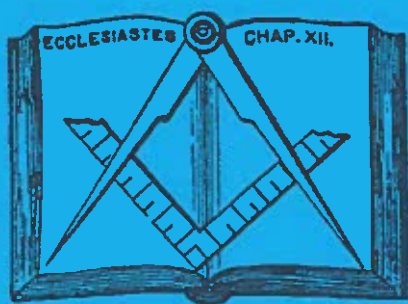


TO THE MASTER MASON



— Book 4 —

The Texas Lodge System Of Candidate Information

The Grand Lodge of Texas, A.F. & A. M.

The material contained herein is taken, in part, from the Lodge System of Masonic Education, printed in 1959 and adapted from material published by the Grand Lodge of New Mexico, along with the 1980 revision of the Texas Lodge System of Candidate Information. However, we are also grateful to many Masonic Grand Lodges, many writers, and many other sources, for the information contained in these pages. To the Grand jurisdictions of Georgia, Iowa, New York, Scotland, South Carolina, Virginia, and Washington, and to our own Texas predecessors of 1935, go our deep thanks for their contributions.

Revised March 2019 – Committee on Masonic Education and Service

PART I

**A SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL LECTURE
FOR THE NEW MASTER MASON**

(The following lecture can either be read to the candidate or played for him using the digital audio file available from the Grand Lodge of Texas.)

PART I - ORAL/AUDIO LECTURE

You are now a Master Mason, a member of one of the oldest and largest associations in the World, an institution whose beginnings are lost in the mists of antiquity.

You will never receive a higher honor, nor accept greater responsibility, than you have in being raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason. You are entitled to all the Light your Lodge can bestow, and all of the responsibilities that go with membership in the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.

Your enjoyment and appreciation of Freemasonry, its influence in your life, your contribution to its grand design, will be in direct proportion to your understanding of its secrets. If you will recall the Degree you have just received, you do not yet have all of these secrets, for they can only be gained by your own future efforts, and the assistance of your Brethren. Your success will depend entirely on your devotion to Freemasonry's ideals. For it has been wisely said that the true realization of the Brotherhood of Man depends greatly upon the *manhood of the Brothers*.

To fully appreciate and realize your Masonic potential, to become a true *Master Mason*:

- you must have a desire for knowledge;
- you must strive to define and improve your own personal philosophy;
- you must actively seek to understand *Freemasonry's* philosophy, its history, its religious implications, and its tried and true principles of life; and finally,
- you must recognize that the Master's Degree is just the *beginning*, and *not the end* of your search.

Much has been written of Freemasonry. Its field of knowledge is so broad that men have studied a lifetime without scratching its surface. Your Grand Lodge Library possesses thousands of volumes on its history, philosophy, symbolism, and

jurisprudence. They are always at your disposal. You CAN learn the mysteries of Freemasonry if you WILL. The WILL you must furnish yourself.

Each new concept, each new level of Masonic Learning you explore will be deeply satisfying and exciting. The old adage "the more you participate, the greater your reward" is particularly true in Freemasonry. The more involved you become, the more you learn, and, in turn, the daily practice of Masonic principles will make your life more secure.

Thus, the *real* purpose of this discussion is to further introduce you to the great field of Masonic learning. If we can furnish you with a starting point for your search for Masonic knowledge, you may be encouraged to search further. If you do, you will be richly rewarded.

Freemasonry has many sides. To the lover of ritual, it is the quintessence of beauty. To a man interested in law, Masonry reveals a great field of jurisprudence in its landmarks, traditions, customs, constitutions, and laws. If you like research, a whole new world is ready for your exploration. The philosopher discovers in Masonry a simple, yet profound, solution to the problem of human relationships. To *EVER Y MAN*, Freemasonry offers unlimited opportunities for helpful friendship, fellowship, Brotherly love.

Much of the symbolism of the Master's Degree has already been explained to you. But not all. Some of it is not so obvious or self-explanatory, yet is very important to an understanding of the mysteries of the Master's Degree.

The circumambulation in the Degree is accompanied by a scripture reading. Hear the words of Carl Claudy, in his *Introduction to Freemasonry*, as he speaks of this scripture reading:

Read it how you will, the majestic and the awe-inspiring poetry rings here the solemn warning with a shake of the heart and a shiver up the back... "Remember now thy Creator" ...now, before the fearsome storms of life, or the decay of old age is upon you, wait not until "fears are in the way" to cry for help to the Almighty. Delay not until toothless, sightless, white-haired age asks for help from on high because there is no help left on earth! Remember now thy Creator, while limbs are strong and desire ardent, while life pulses ready and the world is all before...

No man thinks of his Master Mason's Degree, but hears again in his heart at least the beginning and ending of this sermon in poetry: "Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth... then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the Spirit shall return unto GOD who gave it". The solemn strokes of the bell which is Ecclesiastes, and the heart-gripping drama of the legend of Hiram Abif are never to be known apart by him who has met them together!

For in the Hiram Legend is the very essence of Freemasonry, the foundation of its philosophy, the answer to its questions, and yet, its mystery of mysteries.

To understand the symbolism of the Hiram drama is to UNDERSTAND Freemasonry, to *miss* its significance is to remain in darkness!

First, look at the story of our Grand Master Hiram Abif as drama, through the words of one of the world's great actors, Edwin Booth:

"In all my research and study, in all my close analysis of the masterpieces of Shakespeare, in my earnest determination to make those plays appear real on the mimic stage, I have never, and nowhere, met tragedy so real, so sublime, so magnificent as the legend of Hiram. It is substance without shadow, the manifest destiny of life which requires no picture and scarcely; a word to make a lasting impression upon all who can understand. To be Master of a Lodge, and to throw my whole soul into that work, with

the candidate for my audience and the Lodge for my stage, would be a greater personal distinction than to receive the plaudits of people in the theaters of the world”.

My Brother, are you satisfied with the legend as drama? I hope not. For you must look further to understand the drama's true symbolic significance, and your search will carry you back to the very beginning of spiritual thought among men.

Always remember that the legend of Hiram is allegorical. There is a Hiram in the Biblical story of the building of Solomon's Temple. He is no doubt the same Hiram. But there is no trace of the legend of his death *as we have it* anywhere in history, either sacred or profane. Thus, to pass through the second section of the Third Degree with the thought that you are portraying an historical event is to *miss* the meaning of the Degree.

Your first step in understanding the story of Hiram Abif is to see, and never to forget, that the whole Degree is symbolic; using that word in its largest sense. A few facts borrowed from history are used in it, but not many, and in each case, not for the sake of history.

Ritual cares for neither time nor place, takes its materials where it finds them, works them over to suit its own purpose. Ritual moves in a timeless, spaceless region; makes its appeal to your mind through your imagination, and has as its purpose the making effective in the experience of a man certain realities of the moral and spiritual life. Therefore, if no record of Hiram Abif is found in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, or if you find that the historical facts given in the ceremony do not agree with the records of the Sacred Writings, or even if they contradict them outright, do not be uneasy. The history, such as there is of it, is fluid, freely re-shaped for ritualistic purpose, just as Shakespeare re-shaped the history of the English Kings in his dramas.

The idea that lies behind the Hiramic legend is as old as religious thinking among men. The same elements existed in the story of Osiris, celebrated by the Egyptians in their temples. The Persians told it concerning Mithras, their hero god. The Dionysian mysteries in Syria had the same elements in the story of Dionysius. And, there is the story of Tammuz, older than any of these. These legends are collectively referred to as the "ancient mysteries". They were celebrated by secret societies, with appropriate ceremonies, during which the initiates were advanced from one degree to another. Read these old stories for yourself, and see how men of all ages taught the same great truths in the same very effective way.

Hiram's doom is the fate of every man who falls victim to those enemies that interrupt his work, the mastership of himself and in the end becomes buried under all kinds of rubbish, disgrace, and evil habits. The manner in which he was raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular represents the way any man rises from self-defeat to self-mastery. The power that raised Hiram Abif is the same God that will raise us out of the grave of defeat, sin, and death if we will but create the environment in which he can work.

No man can ever fully explain the tragedy of Hiram Abif to another; each must learn for himself. For that reason, you were made to participate by yourself in your own drama. You could not be a spectator because it takes place in your own soul; and if you ever are to be a Master Mason in reality and not in name only, you must experience it yourself. For to truly be a Master Mason, is to be *master of yourself*.

Fix the study of Hiram Abif firmly in your mind. It will furnish you guidance, strength, and wisdom when you come face to face with *your* enemies, both within and without yourself. It can strengthen your character, help you master yourself, and let you stand tall as a Master Mason and as a Man.

The Degree of a Master Mason has one other great mystery to show us. We speak of it sometimes as "The Word", sometimes as "The Secrets of a Master Mason", sometimes as "That Which Was Lost", and again as "The Lost Word". To us, it is the symbol of the truth concerning God and man, and the relationship of God to man and of man to man. We spend a lifetime searching for "The Word", with only the assurance that sometime, somewhere, when our labors here on earth are ended, when Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty exist at one and the same time, then we shall know it in all its fullness. Until then, we must be content with a substitute.

Again, as in the story of Hiram Abif, we are not original in our philosophy of the Word. The Jewish people had a tradition of a great word of which none but the High Priest knew the pronunciation, and he could pronounce it only in the Holy of Holies of the Temple.

But, you may ask, why are we so continually admonished to search for this Master Mason's Word? Why this ceaseless, endless search for perfection and truth, only to receive a substitute? Because, my Brother, in the very search for perfection, we come nearer to it. Like the cathedral spires of a great Church, which point upwards though they never reach Heaven, we find that in our seeking after the perfect life, we do come nearer and nearer to it. Because of this constant, life-long search, you and I become better men, and live better lives.

Thus, the seeking for the Master's Word is the real purpose of Masonry. It should be the purpose and the object of every true and worthy Brother to search for the Secrets of a Master Mason. With the thought of the Unity of God, the hope of immortality, and the seeking after the perfect life, we will build a temple that will be eternal.

ARE YOU A MASTER MASON?

My Brother, we have tried to give you some insight into the nature and purpose of this great Masonic Degree. To understand it, to live by the power of it, and to walk in the light of it will mean a new life for you. Some men become members of our Fraternity and pay dues for a lifetime, and never truly become *Masons*. Other men never join the Fraternity at all, yet lead beautiful lives of true Masonic excellence. How will *you* know *yourself* to be a Mason? Joseph Fort Newton expressed it for all time when he wrote:

When is a man a Mason?

When he can look out over the rivers, the hills and the far horizon with a profound sense of his own littleness in the vast scheme of things, and yet have faith, hope, and courage, which is the root of every virtue.

When he knows that down in his heart every man is as noble, as vile, as divine, as diabolic, and as lonely as himself, and seeks to know, to forgive, and to love his fellow man.

When he knows how to sympathize with men in their sorrows, yes, even in their sins, knowing that each man fights a hard fight against many odds.

When he has learned how to make friends, and to keep them, and above all, how to keep friends with himself.

When he loves flowers, can hunt the birds without a gun, and feels the thrill of an old forgotten joy when he hears the laugh of a little child.

When he can be happy and high-minded amid the meaner drudgeries of life.

When star-crowned trees, and the glint of sunlight on flowing waters, subdue him like the thought of one much loved and long dead.

When no voice of distress reaches his ears in vain, and no hand seeks his aid without response.

When he finds good in every faith that helps any man to lay hold of divine things and sees majestic meanings in life, whatever the name of that faith may be.

When he can look into a wayside puddle and see something beyond mud, and into the face of the most forlorn fellow mortal and see something beyond sin.

When he knows how to pray, how to love, how to hope.

When he has kept faith with himself, with his fellow man, with his God; in his hand a sword for evil, in his heart a bit of a song glad to live, but not afraid to die!

Such a man has found the only real secret of Masonry, and the one which it is trying to give to all the world.

MY BROTHER, ARE YOU A MASTER MASON?

PART II - TO THE NEW MASTER MASON:

In the preceding pages, we have endeavored to give you a reasonable explanation of the Master's Degree, and its importance in your life. We sincerely hope that you now fully realize, as it was earlier pointed out, "that the Master's Degree is just the beginning, and not the end of your search" for Masonic knowledge.

In Part II of this booklet, we have assembled some additional material for the continuation of your search. Please note that the last item included is a suggested reading list of Masonic books, all of which are available from your Grand Lodge Library for only the cost of the return postage. The additional reading contained in this booklet includes:

1. **SYMBOLS, EMBLEMS, AND ALLEGORIES, OF THE THIRD DEGREE.** A different perspective than that presented in the conferral of the degree meant to inspire further contemplation and study.
2. **THE BLACK CUBE.** A very important essay on the Mason's most serious responsibility: the ballot.
3. **THE GREAT LIGHT.** Masonry's first and greatest Landmark, the Holy Scriptures, and their importance to our Fraternity.
4. **THE GRAND LODGE.** A short explanation of the background and history of the Grand Lodge concept.

5. **THE DUTIES, RIGHTS, AND PRIVILEGES OF A MASTER MASON.** A brief resume of your responsibilities as a Master Mason, and what you can look forward to in future years.

6. **SUGGESTED READING LIST FOR A MASTER MASON.** A list of over sixty books readily available from the Texas Grand Lodge Library and in many cases in PDF format on the Internet, a challenge to a forward looking Mason!

SYMBOLS, EMBLEMS, AND ALLEGORIES, OF THE THIRD DEGREE

In your experience with the Ritual you have learned that every detail in the ceremonies of initiation is full of meaning. In the Third Degree are the deepest secrets and the most profound teachings of our Fraternity.

You passed through the degree in one night; to understand it will require many nights. In these few minutes we can give you a few hints, in the hope that they may inspire you to study the degree for yourself.

The symbolism of the First and Second Degrees centers around the art of architecture. Its purpose is to teach you, in the First, to be a builder of yourself; in the Second, a builder of society. In the Third Degree this symbolism takes another form. Although its background continues to be architecture and its action takes place in and about a Temple, it is a spiritual symbolism of life and death. Principally, it delves into the concept of the immortality of the human soul.

If a man permits himself to be buried under the rubbish of sins and passions, it is possible, if he has learned the secret of the spiritual life and with the help of God and of the Brotherhood, to rise again into a new life. This gives us the key to the Degree; and in this light, all its symbols, emblems, and allegories must be understood.

This note is struck in the Scripture Reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes, which pictures a man, once flushed with health and strength, and brought tottering by old age to the brink of the grave. This, the Chapter tells us, will become a light burden to him who has learned to trust God. God is the God of old age and of the soul after death, just as much as He is of youth and of strength.

The Working Tools of the degree are all the implements of Masonry, but more especially the Trowel by which we spread the cement of Brotherly Love and Affection. But Brotherly Love itself has its source and seat in the soul. To love a man above his

sins, to cherish him in spite of his faults, to forgive him in all sincerity is possible only as we live in the spiritual life, our souls purged of selfishness.

The tragedy of Hiram Abif is the climax of the degree; it is indeed the climax of all the ceremonies of Freemasonry. Next in importance is the allegorical Search for *That Which Was Lost*. This has an historical background. To the early Jewish people the name of God was held in extreme reverence. This holy name was never pronounced above a whisper; after a while only the Priests were permitted to use it; finally only the High Priest, and then only when alone in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement. During some national calamity, perhaps at the time of the Babylonian Captivity, the High Priest was destroyed before he had opportunity to pass it on to his successor. In this way was the name lost.

The name might have been preserved in the sacred writings of the Jews except that in their written language the vowels are understood, not written. The consonants of the Divine Name are known, J H V H, but not the vowels and therefore not the name.

All this appears in our Ritual in the form of an allegory. A Word was possessed; the Word was lost.

Like all symbols, this means many things. One of its most profound meanings is that if a man has lost the ideals of his youth, his character, his faith in truth and goodness, the secret of what it is to be a man, he must, if he is to live the Masonic Life, go in search of that which was lost and continue searching until he has found it. Without manhood it is useless to be a man.

You may wonder why the Ritual does not fully explain the meaning of this symbolism, why it leaves the candidate to find the meanings for himself. There are three reasons for this silence. First, lack of time, to explain them all fully would require not three nights, but perhaps three hundred. Secondly, the Masonic life grows by what we do for ourselves infinitely more than by what others do for us. The Ritual presupposes that we

are grown men, not boys in school, and that each of us does *his own thinking*. Thirdly, the method of the Ritual is to bring us into the presence of the greater truths of life knowing their mere presence will have a deep influence over us; each man is left to work them out in detail according to his own needs.

Of the Emblems of the Third Degree, one after another is set before us, apparently in no given order, and each with only a hint of what it signifies. Yet each of them stands for some great idea or ideal, necessary throughout our lives; and the purpose is to plant them in our consciousness, to keep them always in our presence.

Each of them is a master of truth. In the Three Pillars we have the three great ideas of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty.

The Three Steps remind us that Youth, Manhood, and Age, is each a unity in itself, each possessing its own duties and responsibilities, each calling for its own philosophy.

The Pot of Incense teaches that to be pure and blameless in our inner lives is more acceptable to God than anything else. What a man really is, obviously, is of vastly more importance than that which he appears to be.

The Book of Constitutions is the emblem of law and reminds us that our moral and spiritual character is grounded in law and order as much as in government or nature. It teaches that no man can live a satisfactory life who lives lawlessly.

The Sword Pointing to the Naked Heart discovers that one of the most rigorous of these laws is justice, and that if a man be unjust in his heart, the inevitable results of injustice will find him out.

The All-seeing Eye shows that we live and move and have our being in God; that we are constantly in His Presence, wherever or whatever we are doing.

The Anchor and Ark stand for that sense of security and stability of life grounded in Truth and Faith.

The Forty-seventh Problem is an emblem of the Arts and Sciences; by them we are reminded that next to sinfulness the most dangerous enemy of life is ignorance.

In the Hour Glass we have the emblem of the transitoriness of life; no man lives forever in this world.

The Scythe reminds us that passing time will bring an end to our lives as well as to our work, and if ever we are to become what we ought to be, we must not delay.

Unhappy is the man who reaches middle years having missed these undeniable and all-important truths. He has gone backward, not forward, and is not blameless in his heart. Yet there is hope for him. The central teaching of the Master Mason's Degree, expressed in the Tragedy of Hiram Abif, is a way for him to recover possession of his life. He can be raised to a new manhood, lifted from the dead level of death to a living perpendicular. He may be called back from a grave that is more terrible than the dissolution of the body. By repudiation and death of his old life, by gaining again his faith in God, by the Power of Brotherhood, he finds the path that leads to recovery.

THE BLACK CUBE

"The white balls elect, the black cubes⁵ reject".

This statement is always made prior to voting on the application of one who would be an initiate of Texas Freemasonry. Texas Grand Lodge Law allows for no more than two black cubes or combination of black cubes and protests, to elect a man eligible to receive the degrees of Freemasonry; three black cubes, or combination of black cubes and protests, prohibits a man from becoming a Mason for one year, four black cubes or combination of, prohibits for two years, and five or more, prohibits for three years. At the end of such time, the petitioner may re-petition if he still desires to become a member.

The ballot on the petition of an applicant is taken secretly that is, with no Brother knowing how another may vote. In Texas it is an infraction of Masonic law to endeavor to ascertain how another Brother will vote, or has voted on an applicant or to disclose how he voted or will vote.

The "secrecy of the ballot" is one of the greatest bulwarks of the Fraternity. Occasionally both the secrecy and the near unanimity may seem to work a hardship on a man apparently worthy of being taken by the hand as a Brother; but no human institution is perfect, and no human being acts always according to the best that is in him. The occasional failure of the system to work complete justice may be laid to the individuals using it, and not to the Fraternity.

⁵The ballot box in a Masonic Lodge is composed of white balls, and usually, black cubes. However, some Lodges still use black balls, instead of cubes. The black cubes are strongly preferred, since they materially reduce balloting error due to failing eyesight or lack of attention. There should always be an equal number of white balls and black cubes in the box, allowing every member the opportunity to vote in either manner.

Harmony is the chief strength and support of all well-regulated institutions, especially this of ours. Harmony, oneness of mind, effort, ideas, and ideals, is one of the foundations of Freemasonry. Anything which interferes with Harmony, by so much; hurts the Institution. Therefore, it is essential that Lodges have a harmonious membership; that no man be admitted to the Masonic home of any Brother against his will. For this reason it is required that the names of applicants to a Lodge be set before the entire membership, prior to a vote that all may know that he is to be balloted upon; that any who think him unfit timber for the Lodge, or who have personal objections to entering into the sacred relation of Brotherhood with him, may have the opportunity to attempt to exclude him.

The power thus put in the hands of the individual Master Mason is very great. No officer, not even the Grand Master, may inquire as to how you vote, or why you voted as you did. No Grand Master has the power to set aside the black cubes you cast.

The Brother who casts a ballot, then, upon the petition of an applicant, wields a tremendous power. Like most powers, it can be used well or ill. It may work harm or good, not only upon him against whom it is used, but to him who uses it. Unlike many great powers put into the hands of men, however, this one is not subject to *review* or *control* by any human agency. No king, prince, potentate; no law, custom or regulation; no Masonic Brother or officer, can interfere with the individual's use of his power with the ballot.

For no one knows who uses the black cube. No one knows why one is cast. The individual Brother and his God alone know.

The very absence of any responsibility to man or authority is one of the reasons why the power should be used with caution and intelligence, and only when, after solemn self-inquiry, the reason behind its use is found to be sound.

Anyone can think of a hundred reasons why black cubes are cast. If the Lodge might suffer, we have the best of reasons for seeing that he is rejected. Such use of our power is proper, Masonic, ethical, wise, and just.

But there is another side of the shield. Unfortunately, no hard and fast rule can be laid down. There is no way to explain "this is a good reason, but that is not a good reason" for casting a black cube.

The black cube is the great protection of the Fraternity; it permits the Brother who does not desire to make public his secret knowledge to use that knowledge for the benefit of the Craft. It gives to all members the right to say who shall not become members of their Lodge family. But at the same time it puts to the test the Masonic heart, and the personal honesty of every Brother who deliberates on its use. The black cube is a thorough test of our understanding of the Masonic teaching of the cardinal virtue Justice, which "enables us to render to every man his just due without distinction". We are taught of justice that "it should be the invariable practice of every Mason, never to deviate from the minutest principles thereof."

Justice to the Lodge requires us to cast the black cube on an applicant we believe to be unfit.

Justice to ourselves requires that we cast the black cube on the application of the man we believe would destroy the harmony of our Lodge.

Justice to the applicant, we are taught to render justice to every man, not merely to Masons, requires that no black cube be cast for little reasons, small reasons, mean reasons.

And, justice to justice requires that we think carefully, deliberate slowly, and act cautiously. No man will know what we do; no eye will see, save that All-Seeing Eye which pervades the inner most recesses of our hearts, and will, so we are taught, reward us according to our merits.

The black cube is a giant's strength to protect Freemasonry, but used thoughtlessly, carelessly, without adequate reason, it not only crushes him at whom it is aimed, but degrades him who casts it.

"The white balls elect, the black cubes reject".

"Be careful how you vote," but a good Mason will always cast his ballot for what he deems to be for the best interest of the Order.

THE GREAT LIGHT

As a Master Mason you will discover how important in the system of Freemasonry are the Ancient Landmarks. Like every other regular Master Mason in the world you stand under the gravest and most solemn obligation to preserve them inviolate; at the time of his installation the Worshipful Master takes an oath to see that his Lodge makes no innovation in them; the Grand Master and his Wardens are similarly charged by Grand Lodge. Loyalty to them is a test of Masonic regularity, and one Grand Lodge will not fraternize with another that is guilty of abrogating them. They are to our Craft what a man's identity is to a man; without them Masonry would cease to be Masonry.

One of the chiefs of these Landmarks is the law that the Holy Scriptures or Volume of Sacred Law must be open on the Altar of every Lodge. This is the first to be grasped in our study of the place occupied by the Holy Bible in Freemasonry. The display of the Book at the center of the Lodge room is not for the sake of appearances, as a pious but insincere gesture, or as a badge of respectability; rather it is there to be to the Lodge what the sun is to its planets, a giver of light and of life, a source of law and teachings, a center of gravity about which many things revolve.

The Volume of Sacred Law has occupied this central place in the Fraternity from the beginning. In our oldest written records it is reported that Operative Masons took their obligations with their lips upon the Book. Long before Operative Masonry became completely transformed into Speculative Masonry, the Craft, to signalize even more clearly to what an extent the Holy Scriptures were the rule and guide of faith, made them The Great Light.

In Texas Masonic Ritual, the Holy Bible, along with the Square and Compasses, are deemed essential components of the Lodge room. You will see at once the great significance of these items. A family cannot live in a house, or maintain itself as such, unless the house is equipped with chairs, tables, beds, stoves and such necessities; in the same manner, Masons cannot meet a Lodge room without the Holy Bible, Square, and

Compasses. They are indispensable to the Lodge which meets in that room; the members of that Lodge, in a symbolic sense, cannot keep house without them.

It is on the Holy Bible⁶ that a candidate seals his obligations. The Book in its physical sense, as made of print and paper, is the visible sign of the will of the true and living invisible God. To take one's oath upon it means that the oath is taken so sincerely that the all-searching eye of God can itself find no equivocation or reservation hidden away in the candidate's inner mind. It would be impossible for a man to take a more sacred and binding vow, and he who could be false to it, necessarily, is morally corrupt at the center of his being.

The Volume of Sacred Law represents that which is sacred, which is central in a man's spiritual life and in the experiences of his own soul with his God. It is for this reason that the Craft makes no attempt to interpret the Book in a theological sense, or to bind a Mason to this creed, rather than to that but leaves each man free to read it according to his own insight, and in the light of his own conscience. God has his own message to each of us, because no two of us have quite the same needs, and it is not for any other to dictate to a man concerning the mysteries of his own spiritual necessities.

All such facts together mean that Freemasonry is erected upon a foundation of religion, not upon a religion, not upon this religion rather than *that*, but on religion itself, which is the ground under all the creeds, the sky over all the churches, the one universal source out of which all creeds and churches have come. Let a man have any name for the Father of all that best pleases him, the name matters not, what does matter is that the Father of all shall be in that man's knowledge and experience, and that is the prime meaning of religion.

⁶ Art. 397. (434). **Religious Belief.** A firm belief in the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the divine authenticity of the Holy Scriptures is indispensably necessary before a candidate can be initiated, but this Grand Lodge does not presume to prescribe any canonical books or what part thereof are inspired. It is the policy of this Grand Lodge to permit a candidate whose religious persuasion is based upon other than the Holy Bible to be obligated upon the book of his chosen faith, and same may be situated upon the Altar in front of the Holy Bible during the conferral of the three degrees of Masonry. In which event, all esoteric references to "The Holy Bible" during the conferral of the degree(s) and the lessons appropriate thereto shall be substituted with "The Book of your (my) Faith." (Revised 1995)

Since it is religion in this sense, rather than religion in a merely sectarian sense, which lies as the foundation of Freemasonry, it inevitably follows that religious tolerance is required of every Mason. Indeed, religious tolerance possesses the power and value of a Landmark. Religion is like the gentle rain from heaven which, once it has fallen upon the earth, finds its way underground into this spring, that well, or yonder cistern, and over ground into a pool here, a lake there, a brook yonder, into a river, or into a sea; in the same manner faith in God, though it is the life of the whole world, must find its way to the individual, and when it does it becomes translated into the individual's experience and takes the form of his life and conditions. It is everywhere the same faith in general but it is nowhere quite the same in detail. And just as it would be shortsighted and vain to quarrel with the rain because the cistern in which we catch it differs from a neighbor's cistern, so also is it an act of bigotry to quarrel with the fact that religion takes the shape of the habits and modes of thought of the men to whom it comes. If another differs from us in the form of his faith, it is not the difference that should impress us, rather, we should rejoice that he also has found faith.

The denominations and sects, therefore, are to religion what the languages and dialects are to man's power of speech; the number and variety of them are a testimony to the riches of that which they express. Toleration is not merely a restrictive and negative thing; on the contrary it is constructive and positive and is built on the fact that in this world religion is so great and so necessary that it must take many forms to satisfy the many needs of the multiform life of mankind. Not only does Masonry not make war on any church nor permit any of its members to do so in its name, but instead its policy is to look with approval upon all true and sincere churches whatsoever. And if, out of some private dogma of its own, some church should chance to make war upon Freemasonry, we attribute it to a lack of correct information and ignore it, because we wish to be as tolerant of those who differ from us as of those who differ from each other.

THE GRAND LODGE

Prior to the time of the Reformation, Masonic Lodges had very little, if any, organization outside of the individual Lodges. They were individual in their rules and regulations, and their attachment to and with one another was meager. The earliest known meetings among the Craft were called Assemblies. The Assembly was a meeting or an organization nearest related to our present Grand Lodge. One of the earliest known records of the Assembly was published in the York Manuscript No. 1 about the year 1600 wherein it is said "the Edwin procured of ye King his father a Charter and Commission to hold every year an Assembly wheresoever they would within ye realm of England". In the Harleian Manuscript published about 1660 it is ordered "that every Master and Fellow come to the Assembly if it be within five miles about him, if he have any warning".

The Grand Lodge organizations as we now have them are probably in historical continuity with the Grand Assembly. Doubtless the most authentic account of the organization of the first Grand Lodge is found in Dr. James Anderson's work, "The New Book of Constitutions," which was published 1738, and which document was approved by the Grand Lodge itself. Anderson's statement as to the formation of the first Grand Lodge is recorded as follows:

"King George I. enter'd London most magnificently on 20 Sept. 1714. And after the rebellion was over A. D. 1716, the few Lodges at London finding themselves neglected by Sir Christopher Wren, thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the Center of Union and Harmony, viz., the Lodges that met,

- 1. At the Goose and Gridiron Ale house in St. Paul's Church-Yard.*
- 2. At the Crown Ale-house in Parker's Lane near Drury, Lane.*
- 3. At the Apple-Tree Tavern in Charles-street, Covent-Garden.*
- 4. At the Rummer Row, Westminster.*

They and some other old Brothers met at the said Apple-Tree, and having put into the chair the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge), they constituted themselves a Grand Lodge pro Tempore in Due Form, and forthwith revived the Quarterly Communication of the Officers of Lodges (called the GRAND LODGE), resolved to hold the Annual Assembly and Feast, and then to chuse a Grand Master from among themselves, till they should have the honor of a Noble Brother at their Head.

Accordingly, on St. John's Baptist's Day, in the 3d year of King George I, A. D. 1717, the ASSEMBLY and Feast of the Free and Accepted Masons was held at the aforesaid Goose and Gridiron Ale-House.

Before Dinner, the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge), in the Chair, proposed a list of proper Candidates; and the Brethren by a majority of hands elected Mr. Anthony Sayer, Gentleman, Grand Master of Masons (Mr. Jacob Lamball, Carpenter, Capt. Joseph Elliott, Grand Wardens), who being forthwith invested with the Badges of Office and Power by the said oldest Master, and installed, was duly congratulated by the Assembly who paid him the Homage.

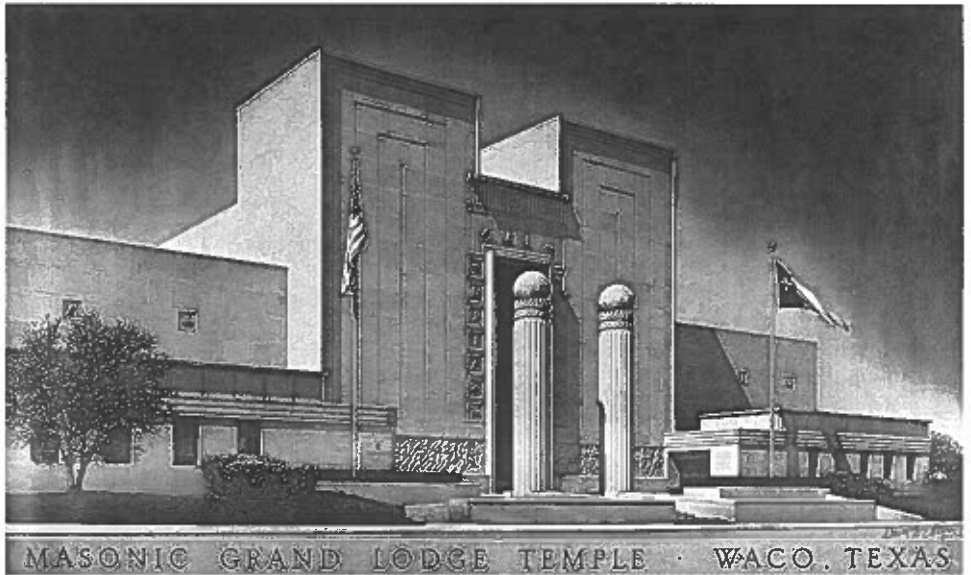
Sayer, Grand Master, commanded the Masters and Wardens of the Lodges to meet the Grand Officers every Quarter in Communication, at the place that he should appoint in the Summons sent by the Tyler”.

The organization of New Grand Lodges within the United States has been essentially the same as that adopted by the four Lodges which formed the Grand Lodge of England. Three or more legally constituted Lodges, working in any State, Territory, or other political subdivision, where no Grand Lodge already exists, may organize, adopt a Constitution and laws and elect officers. The Lodges within the new jurisdiction surrender their warrants or charters to the Grand Lodge which had issued them, and new warrants or charters are then issued by the New Grand Lodge.

There is probably no account of the beginning and development of a Masonic Grand Lodge in the United States more replete with interesting and thrilling details than the account of the early meetings among the Craft in the Grand Jurisdiction of Texas, and which meetings later resulted in the organization of the Grand Lodge of Texas, a short history of which was given you among the first information you received. From that humble beginning, the Grand Lodge of Texas grew, and at its peak in the 1960s boasted over nine hundred eighty Lodges, and a membership of 220,000. This dramatic increase was largely the result of a huge influx of members following WWII and the Korean conflict. We have seen a steady decline since then, and now stand at approximately 800 Lodges and 70,000 members. However, the good news is that we appear to have stemmed the tide and that our numbers are stabilizing.

The Grand Lodge of Texas meets annually in Waco, on the Third Thursday of January, beginning at 12:00 Noon. All Master Masons are welcome to attend Grand Lodge sessions, although only authorized Lodge representatives and Past Masters are entitled to vote on Grand Lodge business.

The annual meetings are held in the awe-inspiring Memorial Grand Lodge Temple, one of the most impressive and beautiful Masonic buildings in the world. Situated on Columbus Avenue, high on a hill overlooking downtown Waco, this striking building dominates its surroundings. Along with the huge blue and gold auditorium, which seats over 3,700, this beautiful building also houses the Texas Grand Lodge Library and Museum, the Grand Secretary's Office, the Texas York Rite Offices, and other interesting features. The building is open during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, and visits by Masons and their families are heartily welcomed.



The purposes of the Grand Lodge of Texas, as set forth in its Constitution, are to control and regulate the practice of Freemasonry throughout its Jurisdiction, in accordance with the immemorial usages of this ancient and honorable Craft; to advance the moral and social interest of its membership; to cultivate the exercise of charity in its best and broadest sense; to assist the widows and orphans of its deceased members; to stimulate friendship, harmony and Brotherly love, and generally to promote in its own way, the happiness of mankind. In short, it is a fraternity of good men, linked together by honorable and indissoluble bonds, to accomplish these noble purposes, eschewing all interest in factional politics and sectarian religion, and free from the dictation of both.

THE DUTIES, RIGHTS, AND PRIVILEGES OF A MASTER MASON

The *first duty* of a Master Mason is to live by and act consistently with his obligation.

He must pay his dues promptly and share the financial costs of the Fraternity. A current dues card, which you should carry with you at all times, indicates that you are in "good standing" in your Lodge. Failure to pay dues by the end of a period subjects a Mason to suspension.

A Mason is obliged to abide by the Constitution, Laws, and edicts of the Grand Lodge of Texas, and by the BY-LAWS of his own constituent Lodge. He must maintain and support the "Ancient usages, customs, and landmarks of the Fraternity."

It is your right and privilege to attend *all* stated and called meetings of your Lodge; to enjoy fellowship with the Brethren; to join in the discussions of the Lodge, to vote, to hold office, and render other meaningful Masonic services; to ask for Masonic relief should such become necessary; and to be taught all that Masonry includes, and to enjoy the privileges it offers to the mind, heart, and spirit.

You may ask the Secretary of your Lodge about the Masonic Home and School and your rights in regard to the Texas Masonic Retirement Center in Arlington.

By previous arrangement or by simple request of your family, you have the right to a Masonic burial. These rites will be tenderly performed. Just as you have a right to expect your Brethren to attend your Masonic burial, they also have a right to expect your presence at theirs. The general public is greatly influenced by this Masonic service and judge us all by it.

It is your privilege to visit other regular Lodges and jurisdictions; to be "vouched for" ("to bear witness to" or "to be sponsored by") by other members with whom you have sat in Lodge; also, to vouch for others should you know them to be Masons. It is your

privilege to re-affiliate, upon a letter of good standing or demit from your Lodge, with another Lodge provided the new Lodge votes favorably. In Texas, you may hold "dual membership," that is, be a member in good standing of two Lodges at the same time.

Any act unbecoming a good man and true, as well as any willful violation of his obligation, is considered a Masonic disciplinary violation. If brought to trial and found guilty, the offender may be punished by (1) a reprimand, (2) definite suspension, (3) indefinite suspension, or, (4) by expulsion. You have the right to trial by your peers should you transgress the laws of Masonry, and it is your right to appeal to the Grand Lodge of Texas if found guilty of Masonic misconduct. The decision of the Grand Lodge is final.

It is your privilege to recommend a man for Masonry. You should be careful, however, NOT to recommend one unless you are satisfied that he is a good man and will conform to the principles of the Order and be a credit to the Craft. Your Brethren will give considerable weight to your recommendation.

Freemasonry, in all its richness, belongs to you to use and enjoy. Take part, become involved and study this great Fraternity. There are literally thousands of books and short writings available to research. The Memorial Library of the Grand Lodge at Waco is a good source of materials.

Remember, every moment of your life, in public, at work, at play, with your family, and even when you are alone, YOU ARE A MASON. The non-Masons who know you will judge each of us, and Masonry itself, by the way you conduct yourself.

After you build a good foundation in the first three degrees and have demonstrated your proficiency as a Master Mason, you are encouraged to seek additional light in the beautiful and significant degrees and orders of the York Rite, and in the meaningful and dynamic degrees of the Scottish Rite. The education afforded by these Bodies will round out and supplement your Masonic life.

SUGGESTED READING LIST FOR A MASTER MASON

The following list of books are available from our great Texas Masonic Library in Waco, and most are available to borrow. To request to check out books from the Grand Lodge Library, simply write a letter or card giving the title or subject of the book or books you are interested in (up to three at a time), your name, address, and the name, number, and address of your Lodge.

Address your request to: TEXAS GRAND LODGE LIBRARY, P. O. Box 446, Waco Texas 76703. It's as simple as that! Your only cost is the return postage. The Grand Lodge Library even provides return mailing labels.

The following list of books is only a sample of the vast number of titles written on the subject of Freemasonry. You are encouraged to support your own Lodge's Library, and if you do not have one, to start one.

10,000 Famous Freemasons, by William R. Denslow

A Comprehensive View of Freemasonry, by Henry W. Coil

American Freemason: Three Centuries of Building Communities, by Mark A. Tabbert

An Introduction to Freemasonry, by Douglas Knoop

A Pilgrim's Path, by John J. Robinson

A Short History of Freemasonry, by Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones

Beginnings of Freemasonry in America, by Melvin M. Johnson

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia, by Henry Wilson Coil (revised edition by Allen E. Roberts)

Concise History of Freemasonry, by Robert Freke Gould

Dungeon, Fire, and Sword, by John J. Robinson

Famous Masons and Masonic Presidents of our Government, by Philip A. Roth

Freemasonry: A Celebration of the Craft, by John Hamill

Freemasonry in American History, by Allen E. Roberts

Freemasonry in American Revolution, by Sidney Morse

Freemason's Guide and Compendium, by Bernard E. Jones

Freemasonry Through Six Centuries, by Henry Wilson Coil

Freemasonry Universal, by Kent Henderson

History of Freemasonry, by H. L. Haywood and James E. Craig

House Undivided: The Story of Freemasonry and the Civil War, by Allen E. Roberts

Introduction to Freemasonry, by Carl H. Claudy

Illustrations of Masonry, by William Preston

Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry? by Art de Hoyos and S. Brent Morris

Jurisprudence of Freemasonry, by Albert G. Mackey

Key to Freemasonry's Growth, by Allen E. Roberts

Little Masonic Library, edited by Carl H. Claudy

Living the Enlightenment, by Margaret C. Jacob

Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers, by Ronald E. Heaton

Masonic Symbolism, by C. C. Hunt

Masonic Trivia & Facts, by Allen E. Roberts

Masonry in Texas, by James D. Carter

Miracle at Philadelphia, by Catherine Drinker Bowen

More About Masonry, by H. L. Haywood

Morals & Dogma, by Albert Pike

One Hundred One Questions About Freemasonry, Available from MSANA

Pocket History of Masonry, by F. L. Pick and G. N. Knight

Pursuit of a Thread, by Deed L. Vest

Revolutionary Brotherhood: 1730-1840, by Steven C. Bullock

Short Readings in Masonic History, by J. Hugo Tatsch

Spirit of Masonry, by William Hutchinson

Symbolism of Freemasonry, by Albert G. Mackey

Symbolism of the Three Degrees, by Oliver Day Street

The Antimasonic Party in the United States 1826-1843, by William Preston Vaughn

The Boy Who Cried Wolf: The Book That Breaks Masonic Silence, by Richard Thorn

The Builders: A Story and Study of Masonry, by Joseph Fort Newton

The Clergy and the Craft, by Forrest D. Haggard

The Craft and its Symbols, by Allen E. Roberts

The Freemason at Work, by Harry Carr

The Great Teachings of Freemasonry, by H. L. Haywood

The Lodge in Friendship Village, by P. W. George

The Mason's Words, by Robert G. Davis

The Master's Book, by Carl H. Claudy

The Men's House, by Joseph Fort Newton

The Mystic Tie, by Allen E. Roberts

The Newly Made Mason, by H. L. Haywood

The Pocket History of Freemasonry, by Fred L. Pick & G. Norman Knight. F. Muller

The Rise and Development of Organized Freemasonry, by Roy A. Wells

Tied to Masonic Apron Strings, by Stewart M. L. Pollard

Treasury of Masonic Thought, by Carl Glick

William Preston and His Work, by Colin Dyer

Whither Are We Traveling? by Dwight L. Smith

Workman Unashamed: The Testimony of a Christian Freemason, by Christopher Haffner

York Rite of Freemasonry: A History and Handbook, by Frederick G. Speidel

Texas Lodge System of Candidate Information (T.L.S.C.I.)

To the New Master Mason

General Evaluation Sheet

My Brother,

Congratulations upon being raised to the degree of Master Mason. Your opinion is important to me; therefore, I request that you take a few moments and fill out the short evaluation below.

Please mail or email to:

Chairman
Committee on Masonic Education and Service
PO Box 446
Waco, Texas 76703
chairman.mes.glotx@gmail.com

	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
1) Readability	1	2	3	4	5
2) Informational content	1	2	3	4	5
3) Worth the time spent	1	2	3	4	5

	Too Little	Just Right	Too Much
1) Amount of Information	1	2	3
2) Time used to complete	1	2	3

Strong points were: _____

Weak points were: _____

Topics not useful: _____

Topics wanted: _____

Additional Comments: _____

Spelling, Typos, Grammar, etc. (Please reference page and paragraph): _____

Thank you for your time!