



THE LODGE GATE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF BILTMORE MASONIC LODGE

Memorial Endowed Membership

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There was a time when Masons didn't recognize the "Mason of the Year" for outstanding service to his lodge. Apparently, it was just expected that one would do such things. Occasionally though, when a man had exceeded the usual good work, his lodge would recognize him with a Life Membership. One such man was Coy Jackson Huff; Jack to his friends.

Jack was born in Hartwell, Georgia on September 21, 1901. During World War I he served in the U. S. Navy. He moved to Asheville sometime around 1929 and worked for Reusings Appliance store for many years thereafter. Jack and his wife Betty bought a house at 535 Fairview Road in the Oakley community. He was a man of the community, active in church, the school and of course in his lodge. Jack was the president of the Oakley Men's Club (supported Oakley School and community projects) and a member of Reed Memorial Baptist Church.

Jack began his Masonic journey early in life. He petitioned and received his degrees in Battle Hill Lodge No. 523 in Atlanta, Georgia in the summer of 1923. The members of Biltmore Lodge elected him to membership on January 31, 1931. From this time forward Jack became an active Mason, not only in Biltmore Lodge but all across



the 39th District. Jack served as Master of Biltmore Lodge in 1936. Somewhere along his Masonic journey he became a Scottish Rite Mason and in time received the 33rd Degree.

The following are just some of his Masonic achievements: Certified Lecturer, District Deputy Grand Lecturer of the 39th Masonic District, District Deputy Grand Master of the 54th Masonic District, District Education Chairman of the 61st Masonic District, committee member of the Masonic and Eastern Star Home, Honorary Member of John A. Nichols Lodge No. 650. He conferred countless degrees and delivered just as many lectures over his 61 years of Masonic membership. Jack served as The Masonic Service Association (MSA) of North America

representative at the VA Hospital in Oteen looking to the needs of Masonic active duty military and service veterans. His tenure as the MSA representative was a boon to Biltmore's membership role. He influenced many doctors, administrative and technical hospital staff and patients to petition Biltmore Lodge for membership.

All of these accomplishments endeared Jack to the members of Biltmore Lodge. Jack was elected to Life Membership on October 7, 1975. Later, in November 1983, he received his 60 Year Jubilee Award. Jack died on January 17, 1984. He was just one of many men that have made a difference in Biltmore Lodge.

At the August 18, 2026 WB Huff received one more recognition. Our Secretary, WB Larry Dotson and Past Secretary, WB Curtis Hipps proposed to the lodge that a Memorial Endowed Membership be purchased in the memory of WB C. Jack Huff for his many accomplishments in service to Biltmore Lodge and the community at large. The membership voted unanimously that the Endowed Membership be purchased.



Lodge of Edinburgh—Mary's Chapel No. 1

The Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) enjoys an enviable position, not only within Scottish Freemasonry, but in the Craft throughout the world. Owing to the diligence of the Brethren who have served the Lodge in the capacity of Secretary and of the foresight of those Brethren who saw fit to safeguard our records, the Lodge has minutes reaching back to July 1599.

This is the oldest minute of a still-extant Lodge anywhere in the world and its contents reflect the wholly operative nature of the Lodge at that time. It was only with the introduction of the non-operative, or speculative masons in the seventeenth century that the Craft began to adopt the form we recognize today.

Most impressively, its first 5 pages of minutes incorporate the Schaw Statutes which are dated December 28, 1598. Six months later, on July 31, 1599, are to be found the minutes which confirm the lodge's claim as having the oldest existing Masonic minutes. It must be noted, however, that from these minutes there exists no conclusive evidence that the lodge was actually constituted on this date nor that it is, in actuality, the oldest lodge.

The Schaw Statutes (part of the Old Charges) are named for William Schaw, who was Master of Work to His Majesty and General Warden of the Masonic craft. In these Statutes, he declared that these ordinances issued by him for the regulation of lodges considered the lodge at

Edinburgh to be for all time, the first and principal lodge in Scotland.

It is often styled Mary's Chapel or The Ancient Lodge of Edinburgh Mary's Chapel, the former of which derives from its ancient origins, where it first met within the old chapel of St Mary's on Niddrie's Wynd in Edinburgh, which was demolished to make way for Edinburgh's South Bridge, which were completed in 1788.

Above the entrance door is found incised symbols which may appear unintelligible to the average viewer but when explained make perfect sense.

-The four numbers are a date, 1893, the year the Lodge moved in to Hill Street.

-The design of two triangles, one pointing upwards and the other downwards, is a hexalpa and symbolises the unity of man's human and spiritual nature.

-At the centre, a fiery 'G' is the radiant power of the Great Architect, God himself.

-The letters 'LEMCNo.1' are short for the 'Lodge of Edinburgh, Mary's Chapel No.1'.

-The Pictish runes which make up the other 16 symbols are the marks of the members of the lodge in 1893, plus the Earl of Haddington who was the Grand Master Mason, the head of the organization in Scotland. His mark is placed at 12 o'clock in the carving.





Album Review

In every previous newsletter I have provided a review on a book about Masonry or of one of similar interest; but not this time. Several issues ago I provided an article about Worshipful Brother Rick Wakeman but this is about his musical work.

Rick Wakeman, best known for his multiple tenures in the progressive rock band Yes, is a proud and active Freemason. He joined in 2007, serving as Master of London's Chelsea Lodge No. 3098 (known as the "Entertainers' Lodge"), and acts as a long-standing patron for the Masonic charity Lifelites. Wakeman's connection to the fraternity is deeply personal. He was inspired to join after seeing the care and support his mother received from his late father's lodge when his father passed away in 1979.

The following article is from rwcc.com.

Following his acclaimed 2020 album *The Red Planet*, Rick Wakeman makes a triumphant and inevitable return to Mars with *Return to The Red Planet*, a sweeping new progressive work that fuses science, imagination, and musical virtuosity into one of the most ambitious recordings of his career.

At a time when space exploration has moved back to the forefront of human endeavor - with missions to the Moon, Mars and beyond, once again capturing the

world's imagination - *Return to The Red Planet* feels both timely and visionary, rekindling the cosmic spirit that helped define progressive rock's golden age.

Where its predecessor opened the story, this album explores the planet's ancient lakes, vast canyon systems, shifting dust storms, and geological epochs, drawing directly on the remarkable images and research that have transformed our understanding of Mars in recent years, Wakeman immersing himself in planetary research, data, and mission reports before a single note was written.

"Once I started looking at the new data and photographs, I realized there was an entirely new album waiting to be written. There was simply too much more to say about Mars - musically and spiritually - not to return."

Recorded between August 2025 and January 2026, the project also marks a welcome return to full band recording, with all musicians working together at Decoy Studios - a creative approach Wakeman considers essential to capturing the spontaneity and energy of progressive rock at its best.

The album is performed by Wakeman's English Rock Ensemble, featuring bassist Lee Pomeroy, guitarist Dave Colquhoun, drummer Adam Falkner, and vocalist Mollie Marriott, daughter of legendary Steve Marriott. The album was mas-

tered by renowned engineer Simon Heyworth.

Among the album's centrepieces is Bowie's *Vision*, a deeply personal homage to Wakeman's friend David Bowie, whose fascination with Mars helped shape popular culture's image of the planet. The connection is more than thematic: Wakeman performed the iconic piano on Bowie's *Life on Mars?*, making this tribute both musical and autobiographical - a reflection on a shared history, a lasting friendship, and one of rock's most celebrated recordings.

The music was initially composed as keyboard "templates" at Nursery Studios, before being expanded collaboratively by the band at Decoy Studios and engineered by Toby Wood. Final overdubs and mixing with producer/engineer Erik Jordan bring the vision into sharp focus - from sweeping symphonic passages to intricate rhythmic sequences and haunting choral textures.

"This isn't just another Rick Wakeman album. It's a bloody good one!"

Simon Heyworth Producer of Tubular Bells





Rite of Strict Observance

The following article was taken from Wikipedia.

The Rite of Strict Observance was a Rite of Freemasonry, a series of progressive degrees that were conferred by the Order of Strict Observance, a Masonic body of the 18th century.

Baron Karl Gotthelf von Hund (1722–1776) introduced a new "Scottish" Rite to Germany, which he renamed "Rectified Masonry" and, after 1764, the "Strict Observance", while referring to the English system of Freemasonry as the "Late Observance."

The Rite appealed to German national pride, attracted the non-nobility, and was allegedly directed by "Unknown Superiors". The Strict Observance was particularly devoted to the reform of Masonry, with special reference to the elimination of the occult sciences which at the time were

widely practiced in many lodges [citation needed], and the establishment of cohesion and homogeneity in Masonry through the enforcement of strict discipline, the regulation of functions, etc.

By 1768 the Rite of Strict Observance counted some forty lodges.

Despite its initial popularity, growing dissatisfaction among members over the failure to bring initiated into the mysteries of the Unknown Superiors led to the Convent of Wilhelmsbad in 1782. The delegates there renounced their Templar origins (not unanimously) and gave greater self-governance to the lodges, resulting in the order fragmenting and the lodges adopting other rites over the next few years.

Degree structure

The degrees of the Rite of Strict Observance were:

1° Entered Apprentice (sometimes just called Apprentice)

2° Fellow Craft (sometimes just called Fellow)

3° Master Mason (sometimes just called Master)

4° Scot (sometimes also called Scottish Master)

5° Novice (sometimes also called Squire Novice)

6° Templar (sometimes also called Knight Templar)

7° Professed Knight (sometimes just called Professed)

Freemason's Tavern and World Cup Football



The FIFA World Cup Games are over and now its time to wonder if the USA can ever understand all of the rules and penalties, and yellow cards verses red cards. Why such odd rules we ask.

It's a question that is often asked at the FIFA World Football Museum... why the 'Laws' of the Game and not the 'rules' of the game? The answer dates back to the evening The Football Association in England was formed on 26 October 1863.

A meeting took place at the Freemasons' Tavern in London

that would sculpt the fate of football for generations to come. Ebenezer Morley, a solicitor and local sportsman, met with representatives of a dozen London and suburban clubs and proposed that football should have one standardized set of rules. Ebenezer Cobb Morley was not a Freemason. He is known as the "founding father of modern football" because he drafted the sport's first 13 laws. While the historic meeting took place at a Masonic venue, Morley's connection to the fraternity stops there. The location was chosen

simply because the Freemasons' Tavern was a popular and central London venue at the time for public meetings and sporting organizations.

At that meeting, The Football Association was formed and the original Laws of the Game began to take shape. As Americans many of us watched some of the games of the 2026 World Cup and probably still don't understand all of the rules but we did enjoy the antics of supposedly injured players.



Brother Harry S. Truman

Serving as the 33rd President of the United States from 1945-1953, MWB Harry S. Truman is well known for launching the Marshall Plan, leading the Cold War through the Truman Doctrine and NATO, and for intervening in the Korean War. He also lived his life dedicated to the craft, ultimately becoming the second President to also serve as Grand Master. Read on to learn more about his life in Masonry and beyond.

MWB Harry S. Truman is known as one of the most dedicated men to have joined Masonry. He was a member of a large number of Orders even while serving as Senator, Vice President, and President. On February 9th, 1909, he received his first degree after petitioning Belton Lodge No. 450 in Belton, MO. While his father was not a member, both of his grandfathers were; he also had various cousins, siblings, and nephews that were Masons. MWB Truman was elected as the Junior Warden of his lodge in 1910, and became a key figure in organizing the Lodge in Grandview, MO, becoming its first recorded Master when it was formally chartered.

In 1912 he entered the Scottish Rite Lodge of Perfection and Chapter Rose Croix in Kansas City; he completed the Scottish Rite Degrees in 1917 before leaving for the war. Through the York Rite he received the Chapter and Council degrees in Kan-

sas City in 1919, and in 1923 was honored as a Knight Companion of the Red Cross of Constantine. From 1925 to 1930 he served as District Deputy Grand Master and Lecturer for the newly formed 59th Masonic District. He then proceeded to enter the Missouri Grand Lodge line, ultimately serving as Grand Master from 1940 to 1941.

While his primary interest was the Blue Lodge, he also was honored in the Scottish Rite by being coronated as a 33° Honorary in October of 1945 for both his service to Freemasonry and the United States. He also received the Gourgas Medal by the Northern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. On May 18th, 1959, MWB Truman was presented with the fifty-years award; he was the only U.S. President to reach that golden anniversary in Freemasonry.

On June 19, 1953, just five months after handing over the keys to the most powerful office on earth, Harry S. Truman did something no former president had ever done before or has done since — he packed his own suitcase, helped his wife Bess into the passenger seat of his brand-new 1953 Chrysler New Yorker, and hit the open road completely alone, no Secret Service, no press, no motorcade, just an ordinary American couple from Independence, Missouri, trying to blend in with the rest of the country they had spent eight years serving; and what happened along that highway was

pure magic, because every time Truman stopped at a roadside diner, pulled into a small-town filling station, or slowed down near an ice cream stand, ordinary people would squint across the room and whisper to each other, 'that can't possibly be... can it?' — and then their faces would light up like the Fourth of July, and Truman, the man who had once commanded the fate of nations, would simply roll down his window, lean out with that wide Missouri grin, shake hands, chat about the weather, about their town, about their lives, carrying his own bags, paying his own bills, eating at the same diners as truck drivers and schoolteachers, and somewhere along the Pennsylvania Turnpike a trooper pulled him over — not because anyone recognized him, but because the law was the law — and Truman sat there and took his citation without a word of complaint, because this was the whole point of the trip, to remember what it felt like to just be a man again, a regular American man on a summer road with the woman he loved, and the people he met along that highway didn't see a president with a 22 percent approval rating, they saw Harry — warm, funny, feisty, and achingly real — proof that the greatest leaders are not the ones who forget where they came from the moment the cameras turn away, but the ones who never forgot in the first place.

On December 26th, 1972, Harry S. Truman passed away in Kansas City, MO.





A Man of Many Talents

Freemasonry aims to unite men of every country, sect, and opinion, fostering friendship among those who might otherwise remain at a distance. This core tenet, often discussed in the Entered Apprentice degree, promotes brotherly love, equality, and harmony by avoiding discussions on divisive topics like politics and religion.

Over the years I have met men through my connections with Freemasonry and its appendant bodies that I would not have met otherwise. One of those men is Alexander Hamilton Hanks; known to us as Brother Bucky, the Lodge Chaplain. I met Bucky through Past Master Larry Bishop. Serving as the Venerable Master of the Valley of Asheville Scottish Rite in 2005 I sought to revitalize the old tradition of the Feast of Tishri held in October. Bucky agreed to speak at the event and for many years thereafter I did everything 'legally acceptable' to coerce him into becoming a Mason. Finally he did and we have been a stronger and more

complete lodge with his having joined.

Bucky Hanks received his undergrad degree at UNC Asheville, graduating with BA degrees in both History and Classical Languages (Greek, Latin, and Hebrew) and then went on to receive a graduate degree from Western Carolina University and this along with his having served as a priest Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Woodfin for many years allows him to speak on historical and biblical topics with authority in our lodge. As a side gig, he also taught music for many years. But music has always been his love.

He is a talented musician, steeped in the Bluegrass tradition as well as other genres. He played in the Bluegrass group Runners of the Green Laurel with his sons Caleb and Micah and others and also in a group called the Bantry Band with his wife Linda and other local talent. The Bantry Band performed traditional Irish and British tunes. But his launch into the

world of music didn't begin with Bluegrass or traditional British Isles tunes but with rock and roll. In the early 1960's he and three other young men from Asheville formed a band called the Satyrs.

Rather than me ramble on about those years I invite you to copy and paste the first link below onto a search engine to hear an interview done with the band back in 2016 and learn of a possible revival. The second link is an article about the band produced by the Mountain Express newspaper.

Oh, as a side note, the band took their name from a Greek mythological creature, often portrayed as a man with goat-like features that were featured on a pair of vintage cuff links Bucky still owns.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONIsUEZnhaY>

<https://mountainx.com/arts/art-news/032812hunting-down-the-satrys/>



What the Heck is a Satyr?

Okay, I needed something to fill this space, so here it is.

In popular culture, satyrs or fauns in Roman myth are often envisioned as creatures with the lower body and horns of a goat and the upper body of a human. However, this is just one interpretation of Satyrs and Silens.

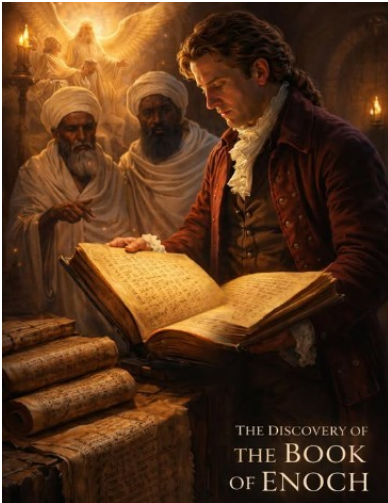
Early depictions portrayed them as comically hideous, bearded, balding men with an exaggeratedly large erect penis, ears, tails, and occasionally lower legs of a horse or goat.

Thanks to the enduring artistic forms of black and red figure pottery, we know how the image of the satyr evolved throughout

ancient Greece. While early satyrs and silens always had the ears and tails of horses, other elements evolved. Pottery from the early 6th century BCE often depicted them with human or horse legs, yet by the end of the century, depictions of the human-legged version became common.



A Freemason's Epic Discovery



In 1772, a man named James Bruce, a Scottish explorer and diplomat, was deep into a multi-year expedition across North and East Africa in search of the source of the Nile. His journey lasted years, pushing through harsh terrain, political instability, and near starvation before leading him into the Ethiopian highlands. There, inside a remote monastery, he encountered something far more unexpected than a river.

Bruce was shown ancient manuscripts written in Ge'ez, preserved by a tradition that had remained largely unknown to the outside world. Among them was a version of scripture containing 81 books, far more than the 66 of the King James Bible or the 73

recognized by the Catholic Church.

Within it was the Book of Enoch, a text that transforms Enoch from a briefly mentioned figure into a central witness. In this account, Enoch is taken from Earth by beings known as the Watchers and brought into a structured heaven, where he records celestial movements, ordered realms, and luminous entities with striking detail.

At the time, the wider church dismissed the text as apocryphal, assuming it was a late or isolated work preserved only in Ethiopia. That assumption held for more than a century.

Then, in 1947, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery revealed multiple ancient copies of Enoch among the scrolls, dating back over two thousand years. These manuscripts closely matched the Ethiopian version Bruce had encountered, confirming that the Book of Enoch was not an outlier, but part of a much older and widely known tradition.

Bruce was a Scottish Freemason. He was Initiated in Lodge Canongate Kilwinning, No. 2, on 1 August 1753. The Lodge history, which details his Initiation in the Lodge reads: 'Bruce, James, Younger of Kinnaird – the Abyssinian Traveller.'

1951



This photo of 1951 Officers was taken in December 1950 in Biltmore Lodge located on the second floor of the McGeachy Building situated on the west side of the Plaza in Biltmore Village.

Front row – (L-R) William Butler Master, Joseph A. Hawkins, Joe L Tandy

Second Row – Alfred Creasman, Charles Burgess

Third row – (L-R) Claud Waldrop, Jack Huff, John C. Taylor, Paris F. Head

Back Row - Karl Muschette, Nathaniel T. Clark, Thomas Stevens

1951 Officers

William Butler – Master
Joseph A Hawkins – SW
John L. Tandy – JW
Ralph Wilkerson – Treasurer,
Alfred Creasman – Secretary
Charles Burgess - SD
Paris F. Head - JD,
Thomas Stevens – SS
Ben Mayfeild – JS
Nat Clark - Tyler
John C. Taylor - Chaplain

(By the way, we still have these officer aprons in our archives)



The Ever Changing Notion of Justice



In Freemasonry, justice is understood both as a fundamental cardinal virtue that encourages fairness and impartiality in daily life and as a concrete legal framework used to govern conduct within Masonic lodges. It serves as a moral compass, emphasizing the importance of treating others with respect and upholding ethical standards.

But what exactly is justice? Justice is a moral concept that is very elusive and bears no universal definition, despite the agreed notion that everyone should be given what they deserved. The meaning of justice changes according to differing cultures, time periods, circumstances and values. So how has the idea of justice changed over time?

Classical justice as propounded by Plato, is a 'human virtue' which would entail that the individual has to balance numerous parts of his soul namely; reason, desire and spirit. Everyone would deal in a fair way in society and will fulfill their duty in right way and place. This would eventually mean prioritizing what society needed and not what the individual wanted- this concept of justice eventually carries notions of a totalitarian regime. While Aristotle would even claim, in *Politics*, that some people need to be treated in a different way by the law than others, for the greater good, as they are "natural slaves".

Medieval justice was most famously advocated by St Thomas Aquinas (especially in *Catholi-*

cism) whose theory is that justice is when one person gives the other only what the latter is due, despite this not being equal. Moral law plays a great part in his idea of justice. He was also a firm believer that there is a just price for everything.

Modern justice on the other hand, is rooted from the period of the Enlightenment, pushed under the spotlight by Emanuel Kant. This idea of justice is based on how we are all equal before the law and this concept of egalitarianism is expanding more and more to all categories of human beings- from men, to women and children. Karl Marx and Adam Smith have also pushed forward a form of distributive justice that gives the general idea that goods should be distributed according to the moral, rights-based values or in the case of Smith, according to the market.

The era in history we refer to as the Enlightenment produced what we now know as Freemasonry. Enlightenment justice is a framework that replaced arbitrary, religion-based punishments with systems grounded in reason, natural rights, and procedural fairness. Thinkers like John Locke, Cesare Beccaria, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that justice should protect individual liberty, equality, and the social contract rather than merely serving the interests of absolute monarchs.

Core Principles of Enlightenment Justice saw the movement

shift from the focus of punishment to protection, establishing several key ideas that still influence modern legal systems:

Natural Rights: The belief that all individuals possess inherent rights—such as life, liberty, and property—that governments are created to protect.

Social Contract: The concept that laws and social structures are only just if they have the consent of the governed.

Procedural Fairness: A move away from harsh, superstitious penalties toward rational, proportional, and humane treatment under the rule of law.

Separation of Powers: The idea that power should not be concentrated in one person or group, ensuring checks and balances in the legal system

However, this is just a few examples of how the notion of justice has changed over time. There are plenty more theories and as aforementioned, the idea of justice still differs according to different cultures and circumstances.



Thomas Aquinas on Virtue

Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 7 March 1274) was an Italian Dominican friar and priest, theologian, and philosopher. He is considered one of the most influential thinkers in the history of Catholic theology and Western philosophy. Thomas was a proponent of natural theology and the father of a school of thought (encompassing both theology and philosophy) known as Thomism. He argued that God is the source of the light of natural reason and the light of faith. He embraced several ideas put forward by Aristotle and sought to synthesize Aristotelian philosophy with the principles of Christianity.

He taught that virtue is a habit that perfects human action, enabling us to live according to reason and move toward our ultimate end in God. He built on Aristotle's framework of cardinal virtues—prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance—but expanded it with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity. For Aquinas, the virtues work together. Prudence guides judgment, justice ensures fairness, fortitude strengthens courage, and temperance moderates desire. Yet these natural virtues, while essential, are not enough. The theological virtues are infused by grace, orienting us directly toward God. Faith gives knowledge of divine truth, hope trusts in God's promises, and charity unites the soul with divine love. This synthesis of classical and Christian virtue ethics shaped moral theology for centuries. Aquinas showed that the moral life is not only about rules

but about cultivating character in harmony with reason and grace.



Justice, for Aquinas, is the steady will to give each person their due. Among the virtues, it governs relationships, ensuring fairness and the common good. Without justice, society collapses into disorder, for no one receives what rightly belongs to them. In the Entered Apprentice Degree lecture found in the 'Bahnson Manual' we find these words concerning justice: "Justice is that standard or boundary of right which enables us to render to every man without distinction his just due. This virtue is not only consistent with Divine and human laws, but is the very cement and support of civil society; and as Justice in a great measure constitutes the real good man, so should it be the invariable practice of every Mason never to deviate from the minutest principles thereof." The thoughts of Aquinas may have influenced the development of this portion of our lecture.

Aquinas distinguished different kinds of justice: commutative (fair exchange between individu-

als), distributive (allocation of goods in society), and legal (citizens' responsibility toward the community). Each expresses the harmony of giving and receiving, balancing rights and duties. He also linked justice to charity. While justice ensures fairness, charity moves beyond to love, binding people in a deeper unity. For Aquinas, true justice is inseparable from the love of God and neighbor. His insights on justice remain foundational for ethics, law, and politics, shaping ideas of rights and responsibilities still relevant today as well as a great influence on our Craft..

"Justice is a habit whereby a man renders to each one his due by a constant and perpetual will." —Thomas Aquinas



Brother Howard Keyes, a 70 Year Member

On July 17 eight Master Masons from Biltmore Lodge met in the lobby of the North Carolina State Veterans Home located in the Swannanoa Valley. Their purpose was to present two awards and their love and appreciation to our beloved brother Howard Keyes.

WB Clay Sorrells began with a reading of the many accomplishments of our amazing brother. Brother Keyes enlisted in the US Army in 1950 and by 1961 was commissioned as a 1st Lieutenant. From there he steadily advanced in rank. He served two years in combat operations (1967-68) in Vietnam before returning to the States and subsequently retiring in 1971 as a Major. During his 21 years of service he acquired many medals and commendations for his excellent service.

He was initiated, passed and raised in Queen City Lodge No.761 in Clarksville, TN. He came to Biltmore Lodge in 2000 and became a valued asset to our lodge. Howard is also a member of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (AAONMS). Noble Howard is a lifetime & Disney Award Oasis member who has served as a Past Captain with the Oasis Tripper Unit. He has traveled many miles helping Shrine patients and their families safely arrive and return home from their visit to our 22 Shriners Children's Hospitals. He has volunteered to make over 250 trips to our

hospitals.

The Master, Worshipful Brother Michael Ogus presented Brother Howard with a Lifetime Membership Award in Biltmore Lodge. He was also presented a 70 Year Service award from the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. We wish Brother Howard Keyes good health.



The Master presents the 70 Year Award



Michael Lawrence presents award pin



The Master Masons





An Exposé of Ecclesiastes 12

At our First Stated Communication in August 2026 we raised three men to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. During the circumambulation of the Master Mason's degree the candidate (if he is listening) hears the words from the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes chapter 12. According to rabbinic tradition, Ecclesiastes was written by King Solomon in his old age. In Ecclesiastes, the author never says the name "Solomon, but he does say that he is the son of David, who is the king in Jerusalem, and that he is fantastically rich and wise. In other words, he is claiming to be Solomon without using his name." In the early Christian tradition, Gregory of Nyssa wrote that it was written by another Solomon and Didymus the Blind wrote that it was probably written by several authors.

Ecclesiastes is a book of wisdom. By chapter 12 Solomon has finished his examination of worldly wisdom, and now aims to bring his book to a conclusion. Solomon found no satisfying answers through worldly wisdom to the problem of the meaninglessness of life (vanity of vanities; all is vanity). So, as he concludes his book, he emphasizes man's relationship to his Creator. In this section, he gives us a poem that encourages us, through a poignant description of old age, to "remember" our Creator while we are still young.

Like much great poetry, there are a multitude of interpretations,

and levels of interpretations, to the word-pictures that Solomon uses. Yet, as we read this poem, even if we do not come to fully understand all the levels of meaning given in these word-pictures, we can intuitively feel that they describe the decline of the body as one grows older, and nears death.

The poem begins with words of advice from Solomon: "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, 'I find no pleasure in them'" (vs. 1). To "remember" here means more than just bringing to mind. Action in response to mere remembrance is implied. "When he uses the word 'remember', he is not asking for mere mental cognizance, for the biblical term 'to remember' means much more than simple recall. Besides reflecting on and pondering the work of God in creating each individual and His world, there is the strong implication of action. To remember our Creator calls for decisive action based on recollection and reflection on all that God is and has done for us".

Solomon exhorts us to remember our Creator in our youth, "before the days of trouble come." It is important, of course, to know and serve God early in life, but it is more difficult to do so. In our youth, we feel invincible, and so we consider death and our eternal destiny to be far away. Solomon tells us to consider our eternal destiny, to remember our

Creator in our youth, so that we would develop a relationship with our Creator, in order that we may have the strength of the Lord, and the hope of eternal life, to endure the "days of trouble" that come with old age.

In verses 2 through 5, Solomon uses analogous word-pictures to describe old age. First, he compares old age to the coming of winter: "Before the sun and the light and the moon and the stars grow dark, and the clouds return after the rain" (vs. 2). In the next few verses, Solomon seems to be comparing the aging of the body to the decaying of an old house and household: "When the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men stoop, when the grinders cease because they are few, and those looking through the windows grow dim" (vs. 3). Many commentators interpret the trembling "keepers of the house" and the stooping "strong men" as trembling arms and stooping legs, clear signs of aging. The dwindling "grinders" seem to indicate the losing of teeth, and then the loss of eyesight seems to be described by "those looking through the windows grow dim." And then things progress so that "the doors to the street are closed and the sound of grinding fades" (vs. 4).



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An Exposé of Ecclesiastes 12, continued

The "doors to the street" closing could be the lips closing over where teeth used to be, as the "sound of grinding fades" due to the total lack of teeth.

In old age, sleep is typically not sound: "When men rise up at the sound of birds, but all their songs grow faint" (vs. 4). Sleep is disturbed even by the "sound of birds", even though the ability to hear is degraded, as "all their songs grow faint." Old age also brings new fears: "When men are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets" (vs. 5). The unsteadiness of step causes a fear "of heights"; the frailty of the body causes a fear of "dangers in the streets", as the aged become more vulnerable. "When the almond tree blossoms

and the grasshopper drags himself along and desire no longer is stirred" (vs. 5). The blossoming "almond tree" is probably referring to the graying of hair. Then, getting around becomes so difficult that it is compared to a wounded grasshopper dragging itself along. Finally, "desire no longer is stirred", which most likely refers to the cessation of sexual desire. In the end, death comes: "Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets" (vs. 5).

Solomon again exhorts: "Remember Him' before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well" (vs. 6). The poetic

image used here seems to be that of a fountain of life, with the drawing of the water being the drawing of the lifeblood. If we do not remember God in our youth, as previously exhorted, Solomon pleads at least to remember Him before access to the fountain of life is impeded, when "the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it" (vs. 7). This last phrase points out that it is worth noting that the body and spirit go different places after death. While the body returns to the ground as dust, the spirit goes to God. Solomon is exhorting us to prepare for this meeting.

Special Interest Lodges



In recent publications I have linked Freemasonry with the sport of football (soccer to you American types) but in this short article will focus on specialty lodges. In the United States our focus on specialty lodges tends towards Strict Observance, Research and a few motorcycle enthusiast lodges. In the UK, if you have an interest in something, you will find a lodge that is geared (pun intended) towards your interest.

I am a huge supporter of the Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 Team based in England and have discovered a lodge dedicated to

Freemasonry and Formula 1 racing. Formula One Lodge is a place where two passions coincide – Freemasonry and all things Formula 1 Motorsports. Formula One Lodge No. 4168 is the leading special interests lodge in the UK, currently made up of over 40 members with more joining regularly.

If you like classic (British) cars then Square Wheels Lodge No. 9966, the Buckinghamshire Classic Car Lodge No. 9945 and the Buckinghamshire Motorcycle Lodge No. 9926 are available.

Do you like smoking cigars? Hazara Lodge 4159, formed in

1920, is named after a former Punjab Province during the time of the British Raj. Although small in number, it became Hall Stone Lodge in 1926, relocating to London in 1943. Following a period of declining membership, the Lodge reformed in 2013 as a Lodge dedicated to Cigar Smoking.

How about farming? The membership of the Devon Farmers Lodge No. 9250 is made up of predominantly farmers from across Devon, also men from ancillary trades and the rural community. Devon Farmers lodge is known for its quest to make "good men better" through its historic rituals. At Devon

Farmers Lodge we try to enhance the members experience by having fun, whether that be at lodge meetings or social activities. Poor mental health being one of the biggest hidden dangers in farming and the rural community today, the Devon Farmers Lodge provides opportunity for new friendship, fun and relief outside the farm gate.

Maybe our Grand Lodge should look into such variety to enhance the Masonic experience. For a list of all UK Special Interest Lodges visit: <https://www.ugle.org.uk/become-freemason/special-interest-lodges>



Peasant's Revolt

In this article I want to do a brief assessment of one of the leading themes concerning the connection between our Craft and the Knights Templar which was posited in the book by John Robinson, "Born in Blood". I assume that most of us have read Robinson's book and are somewhat familiar with its basic premise; it should be noted that at the time of its writing Robinson was not a Freemason, though I understand that he later became a member of our brotherhood. His theory is that the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 was led by a "Great Society", magna societas, which carried out vengeance and outrage against three prime entities, the Roman Catholic Church, those in charge of collecting taxes, and the rival order to the Templars, the Hospitallers. It is much too involved to attempt to treat this with the necessary thoroughness it deserves in a short article such as the one at hand, however I think we can draw some conclusions from the evidence we have. There are two elements of which I feel that we should be aware. The Templar Order had been defunct for roughly 70 years at the time of the Peasants' Revolt, and an underground religious movement had taken shape in the fifteen or so years prior to the outbreak of the Revolt, i.e. the Lollards.

So then, in view of these two important aspects the question may be asked: Who, or what, was the great society that was behind the Revolt. Three generations had passed since the

Templars were active, thus it doesn't seem likely that there were any of the leaders of the Revolt who had actual Templar ties. Memories perhaps, but how well sustained, and were such memories strong enough to evoke the violence that occurred against Church, the tax collectors, and the Hospitallers. There would have been resentment toward the Hospitallers since they were given virtually all the holdings of the Templars once the Templars had been dissolved. But what about the violence toward the Roman Church? Here again, the Templars had been subjected to the Inquisition and had suffered the worst of medieval forms of torture, so they would have had more than enough reason to harbor bitter feelings toward the Pope and the Church that had brought about their downfall, but could this bitterness and thirst for revenge have lasted 70 years after the fact? Perhaps, but if we look at the stated demands of the rebels which were given to King Richard II, who was only 14 years old at the time, and his party the demands don't mention the Templars or restitution of their holdings in any way. The leader of the rebels was a rather enigmatic fellow, one Walter Tyler, or Wat the Tyler, of which nothing whatsoever is known prior to his involvement in the Revolt. He simply appears on the scene as the leader accompanied by a minor priest, John Ball and Tyler's chief lieutenant who may have been a priest also as some records allude, Jack

Strawe. The fact that Wat Tyler's name may very well have been a "code" name is entirely possible.

What were the demands that Tyler made to the King? He demanded repeal of the laws of serfdom, the end of men being declared outlaw which meant being outside the protection of the law, and the seizure of Church property and its division among the people who worked it, again the peasants, and the appointment of one bishop of the Church for all of England. What would repealing the laws of serfdom accomplish for the rebels? Not only would this end the practice of the serfs being bound to the land upon which they were born but in view of the labor shortage which occurred after the Bubonic Plague episode of the 1340's it would ensure the upward mobility of the freed serfs....they could be free to make their own way in the world! The end of outlawry meant that all men had the protection of the laws of the land, not just the nobles. Finally, and this is the most important point, the demands for the seizure of the Church's property and its redistribution showed the long standing animosity toward the Roman Church in England. It is estimated that the Church owned roughly one third of all the land in England at the time of the Revolt and there was the prevailing view that the Church had grown worldly,

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Peasant's Revolt, continued

rich and basically out of touch with the people. This is the mindset of the Lollard Movement. The Lollards were followers of John Wycliffe, himself a priest albeit a dissenting one from much of what the Church of his day stood for; he felt that the Roman Church was corrupt and full of superstitious practices which in no way helped the average person in their daily spiritual life. He produced the first translation of the Bible in English which became the "book" of the Lollards.

So, whatever the "great society" was behind the Peasants' Revolt it seems to have more concerns with the issues which were pressing at the time....ending serfdom, laws of outlawry, and

the opulence of the Church rather than Templar revenge some 70 years after the fact. The fact that it was the priest John Ball who actually mentioned a "great society" seems to indicate that there was some knowledge of this organization among certain members of the lower clergy.

who most likely sympathized with Wycliffe and his Lollard followers. The possibility that the "great society" was an amalgamation of certain disaffected groups within England which co-

alesced in the years leading up to the Revolt is also a distinct possibility, but we will probably never know for sure. As for the animosity toward the Hospitallers and their possessions

during the Revolt there may have been other reasons for the hatred shown to them, and again, the Hospitallers were not mentioned among the demands made to the King. All in all, it would appear that the Templar connection is tenuous at best as a direct cause of the Peasants' Revolt and the overwhelming crisis that triggered the Revolt was taxation, first and foremost, then the other issues of ending serfdom, ending laws of outlawry, and redistribution of Church property appear to have been added on to address other long standing grievances.

That, brethren, is my story and I'm sticking to it....until a better solution comes along!



Everything Changes

The famous quote "There is nothing permanent except change" is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus.

Everything changes whether we like it or not. Forty years ago when I became a Master Mason our lodge was blessed with many ritualists. Not so today. Men actually stood in line, per se, to become a line officer. Today we beg men to take an office. The night I was raised I estimate there were 60 to 70 men in attendance. We were a Masonic Lodge boasting over 500 members and we regularly had 30 to 40 members in attendance. Nowadays we see 15 to 20 at meetings and struggle to get 25 men to a Master Mason's Degree.

Why the difference? What changed? Men have changed, attitudes are different. Forty years ago cell phones didn't exist, cable TV was in its infancy and people still relied on social gatherings to exchange thoughts, talk about the news and basically be human. That way of life has changed, and I fear we are poorer for it.

The core aspect of Freemasonry has not changed. The symbolic teachings and enlightenment are still there, it is simply that it doesn't seem to matter anymore. The teachings of the Craft could be a tool to rebuild a better society but society has changed and looks upon us as a funny club with ridiculous handshakes. Politicians and professionals

once found meaning and importance in being known as a Mason. Today it is a liability. Freemasonry has not changed, we have.

From 1986 until 2011 the only correspondence from the lodge was via snail mail newsletters. These were never very well done and were irregular in release. Beginning in 2011 with the advent of a software package provided by the Grand Lodge we

one else seemed to want to contribute, no one seemed to care.

Albert Einstein never said "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results" rather the exact phrasing ("doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results") appeared in Rita Mae Brown's 1983 novel, *Sudden Death*. So, to end the insanity this will be the last Lodge Gate Newsletter.



were able to provide email and other correspondence digitally to members with email capability. We were able to quickly notify members of upcoming events and news. Communications changed.

With this new service I took it upon myself to send out a quarterly newsletter. It consisted of articles of recent or upcoming lodge events, history articles, expansions upon symbolism and an occasional opinion piece. During the Covid 19 era when we were unable to meet I sent out a weekly newsletter to keep Masonry available.

Sadly, the newsletter was almost entirely input from me with Brother Bucky Hanks providing articles in the last few years. No

2026 BILTMORE LODGE OFFICERS



Office	Officer
Master	Michael Ogu
Sr. Warden	Frank Bryson
Jr. Warden	Tony Rice
Treasurer	Michael Lawrence
Secretary	Larry Dotson, PM
Sr. Deacon	Eric Willis
Jr. Deacon	Jamie Bradley
Sr. Steward	David Anderson
Jr. Steward	Some old Past Master
Tyler	Howard Hazelrigg
Chaplain	Alex Hanks

Did You Know?

In June 1867, Andrew Johnson became the first president to undergo a Masonic initiation at the White House.

His executive schedule prevented him from holding the ceremony at the Masonic Temple on 9th and F Streets Northwest and the initiation moved to the White House. Benjamin B. French, former commissioner of public buildings and Grand Lodge of New Hampshire, presided over the initiation. French and his colleague Azariah T.C. Pierson arrived at the White House just before lunch.

I don't know why that man is looking out of the window.

