

# MASONIC MUSINGS

*The Masonic Education Newsletter*

**of Lodge Epicurean No 906 and Lodge Amalthea No 914**

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**Issue 12 – December 2013**

Welcome to *Issue Twelve*, the last for 2013. In this edition I shall deal with the important but little understood topic of *Fraternal Relations and Recognition* – of particular interest to any Mason who seeks to visit a lodge outside his own Jurisdiction – followed by an interesting (and true!) piece I recently came across called the *Seven Blunders of the Masonic World...*

Fraternal regards,  
Kent Henderson.

## **Fraternal Relations and Recognition – briefly**

One of the slightly more complex topics in Freemasonry is how Grand Lodges relate to each other, together with the attendant issues of regularity and recognition. The issues involved are, like many things, actually quite easy to understand when explained. The real ‘problem’ is that in my long Masonic experience few brethren actually do understand fraternal relations and thus there are distinctly limited sources for gaining the said explanation!

At the beginning of Grand Lodges, there was only one – the Grand Lodge of England formed in 1717. The ‘problem’ arose when there later became more than one; with the Grand Lodge of Ireland being formed in 1725 and Scotland in 1736. Many others followed – today there are at least 200 bodies in the world that describe themselves as Masonic Grand Lodges. So what is this ‘problem’ of which I speak? It is very easy to call yourself a Masonic Lodge or a Grand Lodge; but it is entirely another matter if others agree with you. To use the old maxim – *beauty is in the eye of the beholder!*

The majority of Masonic Grand Lodges in the world recognize each other as such. Each Grand Lodge can provide a list of which other Grand Lodges it recognizes as Masonic; but no two lists will be identical. This is important knowledge for any Freemason wishing to visit a lodge outside his own Jurisdiction. He can only (legally) visit a lodge in another Masonic Jurisdiction which is recognized by his own. Thus, for example, a Mason from England can readily visit a lodge in any Australian State because the United Grand Lodge of England recognizes the Grand Lodges in each Australian state. On the other hand, for example, as the United Grand Lodge of England does not currently recognize any Grand Lodge in France, its Masons cannot visit there – but there

are several Grand Lodges in France that describe themselves as Masonic.

So, how does a Grand Lodge determine if another is indeed Masonic, and worthy of recognition as such? Why are World Freemasons not all in harmony? While one could cite a number of others reasons, including racism, and ‘who started first’, but these aside there are two major reasons why Grand Lodges fall out:

1. The perceived variance from the *Ancient Landmarks of the Order*.
2. The perceived need to only recognise one Grand Lodge in each country.

### **1. *Ancient Landmarks of the Orde.***

The American Masonic academic Dr. Albert G. Mackey in his *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* lists 25 landmarks. One can easily differ with Dr. Mackey in his List of Landmarks (and more than a few do) because some of them were not present at the inauguration of Grand Lodge in 1717; nor were they part of the *Constitutions* as drawn up by Dr. Andersen a few years later in 1725.

In terms of this differentiation, some USA Grand Lodges have adopted Mackay’s 25, whilst others have made their own lists. For example, the Grand Lodge of Connecticut has 19, Kentucky 54, Minnesota 26 and so on.

As an example, take No. 21 of Dr Mackey’s list: “*It is a Landmark, that a “Book of the Law” shall constitute an indispensable part of the furniture of every Lodge*”. In the *Antient Charges* in our Book of Constitutions, there is no reference to an Altar or a VSL. Neither is there in the Summary of these Charges as read to every candidate for the Office of Master.

I see the introduction of the Altar way back in the 18th century and a “Book of the Law” as being that part of proceedings in all the courts and churches of the lands where Freemasonry took hold to enable a man to take a solemn oath on something he held to be sacred to him i.e. solemn and binding. Thus, it was therefore arguably a Masonic innovation... Be that as it may!

Nonetheless, the “Book of the Law” or Volume of the Sacred Law is considered by many today as the most essential Landmark of the Order. When it is displaced by any Grand Lodge, trouble follows. For example, in 1877 the Grand Orient of France abolished the necessity for its candidates to believe in a Supreme Being or for the Volume of the Sacred Law to be present at lodge meetings. Most other Grand Lodges in the world look a dim view of this turn of events, and promptly de-recognized the Grand Orient of France – an interdict which still holds to this day.

Regardless of any lists, I suggest that best way to determine a landmark is simply to test it against the following definition – “A landmark of the Order is something which, if removed, Freemasonry would not longer be Freemasonry”. So, landmarks ARE such things as the necessity

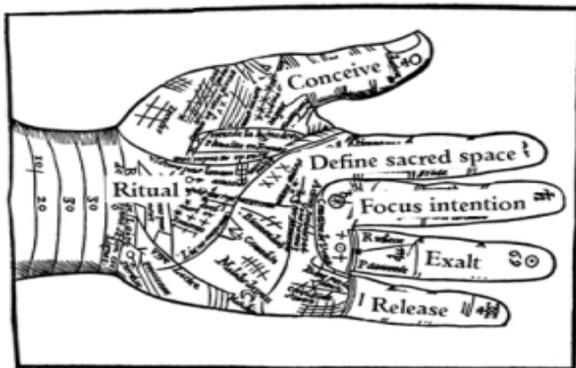
of Masons to congregate in Lodges, that they are ruled by a Master and two Wardens, that they belong to a Grand Lodge ruled by a Grand Master, and so on. Many things are not – a Festive Board is not a landmark, for example – neither are such things as Deacons carrying wands, or Tracing Boards. Of course, over some things there will be (and are!) differences of opinion – which is why various Grand Lodges have varying List of Landmarks, and in many cases (such as Victoria) have no official list at all!

## 2. One Grand Lodge per Country

This dictum is immediately untrue, as every State of the United States of America, every State of Australia and every Province of Canada has its own (recognised) Grand Lodge. All these Grand Lodges effectively agree to share the country. In the rest of the world (there are other exceptions to the rule...) it is one recognised Grand lodge per country. If a second Grand Lodge in a country wants recognition, it needs the permission of the first. This does not often occur, but again there are always exceptions! For example, Columbia in South America has four widely recognised Grand Lodges – all of which recognize each other.

## Seven Blunders of the Masonic world

1. Ritual without Meaning
2. Fellowship without Frivolity
3. Quantity without Quality
4. Education without Philosophy
5. Charity without Connection
6. Frugality without Discretion
7. Leadership without Competence

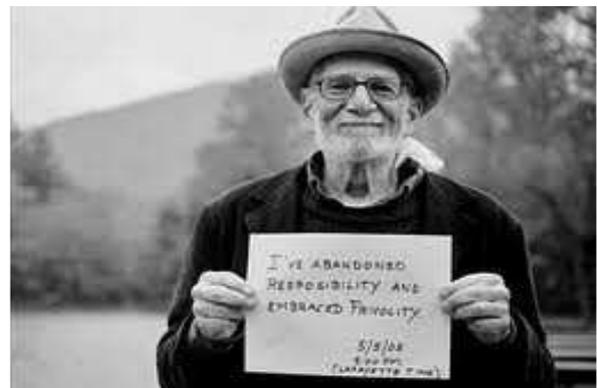


Ritual is the oldest language in the world. It's a powerful form of art (which is always about honor) that clarifies your intentions and communicates them to the world. Performing a ritual is like telling a *universal story*.

Too many times, we are more concerned about performing the ritual perfectly without understanding what it means. I know many men

that give great lectures, but will confide that they don't even know what something means. Ritual for the sake of tradition is worthless. Ritual for the sake of enlightenment is valuable. An understanding of the ritual's meaning is far more important than just memorizing it.

## Fellowship without Frivolity



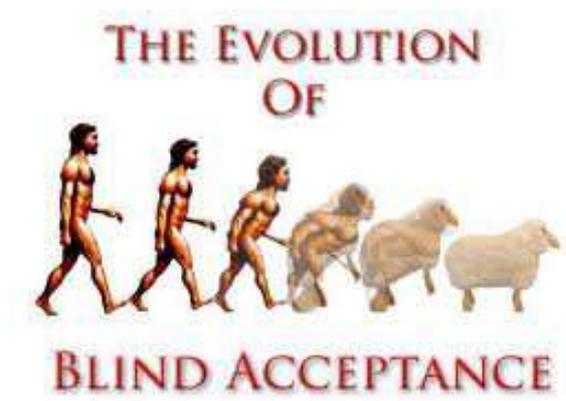
Whenever Masons decide to hold a function for fellowship, a discussion typically ensues about how to make the function have the smallest impact on the lodge's coffers and the wallets of the members. This results in paper plates, meager meals, and boring events. To spend money wisely in order to make fellowship a grand time is wise for the lodge that wants to be successful.

## Quantity without Quality



A lodge with seven great men that believe in the Masonic ideals and actively labor to improve themselves—and therefore the lodge—is far better off than a lodge with one hundred men that show up to lodge just to show up to lodge.

## Education without Philosophy



Many times, we think of Masonic education as being a lesson on the local lodge's history, a famous Mason, the history of the world wide fraternity, or how to do the ritual properly. But if no philosophy is covered in Masonic education, then little self improvement is accomplished. Discussing Masonic lessons in terms of philosophy, ideas, and a man's conduct is what truly transforms men into Masons. It is important to discuss topics that are foreign to a lodge's membership and it is sometimes even necessary to challenge our preconceived ideologies through Masonic education.

## Charity without Connection



Big institutional charities often require that fund raisers be conducted and large cheques written to the people that actually perform the charity. This type of charity is devoid of self improvement because it has no real connection.

If we extend our hands to our needed Brethren and devote our own skills and time to their problems, then we are engaging in true, meaningful charity.

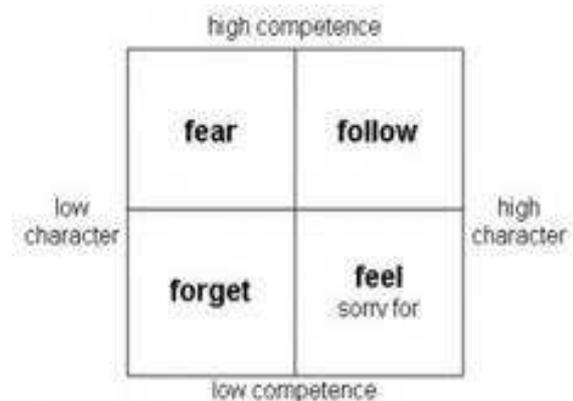
## Frugality without Discretion



Frugality is not a tenet of Freemasonry, a cardinal virtue, or a Landmark. It is okay for the lodge to spend its funds on worthwhile activities that will enhance the Masonic experience of its Brethren.

Not everything should be done in the cheapest way, a habit to which we have become accustomed.

## Leadership without Competence



A man does not deserve to be Master of the lodge solely because he has spent a certain amount of years in the lodge.

We elect leaders without any regard for the skills that they possess to function in that capacity. Only competent, qualified men should be elected to preside over the Craft.