



Scientia Coronati Research Lodge No. 4 F&AM

Scientia Coronati Research Lodge No. 4 F&AM is a Masonic entity formed for the purpose of education, research and informative discourse of Freemasonry.

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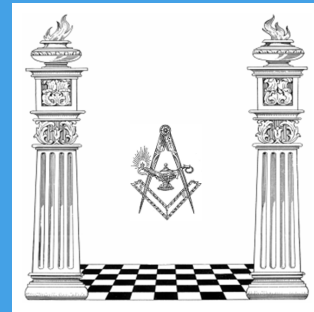
Essays, Papers & Articles

Masonic Topics

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And the Earth was without

form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, 'Let there be light'



Address postal correspondence to:

Scientia Coronati Research Lodge No. 4 F&AM

1028 Willow Creek Road Prescott, Arizona, USA 86301-1642

Address electronic correspondence to:

secretary@scientiacoronati.org

For the benefit of Freemasonry in general

By W. Brother Jean-Claude Malterre PM
An Arizona Freemason

The most profound and useful question each one of us must answer is the second question asked by the Worshipful Master to the Senior Warden at the opening of the Lodge in the Entered Apprentice degree:

'What came you here to do?'

We should all ponder the ritual answer to that question which starts with: 'To learn'. Each one of us should also engage in the formulation of the answer to that question for ourselves.

Then, we should remember that going back to fundamentals is not only always wise but also often necessary. 'Seek and ye shall find' says the ritual: Masonry is for seekers. There are altogether too many things which, in our daily lives, we do take for granted. In Masonry, we should uncover basic truths and debunk others. It is not an exercise in futility but a lifetime attitude. Such an attitude has the benefit of opening the mind, rectifying myths, and establishing the necessarily solid foundations upon which one can erect a strong edifice.

When we speak about Freemasonry in America, the least that we should do is to clearly define what we mean by the word Freemasonry or Masonry. There are altogether too many bogus claims about what it is and what it is not, whether on the internet, in print or even from some of our members. Traditional encyclopedia being unhelpful: 'Teachings and practices of the secret fraternal order officially known as the Free and Accepted Masons, or Ancient Free and Accepted Masons', a definition is absolutely necessary.

Because I was not satisfied with what I was finding to define Freemasonry, (which includes our own Grand Lodge adopted mission statement otherwise widely accepted in the US) and very early in my Masonic career, I attempted to define Freemasonry on my own. I have now worked on my definition for over a decade. Yet, it is still a work in progress which, I do modify almost every single time I work on it.

For the benefit of Freemasonry in general, I am going to explain why and how I have arrived to what I have today. It is only my definition and I do not pretend that it is right nor am I content with it.

If asked what Freemasonry is, you would likely come up with a definition of what it is which might be just... another definition. Because of the diverse character of Freemasonry, we may have as many definitions as we have people formulating them... and then some.

Too often Freemasonry is defined by what it is not: not a cult, not a secret society, not a religion etc... that is why my definition is starting with:

'Freemasonry is'.

I like the fact that, when we say, "Freemasonry is", we also say that it 'is' and affirm that it does exist, today, now, in the present tense. There is no question that what comes next 'is' the real unadulterated definition.

One of the main attributes of Freemasonry is that it is likely the oldest fraternity in the world; consequently, our definition will attest to the fact that it is a 'fraternal' organization.

There is no doubt in my mind that for many Masons and me **'Freemasonry is a way of life'**. It is, (or should be) intrinsically a behavior, a lifestyle, and/or some kind of a standard of living.

It is not the way of life, but one unambiguous way of living ones own life. To me, this also means that Freemasonry is a good way to live one's life. Although I would like to keep it to these simple six words, it is not sufficient to describe the kind of way of life that it is.

This is why I would further qualify my definition by adding two characteristics of the kind of way of life that it is: **'virtuous and exemplary'**. I added the qualifier of **'virtuous'**, because all the teachings of Freemasonry promote a style of life based on virtues to live by. Because it is recognized by Masons and others as a lifestyle worthy of emulation I added **'exemplary'**.

Now, we have: **'Freemasonry is a fraternal virtuous and exemplary way of life'**.

Although I think that this describes well what Freemasonry is, it leaves aside important attributes such as what purpose(s) it is supposed to achieve or for whom it is.

We know that Regular Freemasonry (See Note about regularity) is for men and has been only for men. Since this is not the place to have a debate about women in Freemasonry and observing that no one would call it a sorority but a fraternity, it will suffice to say that Freemasonry is for men.

We also know Freemasonry is not for all men: it is limited to those who believe in a Supreme Being. The best definition that I could come-up with for such men is not very original: **'men who believe in a Supreme Being'**! I tried 'religious men', but that implied that they would practice a religion. I was not completely satisfied with religious and tried 'theist men' for a while. That also was limiting because it excluded Indus, Buddhists and most American Indians. Moreover, with theist I had to explain that it was the antonym of atheist, which brought up the agnostics and defocused the discussion from defining Freemasonry. Therefore, I decided, may be temporarily, to settle for **'men who believe in a Supreme Being'**.

A note about regularity: Freemasonry in America tends to be for the most part 'regular'. Extremely simplified, the core of regularity lies in the adherence to the 'Ancient Landmarks'. Such landmarks are the requirements in a belief in a Supreme Being, the use of a Volume of Sacred Law or, men only organization. There are many other Landmarks too numerous to discuss here. I am exclusively talking about American Freemasonry identified as regular, in accordance with the Landmarks adopted by the United Grand Lodge of England and most American Grand Lodges.

The **'men who believe in a Supreme Being'** have also something else that is special about them: they have all been initiated into Freemasonry. The easiest way to account for that is to qualify them with the word **'initiated'**.

Now, we have **'initiated men who believe in a Supreme Being'**.

To some degree, this last addition defines Freemasons. It is not however complete if it leaves out the important fact that these men join Freemasonry on their own freewill and I came up with this:

'Freemasonry is a fraternal virtuous and exemplary way of life voluntarily lived and embraced by initiated men believing in a Supreme Being'

This sentence, defines Freemasonry and what a Freemason is, at least in North America and most of the world. Obviously, Freemasons make Freemasonry what it is and one cannot be dissociated from the other. What Freemasonry or Freemasons do is defined as a way of life that they live and embrace: yet there is still something missing and I thought that we should also account for the purpose(s) and objectives of Freemasons and their craft of Freemasonry.

Despite of the prevalence of the philanthropic aspects of Freemasonry in the United States, the major sphere of influence of our craft is that of the ideas and societal concepts which are well illustrated in our country. Altogether as well, Freemasonry affects the men carrying out its purposes. It was necessary to explain what these men do, why they do it and what it means to them and the rest of the world. This led me to this final definition:

Freemasonry is a Fraternal virtuous and exemplary way of life voluntarily lived and embraced by initiated men believing in a Supreme Being who, through the application of its teachings, find their own spiritual fulfillment in contributing to the betterment of Society.

There it is! Despite the fact that I am not one hundred percent satisfied with this definition of Freemasonry which I would prefer to see shorter among other things, I think that it represents, as closely as I could achieve, so far, what I believe Freemasonry to be.

I know that it is ambitious to expect these few words (and very long sentence) to say it all about Freemasonry and I do not pretend that they do. I am however challenging anyone to either come up with another definition and/or improve on this one. I recently improved it by adding the initiatic notion, changed the theist word, and added the spiritual dimension for instance.

I am now more satisfied than I ever was with this definition but, it was the case too when I made the previous changes...

What is more important is that each one of us should reflect upon what Freemasonry means to us and to our life, because as Masons, this is what we came here to do.

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