of any degree they have taken before allowing them to progress further. They have to write papers and answer questions on the ceremony they have experienced before they are allowed to move to the next degree. Do we consider the questions our candidates have to answer before being passed and raised really give "proofs of proficiency" in the form of a degree? I think not.

However, as well as educating our members I believe it is important also that we educate the public at large. We need to explain ourselves and what we do to non-masons who show a genuine interest in us. We must explain in layman's language the lessons we are taught in our lodges. As I have explained previously, I do not believe we will be betraying any trust by doing so, nor can we be exposing the mysteries to the eyes of the profane. What we will be doing is encouraging men to join us in order to experience the transformational process for which Freemasonry was created.

I strongly believe that the way forward for Freemasonry is for its members to be encouraged positively to talk about the rituals. There are many men who would join us if they only



realised what Freemasonry was really about, and it is up to us to tell them. Our teachings contain universal truths which need to be promulgated to all those who are interested. The days of reserving knowledge for the benefit of a few are over.

I was invited, two years ago, to address some of the senior boys and monks at Downside, the Roman Catholic boarding school. I spoke for nearly an hour on Freemasonry its symbols and its principles. I quoted passages from the charge after initiation, to give an idea of what a candidate is taught in the rituals. I explained the working tools, and how we moralize their uses in building our temple, not made with human hands. I stressed that Freemasonry was just a system without dogma and doctrine, which leads us through its three ceremonies on a progressive path from ignorance to enlightenment. I pointed out the benefits of the psychological changes that happen to a man as he passes from being an Entered Apprentice through the various offices to the Master's chair—how he develops his intellect, leadership qualities, self confidence, tolerance, kindness, compassion, service to others, open heartedness, social responsibility, temperance and above all self-awareness.

By the time I had finished and taken questions I left them

in no doubt that Freemasonry is a force for good in the world. Even the Headmaster remarked how different my version of the Craft was from what he had been led to believe it was like. The only way we are going to dispel ignorance is through education. If we all made the effort to explain Freemasonry to laymen in suitable terms we could really make a difference to the way we are perceived. Above all we must stress how enjoyable it is.

The brotherhood will surely come to an end if it ceases to be fun.

Excerpted from a transcript of the talk given by MW Bro. Lord Northampton, Pro Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England, at the Summer Conference of the Cornerstone Society, 7 July 2005.

Regalia

Your Grand Lodge Regalia Committee is charged with the care of all the regalia worn by Grand Lodge officers. The committee is asking for brethren to take a look in those forgotten corners of their homes and lodge halls as part of a jurisdiction wide search for missing regalia.

Specifically, the apron, sash, collar, collar jewel and sword of the Grand Sword Bearer is missing. The sword is a particularly expensive item to replace and it is hoped that it can be found.

Once a brother has served in a Grand Lodge office, the regalia is expected to be returned so that it can be used in future years. Brethren are urged to confirm that they have returned their regalia and that it hasn't, forgetfully, been packed away.

Your committee is also requesting the donation of any Past Grand Lodge regalia and jewels as well as regalia and jewels of concordant bodies. These items can often be presented to new officers, reducing costs and forging ties with our past.



W Bro. Palmer Cox, 1893

Please deliver all items to our Grand Secretary's office in Vancouver. ■

Masonic world

In May of this year the Grand Lodge of New York granted dispensation to **Land, Sea and Air Lodge**—currently composed of members of the US 42nd Infantry Division—to meet and initiate candidates in Iraq.

The World Conference of Masonic Grand Lodges—a body whose meetings we do not participate in—cancelled this year's conference in New South Wales due to low advance registration. They intend to try again in France in November 2006.

Pacific Rim Lodge No. 12, Vladivostok, recently celebrating its sixth anniversary, has elected to initiate world famous Canadian guitarist Jerry Dumalski.

At the 131st annual Imperial Council held this year in Baltimore, a controversial amendment from Alcazar Shriners of Montgomery Alabama, which would have allowed non-masonic members, was defeated by what W Bro. Stan Yee termed "an overwhelming majority." ■

Opinion

W Bro.. Dieter H. Wagner of **Kitimat Lodge No. 169**, has recently read a number of best-selling books such as Susan Jakobi's *The Freethinkers*, Tom Harper's *The Pagan Christ* and Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, which point out the historical contribution made by freemasons to society. He writes to us suggesting that the current ills of the world are to some degree the result of freemasons no longer participating in the decision-making.

He fears that we are resting on the accomplishments of our brethren from the past and are

not providing society the leadership that Freemasonry teaches. With the current positive publicity Freemasonry is now getting, he feels there is a golden opportunity for masonic leaders to initiate public discussion on the tenets of Freemasonry which can guide us to a better society.

Although W Bro. Wagner believes we must become far less introverted, he specifically mentions the New Jersey model of soliciting candidates for one-day classes as an example *not* to be imitated. ■

Lodge notes

The **Vancouver Lodge of Education and Research** would like to remind the brethren to plan ahead for the 24th annual Vancouver Grand Masonic Day to be held on 22 April 2006 at the Vancouver Masonic Centre.

W Bro.. Douglas G. Potter of **Landmark Lodge No. 128** recently had the opportunity to present "We Can Help" certificates to Ms Diane Stevenson's grade four class at College Park School in Port Moody. The students were excited about getting their graduation certificates, and also asked plenty of questions about freemasonry.

For the past five years the Freemasons of British Columbia & Yukon have been assisting St John Ambulance in sponsoring, the "We Can Help" programme. We commit financial resources to promote basic first-aid being taught to grade four students throughout the province and the Yukon.

In 2004 we sponsored approximately 25,000 children.

Admiral Lodge No. 170 continues their Food Bank Building Project which is nearing completion. Originally planned for this past summer, W Bro. Randy Sloan, chairman of the Community Involvement Committee is now expecting a Grand Opening this spring. The

building is now being insulating and drywalled, and they hope to have everything in operation by the time you read this. Thanks are extended to all those who donated time and money to this project. W Bro. Sloan encourages other lodges to be more active in their communities, saying: "Volunteerism is the community charity that doesn't come right out of your pocket but rather right out of your heart. Hope benefits, and faith in our fellow creatures is created, by volunteerism." ■

VMSB

All lodges in Vancouver's Lower Mainland are entitled to appoint a representative to the Vancouver Masonic Service Bureau. Many lodges are unaware of this and miss the opportunity to participate in and learn about this important masonic service.

Lodges are urged to appoint representatives and forward their names to the Service Bureau office so that they may receive notices and minutes of meetings.

Contact the Service Bureau at 604-732-5414 or vmsb@telus.net for more information. ■

Blue

Blue, or Azure, is the symbol of Divine eternity and human immortality. Consequently, it is a mortuary colour—hence its use in covering the coffins of young persons. When used for the garment of an angel, it signifies faith and fidelity. As the dress of the Virgin, it indicates modesty. In blazonry, it signifies chastity, loyalty, fidelity, and a spotless reputation.

The Covenanters wore blue as their badge, in opposition to the scarlet of royalty. They based their choice on Numbers 38, "Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in

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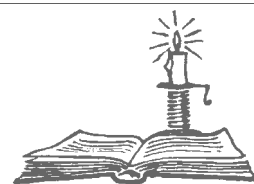
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the borders of their garments ... and that they put upon the fringe ... a ribband of blue."

'Twas Presbyterian true blue (Hudibras, i. 1)

The allusion is to the blue apron which some of the Presbyterian preachers used to throw over their preaching-tub before they began to address the people. In one of the Rump songs we read of a person going to hear a lecture, and the song says—

"Where I a tub did view,
Hung with an apron blue;
'Twas the preacher's, I

conjecture."

Blue-apron Statesman (A)

A lay politician, a tradesman who interferences with the affairs of the nation. The reference is to the blue apron once worn by almost all tradesmen, but now restricted to butchers, poulterers, fishmongers, and so on.

E. Cobham Brewer 1810-1897. Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. 1898.

Purpose

by RW Bro. Michael W. Walker, Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge of Ireland,

The purpose of Masonry is "self-improvement"—not in the material sense, but in the intellectual, moral and philosophic sense of developing the whole persona and psyche so as, in the beautiful and emotive language of the ritual, "to fit ourselves to take our places, as living stones, in that great spiritual building, not made by hands, eternal in the Heavens." Such an hypothetical whole, developed, complete person must, in his journey through life, and in his interaction with others, make a more extensive contribution to society in general, thus realizing and fulfilling his expressed wish on initiation, to become "more extensively useful amongst his fellow-men." Such are the lofty, lawful and laudable aspirations of the Order.

My view of the Masonic

Order could be said to mirror W. B. Yeats view of the aristocracy—"protecting its denizens and devotees from the political storms of change, almost as if in a primal maternal shelter; and as an ingenious scheme for fostering a kind of spirituality, one of order of the soul—secular, profane and beautiful."

I would like to think that the same could be said of the lodge as Yeats once said of Lady Gregory's home at Coole, in County Clare—certainly a "maternal shelter" for craftsmen of a different métier—that "this house has enriched my soul out of measure, because here life moves, without restraint, through gracious forms."

Chaplain's Corner

VW Bro. Doug Sowden, Grand Chaplain

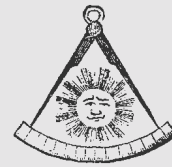
This message is not for all brothers, I hope.

That's enough! I'm tired of it. Let's stop it right now. Better yet, let's figure out why it's happening and stop it. It's not right, needed or productive. I mean losing brothers through demits and suspensions.

Too often do we hear in lodge that yet another brother has asked for a demit. Too often do our brothers drift away from our masonic family to the point where they don't pay their dues, or they make their final dues payment accompanied by a demit request.

In every lodge that I know, there is provision for a brother in distress to have his dues remitted by the lodge. Perhaps some brothers do not know about this process; perhaps their personal pride views it as a charity they won't accept.

When we talk of diminishing membership, there is a tendency for our fraternity to self-examine and beat our breasts. What are we not doing? How can we change



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY DECEMBER, 2005

2	Fri	Board of General Purposes	12:30 pm	Vancouver
2	Fri	Line Officers Meeting	3:00 pm	Vancouver
7	Wed	Installation	Scottish Rite	Langley
10	Sat	Installation Slocan 29, Star of the West 61		Nakusp

ourselves so that the demits decrease? What do we, as a lodge, need to do? And heaven knows we can do more, and better, but what should the departing brother be doing?

We hear the phrase, "you will get out of it, what you put in." In our profit-motivated society we often try to get out more than we put in. If you are at the point of leaving Freemasonry is it because you're not making a profit? The tie is not rewarding to you?

May I humbly suggest that, sometimes in life, you personally will not benefit directly from what you do? Your contribution to African relief, your church, the United Way, the Masonic Charity Fund, etc. may not return a direct benefit to you. The donation is what you do to build a better society.

Freemasonry makes society better. Lodges need your support to do their work, to continue to exist. You may be in a position where you can't get out to lodge, you may feel that you've done enough work, you may even feel that the lodge is not giving you any benefit. But please stay a member and a freemason. If nothing else, your dues help the lodge survive and continue its work of making good men better.

And while I'm on this topic, is the reason that you're leaving Freemasonry the words or actions of another brother? Did someone slight you? Did they not run a meeting as you

believe it should be run? Were you ignored or treated unfairly? These things do happen.

Freemasons are human and still have the weaknesses and foibles of our species. We work at improving ourselves, but the ashlar is still rough.

Did you seek out the brother and offer to reconcile with him? Did you re-examine the situation or issue from his viewpoint? If you have decided that you will not sit in lodge with a certain brother, what are you doing to change the situation?

It is a lengthy process to find someone who is interested in becoming a freemason, to answer his questions, to fill in the application, to go through the approval process, and then to do the work necessary to raise the applicant to the sublime degree of a Master Mason.

It is a slow process and some lodges are finding that they are not getting a lot of applications in a year. How much easier it is to demit, than to join. Imagine our fraternity if the opposite were true; that is, if it were more difficult to leave than to join. Imagine if your obligations were not just a lifelong set of principles to adhere to, but also included a commitment to belong to a lodge until called to the Grand Lodge above.

Please pay your dues and don't demit. May God go with you and bless you.