

Bits & Pieces

Since January of 2018 I have been sharing thoughts that I call 'Living Stones', in an attempt to help you build your own pile of educational tidbits. Hopefully it will help us all better understand our gentle craft. Tonight I share some smaller stones...let's call them Bits & Pieces.

Do you know how old Freemasonry is? Our traditional history dates Masonry from Biblical times, and includes the story of Hiram Abif and the Lost Word. Our story of Hiram Abif is of course not biblical, nor does everything in Freemasonry come from the Bible. Sources of traditional history include such things as the Old Charges and our ritual. Traditional Masonic history is not 'history' in the true sense of the word, as it is (for the most part) the product of the fertile imagination of various Masonic writers. When found in the ritual, these accounts are meant to teach concepts of morality, not to give an accurate portrayal of past events. I must stress that no one today really knows how the Fraternity originated, but the transition theory, from operative to speculative Masons, seems to have taken on a life of its own, and is all too often treated as the last word on the subject. It should be noted that these are just theories of origin and not established facts.

Did you know?...In some countries the Craft or Blue Lodge degrees are under the jurisdiction of the York Rite, in some places it is controlled by the Scottish Rite while in others (in Sweden for example) the Grand Lodge directly controls advancement to degrees beyond that of Master Mason. In many parts of the world advancing to the next degree is neither fast nor is it automatic, the candidate having a lot more study and reflection to do than is usual here in the U.S. Some Grand Lodges (again, Sweden) limit Masonic membership to Christians, though this is not the case in the U.K and U.S.

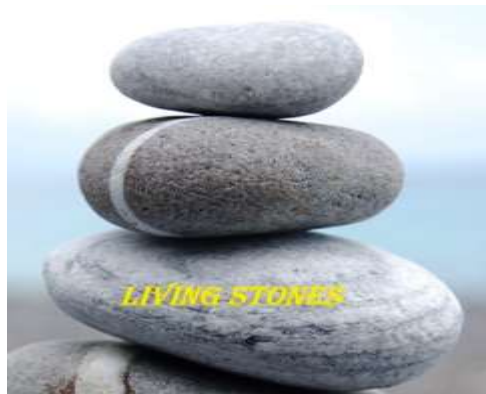
Prince Hall Masons...I want to point out that black and Prince Hall Masons are not automatically considered irregular....that irregular black or Prince Hall masons are not irregular because of their race. A black Mason is not necessarily a Prince Hall mason, and that many Black masons belong to Lodges chartered by so-called "White" grand lodges. Are you totally confused, now? The term 'Irregular' actually stems from a Grand Lodge's pedigree, not the racial makeup of its lodges, and is always judged subjectively. I've found that my past visits with our Prince Hall brethren have been very enjoyable and I was warmly welcomed with good fellowship.

Masonic ritual is supposed to make sense spiritually and emotionally, not logically or historically. Take, for example, the Pythagorean theorem, which relates the lengths of the sides of a right triangle to its hypotenuse, stated algebraically as $a^2+b^2=c^2$. Even today, mathematicians dispute whether Pythagoras himself ever developed this theorem that was named after him, or if he even devised a proof of it. But in either case, the Babylonians made use of this theory around 2,000 B.C., that's about 1,400 years before Pythagoras was born, and none of his original research has survived. Nor is Pythagoras famous for saying "Eureka," meaning "I have found it." It was Archimedes, who gave this exclamation when, sitting in his bath, he realized how to determine whether the crown of the King of Syracuse, was really made of pure gold by immersing it in water to discover its specific gravity.

Due guards and signs.....Those of you who served in the military perhaps noticed that salutes become sloppier in direct proportion to the rank of the officer giving the salute. In Freemasonry, however, just the opposite should be true. Sometimes that's not the case. Due-guards and signs should be given in a crisp, military manner, and accompanied by appropriate placement of the feet. Hands should be completely flat for all due-guards and signs, except for the moving portion of the FC sign.

Freemasonry isn't about secrets.....and saying that "It's a secret" is an unacceptable response to general questions about the Craft. Anti-masons like to attack Masonic "secrecy," attempting to avoid the fact that our organization, like any other, is entitled to its privacy. Please understand that "the real secrets in Masonry are personal insights". He who discovers the secrets of Freemasonry, will not arrive at that knowledge by simply going to Lodge. He gains it through reflection, reasoning, comparing, and deducing. He will not confide it to his best friend in Freemasonry, for he knows if that his friend doesn't find it for himself, the friend will certainly not get it from whatever might be whispered in his ear.

Those are a few bits & Pieces I wanted to share with you tonight....and now we pause for the commercial! I highly recommend to you the Grand Lodge correspondence courses. If you have signed up for the courses and haven't finished them....and you know who you are....Please get back on track with your Masonic Education...it's really important! It's a worthwhile undertaking, especially during this time of forced separation from our Brethren.



Living Stones - Masonic Thoughts for Today's Mason
Douglas M. Messimer, LEO
Fraternal Lodge No.53 1-21