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# Excellency of Freemasonry

by W Bro. William Preston (1742-1818)

Whoever attentively observes the objects which surround him will find abundant reason to admire the works of Nature, and to adore the Being who directs such astonishing operations : he will be convinced, that infinite Wisdom could alone design, and infinite Power complete, such amazing works.

Were a man placed in a beautiful garden, would not his mind be affected with exquisite delight on a calm survey of its rich collections ? Would not the groves, the grottoes, the artful wilds, the flowery patterns, the opening vistas, the lofty cascades, the winding streams, the whole variegated scene, awaken his sensibility, and inspire his soul with the most exalted ideas?

When he observed the delicate order, the nice symmetry, and beautiful disposition of every part, seemingly complete in itself, yet reflecting new beauties on the other, and all contributing to

make one perfect whole, would not his mind be agitated with the most agreeable sensations; and would not the view of the delightful scene naturally lead him to admire and venerate the happy genius who contrived it?

If the productions of Art so forcibly impress the mind with admiration, with how much greater astonishment and reverence must we behold the operations of Nature, which presents to view unbounded scenes of utility and delight, in which Divine Wisdom is most strikingly conspicuous? These scenes, are, indeed, too expanded for the narrow capacity of man to comprehend; yet whoever contemplates the general system must naturally, from the uniformity of the plan, be directed to the original source, the Supreme Governor of the world, the one perfect and unsullied beauty!

Beside all the pleasing prospects that everywhere surround us, and with which our senses are every moment



MW Bro. William C. Rheubottom, Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington for 1994-2000, and MW Bro. Clark M. Gilmour, Grand Master of British Columbia and Yukon for 1995-1996, led their jurisdictions to mutual recognition in 1996. This past September a banquet was held to celebrate this momentous occasion.

gratified ; beside the symmetry, good order, and proportion, which appear in all the works of creation, something farther attracts the reflecting mind, and draws its attention nearer to the Divinity—that is, the universal harmony and affection among the different species of beings of every rank and denomination. These are the cements of the rational world, and by these alone it subsists. When they cease, Nature must be dissolved, and man, the image of his Maker, and the chief of his works, be overwhelmed in the general chaos. In the whole order of

beings, from the seraph which adores and burns, down to the meanest insect, all, according to their rank in the scale of existence, have, more or less, implanted in them the principle of association with others of the same species. Even the most inconsiderable animals are formed into different ranks and societies, for mutual benefit and protection. Need we name the careful ant, or the industrious bee ; insects which the Wisest of all Mankind has recommended as patterns of unwearied industry and

*continued on page 2*



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**Excellence**  
from page one

prudent foresight? When we extend our ideas, we shall find that the innate principle of friendship increases in proportion to the extension of our intellectual faculties; and the only criterion by which a judgment can be formed, respecting the superiority of one part of the animal creation above the other, is, by observing the degrees of kindness and good-nature in which it excels.

Such are the general principles which pervade the whole system of creation ; how forcibly, then, must such lessons predominate in our assemblies, where civilization and virtue are most zealously cherished, under the sanction of science and the arts?

**The advantages resulting from friendship.**

No subject can more properly engage the attention than the benevolent dispositions which indulgent Nature has bestowed upon the rational species. These are replete with the happiest effects, and afford to the mind the most agreeable reflections. The breast which is inspired with tender feelings is naturally prompted to a reciprocal intercourse of kind and generous actions.

As human nature rises in the scale of beings, the social affections likewise arise. Where friendship is unknown, jealousy and suspicion prevail ; but where that virtue is the cement, true happiness subsists. In every breast there is a propensity to friendly acts, which, being exerted to effect, sweetens every temporal enjoyment ; and although it does not remove the disquietudes, it tends at least to allay the calamities, of life. Friendship is traced through the circle of private connexions to the grand system of universal benevolence, which no limits can circumscribe, as its influence extends to every branch of the human

race. Actuated by this sentiment, each individual connects his happiness with the happiness of his neighbour, and a fixed and permanent union is established among men. But, though friendship, considered as the source of universal benevolence, be unlimited, it exerts its influence more or less powerfully, as the objects it favours are nearer or more remote.

Hence the love of friends and of country takes the lead in our affections, and gives rise to that true patriotism, which fires the soul with the most generous flame, creates the best and most disinterested virtue, and inspires that public spirit, and that heroic ardour, which enable us to support a good cause, and risk our lives in its defence. This commendable virtue crowns the lover of his country with unfading laurels, gives a lustre to his actions, and consecrates his name to latest ages. The warrior's glory may consist in murder, and the rude ravage of the desolating sword; but the blood of thousands will not stain the hands of his country's friend. His virtues are open, and of the noblest kind. Conscious integrity supports him against the arm of power ; and should he bleed by tyrant hands, he gloriously dies a martyr in the cause of liberty, and leaves to posterity an everlasting monument of the greatness of his soul.

Though friendship appears divine when employed in preserving the liberties of our country, it shines with equal splendour in more tranquil scenes. Before it rises into the noble flame of patriotism, aiming destruction at the heads of tyrants, thundering for liberty, and courting danger in defence of rights ; we behold it calm and moderate, burning with an even glow, improving the soft hours of peace, and heightening the relish for virtue. In those happy moments, contracts are formed, societies are instituted,

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and the vacant hours of life are employed in the cultivation of social and polished manners.

On this general plan the universality of the system of Masonry is established. Were friendship confined to the spot of our nativity, its operation would be partial, and imply a kind of enmity to other nations. Where the interests of one country interfere with those of another, Nature dictates an adherence to the welfare of our own immediate connexions ; but, such interference apart, the true freemason is a citizen of the world, and his philanthropy extends to all the human race. Uninfluenced by local prejudices, he knows no preference in virtue but according to its degree, from whatever country or clime it may spring.

**Origin of Freemasonry, and its general advantages**

From the commencement of the world, we may trace the foundation of Freemasonry. Ever since symmetry began, and harmony displayed her charms our Order has had a being.

During many ages, and in

many different countries, it has flourished. No art, no science, preceded it. In the dark periods of antiquity, when literature was in a low state, and the rude manners of our forefathers withheld from them that knowledge we now so amply share, Masonry diffused its influence. This science unveiled, arts arose, civilization took place, and the progress of knowledge and philosophy gradually dispelled the gloom of ignorance and barbarism. Government being settled, authority was given to laws, and the assemblies of the fraternity acquired the patronage of the great and the good ; while the tenets of the profession diffused unbounded philanthropy.

Abstracted from the pure pleasures which arise from friendship so wisely constituted as that which subsists among freemasons, and which it is scarcely possible that any circumstance or occurrence can erase, Freemasonry is a science confined to no particular country, but extends over the whole terrestrial globe. Wherever arts flourish, there it flourishes too. Add to this, that by secret and inviolable signs, carefully preserved among the fraternity, it becomes a universal language. Hence many advantages are gained : beside the common ties of humanity, there is still a stronger obligation to induce one to kind and friendly offices. The spirit of the fulminating will be tamed, and a moral brother, though of a different persuasion, engage his esteem : for mutual toleration in religious opinions is one of the most distinguishing and valuable characteristics of the Craft.

As all religions teach morality, if a brother be found to act the part of a truly honest man, his private speculative opinions are left to God and himself. Thus, through the influence of Freemasonry, which is reconcilable to the best policy, all those disputes which

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embitter life, and sour the tempers of men, are avoided ; while the common good, the general object, is zealously pursued.

From this view of our system, its utility must be sufficiently obvious. The universal principles of the art unite, in one indissoluble bond of affection, men of the most opposite tenets, of the most distant countries, and of the most contradictory opinions ; so that in every nation a freemason may find a friend, and in every climate a home. On this principle, unfortunate captives in war, and sojourners, accidentally cast on a distant shore, are particular objects of attention, and seldom fail to experience indulgence from freemasons ; and it is very remarkable that there is not an instance on record of a breach of fidelity, or of ingratitude, where that indulgence has been liberally extended.

Such is the nature of our institution, that in the lodge, which is confined to no particular spot, union is cemented by sincere attachment, and pleasure reciprocally communicated in the cheerful observance of every obliging office. Virtue, the grand object in view, luminous as the meridian sun, shines refulgent on the mind, enlivens the heart, and heightens cool approbation into warm sympathy and cordial attention. ■

*Excerpted from Illustration of Masonry (1772). The student of Freemasonry will not be too quick to accept Preston's claims of Freemasonry's antiquity.*

## The future?

by Bro. Allyn F Davies

Bro Davies details what he hopes will become the twenty-first century masonic lodge.

### Overall equity

A small and intimate lodge for men who value fellowship and want to enjoy a masonic

experience in a convivial atmosphere.

### Benefit equities

A slow, deliberate initiatory experience fully integrates each candidate into the circle of brotherhood. A curriculum of instruction explains Freemasonry's unique moral philosophy and ethical code.

Festive boards and social gatherings provide a convivial atmosphere to enjoy comradeship.

### Reason to believe equities

Membership has a balanced range of ages, open to men of all races, faiths, creeds, and nationalities while a selective and limited membership creates a more intimate fellowship.

An education programme goes beyond a simplistic review of masonic symbols and history. Ritual work is exemplified in measured doses to avoid overwhelming new candidates.

Additional degree fees, annual dues, and Steward's Fund contributions support high quality programmes.

A limited number of meetings accommodate members with demanding work and family schedules.

Meetings are held at convenient times, organized to keep administrative matters to a minimum, and enjoy a high percentage attendance of the membership.

### Organizational character

A new, small, and intimate lodge founded specifically to transcend the time-consuming practices found in older lodges and focus on the convivial fraternal experience typical in an English masonic lodge, while at the same time remembering that the profound teaching of Freemasonry is that we are all the children of one God, and as such, have a moral obligation to live and work together in peace, love, and harmony.

### Position statement

A small, selective, and convivial lodge that provides a close and intimate fraternal

experience founded on ancient masonic traditions that unite men in a harmony of enlightened Fellowship.

### Key attributes

Intimate, selective, convivial, principled, progressive, innovative, and intellectual will be the defining characteristics of our lodges. ■

*Bro. Allyn F. Davies is this year's Education Officer for District 5.*

## Perspective

by W Bro. John Belton

It is perhaps quite shocking to discover that the English style of Freemasonry is not the only one around, that it is not as successful as in other countries and that close to us in Europe, are Grand Lodges that have long standing formulae for engaging with society that seem to be more in tune with the societies of the twenty-first century. All too often such thoughts are dismissed under the pretext of being "discussion of religion and politics" and yet others can circumnavigate and avoid those pitfalls and still feel confident in their regularity.

Before such "heresies" are condemned out of hand, it is perhaps worth looking back to the time when Freemasonry emerged; the times of Ashmole and Moray. The more authoritarian aspects of society were being discarded and it became possible for men to think and not be persecuted for their thoughts. There followed the Enlightenment and the burgeoning of thought; scientific, philosophical and economic. That liberty, to have and argue one's own thoughts, is essential to any worthy society.

As an aside, it does perhaps shed some light on how the "new" East European Grand Lodges feel that they cannot be divorced from society. After all, they know exactly what happens in more authoritarian climates! When all else has not produced any lessening of the decline in numbers, maybe we



## Grand Lodge of BC & Yukon 138th Annual Communication

June 18-20, 2009  
Prince George

Online registration  
will open in the new year  
[freemasonry.bcy.ca/gl2009](http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/gl2009)



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The  
Grand Lodge  
Community  
Charity

really should all have a debate and match the intellectual energy that is emerging from Europe. ■

*Excerpted from "Society and Freemasonry - Another Way!" Square, March 2008, p. 13.*

## The Way

by Bro. Allyn F. Davies

The waves are crashing and the tide is tugging at us.

Many are struggling against the current.

Those who have learned their lessons have learned to keep to the centre.

Those who choose the middle path follow the universal teachings of the Craft, its core principles, flowing past those who claim to know the exclusive Way, though they have never found it. There are issues at hand that we as freemasons should be addressing and championing. Sustainability is one which should be explored further and acted upon. There are many other issues beyond those listed in this paper that are significant to modern individuals and society. If we choose not to become relevant dismissing these issues, the Craft will not die. It is however likely that "established" Grand Lodges, their lodges and members will simply be replaced as a system of Freemasonry more relevant evolves around them that will engage society and individuals seeking to follow and act upon the centre.

Going forward, freemasons today should remember:

There are significant issues in our lives, our fraternity and society that can benefit from actively engaged freemasons.

No one knows what the Rev. James Anderson meant by "landmarks".

The universal and emergent properties of Freemasonry can be identified. The Craft is always evolving while maintaining its core principles

Multiculturalism and diversity make for a healthy,

creative, stable and resilient system.

Freemasonry is an applied philosophy and has parallels and applications in today's world.

Sustainability may be seen to be a modern synonym for Freemasonry. To ensure our obedience maintains its relevance we need to:

- Assess our core principles and what is unique about Freemasonry (universally);
- Objectively and independently audit what we say we do, what we do (at all levels) and how we are perceived inside and outside our Craft;
- Address contradictions by aligning our policies, programmes and behavior to our core principles and enabling diversity within the Craft;
- Identify the most significant issues and best practices inside and outside our Craft;
- Identify and provide resources and support (not dictatorial control) to enable the lodges and freemasons to become relevant, autonomous and engaged (based on our core principles), so as not to be simply another service club or institutionalized charity.

I joined the Craft to be a craftsman, to walk the middle path, to apply the philosophy of Freemasonry. Did you join to work in the quarries too?

"When a stream comes to some stones in its path, it doesn't struggle to remove them, or fight against them, or think about them. It just goes around them. And as it does, it sings." - Benjamin Hoff, *The Te of Piglet* (1992). ■

## Thanks

Our Grand Secretary, MW Bro. James C. Gordon, and his wife Sheila would like to thank all the many brethren who sent messages, cards and letters, and telephoned, during his recent illness. Although tired, he is recovering and is expected



## GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY NOVEMBER 2008

1	Wed	District 28	Vimy Lodge No. 97	Port Coquitlam
1	Sat	Fall Meeting, Royal Order of Scotland		Vancouver
4	Tue	District 5	Barclay Lodge No. 90	Port Alberni
6	Thu	International Night at Lafayette Lodge No. 241		Seattle
8	Sat	Chief Rabban's Roast, Shrine		Abbotsford
11	Tue	Remembrance Day at the Cenotaph		Vancouver
14	Fri	Installation	Ymir Lodge No. 31	Salmo
15	Sat	District 7	Corinthian Lodge No. 27	Trail
18	Tue	District 6	Granite Lodge No. 154	Nelson
20-22	F-S	Fall Ceremonial	Shrine	Burnaby
25	Tue	Blighty Night	Comox Lodge No. 188	Cumberland
29	Sat	Fall Bazaar	Daughters of the Nile	Burnaby

to have returned to the office by the time you are reading this.

Bro. David "DJ" Lam of **Prince of Wales Lodge No. 100**—who recently broke his spine—is now at the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre and is doing well.

The organizers of a recent fundraiser to assist him in his medical expenses wish to thank all those who supported the event. He has a long recovery ahead of him, and your best wishes and support mean a lot to him and his wife Emily. DJ is accepting visitors but please call ahead. ■

## Initiative

It takes all of us to raise a freemason. This year **Mount Saint Paul Lodge No.109** and **Kamloops Lodge No.10** will be working together to provide good instruction to their candidates. They are encouraging their members to participate in their "Partnership in Freemasonry" programme by working in partnership with candidates, taking part in group sessions, and assisting in gathering together masonic materials. ■

## Education

Our Grand Historian, VW Bro. Trevor W. McKeown was recently honoured by being asked to present a research paper before the premier lodge of masonic research, Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, in London, England. Presented at their September meeting, the full text of his paper, "A few notes on freemasons online" as well as further comments by members of the lodge, will appear in the next volume of *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* and will be posted on our Grand Lodge website after publication. ■

## Correction

In our last issue we reported that the owner of Elite Trophies & Awards Inc. concurred with his employee's belief that freemasons were not Christians and *his* store would not do business with them.

This is, in fact, not the case and what was reported as an incident of anti-masonry appears to have been more the result of a simple miscommunication. ■