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John Cooper and Problems in Masonic Research

We are fortunate to have scholars like John Cooper who are also Freemasons. The history of secret and ritualistic organizations has never received the attention that the subject deserves. Although their influence has been and continues to be considerable, they are viewed as having members who are enjoined to be tight-lipped about the activities. Despite the manifest differences between the branches of this fascinating group, their culture has a commonality whose consideration has been neglected, and the research problems they present for scholars have similarities.

Secrecy and ritualism often go together, although for many societies the secrecy is no longer as strong as it once was. However, ritual remains one of their major characteristics, making them distinct from a large number of other groups that may have a few ceremonies such as passing along the chair's gavel or investing new members with lapel pins but which are chiefly issue-oriented. Sometimes it is hard to demarcate between a ritualistic and issue-oriented movement. While the Grange, for example, is certainly an agricultural lobby, it has always had a strong ritualistic side. Rotary or the Lions would seem to be more on the service side, but we have all met members who were as enraptured by the Rotary Wheel as anyone ever was by the Masonic square and compass. All of this presents special challenges to understanding.

As Dr. Cooper points out, there can be a change in emphasis over the years. But for all the changes, few public or university libraries take seriously the collecting of material on the Masons, so the serious researcher must get permission to use Masonic archives and libraries. A number date from the nineteenth century and have large holdings. An idea of what they might contain is indicated by the classifications of the Library of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite in Washington, which dates back to 1888 and even then had more than eight thousand volumes. Categories include philosophy and symbolism, church and state, paraphernalia, glassware, benevolent and educational institutions, hospitals, cemeteries, architecture, poetry and drama, humor and satire, and women in Masonry. Paris is unique in having at least four major collections.

Another challenge is understanding the special language and usages that an organization such as the Masons invokes. The more ritualistic the society, the more arcane will be the terminology found in papers. As an example, a considerable problem for the researcher is the dating system used by different Masonic bodies. Ordinary Craft or blue lodge Masons who have taken the first three degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason use the Anno Lucis system, adding 4000 years and giving the year as dated from the Creation. Thus a blue lodge Masonic document of 1995 would be 5995. Royal Arch Masons begin the calendar with the start of work on the Second Temple at Jerusalem in 530 B.C., so that this is the year 2525. Royal and Select Masters number the years from the completion of the original King Solomon's Temple in 1000 B.C., making this the year 2995. Masonic Knights Templar date documents from the founding of the Order in 1118 and hence this is 877. There are other pitfalls: On occasion the researcher will face documents that have been rendered into cipher or have had critical words removed. He or she will also encounter vast amounts of allegory and metaphor, so that without an advance immersion in the rituals the text will be unintelligible.

In sum, we need researchers who can tackle the special problems of what is a fascinating subject. We are lucky to have as many hard workers in the stacks as we do, and these papers are a notable contribution.

Paul Rich
President, Policy Studies Organization

Into the Maelstrom: The Issue of Masonic Regularity, Past and Present

John L. Cooper III, Ph.D., President Institute for Masonic Studies

The dictionary defines “maelstrom” as “a powerful whirlpool in a sea or a river,” and secondarily “a situation or state of confused movement or violent turmoil.” This definition seems appropriate when we look at the issue of Masonic “Regularity” in the present world of international Masonic relations. The term “regular” is a popular way for grand lodges to proclaim their adherence to certain standards that set them apart from other grand lodges. On June 15, 1979, nine lodges in Belgium withdrew from the Grand Lodge of Belgium after that grand lodge had lost recognition from the United Grand Lodge of England, and formed the Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium.¹ In 1991 lodges in Portugal formed the Regular Grand Lodge of Portugal, which changed its name to the Legal Grand Lodge of Portugal / Regular Grand Lodge of Portugal in 1996.² In 1993 a group of lodges that withdrew from the Grand Orient of Italy formed the Regular Grand Lodge of Italy.³

The term “regular” as a definition of a grand lodge in its title became popular in grand lodge circles, so it was with something of a wry sense of humor that on March 5, 2005, the Regular Grand Lodge of England was created in London – a grand lodge which is universally acknowledged to be neither “regular” nor “legitimate” by most grand lodges in the world.⁴ This paper is an attempt to look at the issue of “masonic regularity” in Masonic international relations today, together with a brief look at the historical development of the idea.

In the world of international Masonic relations the term “regular” is often confused with “recognized.” But the two terms are not synonymous although they are related. Grand lodges “recognize” one another when they enter into some type of mutual relationship that allows members from their respective lodges to intervisit in one another’s lodges. This reciprocal arrangement may or may not include the right affiliate with a lodge in another jurisdiction, but the principle of intervisitation is the primary value of recognition of one grand lodge by another.

It must be acknowledged that intervisitation is not solely the prerogative of grand lodges, for in some jurisdictions this decision is reserved to the individual lodge itself. That appears to be the case in the Grand Lodge of France, and more certainly, in the Grand Orient of France. But in general grand lodges reserve to themselves the right to determine which masons from other Masonic grand lodges are allowed to visit their lodges, and which lodges in other jurisdictions their members are allowed to visit.

The basis for such recognition is an acknowledgement that the grand lodge recognized by another grand lodge practices the same kind of Freemasonry as the grand lodge granting the recognition, and the term “regular” is used in Freemasonry to describe the belief that the Masonic practices of the other grand lodge are sufficiently like those of the recognizing grand lodge so as to permit intervisitation. The practices do not have to be identical, and indeed are rarely so, because grand

¹ Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium website, <http://www.glr.net/en/>

² Grande Loja Legal de Portugal / GLRP website, <https://www.gllp.pt/>

³ Regular Grand Lodge of Italy website, <http://www.glri.it/en/>

⁴ Regular Grand Lodge of England website, <http://www.rgle.org.uk/RGLE.htm>

lodges in the world of Freemasonry are autonomous, and establish their own organizational structures and adopt, or permit, a wide variety of rituals to be used by their lodges. The minimal acceptable practices are sometimes listed by a grand lodge, either in their fundamental laws, or established through longstanding custom. Over time there have come to be some requirements held in common by groups of grand lodges, so that there has arisen the concept of “Regular Freemasonry” as opposed to “Irregular Freemasonry,” and recognition by grand lodges who deem themselves to be “regular” of other grand lodges has created an international community of “recognized” grand lodges.

There are two fundamental rules which all grand lodges which consider themselves “regular” which seem to be paramount, and which establish a distinguishing characteristic for these grand lodges. The first is the requirement that all members hold some kind of belief in a Supreme Being, and the second is the requirement that only men may be members. There is some acknowledgement by grand lodges belonging to this family that there may be other grand lodges which are “regular” in all respects except for the restriction to a male-only membership, as when the United Grand Lodge of England acknowledges that there are women Freemasons, and suggests (or has suggested from time to time on its website) that women interested in Freemasonry seek out one of two grand lodges in England which restrict their membership to women.⁵ It would seem, at least for this grand lodge, that a belief in a Supreme Being is a more important principle for the issue of “regularity” than is the sex of a Mason.

A discussion of “regularity” in Freemasonry is thus a discussion of the nature of Freemasonry itself. In the 19th century there were several attempts to develop lists of characteristics that would define Freemasonry, the most famous of which was the list of “Landmarks” developed by the American Masonic scholar, Dr. Albert G. Mackey. His list of twenty-five Landmarks became the basis for a long and often fruitless discussion in Freemasonry as to the true nature of the organization, and which rules were indispensable for its existence.⁶ An excellent summary of the debate over the Landmarks can be found in an address to the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America by the noted Masonic scholar, Roscoe Pound, on February 20, 1952, and reprinted in *Masonic Writings and Addresses of Roscoe Pound*.⁷ In his address to the conference, Pound set for the nature of Landmarks in this way:

I take it that by the term Landmark of Masonry we mean one of a body of fundamental precepts of universal Masonic validity, binding on Masons and Masonic organizations everywhere and at all times; precepts beyond the reach of Masonic legislation, adherence to which by Masons and by organizations of Masons is a prerequisite of recognition as Masons or as Masonic.⁸

⁵ United Grand Lodge of England, “Are There Women Freemasons?”, <http://www.ugle.org.uk/what-is-freemasonry/frequently-asked-questions>

⁶ Mackey, Albert G., “The American Quarterly Review of Freemasonry,” Vol. II, 1859, pdf copy from University of Michigan, <https://www.scgrandlodgeafm.org/uploads/1/9/0/8/19088243/americanquarterlyreviewoffreemasonry-mackey-vol-2.pdf>, “The Foundations of Masonic Law,” p.230.

⁷ Pound, Roscoe, *Masonic Addresses and Writings of Roscoe Pound*, (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., Richmond, Virginia), 1953, p. 239.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

In 1993, Bro. Michel Brodsky presented a paper to Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, “The Regular Freemason: A Short History of Masonic Regularity.”⁹ In that paper he said:

Whichever theory of origin of Freemasonry is preferred, one may assume that, prior to the establishment in 1717 of the first Grand Lodge, the operative modes of recognition were sufficient to establish the quality of a visiting brother and indeed his right to visit and to obtain assistance in case of need. Freemasons in a given locality would know each other well. Visiting brethren had to prove themselves before being admitted into a lodge or petitioning for help, though it is conceivable that, as more lodges were established, some form of written recommendation may have been carried by those travelling far from home. The caution exercised toward a visitor, aimed both at the protection of the secrets of Freemasonry and at the exclusion of cowans and imposters from the benefit of charity, is evidenced in the first ritual texts.¹⁰

Brodsky further points out that the first legislative enactment of the premier grand lodge, the General Regulations of 1720, established the rule that new lodges must receive permission to organize from grand lodge, and that lodges are to take care that they do not extend charity to those who are not genuine Masons.¹¹ Regulation VIII refers to “regular Lodges,” when it states that

If any Set or Number of Masons shall take upon themselves to form a Lodge without the *Grand-Master's* Warrant, the *regular Lodges* are not to countenance them, nor own them as *fair Brethren* and duly form'd, nor approve of the Acts and Deeds; but must treat them as *Rebels*, until they humble themselves, as the *Grand-Master* shall in his Prudence direct.¹²

Brodsky further points out that the premier grand lodge had to deal with foreign visitors beginning in the 1740s, as evidenced by the minutes of the Grand Lodge, and in 1755 adopted a program of issuing certificates to members of its lodges to confirm that the bearer was a legitimate Mason in good standing, which could be used for purposes of visitation both domestically and abroad.¹³

He further points out something that was presumably widespread in the 18th century, but which today would be considered questionable, if not completely unacceptable:

In Europe, each Grand Lodge established its own criteria. In general, a candidate – or even a visitor – had to be a Christian, and even the denomination could be specified. The primary consideration was social status; artisans, shopkeepers, farmers and the like were regarded as undesirables, as were Jews, who in most countries had no legal status. Muslims and those of inferior rank such as servants – and often actors – were not even considered.¹⁴

⁹ Brodsky, Michel, “The Regular Freemason: A Short History of Masonic Regularity,” AQC Vol. 106, 1993, p. 103 ff.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹² Constitutions of 1723, General Regulations of 1720.

¹³ Brodsky, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

A major contributor to the discussion of regularity and recognition of grand lodges was Bro. Christopher Haffner. His book, *Regularity of Origin: A Study of Masonic Precedents* (1986), was an expansion of a paper presented on 23 June 1983 at Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, London, and printed in AQC.¹⁵ In his paper, Bro. Haffner addresses the issue of “regularity of origin,” a condition of “regularity” and “recognition” which appears on many lists of conditions for recognition. He states:

“There is thus inherent in every freemason’s education the idea that regularity itself is a virtue, necessary for its own sake. This can be applied to regularity of origin. There is a sort of apostolic succession in the Craft, viz:

1. Lodges working under immemorial constitution form a Grand Lodge;
2. The Grand Lodge constitutes new lodges nearby and afar;
3. The new lodges in a specific and distinct geographical area form a new Grand Lodge;
4. The new Grand Lodge constitutes new lodges in its own and any open territory.

This is the complete series of four steps and nothing need be added. But they raise a whole series of questions. What is open territory? Can a lodge be founded by immemorial constitution?”¹⁶

This raises the question about the “rule of three,” i.e., whether three lodges can form a new grand lodge. In the American context, grand lodges were formed on the Eastern seaboard soon after the American Revolution. These grand lodges chartered lodges on the frontier, which eventually became a part of new grand lodges organized in the territories which eventually became states of the American Union. It is a settled point of Masonic law in the United States that there is an inherent right of three lodges in a territory/state to form its own grand lodge, and the parent grand lodge or grand lodge could not object to one of its lodges leaving the parent jurisdiction and forming a new grand lodge. But the application of this principle in the current Masonic world raises serious questions. In recent years grand lodges that are otherwise acknowledged to be “regular” by most other grand lodges considering themselves as such, have experienced lodges seceding from them and forming new grand lodges. These secessions are often the result of bitter quarrels within the original grand lodge, and the resultant creation of a new grand lodge by three or more lodges is generally considered to be “illegitimate,” and the resultant grand lodge “irregular.” However, that has not uniformly been the case.

Two recent examples of this problem involve the Grand Lodge of Baja California and the French National Grand Lodge. In 2005, some lodges in the Grand Lodge of Baja California seceded and formed their own grand lodge. They claimed to be the successor of the original grand lodge, which they then declared as “irregular.” This declaration had nothing to do with any of the usual conditions of regularity. The charges against the original grand lodge were that a grand master

¹⁵ *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, Vol. 96, 1983, p. 111ff.

¹⁶ Haffner, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

had exceeded his authority and was guilty of inappropriate conduct toward some of the lodges. Instead of fighting a battle within the grand lodge, several of the lodges withdrew and formed their own grand lodge – a grand lodge that was a mirror of the original one to all intents and purposes.

This splinter grand lodge subsequently obtained recognition as the legitimate grand lodge of Baja California from the Confederation of Regular Grand Lodges of Mexico, the Interamerican Masonic Conference, and the World Conference of Regular Grand Lodges. The Grand Lodge of California continued to recognize and support the original grand lodge, and the situation in Baja California has still not been resolved, even after ten years. Despite support for the splinter grand lodge by some outside agencies, its regularity is still in dispute because of the manner in which it was formed. Most lists of conditions for the formation of a new grand lodge do not address the issue of the withdrawal of lodges *within* a given territory from the original grand lodge, and the issue of “regularity” is not really addressed by such rules.

A similar situation prevails in France. After several years of turmoil within the French National Grand Lodge, some lodges withdrew from the GLNF and formed the Grand Lodge of the French Alliance. As with the situation in the Grand Lodge of Baja California, rules pertaining to the formation of new grand lodges are not completely clear when it comes to the formation of a new grand lodge out of an existing grand lodge due to internal quarrels in the original grand lodge. Rules pertaining to regularity and recognition were formulated in a different era, and applying them with consistency in the contemporary world raises questions which are not easily answered. Nothing in the usual rules on the formation of a new grand lodge address the situation in occupied territory, except the suggestion that if the original grand lodge agrees, a new grand lodge can come into existence. If the new grand lodge is a result of a schism, such an agreement is extremely unlikely, and therefore begs the question as to whether three or more lodges can form a new grand lodge if they cannot get the permission of the original grand lodge to do so.

We now turn to issues of regularity, and consequent recognition itself. One way of doing this is to compare three sets of “rules” pertaining to “regularity” and consequent recognition of another grand lodge. The issue of Masonic Regularity, and consequent recognition of a lodge or a grand lodge as “regular” should, on the surface, seem to be an easy thing to establish. All one should have to do is to start with the rules and regulations of one’s own grand lodge (which, by definition, must always be right), and then apply those rules and regulations to other grand lodges. If another grand lodge fits the template, it must, by definition, be considered as “regular.” As I am a member of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of California, here are the provisions in the *California Masonic Code* pertaining to the “regularity” of another Grand Lodge:

§409.010. RECOGNITION.

Recognition is the grant of authority for Masons of this Jurisdiction to have Masonic Communication with Masons of a Lodge chartered by or holding allegiance to the recognized Grand Lodge. Grand Lodge may recognize only Grand Lodges that:

- A. Are regularly formed by subordinate Lodges which trace their origin to regular and legitimate Ancient Craft Masonry;

- B. Hold undisputed sway as the acknowledged sole or concurrent supreme power in Ancient Craft Masonry in the territory in which they claim jurisdiction, must not render allegiance or obedience, in any sense whatsoever, to any other Masonic power or Supreme Council, must recognize the jurisdiction of all other recognized Grand Lodges to the extent asserted by them in their respective territories, and must not presume to project their authority or sovereignty into the territory of another recognized Grand Lodge without its consent;
- C. Confine their authority and the exercise thereof to the three degrees of Craft or Symbolic Masonry; and
- D. Subscribe to the General Regulations of Masonry.

The foregoing notwithstanding, this Grand Lodge shall recognize only one Grand Lodge in any state or territory of the United States unless the Grand Lodge which this Grand Lodge recognizes with exclusive jurisdiction over that state or territory chooses to waive its right to maintain exclusive jurisdiction and permit concurrent jurisdiction. In the event of such a waiver, this Grand Lodge may also recognize such additional Grand Lodges in that state or territory as have been granted such concurrent jurisdiction.¹⁷

The United Grand Lodge of England sets forth provisions for recognition of other grand lodges in its *Book of Constitutions* as follows:

BASIC PRINCIPLES FOR GRAND LODGE RECOGNITION

Accepted by the Grand Lodge, September 4, 1929

1. Regularity of origin; i.e., each Grand Lodge shall have been established lawfully by a duly recognized Grand Lodge or by three or more regularity constituted Lodges.
2. That a belief in the G.A.O.T.U. and His revealed will shall be an essential qualification for membership.
3. That all Initiates shall take their Obligation on or in full view of the open Volume of the Sacred Law, by which is meant the revelation from above which is binding on the conscience of the particular individual who is being initiated.
4. That the membership of the Grand Lodge and individual Lodges shall be composed exclusively of men; and that each Grand Lodge shall have no Masonic intercourse of any kind with mixed Lodges or bodies which admit women to membership.

¹⁷ *California Masonic Code*, 2014 Edition.

5. That the Grand Lodge shall have sovereign jurisdiction over the Lodges under its control; i.e. that shall be a responsible, independent, self-governing organization, with sole and undisputed authority over the Craft or Symbolic Degrees (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason) within its Jurisdiction; and shall not in any way to subject to, or divide such authority with, a Supreme Council or other Power claiming any control or supervision over those degrees.
6. That the three Great Lights of Freemasonry (namely, the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and Compasses) shall always be exhibited when the Grand Lodge or its subordinate Lodges are at work, the chief of these being the Volume of the Sacred Law.
7. That the discussion of religion and politics within the Lodge shall be strictly prohibited.
8. That the principles of the Antient Landmarks, customs, and usages of the Craft shall be strictly observed.¹⁸

The Commission on Information for Recognition [of Foreign Grand Lodges] of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America, upon which grand lodges in North America rely for information leading to recognition of other grand lodges has the following statement of principles for recognition:

The standards for recognition are summarized as follows:

1. Legitimacy of origin.
2. Exclusive territorial jurisdiction except by mutual consent and/or treaty.
3. Adherence to the Ancient Landmarks – Specifically, a Belief in God, the Volume of the Sacred Law as an indispensable part of the Furniture of the Lodge, and the prohibition of the discussion of politics and religion.¹⁹

A comparison of these three documents shows that there are some similarities amongst them, with some common provisions. The comparison also reveals differences, some of which are significant. In addition there is ambiguity in these documents which the Commission document, published on its website, covers by stating that the principles it enunciates are only “summarized.” A comprehensive review of all the provisions of grand lodges throughout the world was not possible for this paper, but it is likely that some version of these provisions listed above would be similar in some respects, dissimilar in others, and ambiguous in many. A careful analysis of the principles of “regularity,” and the resultant “recognition” of one grand lodge by another may not seem to be of great importance, but it goes to the very heart of the nature of Freemasonry itself. Although there are political aspects to the reasons why one grand lodge will recognize another, the implications of such recognition go far beyond the temporary nature of

¹⁸ United Grand Lodge of England, Book of Constitutions, 2014. <http://www.ugle.org.uk/about/book-of-constitutions>

¹⁹ Commission on Information for Recognition, Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America, <http://www.recognitioncommission.org/>

political considerations. This paper will attempt to explain why “regularity” and concomitant “recognition” by one grand lodge of another is one of the most important questions facing Freemasonry today.

One way of looking at this issue is to use a different term. Rather than using the term “regular,” I would suggest that we use the term “authentic.” The term “regular” comes from the Latin word for “rule,” “regula,” and the use of the term “regular” seems to imply that an organization that can make rules can change the rules. But Freemasonry has a different concept of this idea. There are some rules (or regulations) that can be changed, and have been changed over time. But there is also an acknowledgement that there are some rules that *cannot* be changed because they are so fundamental to the nature of the organization that if they were to be changed the organization would not be recognizable. These fundamental rules are referred to by Freemasons as the *Ancient Landmarks*, and they are referred to in two of the three documents quoted above. The United Grand Lodge of England states that “recognition” of another grand lodge is consequent upon a determination “That the principles of the Antient Landmarks, customs, and usages of the Craft shall be strictly observed.....” by another Grand Lodge. The Commission summary has a similar statement. The section of the *California Masonic Code* incorporates that statement by reference, for the term “General Regulations of Masonry” is defined in Section 100.035 as:

“The Ancient Landmarks, or unwritten law of Masonry, and the craft’s ancient constitutions, regulations and charges, as the same may be and have been modified by specific action of this Grand Lodge.”

If there were some agreement as to what these “Ancient Landmarks” of Freemasonry are it would be simpler to determine which grand lodges are regular, and thus eligible for recognition by another grand lodge. Unfortunately such is not the case. Some grand lodges have adopted lists of “Landmarks” for their jurisdictions, but others have avoided doing so. A useful list of American grand lodges that have adopted some sort of a list of Landmarks can be found on the Internet.²⁰ But the reference to the “Ancient Landmarks” as a source for regularity and recognition is not particularly helpful unless they are defined. The result is even more confusion as to what is “authentic” in Freemasonry and what is not.

This confusion has been with us for a long time. In the Constitutions of 1723, James Anderson included the General Regulations “compiled first by Mr. George Payne, *Anno* 1720, when he was GRAND-MASTER, and approv’d by the GRAND-LODGE on *St. John Baptist’s Day, Anno* 1721, at *Stationer’s-Hall, LONDON;*”²¹ Regulation XXXIX stated “Every *Annual* GRAND-LODGE has an inherent Power and Authority to make *new Regulations*, or to alter these, for the real Benefit of this *ancient Fraternity*: Provided always that *the old LAND-MARKS be carefully preser’d*” That was no more helpful then than it is now.

Grand lodges have been altering the structure and thus the nature of Freemasonry ever since. Sometime in the 1730s the premier Grand Lodge at London reversed the passwords for the First and Second degrees, troubling many lodges, and which was ultimately listed as one of the causes for the formation of the *Antient* Grand Lodge in 1751. Since grand lodges are autonomous, the

²⁰ Bessel, Paul, “Landmarks of Freemasonry,” at <http://bessel.org/landmark.htm>

²¹ Anderson, James, *Constitutions of 1723*, “General Regulations.”

only restraint on their legislative enactments is the opinion of other grand lodges as to whether such enactments are consistent with the “Ancient Landmarks,” and since these are not defined, arguments have arisen through the years as to whether certain enactments of grand lodges are legitimate. The issue of legitimacy, or as I would term it, “authenticity” of Freemasonry is what the arguments over regularity and recognition are all about.

If Freemasonry were not an initiatic society, most of these arguments would be of an antiquarian interest only. If no one can define what the Landmarks are, why argue over something that no one can prove? Why not just ignore the issue and move on. The answer lies in the nature of Freemasonry as an initiatic society, and it is to this issue that we must next turn.

One of the fundamental principles common to all Masonic organizations is the initiatic tradition. Admission into a Masonic lodge is by initiation, and these initiations are secret. Initiations are not public ceremonies but are private ceremonies through which a candidate passes to become a member. The issue of the function of secrecy in Freemasonry was explored in a paper by Dr. Michael Pearce, published in the Spring, 2010, issue of the *Philalethes* journal.²² Dr. Pearce notes that “Secrecy is a fundamental necessity in the transformation of an initiate from an ordinary member of society to a member of a select group.” He further explains the paradox that the rituals of Freemasonry are widely known in published form, and yet are “secret”:

“Masonry is not unusual in its determined preservation of ritual in the face of centuries of repeated exposure; to all initiatory orders an emphasis upon the secrecy of the initiatory process is the mainstay of their survival. Secrecy is essential for effective rites of passage: initiates will be transformed by passing through the ritual, so they must be unaware of what to expect.”²³

Over the years there have been attempts by anti-masonic groups to lampoon Freemasonry by enacting the rituals for the public to see, and in more recent years, filming them and making them widely available. No one would claim that he or she had been made a Mason by viewing these films, regardless of the accuracy of them. The initiatic process is fundamental to Freemasonry and is one of the marks of authenticity. Although not often listed as a condition of “regularity,” it seems obvious that the preservation of the initiatic function is essential to any definition of Freemasonry. And yet none of the rules pertaining to “regularity” quoted above mention this important fact. It may be implied but is nowhere stated.

Rituals of Freemasonry almost universally required the candidate to promise not to divulge what has been experienced in the initiatic ceremonies, and that has been present in our rituals for a very long time. One example will suffice. In the Edinburgh Register House MS. (1696):

²² Pearce, Michael, “The Function of Secrecy in the Work of Freemasonry,” *Philalethes: The Journal of Masonic Research and Letters*, Vol. 63, No. 2.p. 16ff.

²³ *Ibid.*

By god himself and you shall answer to god when you shall stand nakd before him, at the great day, you shall not reveal any pairt of what you shall hear or see at this time whither by word nor write nor put it in wryte at any time nor draw it with the point of a sword, or any other instrument upon the snow or sand, nor shall you speak of it but with an entered mason, so help you god.²⁴

When a candidate enters a Masonic lodge he has to assume that all those present belong there. He then promises not to divulge what he has experienced to anyone not present, “except to him or them to whom they of right belong.” An excerpt from *Duncan’s Monitor* will illustrate this:

I, Peter Gabe, of my own free will and accord, in the presence of Almighty God, and this Worshipful Lodge, erected to Him, and dedicated to the holy Sts. John, do hereby and hereon (Master presses his gavel on candidate's knuckles) most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, that I will always hail, ever conceal, and never reveal, any of the arts, parts, or points of the hidden mysteries of Ancient Free Masonry, which may have been, or hereafter shall be, at this time, or any future period, communicated to me, as such, to any person or persons whomsoever, except it be to a true and lawful brother Mason, or in a regularly constituted Lodge of Masons; nor unto him or them until, by strict trial, due examination, or lawful information, I shall have found him, or them, as lawfully entitled to the same as I am myself.²⁵

The candidate does not know to whom he may reveal the information that he has received in his degree, and thus the lodge – or its grand lodge – must define it for him. That is the meaning of doing so “to a true and lawful brother...” or “in a regularly constituted Lodge....” The term “regularly constituted Lodge” must be defined by someone else, and this is the foundation upon which “regularity” of a lodge and a grand lodge rests. Lists of “basic rules” for recognition between grand lodges, in turn, rest upon this foundation. Unless this is acknowledged, the whole idea of “regularity” and “recognition” has no meaning. A Mason is not entitled, by the very nature of the initiatic process, and the obligation that he takes, to share the information with someone, or in the presence of others, who are not entitled to have it.

All this sounds rather simple, but it is not simple. As indicated in the General Regulations of 1720, grand lodges consider themselves entitled to change things in Freemasonry *as long as what they are changing are not a part of the fundamental nature of Freemasonry, which Masons refer to as the Ancient Landmarks*. But where do we turn for a definition of those Landmarks? I would suggest that there is a source that has not been acknowledged – the rituals themselves.

In the early fifth century, a disciple of St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Prosper of Aquitaine, wrote a book in which, in part, he set forth his understanding of the authority of the Apostolic See at Rome. His work is apparently the source of the maxim, “Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi” – the law of prayer is the law of belief. It is an affirmation that the liturgy of the Church, its “Law of Prayer,” is a source of belief rather than a result of belief. In other words, the beliefs of the Church were

²⁴ Knoop, Douglas, G. P. Jones, and Douglas Hamer, *The Early Masonic Catechisms*, p. 33.

²⁵ Duncan, Malcolm C. (2010-03-01). *Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor* (p. 19). Kindle Edition.

enshrined in its liturgy at a formative stage of theological development before more elaborate theological beliefs emerged. There is a parallel situation in Freemasonry which has received too little attention. The early rituals of Freemasonry are an important source of for our knowledge of the nature of Freemasonry. In most discussions about the “Landmarks” of Freemasonry this is an overlooked source. What do the early rituals tell us about the nature of Freemasonry? And how can they help us determine the “Landmarks”?

In keeping with the principle that Freemasonry is an initiatic society, it should be no surprise that we are not completely sure as to the validity of the fragments of ritual that survive from our earliest days as an organization. Many of them are in “Question and Answer” format, what is termed a “catechism,” that is, they were ways of delivering information about the Masonic degrees of those days to the candidate – what we would today call “lectures.” Often embedded in these catechisms are “catch questions” – questions, the answers to which only a Mason would know through participation in the Masonic ceremonies, or which were purposely created to “catch out” an imposter. But also embedded in these rituals is important information as to the nature of Freemasonry itself. An example is offered, from *A Mason’s Confession*, c. 1727:

Q. Who made you a mason? *A.* God almighty’s holy will made me a mason; the square, under God, made me a mason; nineteen fellow-crafts and thirteen entered prentices made me a mason²⁶

The early rituals assume a belief in God, and thus it is not inappropriate for a grand lodge to make such a belief a condition of “regularity” in its legislative enactments. However, that does not necessarily mean that everything in the old rituals is of “Landmark” standing. One might note that even the author of the above excerpt from the ritual went on to state that “N.B.” They do not restrict themselves to this number [nineteen fellow-crafts and thirteen entered prentices], though they mention it in their form of questions, but will do the thing with fewer.”²⁷ The rituals are a *source* of information, but are not a *comprehensive source* of information. Care must be exercised when making claims that are illogical or unsupported.

There is a further problem with quoting texts from our history, whether they are from rituals, or even from constitutional documents such as the *Constitutions of 1723*. In an address to the National Workshop on Christian Unity, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, Professor Amy-Jill Levine noted an abuse of history as a the basis for prescribing for the present. She said, “A text, without a context, is a pretext to say anything you want.”²⁸ We need to guard against making pronouncements about the nature of Freemasonry by quoting texts out of context, and then proclaiming that these are fundamental and unalterable precepts.

A clear example is the First Charge of 1723, with its statement that “A Mason is oblig’d by his Tenure, to obey the moral Law; and if he rightly understand the Art, he will never be a stupid *Atheist*, nor an irreligious *Libertine*.” Arguments over the meaning of this text often ignore the

²⁶ Douglas Knoop, *op.cit.*, p. 103.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, Lecture, “Hearing the Parables Anew,” delivered at the National Workshop on Christian Unity, April 20 – 23, 2015, at Charlotte, North Carolina. Dr. Levin is the University Professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University.

context in which it was written, whereby the text becomes, in the words of Dr. Levine, a “pretext” for whatever argument we wish to make. One could argue endlessly as to whether an *intelligent* Atheist is eligible to become a Mason, or whether a devout Libertine was actually “under the tongue of good report” if he went to church every Sunday! A much more fruitful discussion would be whether this condition for membership in Freemasonry made sense in the 18th century, but makes less sense in the 21st. And it would be more useful to discuss whether this text requires a belief in a personal god, or whether it can allow for a belief in a Supreme Being who may have created the universe millions of years ago, but who has no significance at all for people today.

That the latter question is not just academic is clear by comparing the conditions for considering a grand lodge “regular” by the Grand Lodge of California, and the United Grand Lodge of England. The *California Masonic Code* states that “Masonry is a fraternity composed exclusively of men ages 18 years and older who believe in a Supreme Being and a future existence.”²⁹ The Basic Principles for Grand Lodge Recognition of the United Grand Lodge of England state that “...a belief in the G.A.O.T.U. and His revealed will shall be an essential qualification for membership.” Which definition is a fundamental principle of Freemasonry? Which one is a “Landmark”? And how would we know?

All this is to indicate that while there may be substantial agreement in general on the nature of Freemasonry, and even some consistency amongst grand lodges as to what they consider “regular” Freemasonry to consist of, the discussion is not closed. It is obvious that some things that may have been considered fundamental at one time may no longer be considered so. An illustration of this is the “Doctrine of the Whole Youth.”

The 1723 Constitutions had the following statement: “The Persons admitted Member of a *Lodge* must be good and true Men, free-born, and of mature and discreet Age, no Bondmen, no Women, no immoral or scandalous Men, but of good Report.” In addition, these same Constitutions stated that:

Only *Candidates* may know, that no *Master* should take an *Apprentice*, unless he has sufficient Employment for him, and unless he be a perfect Youth, having no Main or Defect in his Body, that may render him incapable of learning the *Art*, or serving his *Master’s LORD*, and of being made a *Brother*.³⁰

This section of the Constitutions of 1723 has been used by grand lodges to exclude candidates who have physical disabilities, although this has significantly changed in recent times. It should be noted in passing that the Constitutions of 1723 are a curious mixture of rules pertaining to operative stonemasons as well as rules that are more appropriate for a society which had emerged from its operative roots into its modern, not operative status. This raises the question as to the validity of the Constitutions of 1723 as a source for constitutional law in Freemasonry. As Dr. Levine said, the lack of *context* in a text often becomes a *pretext* for what we want to do.

Is the first part of this statement from 1723 binding upon all future generations of Masons, while the second is not? If so, why? Why were we able to change the “discreet Age” provision (the age

²⁹ *California Masonic Code*, §200.010.

³⁰ Constitutions of 1723, Charge IV.

for admission was twenty-five years when this was written; now it is twenty-one in many grand lodges, and eighteen in some). Slavery has generally been abolished, so why are we concerned with “no Bondmen”? The prohibition against any “immoral or scandalous Men” still makes sense, but “no Women”? Why not? Can a man with no arms be made a Mason today? Doesn’t that “render him incapable of learning the *Art*.... and of being made a *Brother*?” If it does not, then why not?

There has been no real discussion of all this at the global level in Freemasonry for a very long time. I believe that it is time to remedy that fact. Freemasonry is divided into different camps. Each camp believes that it has all truth, and declares the other camps as either reactionary or as “irregular” and even “clandestine.” It is time to stop doing that and to engage in honest and fruitful dialogue. In order to make that happen each camp may need to take some risks that it might not be right in all that it presently does or believes. There are some serious questions that need to be laid bare and studied by some of the best minds that we can muster. The end result might not resolve all our differences, but it surely would reduce some of them.

In this paper I have tried to point out that our differences of opinion on what constitutes “regular” Freemasonry is not as simple as many would have us believe. I have further suggested that there are ambiguities that need to be discussed, if not resolved. What is the fundamental nature of Freemasonry? What are those things that, if changed, would alter it so that it is unrecognizable? What things that may be accidents of history have we enshrined as “fundamental” precepts, when they are nothing of the kind? How often do we treat our foundational texts as if they were a pretext to do what we want to do anyway, with no thought to the *context* of the time when they were written? Is there a better way than simply ignoring one another as Masons, or worse, attacking one another? If so, then the old questions are more important for us today than ever: “If not now, when? If not us, who?”

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Science and the Second Degree of Masonry

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The subject of tonight's lecture is "Science and the Second Degree of Masonry." The Second Degree of Masonry, or the Fellow Craft Degree, is widely considered to be the "intellectual degree" of Ancient Craft Masonry. The Entered Apprentice Degree introduces us to the Craft, and it presents to us the elemental working tools of a Freemason, together with a simple, but profound, promise to keep the secrets of Freemasonry that will be entrusted to us. The symbols are concrete in nature: a twenty-four inch gauge, a common gavel, a rough and perfect ashlar, a mosaic pavement, a blazing star, and such primary substances as chalk, charcoal and clay, among others. Some symbols are historic in nature, such as the reference to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness as having been a model for King Solomon's Temple, and thus for a Masonic lodge. And some are allegorical in nature, such as the Form of a Lodge extending from east to west and from north to south. But the symbolism is rather straightforward.

When we enter into the symbolism of the Fellow Craft Degree, it is obvious that the nature of the symbolism has changed. It has now become an allegory rather than simply a set of symbols presented to the candidate. In some Masonic rituals, Freemasonry is referred to as "a system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbol." A common dictionary definition of allegory is "the representation of abstract ideas by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form." As such, the candidate in the Fellow Craft Degree is introduced to the allegory of King Solomon's Temple in a unique way. Although the Entered Apprentice Degree uses the symbol of the Mosaic Pavement as a representation of human life, checkered with good and evil, it is essentially a static symbol. In the Second Degree of Masonry we are introduced to a dynamic symbol – actually an allegory – of King Solomon's Temple, whereby the candidate ascends a Winding Staircase and progresses through outer and inner doors to the Middle Chamber. These are not simple symbols, but rather an allegory that will be explored in this paper.

The title of this paper is "Science and the Second Degree of Masonry." Science, today, implies a body of knowledge that is based on observation and experiment. Again, the common dictionary definition of science is "the observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanation of phenomena." All of contemporary science is based upon observation – that which can be physically seen, even though we use instruments to enhance the senses. Until the invention of the telescope, it was not possible to see the universe in any meaningful way, and until the invention of the microscope, it was not possible to observe the minute forms of nature that lie below the threshold of our ordinary sight. Even the most elementary understanding today of astronomy, biology, and physics, leads us to understand that there is much beyond the ordinary powers of observation which enhancement and augmentation can bring about. The Hubble telescope has enabled us to gain knowledge of the universe that would have been unimaginable to Copernicus, and the electron microscope has enabled us to "see" a world that none knew existed before its invention.

Science also relies on the organization of what is observed in a systematic fashion. Hypotheses are made, and then subjected to confirmation. We are all familiar, perhaps, with the practice of proving the null hypothesis. The scientific method progresses according to established rules of

logic, and scientific inquiry is the process of disproving an idea – a hypothesis – rather than “proving” it. Truth is thus a temporary and moving target, subject to subsequent examination and confirmation. A theory is – again, according to the common dictionary definition – “a set of statements of principles devised to explain a group of facts or phenomena, especially one that has been repeatedly tested or is widely accepted and can be used to make predictions about natural phenomena.” That which is not testable by the use of observation or experiment is therefore, by definition, not scientific.

We also make a distinction between the natural sciences and the social sciences. Returning again to a dictionary definition, natural sciences are those that collectively “are involved in the study of the physical world and its phenomena, including biology, physics, chemistry, and geology, but excluding social sciences, abstract or theoretical sciences, such as mathematics, and applied sciences.” The “Staircase Lecture” of the Fellow Craft Degree introduces us to the last named subject, that of an “applied science”, by identifying “Operative Masonry” with “Architecture.” Listen to the words of the monitorial part of our lecture:

By Operative Masonry we allude to a proper application of the useful rules of architecture, whence a structure will derive figure, strength, and beauty, and from which will result a due proportion and just correspondence in all its parts. It furnishes us with dwellings and convenient shelters from the vicissitudes and inclemencies of the seasons; and, while it displays the effects of human wisdom, as well in the choice as in the arrangement of the several materials of which an edifice is composed, it demonstrates that a fund of science and industry is implanted in man for the best, most salutary and most beneficent purposes.

The lecture states that there is an innate quality within a human being that causes us to create structures in our world. In the context quoted, these structures are actually buildings, for we are told that the exercise of this faculty causes the construction of “dwellings and convenient shelters from the vicissitudes and inclemencies of the seasons....” However, the reference is not to a particular physical building, but rather to an abstract concept of a “dwelling” or an “edifice.”

This introduction to the Lecture of the Fellow Craft Degree is actually the beginning of the allegorical instruction regarding King Solomon’s Temple which will follow. It is easy to miss this allegory because our mind tends to concentrate on the supposed purpose of the use of the “applied science” of architecture, or “Operative Masonry,” rather than the concept behind it. What is really being described is a *paradigm*. The word “paradigm” comes from the Greek word, *parádeigma*, meaning a “pattern.” A *paradigm* is something that enables us to make sense of a series of phenomena that are observed. In the Lecture of the Fellow Craft Degree, the *pattern* of the observed phenomena that structures have “figure, strength and beauty,” to quote from the ritual, leads us to understand that the creation of structures that have this must spring from some source – and in this case, the source is the human mind. We will see, later, how important this idea is to an understanding of the allegory to be explained later in the Lecture of the Fellow Craft Degree.

Before proceeding further, however, it is important to understand another term related to our understanding of a paradigm or a “pattern” which is observed. In 1962 Thomas Samuel Kuhn, an American physicist, originated the term *paradigm shift* to describe the way in which a model of

scientific explanation evolves. If a paradigm is a pattern or model, and if it is later discarded and a different pattern or model replaces it, Kuhn calls this process a “paradigm shift.” An example of this is the Ptolemaic system of the universe in which the earth is at the center of the solar system, which was replaced by the heliocentric system of Copernicus. It should be noted in passing that the Entered Apprentice Degree apparently still has a Ptolemaic system in mind because we are shown the symbol of Jacob’s Ladder, “reaching from earth to heaven,” and no comment is made about the impossibility of this having occurred. Of course this is a reference to a story from Genesis concerning the Patriarch, Jacob, but nonetheless, we accept this symbol without much noticing that it belongs to an astronomical paradigm that few, if any, would accept today as a valid scientific statement of fact.

In his book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn is trying to understand why our patterns or models – our *paradigms* – change or shift over time. For example, he says:

Normal science does not aim at novelties of fact or theory and, when successful, finds none. New and unsuspected phenomena are, however, repeatedly uncovered by scientific research, and radical new theories have again and again been invented by scientists. History even suggests that the scientific enterprise has developed a uniquely powerful technique for producing surprises of this sort. If this characteristic of science is to be reconciled with what has already been said, then research under a paradigm must be a particularly effective way of inducing paradigm change. (Kuhn, p. 52)

The point of all this is that true scientific paradigms cannot be dogmatic. They must function to describe the internal consistency of the phenomena being studied, and subject it to testable hypotheses. They must also continue to focus on the anomalies produced by the paradigm because it is these anomalies that future breakthroughs may occur – even breakthroughs that may eventually destroy the paradigm itself. The Ptolemaic paradigm of the universe was not replaced so much by the fact that it was wrong – it accounted for observations at the time rather perfectly – but by the fact that anomalies observed eventually caused the entire paradigm to *shift* to a new one. It is this openness to change that is essential to the use of a paradigm, and it is this unique openness to the possibility of change in an understanding of truth that is the real nature of scientific inquiry.

It is important to keep this in mind when we return to the Fellow Craft Degree. At the conclusion of the degree, the Master delivers a lecture on a paradigm of the universe, and asks the candidate to join him in symbolically demonstrating the consequences of the discovery of this paradigm. I refer here to the following from our monitorial work:

By Geometry we may curiously trace nature through her various windings to her most concealed recesses. By it we discover the power, wisdom and goodness of the Great Artificer of the Universe, and view with delight the proportions which connect this vast machine. By it we discover how the planets move in their respective orbits, and demonstrate their various revolutions. By it we account for

the return of seasons, and the variety of scenes which each season displays to the discerning eye. Numberless worlds are around us, all framed by the same Divine Artist, which roll through the vast expanse, and are all conducted by the same unerring law of nature.

A survey of nature, and the observation of her beautiful proportions, first determined man to imitate the Divine plan, and to study symmetry and order. This gave rise to societies and birth to every useful art. The architect began to design; and the plans which he laid down, being improved by time and experience, have produced works which are the admiration of every age.

At this point in the ceremony, the candidate has already been introduced to the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences – grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. This set, or classification, of knowledge, once comprised the whole of our understanding of the world. It is introduced in the lecture not because Freemasons believe that it still encompasses all knowledge, but as a symbol of the completeness of knowledge which is important to an integrated mind. The vast quantity of knowledge today has made it the realm of the specialist, and it is perhaps easy to forget that there was a time when the truly educated man was expected to understand something about all fields of knowledge, as well as how they were interrelated. That may be an impossibility today, but there is much to be said for a broad education which gives a man an understanding of the important principles of many fields of knowledge, if not the details now confined to the specialist.

The Master calls the new Fellow Craft's attention to what Freemasons state to be the most important of these seven branches of knowledge – geometry. The candidate has already received an explanation of geometry, or at least an abbreviated explanation, by the Senior Deacon. Now the Master explains why geometry is considered by Freemasons to be the most important of the sciences. The observations that the Master makes are two:

- The observable world is the result of the operation of the “unerring law of nature,” and
- The laws of nature are the result of the “power, wisdom, and goodness of the Great Artificer of the Universe.”

The symbolic consequences of this assertion is that all Masons, from the youngest Entered Apprentice in the northeast corner of the lodge to the Worshipful Master in the East, should acknowledge this in an esoteric fashion revealed to the Fellow Craft at this important juncture.

At this point it is important to realize that this section of the lecture is a *paradigm*, and not a dogmatic assertion. By making this portion of the lecture of the Fellow Craft Degree into a statement of fact rather than a paradigm that leads us to further investigation is to miss the point. After all, we have already made our point about the existence of God for the candidate. At the beginning of his Masonic journey we asked him in whom he put his trust, and then, in the lecture that followed, we told him that “no atheist can ever be made a Mason.” The purpose of the lecture about geometry in the Fellow Craft Degree is not to deliver a dogmatic statement about the nature of the universe to the Fellow Craft, but rather to present him with a *paradigm* for him

to explore. You will remember that I said earlier that Thomas Kuhn observed that the purpose of a paradigm is to bring order to a set of facts, and to encourage the testing of the paradigm in order to demonstrate the null hypothesis – to discard what does not work for the paradigm, and also to open the door to new discoveries as anomalies which do not fit the paradigm are pursued. And he told us that this is the genius of the scientific enterprise. It imposes order on our thought processes and enables us to test what we believe to be true, without suppressing the possibility that the paradigm might eventually be replaced by a better paradigm. In a like fashion, Freemasonry does not present the candidate with a set of beliefs, or dogmas, which must be uncritically accepted, but instead encourages him to passionately pursue the search for truth. To make the statement that “numberless worlds are around us, which roll through the vast expanse, and are all conducted by the same unerring law of nature,” is not so much statement of fact as it is a statement of a hypothesis associated with a particular paradigm of how the universe operates. We are not asking the Fellow Craft to accept a particular concept of astronomy; we are presenting him with a starting point for his own investigation of the universe.

To illustrate this better, we need to know a bit more about where the Fellow Craft Degree came from, and something about its probable author. We also need to know something of the towering figure of Eighteenth Century science – Sir Isaac Newton. Newton was born in 1643, and died in 1727. So far as we know he was not a Freemason, but he had tremendous influence on Freemasonry as it evolved from a simple stonemasons guild into the modern fraternity that we know today. His *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, published in 1687, is one of the most important scientific books ever written.

Just as the Commonwealth was coming to a close, and Charles II was returning to London to take the throne in 1661, a group of some twelve scientists who had been meeting from time to time in London, and who had called themselves “The Invisible College,” requested and received a charter from the King as “The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge,” known more simply in history as “The Royal Society.” The purpose of the society was to encourage the investigation of knowledge, and more especially the “new science” as promoted by Sir Francis Bacon in his book *New Atlantis*, first published in 1624. The Royal Society is still in existence today, and acts as a scientific advisor to the British government. Many of its early members have been identified as Freemasons, or were closely associated with those that we know to have been Freemasons. Sir Christopher Wren, the great architect, is one. Recent research has confirmed that he was a member of the lodge that met at the Goose and Gridiron in St. Paul’s Churchyard – now the Lodge of Antiquity No. 2 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of England. Sir Isaac Newton was president of the Royal Society from 1703 until his death in 1727.

One of the founders of the first Grand Lodge in 1717 was Dr. John Theophilus Desaguliers, a respected member of the Royal Society, and a close friend of Sir Isaac Newton. A priest of the Church of England, Desaguliers was also a rationalist, and curator of experiments for the Royal Society. He was born in 1683 in France, the son of Huguenot parents, who fled France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes by Louis XIV in 1685. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes imposed harsh penalties on Protestants, such as the Desaguliers family. Parents could leave the country, but they could not take their children with them, who were to remain in France and be raised as Catholics. John’s father smuggled him out of the country in a barrel – certainly a

traumatic experience for a young boy. John apparently never forgot this episode in his life, and Freemasonry, with its attendant toleration of men of all religious faiths, was particularly attractive to him. He was the third Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, having been installed as such in 1719.

We do not know how the Fellow Craft Degree came into existence, but there is a strong belief amongst some Masonic students that it was the creation of Dr. Desaguliers. If so, then its content reflects his interest in science and the pursuit of knowledge. Dr. Margaret Jacob has documented the close association of Freemasonry with the development of the scientific spirit during this time period, and so it is no surprise that Desaguliers should have been able to import the philosophy so closely associated with the Royal Society into the Second Degree of Freemasonry.

Our evidence for the content of the Fellow Craft Degree in the earliest times is, of course, the various Masonic exposures, which began to appear around 1696, and became more common after the formation of the Grand Lodge in 1717. From those sources we know that some of the content which eventually ended up in the Second Degree may have been present in the earlier Admission Ceremony. Material that later found its way into the Fellow Craft Degree, and even the Master Mason Degree, is found, jumbled together, in the earlier exposés. For example, in *A Mason's Examination*, published in April, 1723, we find the following:

A Fellow I was sworn most rare,
And know the Astler, Diamond, and Square:
I know the Master's Part full well,
As honest *Maughbin* will you tell.

If a Master-Mason you would be,
Observe you well the *Rule of Three*;
And what you want in Masonry,
Thy *Mark* and *Maughbin* makes thee free.

With the possible exception of the *Wilkinson Manuscript*, which has been attributed to the late 1720's, the first mention of the "Letter G" as a part of our ritual is Prichard's *Masonry Dissected*, published in 1730. This is the first exposé to have the three degrees of Masonry, and thus many students are of the opinion that this represents the development of the ritual during the second and third decades of the 18th century. The "Letter G" is associated here with both "Geometry" and "God", and while we know that Geometry was considered the most important of the Liberal Arts and Sciences in the old Gothic Constitutions, it is only when we come to the 1730 exposure that we find that "Geometry" and "God" are set forth as essentially meaning the same thing. I do not believe that this is an accident. A fertile mind, such as that of Desaguliers, was quite capable of taking the subject of "Geometry" from the old manuscript "constitutions" which had originally been read at the making of a Mason before the advent of the Grand Lodge era, and adding to it the concept of "God" considered as the "Grand Geometrician of the Universe." Here is what *Masonry Dissected* says:

Q. Are you a Fellow-Craft? A. I am.

Q. Why was you made a Fellow-Craft? A. For the sake of the Letter G.

Q. What does that G denote? A. Geometry, or the fifth Science.

.....

Q. When you came into the middle [chamber], what did you see?

A. The Resemblance of the Letter G

Q. What doth that G denote? A. One that's greater than you.

Q. Who's greater than I, that am a Free and Accepted Mason,
The Master of a Lodge?

A. The Grand Architect and Contriver of the Universe, or He that was taken up to
the top of the Pinnacle of the Holy Temple.

A. Can you repeat the Letter G? A. I'll do my Endeavour.

The Repeating of the Letter G

In the midst of *Solomon's* Temple there stands a G,
A Letter fair for all to read and see,
But few there be that understands
What means that Letter G.

My Friend, if you pretend to be
Of this Fraternity,
You can forthwith and rightly tell
What means that Letter G.

By Sciences are brought to Light
Bodies of various Kinds,
Which do appear to perfect Sight;
But none but Males shall know my Mind.

The Right shall [Response] If Worshipful.

Both Right and Worshipful I am,
To Hail you I have Command,
That you do forthwith let me know,
As I you may understand.

By Letters Four and Science Five
This G aright doth stand,
In a due Art and Proportion,
You have you Answer, Friend.

My Friend, you answer well,
If Right and Free Principles you discover,
I'll change your Name from Friend,
And henceforth call you Brother.

The Sciences are well compos'd

Of noble Structure's Verse,
A Point, a Line, and an Outside;
But a Solid is the last.

It must be remembered that what *Masonry Dissected* is “exposing” is the lectures that follow each degree, which, in those days, were in “question and answer” format, or what we call a “catechism.” It does not purport to give the “working”, i.e., the conferral of the degree. However, it is entirely possible that this excerpt, which is in the form of a poem, is actually what was said to the candidate when he was presented with the “Letter G” during the ceremony of being made a Fellow Craft Mason. Note that there are echoes here of an earlier placement in the more simple “Admission Ceremony,” or at least an echo of the early practice of “initiating and passing” on the same night. The candidate’s name is changed from “friend” to “brother” at this point – something that we would have expected to be in the Entered Apprentice Degree and not in the Fellow Craft Degree.

There is nothing in Prichard to indicate that the Winding Staircase of King Solomon’s Temple was a part of the ceremony at this stage, although it could have been. The reference to the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences in the excerpt certainly leaves this as an open question. The Lecture of the Fellow Craft Degree represents a transition between the traditional “question and answer” form of the lecture and the later narrative lectures with which we are familiar. In our present work, the Senior Deacon gives the first part of the lecture, and it is a lecture that is given “in transit.” The candidate is conducted on a symbolic journey through a part of King Solomon’s Temple, up a Winding Staircase, and into the Middle Chamber where he receives further instruction from the Master in a narrative lecture. The most important part of that lecture is an explanation of the significance of Geometry, and its association with an understanding of God. I have previously quoted part of the monitorial part of the lecture, but here I will quote it in full. It may be that this “speech” on the part of the Master represents the essentials of what the candidate was told about Geometry and its importance through what was originally an extemporaneous commentary:

By Geometry we may curiously trace nature through her various windings to her most concealed recesses. By it we discover the power, wisdom and goodness of the Great Artificer of the Universe, and view with delight the proportions which connect this vast machine. By it we discover how the planets move in their respective orbits, and demonstrate their various revolutions. By it we account for the return of seasons, and the variety of scenes which each season displays to the discerning eye. Numberless worlds are around us, all framed by the same Divine Artist, which roll through the vast expanse, and are all conducted by the same unerring law of nature.

A survey of nature, and the observation of her beautiful proportions, first determined man to imitate the Divine plan, and to study symmetry and order. This gave rise to societies and birth to every useful art. The architect began to design; and the plans which he laid down, being improved by time and experience, have produced works which are the admiration of every age.

The lapse of time, the ruthless hand of ignorance, and the devastations of war, have laid waste and destroyed many valuable monuments of antiquity on which the utmost exertions of human genius were employed. Even the Temple of Solomon, so spacious and magnificent, and constructed by so many celebrated artists, escaped not the unsparing ravages of barbarous force. Freemasonry, notwithstanding, has still survived. The attentive ear receives the sound from the instructive tongue, and the mysteries of Masonry are safely lodged in the repository of faithful breasts. Tools and implements of architecture most expressive are selected by the Fraternity to imprint upon the memory wise and serious truths; and thus, through the succession of ages, are transmitted unimpaired the most excellent tenets of our Institution.

Preston did not invent his material, but rather edited material that he found already in use. The substance of this lecture may well have been that which was developed in the 1720s by Desaguliers for the new Fellow Craft Degree. As pointed out earlier, it represents a Newtonian view of the universe, and is an appropriate expansion of the lecture on the “Letter G.” We do not know if the material that Preston developed for his *Illustrations of Masonry* was present in 1720, but there is a likelihood that it was. Given the conservative nature of Masonic ritual, it seems unlikely that such a major development could have occurred after 1730. What we know of the history of Grand Lodge after 1730 would indicate that most innovation in the ritual had come to an end by that date, and that the Grand Lodge was increasingly preoccupied with internal quarrels, and with attempts by imposters to break into lodges through the use of the “exposures.” Sometime in the 1730s they switched the passwords of the first and second degrees to catch out imposters, and this action was one of the causes of the eventual creation of the Ancients’ Grand Lodge. In addition, social distinctions began to become more important in lodges under the premier Grand Lodge, and Irish Masons in London, for example, apparently were excluded. Again, this was one of the motives for the formation of the Grand Lodge of England According to the Old Institutions (the “Ancients”) in 1751. Finally, it seems as if the “Moderns,” as the original Grand Lodge came to be termed, were more interested in eating and drinking than they were in practicing Masonry. If the lecture on the “Letter G” had come into existence after 1730 it seems likely that this would have been one of the charges of changing the ritual leveled by the Ancients against the Moderns. That it was not seems to indicate that it happened in the formative period of speculative Freemasonry, the period when Desaguliers was active in Grand Lodge.

In the beginning of this paper I pointed out the importance of the concept of a paradigm to science. I would suggest that the creation of a separate Fellow Craft Degree in the 1720s gave our Masonic ancestors an unparalleled opportunity to use the paradigm of Newtonian science to expand our understanding of Freemasonry. Although the members of the Royal Society would not have understood the term “paradigm,” I think that they would have understood the concept. The Newtonian system was a *model* or *pattern* of thinking that brought observable phenomena into relation to one another so that the implications could be explored. The whole concept of the Newtonian system is that it is open-ended. It is not the end of the discussion, but the beginning. So I believe it is with Freemasonry.

Freemasonry is neither a closed system of thinking, nor a body of knowledge that must be accepted by its members as absolute truth, or dogma. Far from it. It is an attempt to translate into the social sphere what the Royal Society was attempting to translate into the sphere of natural philosophy – what today we call Science. Just as the scientific mindset is a process of accommodating the search for truth to rigorous examination and experimentation, so Freemasonry encourages its followers to do that in the social sphere – and even the political sphere. It is no accident, in my opinion, that some of the most enlightened thinkers have always been attracted to Freemasonry. The noble experiment that became the United States of America is a case in point. We know that Freemasons were not only involved in the creation of the American republic, but that the philosophy and teachings of Freemasonry were present at its birth. The essence of Freemasonry is congruent with scientific thinking, and the Second Degree of Masonry brings this to our attention in a way that makes an indelible imprint on our minds. We close the Fellow Craft Degree with a statement of that fact, and with that same statement, I will close this paper:

Masonry is a progressive moral science divided into different degrees; and, as its principles and mystic ceremonies are regularly developed and illustrated, it is intended and hoped that they will make a deep and lasting impression upon your mind.

Ethnic Diversity in California Freemasonry

John L. Cooper III, Ph.D., President Institute for Masonic Studies

The question of ethnic diversity in Freemasonry might seem strange in that the fraternity makes claim to universality. *For in every country and in every clime are Masons to be found*, as the words of the lecture of the First Degree of Masonry in California puts it. Freemasonry boasts that it disregards both race and ethnicity in accepting men who are *under the tongue of good report* as aspirants for its mysteries. Masonic law in California backs up that ancient principle, for our code makes it clear that men of every race and culture are entitled to apply for the degrees of Masonry in our Grand Lodge. And yet a study of the history of Freemasonry in California amply demonstrates that issues of ethnicity have been important. This paper is, therefore, an attempt to relate some of the issues pertaining to ethnic groups that have had an impact on the practice of Freemasonry in California since the founding of the Grand Lodge in 1850.

Getting information for a study of ethnic diversity in California Freemasonry – or rather within the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of California – is itself a challenge. The *California Masonic Code* makes it clear that race and ethnicity are not to be considered when it comes to membership:

§200.010. CORE VALUES.

Masonry is a fraternity composed exclusively of men ages 18 years and older who believe in a Supreme Being and a future existence and who support the other Ancient Landmarks. The membership in Masonry of anyone who does not comply with the foregoing is automatically terminated. Racial or ethnic background, color of skin, political views or religious belief, except for the requirement of a belief in a Supreme Being and a future existence, shall not be a consideration either for membership or visitation.

Since neither racial nor ethnic background can be considered for membership in lodges under the Grand Lodge of California, no statistics on ethnicity or race are kept by Grand Lodge. The information available is either found in the histories of Grand Lodge (of which there have been three since its founding in 1850), or indirectly through references in the *Proceedings* to events that pertain primarily to language rather than directly to ethnicity.

It is important at the outset to understand that this paper concerns lodges under the Grand Lodge of California. No attempt has been made to look at the issues of race and ethnicity in other masonic organizations in California, except insofar as they touch upon actions of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of California (hereinafter referred to as “Grand Lodge”). This paper will discuss non-recognized Freemasonry existing in California at the appropriate time, as well as the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of California, with which our Grand Lodge is in amity, but only from the point of view of the influence of these organizations on the

Grand Lodge of California. Understanding this at the outset will ensure that no erroneous conclusions are reached about the lack of data on these organizations in the paper. Further studies using information from and about these organizations might shed additional light on the issue at hand in a future paper.

Foreign Language Lodges

Many jurisdictions have foreign language lodges, or masonic lodges that work in a language other than the prevailing one used in the jurisdiction of a grand lodge. California is no exception. On June 6, 1851, Grand Master John A. Tutt issued a dispensation for La Parfaite Union Lodge No. 17 in San Francisco – only slightly more than one year after the Grand Lodge of California was founded. Little is known about the circumstances surrounding its formation because the original records were destroyed in the great San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of April 18, 1906. The lodge continues to work the three degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry in French, although the Fellow Craft and Master Mason degrees are French translations of the York Rite Preston-Webb working of the Grand Lodge of California. For some unknown reason the lodge was allowed to work the Entered Apprentice Degree not only in French, but using a Scottish Rite Ritual rather than the York Rite ritual. This ritual may have come from a member who affiliated in 1852 with the lodge – Most Worshipful Bro. Lucien Herman, who had been Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana in 1848-1849.¹ Herman was the second Master of the lodge, and the Master when the charter was received from Grand Lodge. The lodge continues in existence today as a constituent lodge of the Grand Lodge of California.

On October 15, 1897, the Grand Lodge of California issued a charter to the second lodge working Scottish Rite Grand Lodge in France – formed in French in California – Vallee de France Lodge No. 329, in Los Angeles. The lodge had originally been chartered by the Symbolic in the aftermath of an attempt to create an independent Craft grand lodge out of the Scottish Rite Supreme Council in the 1890s. The lodge returned its charter to France, and accepted a charter from the Grand Lodge of California. Although it had undoubtedly worked the three degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry using a Scottish Rite ritual, the conditions under which its charter was granted by the Grand Lodge of California were the same as for La Parfaite Union No. 17 a half-century earlier. They were permitted to work the Entered Apprentice Degree using a Scottish Rite ritual, but were required to use the York Rite Preston-Webb ritual of the Grand Lodge of California for the Fellow Craft and Master Mason degrees. As does La Parfaite Union No. 17, Vallee de France Lodge No. 329 continues to work today as a constituent lodge of the Grand Lodge of California, although, like its sister lodge in San Francisco, it has maintained its existence with some difficulty because of the limited number of French-speaking residents in California nowadays.

The second lodge working in a foreign language in California was Hermann Lodge No. 127. The dispensation for that lodge was issued by Grand Master Nathaniel G. Curtis on March 6, 1858. The lodge met in San Francisco, and worked in German. The lodge continued in existence until January 6, 2003, when it surrendered its charter. It did not consolidate with any other lodge, and at its demise, listed only twenty-nine members of its rolls. It continued to work in German,

¹ Whitsell, Leon O., *One Hundred Years of Freemasonry in California*, Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of California, ©1950, p.225.

even through the difficult years of World War I, and its records were kept in both English and German from the start.² It should be noted that the lodge was named for the great German hero, Hermann, otherwise known as Arminius, who led the Germans in a successful uprising against the Romans, whom he defeated at the Battle of the Teutoberg Forest in A.D. 9. An account of this can be read in the *Annals* of the Roman historian Tacitus. The founders of the lodge were obviously familiar with this story, and named their lodge after the great German chieftain of the Cheruci.

The third foreign language lodge chartered in California was Speranza Italiana Lodge No. 219. On September 16, 1871, Grand Master Leonidas E. Pratt issued a dispensation to a group of Italian Masons in San Francisco to form a lodge working in Italian. The formation of this new lodge followed closely upon events in Italy that had resulted in the creation of the modern state of Italy, and the great hero of the “Reunification” of Italy, Giuseppe Garibaldi, who was a Freemason, and the first Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy. The name, Speranza Italiana, means “Italian Hope” in English, and was an apt name for this new lodge. The charter was granted by Grand Lodge on October 11, 1872. The lodge continued to work in Italian until its consolidation with Golden Gate Lodge No. 30 in 1966. By that time, candidates who spoke Italian had become few and far between, and the consolidation with an English-speaking lodge in San Francisco meant that there would no longer be an Italian-speaking lodge on the rolls of the Grand Lodge of California.

On October 14, 1913, a charter was issued by Grand Lodge to a lodge in Los Angeles to work in the German language. The name and number of this lodge were Germania Lodge No. 438. The lodge consolidated with an English-speaking lodge in 1958, and today as Metropolitan Lodge No. 352, which meets in Downey, a suburb of Los Angeles. In the beginning it was authorized to work the three degrees of Masonry in German – using the York Rite Preston-Webb ritual of the Grand Lodge of California.

This lodge had a rather stormy existence during its years on the rolls of the Grand Lodge of California. In 1918, due to the hysteria occasioned by the war with German in World War I, the lodge petitioned Grand Lodge to change its name to “Acacia” Lodge No. 438, which was granted. It continued to work in German, however, through all these years, and continued to be a “German-speaking” lodge through the even more difficult years of the 1950’s and World War II.

In 1935 Acacia Lodge No. 438 ran afoul of Grand Lodge, and had its charter suspended. Apparently controversy had broken out in the lodge, causing Grand Master Randolph V. Whiting to suspend the charter of the lodge on September 30, 1935. This was just before the Annual Communication of Grand Lodge, and after the Annual Communication, the charter was returned by Grand Master Earl Warren. The name “Earl Warren” may be familiar to you. He was appointed by President Dwight Eisenhower, and confirmed by the United States Senate, as 14th Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court in 1953. The conditions of the return of the charter were that Acacia Lodge No. 438 should thereafter work its degrees in German, but keep its minutes in English, so that Grand Lodge would be aware of what it was up to!³

² Whitsell, *op. cit.*, p. 1038.

³ Whitsell, *Op. Cit.*, p. 1824.

There is a further footnote to the history of Acacia Lodge No. 438. Although it had disappeared as a separate lodge in 1958 when it consolidated with Arlington Lodge No. 414 (later to become Metropolitan Lodge No. 352), the name had not disappeared from history. In 2001 the Grand Lodge of California carried on its rolls a lodge named “Acacia Lodge No. 243,” a relatively new name occasioned by a consolidation lodges in Northern California. In that year, Grand Master David C. Decker, received an email from a journalist in the Republic of Belarus. Belarus is the former Belorussia, a constituent “state” of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which had dissolved in 1990. The Nazi invasion of 1941 had brought German soldiers to this country, and one who died in the invasion, had a letter on his body, which was from the Master of Acacia Lodge No. 438 in Los Angeles. The dead soldier was a cousin of the Master, and the letter was found in the archives abandoned by the Soviets when the USSR disintegrated in 1990. These archives became public property, and in 2001 the journalist in Belarus had sent an email to Grand Master David C. Decker asking about a letter found in the archives. The Grand Master referred it to the then Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge (the author of this paper), who researched it in the records of Grand Lodge. The author of the letter to this young German soldier was located in the “card files” of Grand Lodge from 1941, and confirmed that Acacia Lodge No. 438 had been in contact with him through the Master of the lodge, who was his cousin. Thus a “footnote” to history was confirmed. Acacia Lodge No. 438 had been in touch with Germans fighting on the Eastern Front in 1941, and a letter, found in the pocket of a dead German soldier, connected with a California lodge in Los Angeles at the same time!

In 2001, Grand Master Decker received an email from a journalist in Belarus asking about “Acacia Lodge.” He had found “Acacia Loge No. 243” on our website, and thought it might be “Acacia Lodge No. 438.” It was not. Careful research into the records of Grand Lodge indicated that it was “Acacia Lodge No. 438” rather than the more recent “Acacia Lodge No. 243.” A chapter in the history of Acacia Lodge No. 438 was thus closed more than forty-three years after the lodge had technically ceased to exist.

Maya Lodge No. 793 was chartered by Grand Lodge in the 1960’s as a lodge for Spanish-speaking and Spanish-heritage brethren *working in English*. In the early 1990’s they obtained permission to work the three degrees of Ancient Craft Masonry in Spanish – using the ritual of the Grand Lodge of California. Although their stated meetings were conducted in English, and their records were kept in English, the lodge was for all intents and purposes a “Hispanic” lodge. Until 2004, they were the only Spanish-speaking lodge in this jurisdiction, despite the fact that the Spanish-speaking population of California is now approaching 50%. In that year, Grand Master Howard Kirkpatrick determined that he would encourage the creation of foreign-language lodges in California, and during his tenure as Grand Master, he issued dispensations to two such lodges. Panamericana Lodge No. 849 was chartered by Grand Lodge in 2005 as a lodge working in Spanish. In 2008, it absorbed a Filipino Lodge, Cahuenga – La Brea Lodge No. 513, and now has the number “513.” However, it is still a Spanish-speaking lodge: Panamericana Lodge No. 513.

The second foreign-language lodge that was issued a dispensation by Grand Master Howard Kirkpatrick in 2005 was Ararat Lodge No. 848, an Armenian lodge. At the time of its dispensation, they did not have a ritual in Armenian. The lodge worked in English until the California ritual could be translated into Armenian, and still works in English as of 2010, except

for the Entered Apprentice Degree, which they work in Armenian. This situation illustrates a change from the earlier formation of foreign-language lodges in California. In the case of the French-speaking and German-speaking community, as well as the Italian-speaking community, the desire for the formation of a lodge working in those languages was truly a “grass roots” movement. The same thing can be said about a Spanish-speaking lodge, although for the first thirty years of the existence of Maya Lodge No. 793, there was no expressed desire to work in Spanish. Then – in 2004 – the impetus for new foreign-language lodges came from the Grand Master. This was a result of a recognition that California had become a multi-lingual state, and that the creation of lodges working in languages other than English would be desirable. The result has not been particularly good. Although we now have an additional lodge working in Spanish, and a lodge partially working in Armenian, neither lodge has exhibited the strength that a new lodge should have demonstrated. The slowness with which Ararat Lodge No. 848 has progressed toward the translation of the ritual into Armenian is an example of the rather lukewarm reception that an Armenian-speaking lodge has had within the Armenian-speaking community, and the similar slowness with which Panamericana Lodge No. 513 has progressed in obtaining new Spanish-speaking members is an example of the difficulty of a “top-down” approach to the creation of foreign-language lodges in California.

Speranza Italiana Lodge No. 219 did not survive as a foreign-language lodge, and merged with an English-speaking lodge in 1966. California thus has two French-speaking lodges, which are just barely hanging on, two Spanish-speaking lodges, both of which are in Southern California and neither of which is thriving, and an Armenian-speaking lodge, which is experiencing a similar lack of success. It is thus apparent that the effort of the Grand Lodge of California to promote “ethnic” lodges in recent times has not been successful.

The Chinese Acacia Club

The Chinese Acacia Club of San Francisco is unique in California Freemasonry. It is not a lodge, but rather a club of Freemasons of Chinese ancestry, and has been in existence since 1946. The history of this club was furnished to the author by Bro. Sydney Pond, a past president of the Chinese Acacia Club, and an active Freemason in San Francisco.

There was apparently an initial interest in forming a lodge of Chinese Freemasons as early as 1922.⁴ The lodge, to be known as Educator Lodge, received a dispensation from Grand Master William A. Sherman on April 19, 1922, and a charter at the Annual Communication in October of that year. However, his original plan of creating this lodge as a Chinese lodge did not materialize. Whitsell’s history has this cryptic remark:

.... it is known that among the things discussed was a proposal to take in a number of Chinese brethren, qualify them to hold office in the proposed Lodge, and have them fill the chairs of the Caucasian brethren who would retire at the earliest opportunity. The plan seemed a good one at first. Then, like many other ideas that come up on preliminary meetings, it met too much criticism and had to be abandoned.⁵

⁴ Whitsell, *op. cit.* p. 1260, and Pond, Sydney, unpublished history of the Chinese Acacia Club, 2010.

⁵ *Ibid.*

It would be intriguing to know what this criticism was, and particularly in light of the fact that the Grand Lodge of California already had “ethnic” lodges in existence at this time – French, German, and Italian. However, it must be remembered that California was the home of significant anti-Chinese sentiment, which had only begun to abate in the years after World War I. A summary of this attitude is appropriate here:

From their arrival during the Gold Rush, the Chinese experienced discrimination and often overt racism, and finally exclusion. Action often in the form of Legislation was used against Chinese immigrants and started as early as the 1850 foreign Miners' License Tax law. In 1854 was the California State Supreme Court categorizing Chinese with Blacks and Indians, and denying them there right to testify against white men in courts of law. During the 1870s, an economic downturn resulted in serious unemployment problems, and led to more heightened outcries against Asian immigrants. The Chinese often became the scapegoats for business owners who paid them low wages. This willingness to work for lower wages along with the productivity of the Chinese workers ignited the ire of white labor in California. Racist labor union leaders directed their actions and the anger of unemployed works at the Chinese, blaming them for depressed wages, lack of jobs, and accusing them of being morally corrupt. Denis Kearney, head of the Workingmen's Party of California, led this inflammatory battle against the Chinese. As a consequence of this hostility, local and statewide restrictions continued to be enforced against the Chinese. Eventually, the United States government passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This barred Chinese laborers from immigrating for ten years. Only officials, teachers, students, merchants, and travelers were allowed to enter. The Chinese currently in the United States were barred from naturalization. China, as the home country for these immigrants, was unable to exert any influence on American policy. This law stood in place till it was repealed in 1943.⁶

While the more open forms of discrimination against the Chinese may have been avoided by Freemasonry, the Craft is not immune to the larger social context in which it operates, and it may have been a form of racial or ethnic discrimination which prevented the plan with Educator Lodge No. 554 from moving forward. The lodge never had a significant Chinese membership, and became just another urban lodge in San Francisco. In 1979, it was absorbed by consolidation with San Francisco Lodge No. 166. It is an interesting footnote to the history of this lodge that the current Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of California is a past master of San Francisco Lodge – now number “120” through another consolidation – and in another year will be the second Chinese Grand Master in the history of the Grand Lodge of California. The roster shows that the lodge has a number of Chinese members, although they are not in the majority.

The effort to create a Chinese lodge having run aground, it was decided in 1946 to form a club instead, and thus the Chinese Acacia Club was founded in that year. Its membership has furnished a number of Grand Lodge Officers over the years – and, and indicated above, a Grand Master (Leo B. Mark) in 1987, and presumptively, another Grand Master in 2011. The membership roll since 1946 has more than 700 names, many of them prominent in San Francisco

⁶ <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award99/cubhtml/theme9.html>

Freemasonry. Since the appointment of Bro. Sau Yee Chang as Grand Sword Bearer in 1957, twenty-five members have served as Grand Lodge Officers. In addition, the international character of their membership has meant that they have also had Grand Masters of other jurisdictions as members: Hawaii, Japan and Panama, as well as the Grand Lodge of the Republic of China. In addition, several other Associate Members (non-Chinese) have served their Grand Lodges as Grand Master.

In 1990, the club began a tradition of hosting the Grand Master for a reception each year, and has followed that custom ever since. The annual reception is also the occasion for the presenting of scholarships to graduating high school students of Chinese descent, and thus providing an important community service. If one purpose of the club was to make Freemasons of Chinese decent more visible in California Freemasonry, that purpose has been successful.

Jewish Lodges

It may be questionable whether Judaism is a religion or an ethnic group, but throughout the history of Freemasonry in California, they have apparently been thought of as primarily an ethnic group. As Freemasonry makes no distinction on the basis of religion, other than that a man must possess a belief in a Supreme Being and a future existence⁷, the idea of a “Jewish” lodge may seem to be a contradiction of terms if we are talking about a “religious” distinction for a lodge. However, as an ethnic group, adherents of the Jewish religion have been treated much the same as other ethnic and language groups when it comes to the formation of lodges.

One of the most prominent of the “Jewish” lodges in California was Fidelity Lodge No. 120. It maintained a proud existence from July 11, 1857, when a dispensation was issued by Grand Master Nathaniel G. Curtis to some members of Lebanon Lodge No. 49 whose charter had been suspended by Curtis, and which was subsequently revoked by vote of Grand Lodge. The name, “Fidelity,” was chosen because these brethren believed that they were the “faithful” members of the former Lebanon Lodge No. 49 who had supported the action of the Grand Master in suspending the charter – an action taken because the lodge had failed to discipline a member who had violated his Obligation as a Master Mason. The first Master of Fidelity Lodge No. 120 – and the former Master of the suspended Lebanon Lodge No. 49 – was Louis Cohn. The Senior Warden was Fred A. Benjamin, and the Junior Warden was Seixas Solomons. Inferring ethnicity from names is a chancy thing, but as these three names appear to be Jewish, Fidelity Lodge No. 120 may have had a large Jewish membership from the beginning.

By the early 1950’s, Fidelity was known as the “Jewish Lodge” in San Francisco, while California Lodge No. 1 was known as the “Gentile Lodge.” They met on the same evening at 25 Van Ness, then the largest masonic building in San Francisco, and also the headquarters of the Grand Lodge of California. Past Grand Secretary Robert A. Klinger was Master of Fidelity Lodge No. 120 in 1957, and over the years he told many others about the close relationship and friendship between these two lodges. He personally related to the author of this paper that whenever a man would show up at 25 Van Ness and exhibit an interest in becoming a Mason, his religion was first ascertained. If he was Jewish, his application was given to Fidelity Lodge No. 120; if he was not, his application was given to California Lodge No. 1. Apparently other lodges

⁷ California Masonic Code, Section 200.010

that met at 25 Van Ness had to get their candidates elsewhere! But this practice aside, he related that the two lodges shared much in common, and great masonic friendships ensued that might otherwise never have developed in the outside world.

This religious – or ethnic – division even affected other masonic organizations. San Francisco once had two Scottish Rite valleys – the San Francisco Bodies and the California Bodies. Apparently when the earlier of these two organizations was formed, the San Francisco Bodies, it became a mostly Jewish organization. The idea presumably was that if a mason were a Christian he should go into the York Rite, which was thought to be a Christian masonic organization because being a Christian was required for the Knights Templar, the “top” organization in the York Rite. As this was not open to Jewish Freemasons, the Scottish Rite came to be thought of as “Jewish,” and non-Jewish members were not as welcome. This led to the founding of a second Scottish Rite in San Francisco, which was primarily “Gentile” in membership. In the 1990s, these two groups merged, and now there is only one Scottish Rite valley in San Francisco – the San Francisco Bodies – which no longer makes any distinction on the basis of ethnicity or religion.

Over the years California has had other lodges whose membership is, or was, largely Jewish, and therefore came to be considered “Jewish” lodges. Among them were Menorah Lodge No. 623 in Los Angeles, and Blackmer Lodge No. 442, in San Diego. Both these lodges are not now in existence, except insofar as they continue through consolidation with other – and mostly non-Jewish – lodges. Menorah Lodge continues as Southern California Lodge No. 529, and probably still has the largest Jewish membership of any lodge in California.

Ethnic lodges are in decline, and Jewish lodges are no exception. As indicated above, most have merged with other non-Jewish lodges, and it is difficult to characterize any of them as “Jewish” any longer. However, that does not mean that ethnic issues pertaining to Jewish Freemasons have disappeared. In 1998, Grand Master Anthony P. Wordlow was confronted with an issue that required a formal Grand Master’s Decision. In California, a Grand Master’s Decision is a published interpretation of the *California Masonic Code*, or of its ritual. In that year a question had arisen as to whether a Jewish Mason could wear a Jewish headcovering in a tiled lodge. Two years before Grand Master Charles Alexander had been confronted with a similar situation pertaining to the wearing of Jewish headcoverings at masonic funerals, but as the Master does not wear a hat at funerals, his decision that these headcoverings could be worn at funerals did not create as much of a stir as did the question of wearing them in tiled lodges. Grand Master Wordlow ruled that a headcovering worn for religious reasons was not a violation of our ritual in California, and submitted his Grand Master’s Decision for a vote of Grand Lodge. The motion to approve his decision, however, did not pass.

In California, a Grand Master’s Decision is valid only for the term of office of the Grand Master who issues it, although by submitting it for approval to Grand Lodge, there is some presumption that it the decision can be used by future Grand Masters as guidance. The defeat of Grand Master Wordlow’s decision, however, left the question of the wearing of headcoverings in limbo. His successor, Grand Master Melville H. Nahin, then directed the Grand Lecturer and the Ritual Committee to cease and desist their campaign to forbid the wearing of Jewish headcoverings in a tiled lodge, and since that time it has been a moot point in California. It might be noted that

Grand Master Nahin was Jewish, and he may have been more sensitive than others to the problems created for religiously observant Jews who need to wear a headcovering on certain occasions – and apparently a tiled masonic lodge is one of these.

It should be noted that at the time that this issue came up, not all Jewish Freemasons in California concurred with Grand Master Wordlow or Grand Master Nahin. One prominent such mason, Past Grand Secretary Robert A. Klinger, was vocal in his opposition to the wearing of headcoverings by Jewish Freemasons in a tiled lodge. It was his firm belief that this intruded sectarian religion into the lodge, and was inappropriate. However, his view did not prevail, and the practice now is to allow the wearing of religious headcoverings in a tiled lodge. As a footnote to this situation, it should be further noted that there is an ongoing question as to the wearing of religious emblems in a masonic lodge is appropriate. There have been occasions when masonic Knights Templar have been asked to remove their coats before entering a tiled lodge because these uniforms prominently display the emblem of the Christian religion. The issue of religious emblems in a masonic lodge in California is therefore far from resolved.

African-American Freemasons

The question of African-American Freemasons and the Grand Lodge of California is complicated by the existence of another historic grand lodge operating within the boundaries of California. While there are lodges, and even grand lodges, operating in California, only one is recognized as a regular grand lodge by the Grand Lodge of California – the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of California. This paper will not explore the issues of mutual recognition between these two grand lodges, although an extended discussion of these issues was the subject of a 2005 paper presented to the Philaethes Society at its Annual Feast and Assembly in Washington, DC, that year.⁸

As previously stated, the Grand Lodge of California does not compile statistics based on race or ethnicity. It is therefore very difficult to ascertain the number of men of African descent who are members of lodges under this Grand Lodge. It is also virtually impossible to come by this information in the way described below for Filipino Freemasons. This topic, therefore, needs further research when more information is available.

Filipino Freemasons

The situation with Freemasons of Filipino ethnicity is an entirely different one, and has been a cause for concern in Grand Lodge for a number of years. In order to understand this concern, a bit of history is first in order.

While Freemasonry existed in the Philippine Islands before the American occupation in 1898, then involvement of California Freemasonry in the Philippines began with the chartering of three lodges: Manila Lodge No. 342, Cavite Lodge No. 350, and Corregidor Lodge No. 386. These were not the first American lodges in the Philippines, however. A North Dakota field lodge was formed on August 21, 1898.⁹

⁸ Cooper, John, Annual Lecture, Philaethes Society, February 14, 2004.

⁹ Whitsell, *op. cit.* p. 435.

Manila Lodge No. 342 received its dispensation from Grand Master James A. Foshay on July 4, 1901, and received its charter on October 10 of the same year. In 1912, pursuant to a Grand Master's Decision on the part of Grand Master Alonzo Monroe that the creation of a grand lodge in the Philippine Islands was appropriate, the Grand Lodge of the Philippines was organized, and received recognition from the Grand Lodge of California. Other lodges chartered elsewhere remained in the island, chiefly Lodge Perla del Oriente No. 1034, under the Grand Lodge of Scotland and did not join the new Grand Lodge. But California surrendered the charters of its first three lodges in the Philippines to the new Grand Lodge, and thus began a long and close relationship between the Grand Lodge of the Philippines and the Grand Lodge of California.

The figures from the 2010 Census have not yet been published, but the 2000 Census revealed that there were an estimated 1,850,314 in the United States that year. Half of these were in California, which means that California had a Filipino population of approximately 925,000.¹⁰ The Filipino presence in California lodges is particularly felt – perhaps more than any other ethnic group. This has had both positive and negative results, as discussed below.

The first all-Filipino lodge in California as Tila Pass Lodge No. 797. The lodge was named for the Battle of Tila Pass, a battle between the occupying American Forces and the native Filipino army which was struggling for independence in the wake of the transfer of the Philippines from Spain to the United States. General Gregorio del Pilar let the rear guard which allowed the founder of the Philippine Republic, Emilio Aguinaldo, a Freemason, to escape. The name “Tila Pass,” therefore had great meaning to the Filipino masons who founded the lodge. The lodge is still in existence as Atwater-Larchmont-Tila Pass Lodge No. 614 in Los Angeles.

During the decline of Freemasonry in California during the 1990s, many lodges had difficult filling officer positions. They found a ready-made source of eager Freemasons in the Filipino masonic community, and in several lodges the officers line was soon filled with Filipino masons. Some were the result of the consolidation of an all-Filipino lodge with a non-Filipino lodge (Sublime-Benicia Lodge No. 5 is such a lodge), but in many more Filipino affiliations brought a fresh supply of leadership needed by failing lodges. In many cases, this had a salutary effect on Freemasonry, and lodges were revived and revitalized by this importation of new blood. Unfortunately there were also some less desirable side effects, caused in some cases by cultural differences, and in others by the resentment of older, Caucasian members to this new influx into their lodges. In many cases of such conflict, the older members were unwilling to take up the burdens of office, but didn't want anyone else to do so either. As turmoil ensued, the Grand Lodge itself was drawn into these struggles. The unfortunate result has been the suspension of the charters of a number of lodges and the forced consolidation of at least one such lodge.

In addition to the spread of Filipino membership – and leadership – to lodges that are or were failing, another problem has arisen which involves Grand Lodge. As might be suspected, many Filipino brethren feel a very close attachment to the grand lodge in their homeland, or the homeland of their ancestors in the case of those who were born here. Such attachment is natural, and the Grand Lodge of the Philippines holds a very special place in the hearts of our Filipino brethren. This closeness has resulted in the creation of a fraternal association, the Philippine

¹⁰ <http://www.abs-cbnglobal.com/Regions/USA/Products/AdSales/FilipinoAmericanPopulation/tabid/630/Default.aspx>

Masonic American Association. This nationwide organization of Filipino masons hosts the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, and on more than one occasion, has also asked the Grand Master of Masons in California to address their annual meeting. The cordiality afforded the Grand Master of California on these occasions is well known, and is mirrored when our Grand Master visits lodges under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of California whose membership is primarily Filipino. Grand Master have, in turn, often appointed Filipino masons as Grand Lodge Officers, as well as inspectors and committeemen – thus indicating that the troubles afflicting some lodges as earlier described has not dampened this warm relationship.

There has been one issue, however, that has caused a significant problem, not only for the Grand Lodge of California, but also for some lodges with significant Filipino membership. This is the Grand and Glorious Order of the Knights of the Creeping Serpent – an organization consisting primarily of Filipino masons in California, and whose existence in the jurisdiction has created considerable acrimony. Understanding this situation is essential to understanding the relationship between Filipino masons in California, and the Grand Lodge of California itself.

Exactly how and why an organization that probably originated in Mexico through the Shrine became so closely entwined with the Filipino masonic community is a mystery that may never be solved. Evidence indicates that the Grand and Glorious Order of the Knights of the Creeping Serpent grew out of the Order of Quetzalcoatl founded in 1945 by a Shriner mason, Arthur J. Elian, Recorder of Anezeh Shrine Temple in Mexico City.¹¹ It spread from there to other Shrine temples, including Al Bahr in San Diego, where some twenty years ago it surfaced as a “side degree.” From there is spread to the Filipino masonic community, and eventually crossed the Pacific where it became popular with the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. Information on this organization can be found on the Internet,¹² although the information there indicating that it was founded in San Diego in 1960 out of “Oriental Lodge No. 20” is in error – at least if this is a reference to a lodge under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of California. There is no such lodge on the register of our Grand Lodge, and the only “Lodge No. 20” under the Grand Lodge of California is “Washington Lodge No. 20” at Sacramento.

The organization is reported to confer a degree – or degrees – and as such ran afoul of the Grand Lodge of California because it was operating in California without permission from Grand Lodge. Under the provisions of the *California Masonic Code*, no degree-conferring organization which has as a prerequisite that a member must be a mason can operate in California without first obtaining permission from Grand Lodge through a majority vote at an Annual Communication.

Also known as the “Snakes,” this organization has created controversy in some lodges, separate and apart from any problem with Grand Lodge. Although not legally entitled to operate in California (except as a non-degree conferring organization, of which more below), it has taken candidates to a neighboring jurisdiction for the initiation ceremony, and thus recruited members

¹¹ http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/order_of_the_quetzalcoatl_ritual.htm

¹² <http://www.freewebs.com/ggokcsphils/>

from California lodges. As with all “exclusive” organizations, it has the potential for causing those who are not invited to membership to become jealous, and over the past six years, it has been blamed for unrest in some lodges by the members of those lodges who felt themselves excluded by the “Snakes.”

Several approaches to the problem have been tried by Grand Lodge, including outright prohibition of membership by direct order of the Grand Master, to an effort to get the organization approved by vote of Grand Lodge in 2008 (unsuccessful). In 2009, our then Grand Master got some of their members to agree to operate the organization as a social club only, thereby sidestepping the need for approval of Grand Lodge. Whether this remedy will be effective in the long run is yet to be seen. However, from this ongoing struggle, several things seem to have emerged:

- An organization which is popular with an ethnic group within California Freemasonry is difficult to control and/or eliminate;
- An organization which, in the case of the Filipino masonic community, is endorsed and supported by the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, will remain popular regardless of the position on it taken by the Grand Lodge of California;
- Masons who are passionately attached to an “extra-masonic” organization do not easily yield to the majority opinion of their brother masons as to the value or legitimacy of such an organization, and a struggle with Grand Lodge over such issues is not unexpected.

It should be noted that these kinds of struggles are not necessarily confined to ethnic organizations such as the “Snakes.” Similar struggles have existed in the past with other appendant organizations, and notably with the Shrine, over issues of gambling and alcohol. Some masons are as passionately attached to these organizations as some within the Filipino masonic community are to the “Grand and Glorious Order,” and the Shrine issues are not ethnic in origin.

This paper has been an attempt to explain the varieties of issues that have arisen in California as a result of ethnic groups within Freemasonry in general, and in the Grand Lodge of F. & A. M. of California in particular. While neither race nor ethnicity is supposed to have any bearing on being a mason, it does have such a bearing – or at least it has had in the experience of the Grand Lodge of California from the very beginning. Some experiences led to foreign-language lodges; some led to the creation of influential clubs, such as the Chinese Acacia Club; and some have led to more disturbing situations, such as the “Snakes” within the Filipino masonic community.

In 1723, Dr. James Anderson presented to the Premier Grand Lodge a set of “Constitutions.” He gave Grand Lodge a new set of “charges,” one of which is the famous First Charge, “Concerning God and Religion.” He concluded it with “... Masonry becomes the Center of Union, and the means of conciliating true friendship among persons that must else have remained at a perpetual distance” (orthography and punctuation modernized). Although Anderson was talking about religion in this paragraph, it could just as easily apply to racial and ethnic groups. Despite our differences – differences which exist within Freemasonry despite our Freemasonry – it is also a “Center of Union” for racial and ethnic groups. The experience in California with ethnic diversity may have made our understanding of the value of Freemasonry stronger than it

otherwise would have been. Languages, race and ethnicity can divide, Freemasonry can unite, and when it does, it truly becomes “the means of conciliating true friendship among persons that must else have remained at a perpetual distance.” *So Mote It Be!*