

DETERMINING RECOGNITION

Harry W. Bundy
Grand Secretary
Grand Lodge of Colorado

On St. John's Day, June 24, 1717, two hundred and forty one years ago, the Freemasons of London formed a grand lodge and started the system of organized Masonry which has spread over the entire world, and its law has come to be recognized by Craft Masonry as the criterion by which regularity may be determined. Freemasonry was up to that time a system of Guilds composed of workers in stone, to which honorary or "accepted" members had begun to attach a certain philosophy taught by symbolism based on the working tools of the operative Masons. Then as now the basic hope of man was for an after-life existence. Instinctively he turned to the suggestion offered to him in the story of the plants which may only live again by passing through the period of deep sleep we as humans call Death. The Legend of the Third degree was devised and it held forth to every Mason the fulfillment of that hope for himself which could only be gained by suffering from those calamities to which flesh is heir and conquering the evils and temptations of this life, thus deserving and winning the right to resurrection pictured in the raising to the sublime degree of a Master Mason. Every Rite of Freemasonry eventually recognized the fundamental value of this lesson and adopted it in some form in some of its degrees. Ceremonial rites offering certain privileges to the Mason who successfully passed through the ceremony of Raising gradually became degrees themselves and as the multiplicity of these ceremonies became cumbersome new rites or assemblies of degrees were formed. In Britain, as might be expected, this became what is known today as the York Rite, always bearing true faith and allegiance to the Grand Lodge from which it sprang.

Spreading over on to the continent of Europe and into the France, the idea of another Rite embracing the "floating" degrees resulted in the Rite of Perfection which seized upon the idea of progression in knowledge and symbolism and subordinated the Craft Degrees to a progression of degrees and teachings topped by the 25th degree. What more natural than to develop the thought that the higher the number the higher the power of those possessing the "highest" degree?

Thus we have the gradual departure of the Latin Masonry from the fundamentals of the Anglo Saxon Masonry.

Nordic Masons soon saw the loyalty and cohesiveness of Masonic influence and adopted a strange system which combined adherence to the Christian religion-an influence of the Templar background of the Masons of Central and Northern Europe-the submissiveness of the Trades union or Guild member, and the autocracy of the Grand Master. Thus the Scandinavian Rite was established with the King of Sweden as Solomon, the Grand Master.

The Rite of Memphis, with over a hundred degrees was organized in Italy and based its authority on the Egyptian influence of Freemasonry as practiced in Egypt and brought into Rome by the practice of the Roman Emperors of making philosophers and religionists of all types most welcome in the Eternal City and thereby building an influence which could be used as a personal loyalty when needed to further ambition. Thus Italy welcomed the smooth tongued, plausible and capable though crafty impostor Cagliostro. This man recognized the desire for more light and led those who were groping for the light down pathways which called them far from the fundamentals of Masonry as originally established.

Now let us deal with Latin America. Latin Masonry followed the adventurers into South America. and with it the inclination to yield precedence to the hand which held the scepter of authority. The thirty-third degree of Scottish Rite Masonry became the official or ruling degree by natural sequence. This lasted well over a hundred years.

In the meantime, the Rite of Perfection had come to the shores of the newly created United States of America. The Latin influence and the religious domination over the minds of men caused seven degrees to be added and the thirty-third became the ruling or governing degree of the newly created Scottish Rite.

In this English speaking, English thinking country there was an inevitable clash with the **hierarchical** as contrasted with the **democratic** system of government in Masonry. The compromises of the Constitutional Convention, where each of the newly formed states yielded some personal privilege for the universal harmony of the entire country, had taught the Americans the necessity of having a common cause and objective and the newly formed successor to the Rite of Perfection, the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite accepted the historic right of the Craft Masonry to rule and govern and

gracefully recognized the Priority of right held by the Grand Lodges. The newly formed Grand Lodges themselves declared their sovereignty over the lodges operating in each state of this new country and added to that a principle known as the American Doctrine of Exclusive Jurisdiction which in effect said that the first group to form a grand lodge in any territory not previously governed by a Grand Lodge should be the only regular Masonic authority in that jurisdiction and all others not yielding allegiance would be declared clandestine. This brought a howl of protest from our Latin American Brothers at first, but soon seeing the advantage of such a system in maintaining regularity the Latins started changing their system of government in Masonry to acknowledge the Grand Lodge system of government by the Master Mason Degree, instead of the Thirty-third.

In October, 1921, a convention of the International Masonic Service Associations was held in Geneva, Switzerland, at which a system of determining regularity was adopted. Naturally the English system governed and seven tests were set by which regularity could be measured. This has become the measure of regularity the world over. These are:

1. That it was regularly established by three or more recognized Lodges or legalized by one or more recognized Grand Lodges;
2. That it is independent and self-governing and exercises supreme and exclusive jurisdiction;
3. That it limits membership to men, believing in a S.A.O.T.U., and obligated on the book of sacred law recognized by the initiate;
4. That it requires the display of the three great lights in every Lodge at work;
5. That it bars controversial, political, and religious questions from its Lodges;
6. That it is founded upon and adheres to the ancient landmarks, customs, and usages of the Craft;
7. That it does not maintain fraternal intercourse with bodies which violate these principles.

Let it be noted that religion and politics are forbidden as a matter of discussion in a regular lodge. The participation of women is forbidden. Racial lines are supposedly eradicated. This last step has been often referred to by Mason and profane alike as the tie that has held the British Empire together. The doctrine of exclusive jurisdiction has been adopted by all North American Grand Lodges and has resulted in the lodges formed among negro Americans, they (being branded irregular and clandestine) have been deprived of the privilege of regular membership by the use of the ballot in individual lodges.

The use of the ballot is a landmark and must be used to protect the peace and harmony of the fraternity socially, intellectually, religiously, politically, and influentially. It may well be said that the ballot should not be used to determine physical qualifications such as color. But what of the Doctrine of the Perfect Youth: which bars the non-male, the mentally impaired, the crippled, and the under aged?

This landmark is almost universally acknowledged and used to benefit the Craft. We find many modifications. In our Mother Grand Lodge we find the Lewes system, which allows a youth of 18 to become a Member in the Lodge of his father, attaining, to full membership at manhood. This system is copied in many of the Latin Grand Lodges. American Lodges have forbidden the practice and have substituted encouragement, if not actual sponsorship of the Order of DeMolay, for boys budding into manhood. The "Equal Rights" program of the American states made it natural that the question of sex be modified in Masonry, and the O.E.S. was devised for women and the Order of the Rainbow and the Order of Jobs Daughters for girls. These female and juvenile orders, being builded on fundamental principles known as Masonic, seem to have satisfied the desires of the members of these groups and to have preserved the adult male character of Masonry. Where with ostrich-like stupidity this necessity for modification of a centuries-old way of thinking has been ignored, we find clandestinism flourishing, co-Masonry embracing both men and women, and snobbery destroying the harmony which is the strength and support of regular Masonry. We are reminded of the couplet facetiously quoted when new rules for automobiles entering the traffic were made necessary and a realignment of the rights of autoist and pedestrian alike were necessary:

He was right, dead right, as he sped along,
But he's just as dead as if he'd been wrong.

Masonry should modify its rules to meet the challenge of education, of equal political standing for both sexes and all races, religious and political faiths. This should be done while there is a choice of speed, of method and of goals, rather than hysterical cataclysmic upsetting of the pitcher of cooling water which will refresh and strengthen us all if judiciously used on a basis of share and share alike, according to our needs.

We should have a common religious faith, too, often glibly referred to as a belief in the Grand Architect of the Universe. We should not have the absolutism of the Scandinavian or Eclectic system confining its members to Christianity, the intolerance of the Roman system with the primary purpose of preserving a ruling hierarchy, the fanaticism of the Moslem, promising

physical rewards for earthly morality, or the liberality of the agnostic who (heavenly in his desire to please all) allows the atheistic nonbeliever to crawl under the tent of Masonry as is so woefully exemplified by the Grand Orient of France and its adherents. We should make Deity truly the point within the circle around the perimeter of which is room for every sect or opinion which acknowledges the Fatherhood, of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

To get down to the everyday fundamental with which we come in contact, should we use the hoodwink in initiations? One great jurisdiction has practically discarded it, using it only as we use the door of the preparation room between the profane and the accepted petitioner, discarding the hoodwink as we open the door when we answer the raps of the candidate. It is highly successful. Should we dispense with the physical portrayal of the Legend and rely on the mental application of the allegory? Many jurisdictions have done so under the pressure of caution, and the necessity for bringing "Degree Teams" back from the amusement category of teaching to the solemn purpose of teaching by allegory.

Should we demand the abolishing of jurisdictional lines which require a petitioner to associate himself with a group in which he has little of common interest, socially, financially, politically, religiously, or intellectually, a process which almost guarantees his early withdrawal to the class of the non-attending Brother, if not his complete renouncing of the membership itself? May we cite the case of the Grand Jurisdiction of Pennsylvania where except for the Grand Jurisdiction itself there are no "lines" of demarcation and a profane may choose the lodge with which he associates himself, subject to the possession of fundamental character qualifications. The United Grand Lodge of England recognizes the desirability of this choice by the encouragement of "Class" Lodges. Many Latin jurisdictions practice this in permitting District Grand Lodges to operate in the language of the country of origin of foreign born members. Should we? Would this not let the "color question" solve itself? Would it not prevent forcible integration under conditions distasteful to white and black alike where each is a sincere, thinking Mason? We find a tacit acceptance of the principle of "Birds of a feather flocking together" in the encouragement of Research Lodges for the students of Masonry, in associations of Grand Jurisdictions with like problems. Witness our RMMC. We might do well to approve lodges formed on the basis of creed, color, occupation, and environmental conditions.

Should we demand proficiency in ritual? Which is more desirable, Masonry of the head, or Masonry of the heart? How many Brothers of the Craft absent themselves for fear of ridicule by those who meticulously demand that every pass-word have a certain inflection, that every punctuation point be exactly placed and that every piece of paraphernalia be regarded as sacrosanct? Should there not be a liberalism between Jurisdictions, between Lodges, and even between individual Brothers which will recognize fundamental Masonic qualifications rather than superficial and artificial acquirements? We err in intolerance within our own ranks.

Finally, should we not recognize the fact that circumstances alter cases and that a Jurisdiction threatened in its very existence by a numerically, superior ruling force must operate and concede privileges to preserve its very existence. Masonry must "go underground" in Communist controlled countries. Who would deny them the right to discuss politics or religion within the sanctity of their lodge? Where can they keep the Holy Fire if not on the Masonic Altar? What about domination of religious groups such as we find in Spain where Masonic membership is accompanied with a decree of death pronounced by the Roman Church. Closer than that, in Colombia, South America, where assassination of "heretics" is condoned and encouraged by the domineering Church? Can we forbid these Masons the sanctity of their Lodges to discuss means of self preservation? Can we criticise justly our own jurisdiction which does not open the flood gates which will drown them out with the very water which if controlled will be of great benefit to they development of democratic thought and action?

One could go on for time immeasurable with arguments for and against uniformity and universality of governing laws. The final law must be the answer to the question "Are we trying to fulfill God's will through Masonry? Are we really promoting the Brotherhood of Man?"