

Division Educational and Leadership Conference Educational Program – The Myths of Freemasonry

Introduction

With today's ability to instantly communicate via the airways, Internet, and print media, one can quickly find so much information about Freemasonry. Some of the information is accurate, some is not, but it is difficult for most people to distinguish one from the other. However, it isn't the good information that this presentation will concern itself with—it is the misinformation.

Misinformation or outright lies about Freemasonry are just incredible. Indeed, we suspect that it is more than misinformation; it is **disinformation**, because many of the purveyors of this nonsense actually know better. They fully understand what Freemasonry is about, but they profit from attacking us. And the Internet has made the problem worse. In the past, a person had to search hard to find one of these anti-Masonic tracts. Today anti-Masonic ranting is just a couple of mouse clicks away. The problem is that with so much anti-Masonic material available on the Internet a good deal of this misinformation is believed.

Many Masons get right onto the Grand Lodge and other related sites, and never see this misinformation, but it is out there. And many non-Masons are as likely to stumble across the anti-Masonic sites and read the incorrect information about Freemasonry as they are to visit the sites that can provide them accurate information. Worse yet, they often cannot distinguish the good information from the bad, the truth from the lies.

In this presentation we will expose you to some of scurrilous charges levied against the Fraternity and some of the lies that keep getting repeated—in the language our critics use. Surprisingly, many of the criticisms about Freemasonry are contradictory: some say we are antireligious while others are busy criticizing us for being a religion.

Each of you ought to be equipped to set the records straight in clear and concise language. So we want you to hear how we as Masons can respond to these charges and criticisms. Of course, you also may wish to contact our Grand Lodge Committee on Public Relations if you hear these charges. They can provide a Brother who can even more fully set the records straight.

So let us begin. We will present you a dialogue between a person that is considering membership the Fraternity and has searched through the Internet and other information sources for information. In his search, the potential applicant has happened upon information concerning the Fraternity that is of concern and could prevent the applicant from having any further interest in the Fraternity. The potential applicant has arranged a meeting with a Freemason to discuss some of these issues.

The Play

Hi John – I'm glad you agreed to meet with me this afternoon. I must tell you that I was excited about joining the Freemasons after our discussion the other day. I did some internet research to find out more information. But, I found some stuff that is quite troubling and thought you might be able to explain some of what I am reading about Freemasonry.

Sure, I'd be glad to help you better understand what you might have read. You do understand that there is a great deal of misinformation out there on the Internet. There are no controls on what people can put on an Internet site. And some of what you may read will appear to have research citations and references to respected published information. But sometimes these cites and quotations are wholly out of context or are just plain falsifications that have been perpetuated over the decades and still persist. So what is your first question?

I read where some anti-Masons say that Freemasonry is a religion, yet you indicated that it was not a religion. Help me understand why Freemasonry is not a religion?

Freemasonry confirms and complements religious faith and church participation. The principles of our Fraternity are based on the same moral absolutes that form the foundation of all true faith. Every Mason must believe in a Supreme Being, but Freemasonry does not promote any one religious creed. Masonry makes no demands as to how a member thinks of the Great Architect of the Universe. Freemasonry has no dogma or theology. It offers no sacraments. It seeks no converts. It teaches that it is important for every man to have a religion of his own choice and to be faithful to it in thought and action.

I saw on the Internet that you have your own God called GAOTU – doesn't that make you a religion?

Those who oppose Freemasonry will claim that Masons worship a 'false God' whom they claim is GAOTU - the "Grand Architect of the Universe" (in some jurisdictions referred to as the "Great Architect of the Universe").

Nothing could be further from the truth!

Let me be quite clear: Freemasonry does NOT have a "God" of any kind. Freemasons, however, do profess a belief in a Supreme Being. Upon petitioning for membership, a man is required to profess a belief in a Supreme Being. They are not required or requested to elaborate any further on their beliefs except to make a positive affirmation that they have such a belief.

You should also understand the term "Great Architect of the Universe" (or "Grand Architect of the Universe") does not refer to a Masonic God, there is none. It simply is used as an inclusive way to refer to God that is consonant with the beliefs of men of all different religions. All Masons understand this concept and when prayers are offered in their Lodge, they understand that regardless of the person speaking the words or the manner of prayer of others present, the prayer is addressed to **the** Supreme Being each Mason believes in and worships.

To argue that Masons have a 'god' with the name GAOTU would be similar to arguing that a church where a prayer is addressed to "Most Holy and Glorious Lord God" had a false God with the name MHAGLG. It's bizarre in the extreme.

But don't Masons claim a promise to salvation? Doesn't that make it a religion?

No.

The "search for light" found in Freemasonry is a reference to a quest for knowledge, not salvation. Freemasonry promotes a hope in resurrection, but it does not teach a belief about resurrection. The first is faith, the second is religion.

I saw on the Internet where your organization teaches the physical resurrection of its members – that in one of your degrees you actually simulate this resurrection. Doesn't that show it is tied to the occult?

Although the Degree of Master Mason or Third Degree ritual includes references to the immortality of the soul, Freemasonry makes no impositions on the individual candidate's personal beliefs, nor requires its members to accept any specific teachings regarding resurrection. Freemasonry teaches that death is a "mysterious veil which

the eye of human reason cannot penetrate," and only supports the hope, not the promise, of resurrection.

There have been both Masons and non-Masons who have misunderstood our ceremony to represent a resurrection or raising from the dead, but what is referred to is a body being removed from an unmarked grave and then given a decent burial.

OK, so maybe Freemasonry is not a religion, but I've also read that is a mystery cult? I sure don't want to be a part of any cult.

I agree and so do I. Happily Freemasonry is not a cult.

To respond to this charge, we need to understand what exactly is a mystery or cult.

The term "mysteries" is also used to refer to the Christian belief in the Trinity, Original Sin and the Incarnation. Until the time of the Reformation, the word "mystery" was inscribed on the Pope's MITRE.

And the term “cult” referred to a specific range of Greco-Roman groups or “cults” that reached their peak of popularity in the first three centuries AD. The Mysteries were thus cults in which all religious functions were closed to the non-inducted and for which the inner-working of the cult were kept secret from the general public. Although there are no other formal qualifications, mystery cults were also characterized by their lack of an orthodoxy and scripture.

Later Conservative Christian authors, especially evangelical Protestants defined as a cult a religion which claims to be in conformance with Biblical truth, yet deviates from it.

So it is clear that authors who have accused Freemasonry of being a cult or a mystery cult are making two major errors. First, whether stated or not, they presume that Freemasonry has to be some form of a religion; and second, that modern Freemasonry teaches a belief in certain legends of the pre-Christian Greeks.

Those who would accuse Freemasonry of being a mystery cult generally use the term as a synonym for non-Christian,

which becomes a synonym for **un-Christian**, and by extension, a synonym for anti-Christian and satanic.

Now that you've brought up Christianity, let me ask some questions about what I have read that greatly disturb me. I read where your fraternity claims "salvation by works"? And isn't that contrary to Christianity?

Freemasonry does not teach **any** path to salvation and it certainly does not imply salvation may be attained by one's good works. Freemasonry points to the open Book of Sacred Law and tells the Freemason to search there for the path to eternal life. Teaching the path toward salvation is the duty of a Church, not a Fraternity.

But you do believe that good works are important in living a good moral life?

Yes. Freemasonry does believe in the importance of good works. But this is as a matter of gratitude to God for His many great gifts, and as a matter of individual moral and

social responsibility. Let me repeat, the path to salvation is found in each Mason's house of worship, not in his Lodge.

OK, so you may be right about not advocating salvation by good works, but I read a great deal of stuff that says Freemasonry is incompatible with Christianity. But to tell you the truth, it was confusing and I couldn't find any agreed upon principles shared among these Internet sites that make it clear why your organization is incompatible with Christianity? But I've always believed that where there is smoke, there is fire. So explain to me why some denominations strongly oppose Freemasonry.

Various Christian denominations have strongly discouraged or even prohibited members from becoming Freemasons. These critics of Freemasonry allege that the religious toleration implicit in Freemasonry and the refusal to see one faith as being superior to any others — is a denial of the truth of Christian revelation.

However, the basic tenants of Masonry, brotherly love, relief, and truth are complimentary to any man's Christian beliefs

and a part of a Christian's search for more light in his continual search for truth.

I've read where some of your critics say that Freemasons worship Satan? How do you respond to this?

Freemasons do not worship Satan. Quite the opposite, Freemasonry stands on the side of good against evil, justice against injustice, and brotherly love against intolerance. What Freemasonry stands for and supports is the antithesis of the very concept of Satan.

Doesn't Freemasonry use the Baphomet, or goat-headed devil figure as a symbol of worship?

Absolutely not. Freemasons do not worship Baphomet nor is the Baphomet a Masonic symbol.

So where does this Satan worship accusation come from?

First this is a good example of the disinformation we spoke about earlier. Some of our critics cite works by Levi and Waite to support their charge that Freemasonry worships Satan. However, these cited works are either nonexistent, in the case of Levi, or are taken from non-Masonic sources or taken out of context.

And some Christian critics of Freemasonry make the claim that Freemasonry is a religion whose purpose is the worship of Satan and this allegation is well represented on Anti-Masonic websites. They are wrong both about Freemasonry being a religion and about it worshiping Satan.

Finally, there have been denunciations from the Roman Catholic Church, that Freemasons serve "the kingdom of Satan" (*Humanum Genus*) or that Masonic Lodges are the "synagogue of Satan". As we understand it, the Catholic Church does not believe that Masonic ceremonies are consciously Satanic, but rather that the aims of Freemasons do not advocate exclusiveness of Christian salvation. And, of course, Freemasonry is, in fact, open to men of all religions and does practice religious toleration.

Reputable Masonic websites can credibly refute each of these specific accusations and I invite you to search this out for yourself.

Don't Masons worship their leaders by calling them Worshipful?

Yes, but this has nothing to do with religion or religious worship. It is simply a term of respect, not dissimilar to the way we refer in the U.S. to judges as “your Honor” and to elected officials as “the Honorable”.

Its derivation is from England where the titles of Worshipful and Right Worshipful are used to refer to municipal and judicial officers. There the mayors of small towns, and Justices of the Peace, are called Worshipful, while the mayors of large cities, as London, are called Right Worshipful. This usage of respect was adopted and retained in Freemasonry.

I understand from my readings that Masonry is an organization that teaches by symbols—I found a lot of symbols that you use. But one symbol struck me as odd--your use of the pentagram, isn't it Satanic symbol?

Yes, Satanists have used a pentagram with two points up, often inscribed in a double circle, with the head of a goat inside the pentagram.

But the pentagram is a very ancient symbol that has lots of meanings. For example, it had an astrological meaning representing the five planets of Earth, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, and Saturn. The pentagram was used as a Christian symbol for the five senses and Medieval Christians believed it to symbolize the five wounds of Christ and they believed the pentagram protected against witches and demons. The pentagram is the official symbol of the Bahai faith. The pentagram also represents the five pillars of the Muslim faith and five daily times of prayer

Some Grand Lodge seals and banners use the pentagram and the five-pointed star is on the collar of some Masonic officer jewelry, but its absence from the ritual and lessons of Freemasonry point out that its value to us is simply ornamental.

But I also read that there is a pentagram street design in Washington, DC and, given that George Washington

was an important Mason involved in planning how the city was designed, doesn't this prove there was a Masonic conspiracy?

I frankly don't understand what the conspiracy would be all about, but in any event I would consider three points.

First, there is no published information establishing the Masonic membership of the men responsible for the street plan, and although George Washington commissioned the design committee, Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Andrew Ellicott, and Benjamin Bannecker, the men who developed and executed the design for the city were not Freemasons.

Second, while, as you now know, the pentagram has had many meanings to many people and there is no evidence that any of these groups played a role in the design of Washington, D.C.

And finally, keep in mind that the pentagram does not have any particular Masonic significance. Indeed, Freemasonry promotes rationalism and places no power in symbols themselves. It simply is not a part of Freemasonry to view

the drawing of symbols, no matter how large, as an act of consolidating or controlling power.

Talking about George Washington, I read on the Internet that he renounced Freemasonry?

This is simply not true. George Washington remained a member of the Craft from his initiation into the Lodge at Fredericksburg, Virginia No. 4 on November 4, 1752 until the day he died on December 14, 1799, when he then, at his widow's request, received a Masonic funeral.

This hoax got its start in 1837 with the publication of a paper by Joseph Ritner, Governor of Pennsylvania. Although easily debunked, it was reprinted in 1877, shortly after Prof. Charles Albert Blanchard (1848-1925), a founder and first lecturer of the National Christian Association published a rewriting of the same story entitled *Was Washington a Freemason?*

OK, but to get back to symbols, you do have symbols that are important to freemasonry, right?

Yes, we do use symbols to teach moral principles. Indeed, a number our symbols and their moral meaning have entered into common, everyday speech. We speak about giving someone a square deal, of being square with someone. And, of course, "a square man" is one who deals honestly. When we talk about those who are corrupt we say they have "lost their moral compasses." And when we say something or someone is "on the level" that is an affirmation of truth.

Isn't the all-seeing eye on the top of the pyramid of the dollar bill one of those Masonic symbol? And doesn't it convey the meaning of a world domination by the Fraternity?

No, the all-seeing eye on the dollar bill is not a Masonic symbol. The single eye was a well-established artistic convention for an "omniscient Ubiquitous Deity" in Renaissance art.

Of the four men involved in designing the USA seal in 1776, only Benjamin Franklin was a Freemason, and he contributed little to the committee's proposed design for a seal. Du Simitiere, the committee's consultant, and a non-

Mason, contributed several major design features that made their way into the ultimate design of the seal: the shield, E Pluribus Unum, MDCCLXXVI, and the eye of providence in a triangle."

It also should be noted that Congress declined the 1776 committee's suggestions as well as those of the 1780 committee, and none-of the final designers of the final version were Freemasons.

So why is there this belief that the all-seeing eye is a Masonic symbol?

The misinterpretation of the seal as a Masonic emblem may have been first introduced a century ago in 1884. Harvard professor, Eliot Charles Norton (1827-1908), wrote that the seal was nothing more than a dull emblem of the Masonic fraternity."

But the fact is that the combining of the eye of providence overlooking an unfinished pyramid is a uniquely American, not Masonic, icon. Indeed, the first "official" use and definition of the all-seeing eye as a Masonic symbol seems

to have come in 1797 with *The Freemasons Monitor* of Thomas Smith Webb – 14 years after Congress adopted the design for the Seal." There are no available records showing the all-seeing eye, with or without a pyramid, associated with Freemasonry prior to 1797. So it appears that the Masonic use of the all-seeing eye is more likely adopted from the seal rather than the other way around.

I read where you use A.L. along with A.D. in your dating of events — is that true?

Yes.

And I read that the A.L. stands for “in the "In the year of Lucifer," which would indicate that you do worship the devil.

No, Anno Lucis translates as "in the year of light" and is arrived at by adding 4000 to the common era A.D. date. It appears to derive from the Archbishop of Armaugh, James Ussher's (1581-1656) who published support of a long-accepted chronology of Scripture which fixed the earth's

creation at 4004 BCE. The date has no connection to Lucifer or the devil.

But you do have secrets from the rest of society. I'm concerned about these secrets. I really get nervous about being involved with an organization that has secrets that I can't share with my wife and family.

First, you can tell your wife and family most everything about Freemasonry and they can find many books that will tell them virtually anything they will want to know about the Fraternity. They will find, as will you, that the history, philosophy, and traditions of Freemasonry are in accord with their values, and that the moral principles of Masonry are the same as those taught you in Sunday school or at your mother's knee. However, it is true that we do not share the modes of recognition or parts of our Degree ceremony, but even these can be discovered if someone is that interested.

The tradition of not sharing the modes of recognition goes back to the medieval guilds where in the absence of written diplomas and electronic records, that was the way to determine if a craftsman had the required training. And the ceremonies are kept secret so they would have more of an

impact on the candidate- sort of like when we say don't spoil the book or movie by telling me how it ends.

In my searches I found a great deal of quotations from Albert Pike. Wasn't Pike, a prominent Mason, also a Satanist? Some of the quotes I read were very alarming to me.

General Albert Pike (1809-1891) was a prominent Mason. He was a lawyer and editor, and Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Supreme Council, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (from 1859-until his death, but he was not a Satanist.

He was, however, a whipping boy for anti-Masons for two reasons. First, because he was such a prolific writer who wrote about ancient historical and philosophical matters and was easy for them to take passages out of context and imply interpretations that do not hold up when viewed in context with the rest of the writings. One of these anti-Masonic writers, Leo Taxil, accused him of claiming that the God of Freemasonry was Lucifer.

(interrupt speaker) – Ah see, he was considered a Satanist.

No, he was falsely accused of such by Leo Taxil.

You have referred to this Taxil guy before, who was Leo Taxil and why is he quoted so often on the Internet.

Taxil (and that was not his real name – but his pen name) was born in Marseille, France in 1854, and schooled by the Jesuits. He tried his hand at financial fraud, and when he was discovered he fled from France to Geneva. There, he adopted the name of Léo Taxil. Expelled from Switzerland for fraud, he returned, under amnesty, to France in 1879. Not a real upstanding character.

So why is he important to Freemasonry—fraud doesn't seem to have much connection to Masonry?

In the strongly anti-Catholic climate existing throughout France at the time, Léo Taxil believed that he would find a ready market for anticlerical publications. He wrote anti-Catholic satires poking fun at church leaders. In hopes of

gathering anti-Church material, Taxil joined the lodge Le Temple de L'Honneur Français in Paris in 1881. His true character quickly surfaced, and he was expelled from the Lodge before going beyond the First Degree. Over the succeeding years, his anti-Catholic writing brought him very little income but earned him a great deal of criticism and condemnation from the clergy. So he needed another target for his literary talents. He chose Freemasonry.

What did he write?

Léo Taxil confessed on April 23, 1885 to the sins he had committed in writing and publishing anti-Catholic pamphlets. He then began writing a series condemning the Freemasons. Titles include: *The Three-point Brothers*; *The Anti-Christ and the Origin of Masonry*; *The Cult of the Great Architect*; and *The Masonic Assassins*.

Taxil honed the simple declaration, "Lucifer is God," and attributed it to Albert Pike, supposedly delivered to Freemasons on Bastille Day, July 14, 1889. Taxil claimed that Pike was a Satanist and that the Fraternity followed Satanic practices.

He also coined the non-existent title for Pike as the "Sovereign Pontiff of Universal Freemasonry," even though Pike was the leader of only one of the hundreds of Masonic bodies in the world at that time – the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite.

Although a blatant fraud, Taxil's forgery was a huge success.

Is it True?

No, of course not!

On April 19, 1897 Taxil used his celebrity status to attract a large audience to a meeting in Paris. Journalists came, along with members of the Catholic hierarchy. There Taxil announced that every word written about Masonic devil worship was the product of his own fertile imagination. A Paris newspaper published the thirty-three page text of his speech the following week. And an English translation of Taxil's published confession appeared in Volume 5 for 1996 of the Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction's education journal.

But I understand that Pike was considered an authority on the interpretation of Masonic symbols and teachings and that his word is the final word on interpretation of your teachings and beliefs?

As the author of “Moral and Dogma” Pike extracted much from earlier authors but wrote even more about his own speculation and conjecture – to such an extent that the book’s preface reads: “Perhaps it would have been better and more acceptable, if he had extracted more and written less.” The preface also states that, “Every one is entirely free to reject or dissent from whatsoever herein may seem to him to be untrue or unsound.”

Thus, while he was held in high regard by many North American Freemasons, his writings on the history or symbolism of Freemasonry are not considered authoritative.

You mentioned three reasons why Pike has been maligned, what is the third?

Yes, getting back to your initial question—the other reason that Pike was maligned as a Freemason resulted from

writings of Susan Davis and Walter Fleming who claimed him as a leader of the Ku Klux Klan.

Ah Ha – So Pike was a racist, no wonder you don't want this to come to light.

No, this claim by Davis and Fleming was without documentation or proof and their published accusations have no supporting evidence that can be validated.

Fleming wrote four monographs, one dissertation, and two articles on the Ku Klux Klan. Only in his Introduction to the 1905 reprint of Lester and Wilson's *Ku Klux Klan* does he claim that Albert Pike was chief judicial officer of the Klan. This is the first published claim that Pike was a Klansman; it appeared fourteen years after Pikes death, but this accusation was not supported by any evidence, and to date further research into primary source material revealed nothing that would support this claim.

Well maybe Pike wasn't a racist, but I read where the Freemasons as a group are a racist organization? You don't have blacks in many of your Lodges, especially in

the South? Doesn't that show that you are a racist group?

The first and perhaps most important point to make is that Freemasonry has no bar to membership based on race, religion or creed. Petitions for membership do not ask the race of the petitioner, and it would be considered completely wrong to do so. Indeed, it is un-Masonic conduct for a Freemason to vote to reject an applicant for one of these reasons – it simply is inconsistent with Masonic principles.

But the fact is that most Blacks have joined the Prince Hall Lodges and, over the years, very few Blacks were admitted to certain non-Prince Hall Grand Lodges. This is not the case today, as hundreds of thousands of Black, Native American, Hispanic and Oriental Freemasons can testify.

But there are no blacks that belong to the Grand Lodge of Alabama, as an example, how do you explain that?

There is a schism in Freemasonry dating back over 200 years to when "Prince Hall" Masons, who are African-Americans, declared themselves independent. This schism

is similar to the division of the United Methodist Church from the A.M.E. C.M.E. and United Methodist Church from the A.M.E., S.M.E. and A.M.E. Zion churches or the National Baptists from the American and Southern Baptists.

In each of these three examples the organizations are working to repair the damages of centuries of separation. In the case of Freemasonry the separation between Prince Hall and non-Prince Hall Lodges is disappearing as the two organizations are extending formal recognition to each other and the Brethren from each organization are visiting each other in their respective Lodges. This process has proceeded at a steady pace for nearly ten years.

But Freemasonry only has males in its membership. Doesn't that make it at least chauvinistic?

No. Freemasonry is a family oriented organization with woman's organizations like the Order of the Eastern Star, and youth organizations like the International Order of Rainbow for Girls and Jobs Daughters, and the Order of DeMolay for young men. And Freemasonry also has so many family activities that involve our ladies. But like other

Fraternities and Sororities, we feel that is a place for an organization where men can get together and socialize.

I see where you use the word profane to describe non members. Isn't that a rather insulting term. It even sounds like a derogatory or insulting name or label. Why do use this term which is derived from the word profanity?

The word "profane" comes from two Latin words, "pro," meaning "before," and "fanum," meaning "temple." So when a Mason refers to "profanes" he means only those who are not initiated into Masonry and thus must remain "outside the temple."

The reason this sounds insulting is that, in more recent usage, the term "profane" was most often coupled with the term "language," to denote speech which would not have been uttered inside a temple or other sacred precincts. "Profane" became a synonym for swearing, cursing, and blasphemy, all of which are now called "profanity." And gradually, this became the most common application of "profane" and, in the popular mind, became its only meaning.

Many Masons no longer use the term “profane” because the earlier meaning is rarely understood.

Let me change the subject a little. I’m intrigued by accusations that the Freemasons are tied to organizations that want to take over the world. As an example I’ve read about the Skull and Bones that George Bush and others are members. Isn’t that a Masonic organization, doesn’t it practice Satanism, and aren’t they the seed group to take over the world?

The "Skull and Bones is not a Masonic organization; it is the oldest of Yale’s fraternities, founded in December of 1832 by a Yale senior named William Huntington Russell (1809-85). He and a group of classmates decided to form the Eulogian Club as an American chapter of a German student organization. The Yale society fastened a picture of its symbol — a skull and crossbones — to the door of the chapel where it met.

By 1873, the fraternity was being criticized as a "deadly evil" practicing Satanic initiations.

According to one version of the Order's founding, it was an outgrowth of an earlier British or Scottish Freemasonic grouping first established at All Soul's College at Oxford University in the late 17th century. However, the only link that can be found between Skull and Bones and Freemasonry is the use of the skull and crossbones by both organizations.

I read a lot about a group called the Illuminati. I'm not sure I understand what this group is, but many Internet sites make a tie between the Illuminati and Freemasonry--is this true and isn't this Illuminati group dangerous?

Freemasons are not part of the so-called Illuminati. Indeed, there is no documentation that such a group exists and no evidence that there is even an active or effective group currently using the name.

However, a great deal of fiction has been written on the topic of the Illuminati and this has led to much speculation about the existence of some undocumented, undefined group with the unconfirmed goal of world domination. It's great fun for

conspiracy theorists but even they have not been able to demonstrate or prove the existence of any such organization.

I read that your obligations have horrid and bloody consequences if they are violated—is that true?

The penalties of which you speak are associated with the obligations all Master Masons take, obligations which do not violate our family, civic, or religious obligations. The obligations are of ancient origin and contain penalties for violations which are founded in antiquity, but they are wholly symbolic in nature. We have chosen to leave these symbolic penalties in the obligations because of their antiquity and to impress upon the candidate the seriousness of their undertaking and the shame they should feel were they not to live up to high moral principles of Freemasonry. However, the only penalties which Freemasonry imposes for violations of its tenets and regulations are reprimand, suspension and expulsion.

But your ceremonies do involve hazing and riding goats, do they not?

None of that is true. There is no hazing in Freemasonry. Freemasonry is not a college fraternity, it is for adults, and while we have fun, we have more serious purposes, one of which is to treat each other with respect and dignity.

Let me shift the discussion. In my searches on the Internet I found references to people and acts done by Masons that are repugnant. As an example, I saw where Jack the Ripper was a Freemason, is that true?

There is no evidence to support that claim. However, many books and movies keep the Masonic connection alive – as an example – the 1973 BBC programme, *Jack the Ripper*, and Stephen Knight's , *Jack the Ripper: The Final Solution*. And while fictional accounts depict the murders as resembling Masonic ritual, and the location of the murders as having Masonic significance, neither historical facts nor published Masonic ritual bear out this claim.

Indeed, to date, there has been nothing to identify the perpetrator of the Whitechapel murders as a Freemason, and nothing to implicate Freemasonry in the murders or any

alleged cover-up. This is not surprising because the fact is that the perpetrator – or perpetrators – of the 1888 Whitechapel murders have never been identified – so how could anyone say they were Masons? And I might add that one of the most respected researchers of the Ripper murders, Donald Rumbelow, states in his revised edition of *Jack the Ripper: The Complete Casebook*: "Whichever way you look, there is not a shred of evidence to back up theories connecting Freemasonry to these murders.

In my searches, I read that because you are concerned about the secrets not getting out a person can never leave the fraternity without severe consequences – like being falsely accused of crimes, or being “blackballed” from jobs and the like. Is that true? Do you take action against those that leave your ranks?

Laugh!! No of course not. No recognized Grand Lodge jurisdiction can coerce or compel membership. If a Brother wishes to cease being a Freemason, he can withdraw from the organization. In fact, we have had members that leave the fraternity and then later come back. They are generally,

welcomed as long as they have conformed with our moral and ethical code of conduct.

But I also read that Freemasons killed William Morgan for disclosing the secrets of the fraternity—certainly this is not conjecture? Indeed, I read some old court rulings where a number of Masons were found guilty of kidnapping Morgan. Certainly there has to be some truth in all of this—it wasn't a fabrication?

Here the facts. William Morgan was an itinerant stoneworker who settled in Batavia New York in 1824. He convinced the local Freemasons that he was a Brother and participated in Lodge activities, made speeches and visited other Lodges. He signed a petition for the formation of a Royal Arch Chapter in Batavia, but some other Freemasons questioned his Masonic legitimacy. Another Royal Arch petition was then submitted, which he was not permitted to sign. Morgan was furious about this, and vowed revenge. He proposed publishing of a book exposing Freemasonry. The project was made public, resulting in consternation among the Freemasons.

It is generally agreed that William Morgan was taken to Canada by Freemasons. He was supposedly given \$500 and a horse, with the agreement that he never return. However, despite a lack of evidence, rumors persisted that he had been murdered.

Morgan's deportation cannot be justified by any legal, moral, or Masonic principle. DeWhitt Clinton, a distinguished and eminent Freemason, was Governor of New York at the time. He issued proclamations condemning the actions of those accused of abducting Morgan and secured indictments against four men involved in the conspiracy.

The Grand Lodges throughout the United States passed resolutions, disclaiming all connection or sympathy with the outrage.

The disappearance of William Morgan has been researched extensively, and the evidence that he was murdered by Masons is weak and wanting at best. But regardless, the outrage over the incident led to the formation of an Anti-Masonic political party, widespread condemnation of the

Masons, and nearly resulted in the demise of Freemasonry in this country.

Speaking about government—I understand that you do influence Governments, that you engage in politics and even run your own candidates for office. There was even an anti-Masonic Party in the 1800's that ran a candidate against your political activities.

Yes there was an anti-Masonic Party, but a long-standing rule within regular Freemasonry is a prohibition on the discussion of politics in a Lodge and the participation of Lodges or Masonic bodies in political pursuits. Freemasonry teaches its members to be active in civic concerns, but has no politics, but it is not a political organization.

But you can't deny that Freemasons have been active in revolutions around the world, including the revolution in this country.

That is true. Freemasons have been active in exercising their political views, and it is true that in the United States, in Europe, and in Latin, Masons have been leaders in the

struggle for independence and democracy. But they acted as individuals, not as a representative of Freemasonry.

I read that Adolf Hitler praised Freemasonry and was a Freemason?

No Adolf Hitler was not a Freemason, and after his rise to power, the ten Grand Lodges in Germany were dissolved. The Gestapo seized the membership lists of the Grand Lodges, and looted their libraries and collections of Masonic objects and writings, many members of the Order were sent to concentration camps.

Don't you give preferential treatment to Freemasons in giving out jobs, promotions, and other benefits. I've even heard stories that judges will give lenient treatment to Freemasons in court?

Candidates for Freemasonry are examined to ensure that are joining for the right reasons – not to enhance their business or professional life. And once a Mason, they are enjoined to treat every person – Mason or not – fairly. To

give special privileges to a Mason is considered an abuse which can result in sanctions against the Mason.

Let me ask one last question. Masons say one thing, anti-Masons say another -- whom should I believe and why?

It would be difficult to know whom to believe, if you did not know any Masons. But if you do, you can observe how they behave, how they treat each other and how they deal with people in their daily lives. I think you can tell the character of the organization by the character of its members, and in fact, that is why we are so particular who we allow to join. We want to keep it an organization we can be proud of, and one you can be proud to join.

John – I really appreciate your willingness to answer these questions. I guess there is a lot of half truths and fabrications about the Fraternity. I need to be more judicious in what I accept as a fact, don't I?

I hope I have cleared some things up for you. But we do encourage you to read and research as much as you can about Freemasonry—not only the information that supports

our arguments, but the information that is contrary. It is only by a thorough understanding of all the arguments that you can formulate your own position out of knowledge and not just because someone has said it is true or false.