

October 20, 1994

0. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, INTRODUCTION, AND TABLE OF CONTENTS

(1) Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Roger Ingersoll, whose Masonic FTP archives provided substantial portions of this FAQ. Where possible, I have included specific credits to the authors of those files, though several are anonymous. Note that one of the sources credited here is FMBITS.TXT, which has the following disclaimer as its preface: "With apologies, the original source for the following information has been lost. It probably came from either the Philatethes or the Southern California Research Lodge. The file has been stored in my Computer for a couple of years. Enjoy! William N. Wine (Sysop) #72435,1512 [Masonry Forum Compuserve 07/11/93]".

Many people have worked on this FAQ, by writing suggestions, pointing out errors, offering corrections, and help of other sorts. Honors are due to Ron Boutwell, Steven Cranmer, Earl K. Dille, Bob Dixon, Ed Greenberg, Bill Hickey, Joy Leavy, Paul Leger, Stephen Morris, Tom Schnorrenberg, Michael Shelby, Robert H. Starr, David R. B. Walker, Catherine Yronwode. I'm sure someone somewhere is reading this right now and saying "that @\$@#\$S\$ forgot me!" If so, my deepest apologies! Please speak up and you'll be added to the honor roll in the future.

Several other people have offered to lend a helping hand with this FAQ, and while their work does not appear in this edition, it most likely will in future versions, so I offer them thanks in advance.

Finally, thanks to the Grand Lodge of Michigan, whose lectures provided the basis of the "Famous Freemasons" list.

(2) Introduction

This FAQ is version 1.1, which includes a number of revisions, suggestions, and reactions to version 1.0. It is still not complete and final, though we are slowly getting there.

One of the major changes is that it is now split into parts, to make distribution easier. Also, some newsreaders can't handle large articles, so this should alleviate the problem.

Any question you see marked with an asterisk should be considered incomplete. If you take issue with something or want to help out in authoring any part of this FAQ, please drop me a line. Even catching (gasp!) spelling errors would be a great help.

Also note that there are some areas that are not asterisked, but should be thought of as "permanently asterisked" because their information may change or could always be added to. For example, do you know of any other names to add in the famous Freemasons section? Are you aware of other FTP sites? Any books you would recommend? Etcetera.

Finally, it should be stated without fail that no Mason, no Master, no Grand Master can speak for all of Masonry. The answers provided herein are not "authoritative" in the sense that they are universally true for all Masons everywhere and reflect the beliefs of all Masons. There are differences between each jurisdiction, and in general there

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are differences between US Grand Lodges and Grand Lodges in other countries. Of course, the high ideals and noble principles of Masonry remain the same the world over, but some of the fine points and details may vary.

So remember: nothing here is "gospel". This FAQ is intended to provide a summation of commonly-given answers to commonly-asked questions on the net.

Andrew Fabbro
afabbro@umich.edu
Ann Arbor Fraternity Lodge No. 262
Free & Accepted Masons,
Grand Lodge of Michigan

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I. MASONRY ON USENET AND THE INTERNET

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(9) Hey! Somebody just posted some nonsense about how Masons worship Satan and sell their soul to the Reverend Moon! What should I do about it?

(1) Where is this FAQ available?

This FAQ is available by FTP from Roger Ingersoll's FTP archives (see question 3 of this section).

It is available on the AFS file system, in the /afs/umich.edu/users/a/f/afabbro/Public directory.

This FAQ is also available by e-mail request to afabbro@umich.edu.

It is posted monthly to alt.freemasonry, alt.masonic.demolay, and alt.masonic.members.

(2) Is there a mailing list?

Yes. Send e-mail to freemasonry-list@sacs3.mp.usbr.gov with a message asking to be subscribed (e.g., "Please subscribe me. My name is Benjamin Franklin and my e-mail address is bfranklin@cont.congress.gov"). The exact syntax of your request is not important, as it will be read by a human.

(3) Are there any FTP sites?

Yes. Roger Ingersoll maintains a large collection of Masonic material at ftp.netcom.com, in the /pub/rogeri/freemasonry directory.

(4) Are there any Wide World Web Masonic resources?

Yes. Try <http://www.mit.edu:8001/people/dryfoo/Masons/Main-page.html>

(5) What about CompuServe, AOL, Prodigy, GENie, Delphi, and other commercial services?

On CompuServe, type GO MASONRY to reach the Masonry forum.

(The answer is also yes for AOL and GENie, and possibly the others-- more information as it becomes available)

(6) What is alt.freemasonry for?

Alt.freemasonry is intended for general discussion of Masonry and related topics. Almost any question regarding Masonry is welcome there. Both Masons and non-Masons are welcome.

(7) What is alt.masonic.members for?

Alt.masonic.members is intended to be a home for USENET Masons to talk about the Craft, though non-Masons are welcome to participate. The focus in a.m.m., however, is on discussion among people already familiar with Masonry or people who are Masons, so questions about becoming a Mason or what the York Rite is would be inappropriate (feel free to post such questions in alt.freemasonry instead).

Of course, neither newsgroup (or the mailing list) is considered Tiled and non-Masons read both regularly, so Brothers should not post anything that they would not normally discuss with non-Masons.

Discussion on Co-Masonry (a form of Masonry which includes both men and women) is welcome in either a.f or a.m.m.

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(8) What is alt.masonic.demolay for?

A. m. d. is for discussion regarding DeMolay (shocker, huh?) See III, 6 if you don't know what DeMolay is.

(9) Hey! Somebody just posted some nonsense about how Masons worship Satan and sell their soul to the Reverend Moon! What should I do about it?

Periodically, someone will post obvious flame-bait on one of the Masonic newsgroups. Masons who read the newsgroup obviously want to post and rebut these false claims. However, keep in mind that a single bit of bait that takes 30 seconds to write ("Masons are all KKK members!") can consume hours of time in rebuttal. Half-a-dozen flame-bait posts can drown the newsgroup in meaningless flame-wars that asphyxiate any serious conversation. On the other hand, if the poster finds that his ramblings are simply being ignored, he will likely become bored and go off to alt.get-a-life and mingle with his own kind.

Some readers feel that these claims must be addressed, otherwise USENET readers will get the wrong impression about Masonry. There is some truth in this, though to be frank, if someone is willing to get his information from someone who posts unsubstantiated one-line attacks with half-a-dozen misspelled words, there is probably little hope. However, this FAQ has been created to provide an answer to these nonsense posts, so that Masons can simply say "read the FAQ" rather than having to recreate its answers every time.

Still, some people will want to reply. In descending order of desirability, here is a hierarchy of possible responses:

(a) Ignore it. The person involved obviously is trying to stir up a flame-war, or bait Masons into saying something nasty in return so he can point and say "See! Masons are name-callers!"

(b) Respond via e-mail. Point the poster to this FAQ, or write your own response.

(c) Post a followup designed to entertain newsgroup readers. For example, if someone posts claiming that Masons are part of a global conspiracy, a gag post about channelling Adam Weishaupt of the Bavarian Illuminati or stating that Masons receive their daily to-do lists from root@universe.org would show the folly of the poster's ideas while still contributing something enjoyable to the newsgroup's readers.

(d) If the poster's flame-bait is something not covered in this FAQ and you feel that you just can't hold back from responding, please:

(1) remove any cross-posts (in both the posting and the followups). Some trolls will post a bit of bait in alt.freemasonry and cross-post it to a half-dozen different groups, thus assuring that they receive at least some response somewhere, which will be echoed to all the other groups... can you say snowball?

(2) If it not covered in this FAQ, please send a copy of the original post and your reply to afabbro@umich.edu, so it may be included future editions. No one has yet claimed that Masonry is really a secret martial art or that Master Masons have a special power to buy real estate no-money-down, but if someone does, a Q&A just for them will be added.

Finally, remember that there are people who have genuine questions or

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misconceptions about Masonry and are not trying to flame anyone but rather simply want answers. Just because they have misconceptions does not mean they are trying to provoke anyone. You can usually tell the difference by the tone of the post:

Honest Question: "I read in the Weekly World News that Masons have ties to the KKK and are prejudiced and don't allow blacks to be members. Is this true?"

Flame-Bait: "You Masons are all Klansmen and bigots, aren't you? How do you live with yourselves? Do you enjoy harassing ethnic minorities?"

Honest Question: "I've heard that Catholics can't be Masons. Is this true? Are there any Catholic Masons? What is the issue here?"

Flame-Bait: "How can you Masons lie about Catholics, saying they can be Masons? Why are you trying to deceive everyone? What is your hidden agenda?"

Honest Question: "I thought Masonry was a fraternity, but I read that you have to profess some kind of faith in God, or that people pray in Lodge. Is Masonry a religion?"

Flame-Bait: "Masonry is a religion, and you have to give up your religion to be a Mason! Don't believe what Masons tell you!"

Etcetera. Those asking honest questions will usually respond with a thanks and consider the information given. Those seeking to sow the seeds of a flame-war will simply switch subjects endlessly and ignore any responses.

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(1) What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry (or simply, Masonry) is a fraternal order whose basic tenants are brotherly love, relief (philanthropy), and truth. We strive to enjoy the company of our brother Masons, assist them in times of personal trouble, and reinforce essential moral values. There is an old adage that Masonry "takes good men and makes them better", which is our goal.

It has often been observed that men are the products of everything they come into contact with during their lifetime. Masonry offers a man an opportunity to come into regular, enjoyable contact with men of good character, thus reinforcing his own personal moral development. Of course, Masonry is also meant to be enjoyed by its membership, so the

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order should not be viewed simply as a philosophical club, but rather a vibrant fellowship of men who seek to enjoy each other's company, a fraternity.

To maintain this fraternity, discussion of religion and politics within the Lodge is forbidden, as these subjects are those that have often divided men in the past. Masons cover the spectrum of both religious and political beliefs and encourages a man to be religious without advocating a particular religion, and to be active in his community without advocating a particular medium of political expression.

While there probably are some actual stone-workers who are Masons, Masonry does not teach is membership the literal techniques of stonework. Rather, it takes the actual "operative" work of Medieval Masons and uses it as an allegory for moral development. Thus, the symbols of Masonry are the common tools that were used by medieval stonemasons: the gavel, the rule, the compass, the square, the level, etc. Each of these has a symbolic meaning in Masonry. For example, Masons are said to meet "on the level", meaning that all Masons are brothers, regardless of social status, personal wealth, or office within the Lodge or in the world at large. Similar symbolism exists for other tools.

Masonry is distinguished from other fraternal orders by its emphasis on moral character, its ornate rituals, and its long tradition and history, which dates back to at least the 17th century in modern form, the 14th century (c. 1350-1390) in the written evidence of its precursors, and back to the mists of antiquity in its origin. Masonry has a continuously documented paper history (i.e., Lodge to Lodge) since 1717, though historical analysis shows Masonry to be much older.

There are also a great many things that Masonry is NOT: a religion, a secret society, etc., and these will be covered later in this FAQ.

There are three degrees in Masonry. Other appendant bodies confer additional degrees, up to the 32nd (or the honorary 33rd) of the Scottish Rite, but in symbolic Masonry (or Blue Lodge Masonry) proper, there are only three. At the Blue Lodge, Masons receive the degrees of Entered Apprentice (first degree), Fellowcraft (second degree), and Master Mason (third degree). Promotion generally requires the mastery of a small body of memorized material, the contents of which varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In some jurisdictions, only the signs, tokens, and grips of each degree must be learned; in others, a longer amount of material.

Of course, no Mason would ever look down upon a Brother simply because he was of a lower degree-- the degrees do not exist to create a pecking order or to confer rank. Rather, they are a system of initiation that allows men to become familiar with the august and ancient history and principles of Masonry at a comfortable pace. Proceeding from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason in the US can take as little as three months, while in England, the degrees are spaced apart by a year's interval.

Most Lodges have regular communications (meetings) once a month, that are also referred to as "business meetings". In the US, these are typically only open to Master Masons. In England, these meetings are usually opened in the first degree, and EAs may attend). Conferring of degrees is usually done at other meetings during the month.

While conferral of degrees and mundane business do take up a lot of a Lodge's time, there are a host of other activities that Masons engage in within the fraternity. Charitable work is often done, in the form of fundraisers, community volunteer work, etc. And there are also a great many things done for the simple pleasure of company: monthly breakfasts or dinners, picnics, card/chess matches, lectures on Masonic history, you name it. Masonry is a fraternity, and its membership seeks

to have fun.

Local Masonic Lodges are organized under Grand Lodges. In the United States, each state has its own Grand Lodge, which is a peer with every other Grand Lodge. There is not "Grandest Lodge"-- each Grand Lodge is supreme in its jurisdiction (e.g., in the US, in its state) but has no authority elsewhere. Of course, this does not mean that Masonry in New York is radically different than Masonry in Scotland or New Mexico. Masons are very traditional and the differences between Grand Lodges are usually minor.

The head of a Lodge is given the title Worshipful Master. This, of course, does not imply that Masons worship him; it is merely an stylish title. Masonic Lodges can be found in many cities, of all sizes, around the world. There are presently approximately 5 million Masons, half of which are in the United States.

(2) What is the Scottish Rite?

The Scottish Rite is an appendant body of Masonry, meaning that it is not part of the Blue Lodge per se, but closely associated with Masonry. It requires that a man be a Master Mason before joining the Scottish Rite. The Scottish Rite confers the 4th through 32nd degrees. The degree work may be, but is not necessarily, completed at one time. Any Master Mason is eligible to join the Scottish Rite. The degrees of the Scottish Rite continue the symbolism of the first three Masonic degrees. For a discussion of the 33rd degree, see question 9 of this section.

(3) What is the York Rite?

The York Rite, like the Scottish Rite, is an appendant body of Masonry, and confers degrees beyond the Blue Lodge's three degrees. It consists of nine degrees additional degrees: Mark Master, Past Master, Most Excellent Master, and Royal Arch Mason; the Cryptic Degrees of the Royal Master, Select Master, and Super Excellent Master, and the Chivalric Orders of the Order of the Red Cross, Order of the Knights of Malta and the Order of Knights Templar.

The Temple degrees, which comprise the top degrees of the York Rite are specifically Christian. Or at least, it can be stated that the oath is: in some Grand Lodges in the US and abroad, one need not be a Christian, but rather only be willing to take a Christian OATH. The difference here is that there are some who would willingly swear to defend the Christian faith on the grounds that they would defend any man's faith. The Chapter (or Royal Arch) and Consistory, which comprise the first two sections of the York Rite, are not specifically Christian.

As with most things Masonic, discuss any concerns with your local York Rite, who can advise you regarding your eligibility.

(4) What is the Shrine?

The Shrine is not an appendant body of Masonry, though the distinction would escape many. The Shrine confers no additional degrees. It was founded in 1872 (the Mecca Temple in New York City) and an Arabic theme was chosen. Hence, the distinctive red fez that Shriners wear at official functions.

Members of the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles the Mystic Shrine for North America (AASONM is an anagram for "A MASON") are members of the Scottish Rite's 32nd degree, and/or Knights Templar of the York Rite. The Shrine is most noted for its emphasis on philanthropy and its jolly outlook on life-- it has been called "the playground of Masonry". This

is expressed as "Pleasure without intemperance, hospitality without rudeness, and jollity without coarseness."

* (5) * Are there other appendant bodies?

Yes. For example, the Order of Judas Maccabeus. I'm sure some brave volunteer will shortly provide us with information on this and other orders.

* (6) * What is the Eastern Star?

The Order of the Eastern Star is an adoptive rite of Freemasonry with teachings based on the Bible and objectives that are charitable and benevolent. The founder of OES was Dr. Robert Morris, a lawyer and educator from Boston, Massachusetts, who was a Master Mason and Past Grand Master of Kentucky. Dr. Morris intended his creation to become a female branch of Freemasonry, but he failed to overcome the great opposition this idea engendered. After his first published ritual in 1849-50, he became associated with Robert Macoy who wrote and published a ritual based on Morris' in 1867. The first Grand Chapter was organized in Michigan in the same year. (There is evidence for an organization of the same name founded variously in 1788 or 1793, but this group was defunct by 1867.) Subordinate (local) chapters operate under charter from state level grand chapters which are responsible to the General Grand Chapter at the International Eastern Star temple in Washington, D. C.

Members must be eighteen years or older and either Master Masons in good standing or properly related to a Master Mason in good standing. The latter category includes wives; widows; sisters; daughters; mothers; granddaughters; step-mothers; step daughters; step-sisters; and half-sisters.

Each chapter has eighteen officers, some elected and others appointed. Two offices are specifically male (Patron and Associate Patron) while nine offices are specifically female (including Matron and Associate Matron). While the Worthy Matron is considered to be the presiding officer of the chapter, the degrees cannot be conferred without a presiding brother in good standing (hence the Patron and Associate Patron).

Each chapter retains the right to decide who shall be a member of the organization. Election to the degrees must be unanimous, without debate, and secret. The successful candidate must profess a belief in a Supreme Being and is initiated in five degrees, which are conferred in one ceremony. (When Eastern Star was created, it was intended to be the first of a three degree series. The second and third degrees were Queen of the South and the Order of the Amaranth, respectively.)

Interestingly enough, OES requires only the belief in a Supreme Being even though the degrees are based in both the Old and New Testaments. While non-Christians are not specifically barred from membership, it would seem to be difficult to be other than Christian and belong to the Order.

While Freemasons as members of the OES are a requirement as the Order is currently constituted, one Grand Lodge in the United States forbids its members to join Eastern Star and similar organizations with both male and female membership. In 1921, the Grand Master of Pennsylvania forbade the affiliation of Freemasons as "inimical to Freemasonry" and ordered those so affiliated to cease and desist within six months or be expelled from the Lodge. The long-term result of this edict--which has never been rescinded--has not been the demise of OES, but the importation of Freemasons into Pennsylvania from the surrounding states to be members of OES and Freemasons resident in Pennsylvania who belong to lodges

outside the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.
(Thanks to Joy Leavy for this section)

*** (7) * What is DeMolay/Rainbow?**

The International Order of DeMolay is the world's largest fraternal organization for young men between the ages of 13 and 21. The Order was founded in Kansas City, Missouri on March 24, 1919 by Frank Sherman Land. DeMolay Chapters are sponsored by Masonic Lodges, and some members of the sponsoring body also serve as Advisors on the Chapter's Advisory Council. Structurally, it is similar to Masonry. The officers of a Chapter are the Master Councilor, Senior Councilor, Junior Councilor, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon, Senior Steward, Junior Steward, Orator, Scribe, Marshal, Chaplain, Standard Bearer, Sentinel, Almoner, and seven Preceptors.

DeMolay Chapters hold monthly or bi-weekly meetings with Masonic-like Ritual. Other activities include athletic tournaments and events, social functions (joint activities with Rainbow are encouraged), fund-raising activities, Masonic service activities, and civic and philanthropic activities.

DeMolays are taught the seven cardinal virtues of the Order-- filial love, reverence for sacred things, courtesy, comradeship, fidelity, cleanness, and patriotism-- and the importance of practicing them in their daily lives.

The Order's namesake is Jacques DeMolay, who was the last Grand Master of the Knights Templar and who was executed by the Inquisition on March 18, 1314. Louis Lower, the first DeMolay, and his group of friends, when asked by Dad Land to choose a name for their group, believed that his heroic fidelity and loyalty to his fellow Templars were qualities with which they wanted their group to be identified. Mind you, Dad Land explained this to them before they chose their name.

A fascinating book about the history of the Order and the life of Frank S. Land (1890-1957), titled "Hi! Dad," is available from the DeMolay and More Store or practically any member of the Order. The phone number of the DeMolay and More Store is 1-800-DEMOLAY.
(thanks to Tom Schnorrenberg)

(a similar summary is currently being written for Rainbow, and will be included in a future version of this FAQ)

*** (8) * What is Co-Masonry?**

Co-Masonry refers to Masonic Lodges that admit both men and women. These are uniformly considered "irregular" and are not recognized by regular Lodges. Co-Masonry is not a recent phenomenon and traces its heritage back to the 19th century.

(That's the short answer. The long answer is still in preparation. Until it is ready, direct questions to Jeffrey Zeth (brjacques@delphi.com))

*** (9) * What is Prince Hall Masonry?**

NOTE: This section is excerpted from the Grand Lodge of New Brunswick's annual communication. I am eagerly hoping to find some Prince Hall Masons who can provide better information.

"There are some schools of thought that Prince Hall (his name not a title) was born in Barbados to a free black woman and a Scottish father. He emigrated to the Colony of Boston, Mass. and

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acquired real estate, making him eligible to vote. It was also documented that he was a devout Christian and a leather-worker by trade. On March 6, 1775, during the American War of Independence, Prince Hall along with fourteen men of color were made Masons in Army Lodge #441 of the Irish Constitution. When Army Lodge moved on, the aforesaid brethren were issued a permit authorizing them to appear publicly as a Masonic body for the purpose of celebrating the feast of St. John and to bury their dead.

On March 2, 1784, these same brethren applied to the Grand Lodge of England for a charter, which was subsequently issued to them on September 29, 1784. They were warranted under the name of African Lodge, No. 459 on the register of the Grand Lodge of England by authority of then Grand Master, the Duke of Cumberland. Prince Hall was the first Master. That charter, which is authenticated and in safekeeping, is believed to be the only original charter issued from the Grand Lodge of England still in the possession of any Lodge in the United States.

African Lodge allowed itself to slip into arrears in the late 1790's and was stricken from the rolls after the Union of 1813, although it had attempted correspondence in 1802 and 1806. In 1827, after other unreplied to attempts at communication, it declared its independence of any external authority and began to call itself African Grand Lodge No. 1.

It is interesting to note that when the Massachusetts lodges which were acting as a Provincial Grand Lodge declared themselves an independent Grand Lodge, and even when the present Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was formed by the amalgamation of two separate Grand Lodges, African Lodge was not invited to take part, even though it held a warrant every bit as valid as those others. This may be explained in part by this 1795 quote from John Eliot, who later became Grand Chaplain of the Gr. Lodge of Mass. He wrote, "White Masons, who are not more skilled in geometry than their black brethren, will not acknowledge them... the truth is they are ashamed of being on an equality with blacks."

Today there are 45 Grand Lodges (the latest being the just formed "Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Caribbean") that trace their origin back to African Lodge #459. There are more than 5000 Prince Hall Lodges and over 300,000 members. So far as it is known, their ritual, their secrets, their procedures, their requirements, their beliefs, their tenets or fundamental principles, are all either identical with ours, or recognizably similar." (by.. W Bro. Roy Cassidy)

To add to this:

Some Grand Lodges have recognized the Prince Hall Grand Lodges within their jurisdictions, and it has been or is being discussed in other jurisdictions. Since every Grand Lodge is autonomous and the supreme authority in its jurisdiction, this issue must be approached on a state-by-state basis.

Some have criticized Masonry as "segregated" due to the Prince Hall Lodges, but this is a ridiculous claim, since there are many black Masons in non-PH Lodges, and displays a fundamental ignorance of Masonic history.

(10) What is a 33rd degree Mason?

The Scottish Rite awards a special honorary degree, the 33rd, to

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those it feels has made an outstanding contribution to Masonry, the community as a whole, and to mankind. There is no way to "achieve" this degree or "take" it, in the sense that one takes the 4th through 32nd degrees in the Scottish Rite. It is a singular honor, rarely bestowed, and greatly admired.

- (11) Are there any Masonic functions that I can attend as a non-Mason?

Yes. Many Lodges open their installation of officers to the public. Once a year, a new Worshipful Master takes office. The ceremony performed during his inauguration is public. It is not the same ceremony as would be performed in a regular Masonic ritual or degree, but it does have the flavoring of Masonic symbolism and allows the public to "get a feel for Masonry" without being Masons. NOTE: Not all jurisdictions have public installations. Call or write your local lodge for details.

In addition, many Lodges sponsor public functions throughout the year, such as dinners or charity functions, designed to allow non-Masons who are interested in Masonry the chance to talk with Masons and ask questions. For information, call your local Lodge.

- (12) Who is the head of the Masons?

No one. Each Grand Lodge has its own jurisdiction and is the supreme authority within that jurisdiction. Obviously, many Grand Lodges have regular communication with each other, but official policy in one has no effect in another.

- (13) Are there dues, fees, etc. associated with being a Mason?

Yes. Like all organizations, Lodges must be able to pay their light bills. Typically, there is a one-time fee for the three degrees of Masonry, as well as regular annual dues. But these vary widely depending on the number of members, cost of living (rent in Manhattan is higher than it is in rural Oklahoma), the actual physical facilities of the Lodge, etc. The fees and dues, however, are not prohibitively expensive (the author is a college student and has no problem with them). Rather than give a single figure which may be very different than your local Lodge charges, or publishing an extended table of costs, it is easiest to simply refer the interested to their local Lodge.

Incidentally, many Grand Lodge jurisdictions provide for "life membership" after a Mason has paid dues for a long period. For example, in Michigan a Mason is no longer asked to pay dues after he has been a Mason for forty years. Other jurisdictions allow members to pay a lump sum for life membership. As with almost everything in Masonry, check with your local Grand Lodge or Lodge for more information.

- (14) I hear Masons refer to an "apron". What is that?

"During the ceremonies of his initiation, each Mason is presented with a white leather apron. It is, to him, an emblem of innocence and the badge of a Mason. It has, in all ages, been cherished by the rich, the poor, the high and the low. It is his for life. He will never receive another one and has, therefore, been cautioned to take it home and instructed in its care. While perfectly satisfactory for him to do so if he desires, he need not bring it to Lodge, as linen aprons are provided for his use meetings." (From a pamphlet, "To the Lady and Family of a Mason")

The above applies to the US. In many other countries, the Master Mason owns his regalia and brings it to the Lodge.

(15) What is a "Masonic Funeral"?

"Any member who was in good standing at the time of his death is entitled to a Masonic funeral if he or his family requests it. Such a request should be made to the Master of his Lodge who will make the necessary arrangements with the family, the mortuary, and the minister. A service is authorized by the jurisdiction in which you are located, and consists of participation at the mortuary, the beginning at the mortuary and the closing at the graveside, or graveside only. Pallbearers will be furnished at the request of the family. In general, the Lodge will do as much or as little as the nearest relative wishes it to do." (From a pamphlet, "To the Lady and Family of a Mason")

III. RESPONSE TO COMMON NEWSGROUP FLAMES & TROLLS

- (1) Do Masonic rituals have Pagan elements?
- (2) Do Masonic rituals have Satanic elements?
- (3) Do Masons have to swear terrible oaths? Are people killed when they break them?
- (4) Does Masonry teach magic(k)?
- (5) Masons believe in a special heaven for Masons only, don't they?

III. RESPONSE TO COMMON NEWSGROUP FLAMES & TROLLS

This section covers the current crop of trolling posts appearing in the Masonic newsgroups. The silliness of them is evident.

Other frequently-held myths are dealt with in Section IV. For information on handling flames, trolls, and those with anti-Masonic agendas, see I, 9.

(1) Do Masonic rituals have Pagan elements?

No. It has been stated in alt.freemasonry that Masonic ritual is laced with worship of Baal, Osiris, Thoth, the tooth fairy, and the Great Pumpkin. This is patently false. First, there is no worship of any God, Goddess, or supernatural creature in Masonry. Respect is certainly given to God, but his (her) nature is not defined, nor is a name given to God. Second, worship of any God except the God of their faith would be a serious sin in any Mason's faith, be he Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or whatever.

It should be noted that pagans who read alt.freemasonry do not consider Masonry to be pagan. Historians have noted that Gerald Gardner, considered to be the founder of modern Wicca, a pagan religion, was a Mason and borrowed from Masonic ritual. However, the direction of the transfer was from Masonry to Wicca, not from Wicca to Masonry. This does not indicate that Masonry has any pagan elements, as many other non-pagan groups (such as the Knights of Columbus) borrowed as Gardner did.

One such charge of paganism was the fact that the candidate is taught "to approach the East" during the Entered Apprentice ritual. Someone stated that this is a conscious duplication of the Egyptian worship of the Sun God, who rose in the East. This is patent nonsense and is akin to claiming that every Muslim in North America is a sun worshipper, since they face to the East when praying (the fact that they are facing Mecca is immaterial-- they must be Egyptian sun worshippers!). The meaning in Masonry is symbolic and non-religious: it is simply where one of the Lodge officers traditionally sits in Lodge. It should be also noted that those making this claim have yet to provide any meaningful information on the Egyptian ritual referred to: is it Old Kingdom or Middle Kingdom?

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which dynasty? which part of Egypt? under which Pharaoh? Before or after ancient Egypt's flirtation with monotheism? (It is this author's personal suspicion that those making the claim could not even name the Egyptian sun god).

No documentation has been provided to back up the charge that Masonic rituals are pagan in character, nor has any part of any Masonic ritual been cited showing pagan worship. It simply does not exist.

(2) Do Masonic rituals have Satanic elements?

No. Again, consider that Masons are Christians, Jews, Muslims, and members of other faiths who view Satan as the ultimate evil agent, anathema to their relationship with God. Would members of these faiths, not to mention religious leaders, knowingly take part in Satanic worship? Of course not, nor would they remain within an organization that had even the slightest hint of Satanic worship.

Some critics have charged that there are Satanic "elements" in Masonic ritual. For example, they claim that Masons kiss the Bible as an act of "kissing Jesus goodbye". This is obviously ridiculous, since Christians of a large number of faiths kiss the Bible during various services as a sign of respect. Not surprisingly, the attitude of deference and reverence that surround the kissing of the Great Light during the Masonic ritual referred to is never mentioned in these claims.

Again, no documentation has been provided to back up the charge that Masonic rituals are Satanic in character, nor has any part of any Masonic ritual been cited showing Satanic worship. It simply does not exist.

(3) Do Masons have to swear terrible oaths? Are people killed when they break them?

Yes, and no. Masons swear an oath of secrecy concerning Masonic secrets, which are things such as the modes of recognition, the rituals, etc. These oaths, which are very old, are phrased in colorful and symbolic language designed to impress upon the candidate the seriousness of this oath. The oath itself is very real-- it is sworn with the candidate's hand on the holy book of his faith (e.g., the Bible, the Koran, etc.) and is meant to be morally binding on the candidate.

However, the *penalties* involved in these oaths are symbolic. No Mason ever need fear harm from the hand of a Brother. Even if he were to break ties with Masonry and publish the secrets of Masonry, he would not be harmed. Have you ever read in the New York Times of a man being hunted down and slain by mad Masons? Of course not.

In recent times, some Grand Lodges have added phrasing to the rituals to specifically state the symbolic nature of the penalties.

(4) Does Masonry teach magic(k)?

No. Nowhere in Masonic ritual does a Mason learn any form of Magic(k). There are no spells, occult teachings, invocations, evocations, conjurings, nor are related arts (such as alchemy) taught.

This misconception often arises among those who have heard of the Golden Dawn, the Silver Star (A. A.), the Ordo Templis Orientis (O. T. O.), etc. First, a little history. 19th century England was a time of exploration into the mystical and the occult. England's contact with the Far East through her colonies was one source of this interest, as were people such as H. P. Blavatsky (founder of the Theosophical Society). Interest in mediums, spirits, and the occult was very high. Some occult groups, such as the Golden Dawn, structured their organization after Masonry.

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These occult groups often had a series of degrees, copied certain elements of Masonic ritual such as where officers sit, use of lectures to explain symbolism, etc. These organizations were not Masonic, but rather borrowed some of Masonry's structures.

The confusion comes when one hears of an occult order that has a series of degrees that begin with Apprentice and end with Master, or one comes across a "Lecture for Initiates" from one of these occult groups and later discovers that Masonry also give a "lecture" to its candidates-- obviously, Masons are occultists! Wrong. Again, other groups borrowed from Masonry and changed the nature of the substance while retaining the form, but this does not mean that Masons ever took information from occultists. To say that Masons are occultists is akin to claiming that the United States is really the Confederate States of America because the CSA borrowed the structure of its constitution from the USA.

For more information on the Golden Dawn, consult the Golden Dawn FAQ that is published in alt.magick, among other places. Its author is Steve Cranmer (cranmer@briv2.bartol.udel.edu). Ellic Howe's The Magicians of the Golden Dawn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul), 1972 provides a factual history of the Golden Dawn without getting into its occult practices.

(5) Masons believe in a special heaven for Masons only, don't they?

No. This misconception comes from the fact that Masons sometimes refer to heaven as "The Celestial Lodge". But this is just another poetic term for the same heaven that Christians, Muslims, and some Jews (depending on if their sect believes in life after death) call heaven.

We have all heard people of many different faiths refer to heaven as "the pearly gates". Does not mean that they believe that they are going to a special heaven that has pearly gates, while other heavens have iron gates? Of course not. Similarly, "the Celestial Lodge" is simply a metaphor for heaven.

IV. PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS & MYTHS

- (1) Are Masons just a bunch of old men? Isn't Masonry dying out?
- (2) Aren't Masons racist/elitist?
- (3) Isn't Masonry just a place where businessmen make deals?
- (4) I see titles like "Worshipful Master" and "Senior Deacon"-- is this some kind of cult?
- (5) Masonry is a secret society, right?
- (6) Masonry is a religion, right?
- (7) Are Masons really controlling the world/meeting with the Bavarian Illuminati/members of the Trilateralist Commission/etc?
- (8) Masons are anti-Catholic, right?
- (9) Masonic rituals are demeaning or embarrassing to the candidate, right?
- (10) I heard/read a Mason talking about a "Masonic Bible". Do Masons have their own Bible?
- (11) I see that Masonic buildings are called Temples. Does that mean that Masons worship there?

(1) Are Masons just a bunch of old men? Isn't Masonry dying out?

As regards the United States:

There is no doubt that the population of Masons is aging. There

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was a huge increase in membership in almost all fraternal orders after World War II, including Masonry. This peaked at sometime in the late 50s. During the social turbulence and generational strains of the 60s and 70s, new membership fell off, with the result that by the 1980s, total membership was in sharp decline.

However, there are signs that membership has leveled out, or is gaining in some areas. In many lodges, there are a great number of 50-and-up members, and a number of 30-and-under members, with a gulf in between, representing where Baby Boomers would have been. Of course, we are speaking in broad generalities here-- there is no way to know the demographics of your local Lodge without asking one of its members.

The overall point is that Masonic membership, when talking on a national scale, has probably hit a stable membership base, after a huge surge and then fall in membership.

(Please submit information on other parts of the world)

(2) Aren't Masons racist/elitist?

Regarding racism: Masonry explicitly states the equality of men, regardless of race, creed, or color. But there are some Masons who are prejudiced, and this is unfortunate, saddening, and unMasonic. However, it is not representative of Masonry as a whole, or representative of anything except a tiny minority of Masons. There are Masons of all ethnic backgrounds.

"Elitism" is harder to define. If you mean that Masons are highly selective in their membership, then yes, Masons are elitists. But just criteria is used: men of good character, of good report, who believe in God. Does the majority of the population fit that criteria? If you think not, then you could say that Masons are elitists.

The idea that Masonry is only open to the patrician class, the landed gentry, and the wealthy is incorrect. There are Masons of all economic backgrounds. Indeed, there are Lodges which are mostly or wholly made up of blue-color workers due to local demographics.

(3) Isn't Masonry just a place where businessmen make deals?

No. In fact, most Masons believe that to trade with a Brother Mason only because he is a Mason is unMasonic. Even more importantly, anyone who attempts to join a Lodge solely for business reasons will not be given a petition.

Masons, however, are friends, and it is not surprising that many Masons do trade with Brothers. For one thing, they are dealing with people that are of good character and can be trusted, which is no small statement in the modern marketplace.

But Masonry is not a "place to network". Yes, some men do view one of the benefits of membership as an additional source of customers or partners, but few would say that is the only reason they became Masons. The work involved in the degrees alone would make this a poor investment-- better to join the Rotary Club or other business group.

(4) I see titles like "Worshipful Master" and "Senior Deacon"-- is this some kind of cult?

No. The titles are simply colorful, stylish, and full of ancient

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symbolism. No Mason worships the Master of the Lodge, nor does a Senior (or Junior) Deacon engage in religious actions, as a Deacon of a church might.

(5) Masonry is a secret society, right?

Wrong. Secret societies are generally defined as organizations which are unknown to the public and whose existence is denied. The Bavarian Illuminati and the Mafia would be examples of secret societies.

Masonry, on the other hand, is well-known and proudly displays its existence. Masonic Temples are clearly marked as such, and many Lodges are listed in the yellow pages (usually under "Fraternal Orders"). Members often wear rings or tie-clips that identify themselves as Masons, and Masons often participate in community charity work. Finally, some Masonic functions are open to the public.

Masonry is not a secret society, but rather a society with a few secrets. These are mainly modes of recognition-- the signals, grips, signs, and phrases by which Masons recognize each other. The actual degree rituals are considered secret as well, not because there is anything that would harm Masonry by their revelation, but rather because they are more meaningful if the candidate does not know what is going to go on during them beforehand (see question 9 of this section if that makes you nervous).

It should be pointed out that many other organizations have a similar class of secrets. College fraternities (a. k. a. "Greek letter organizations") often have small secrets known only to their members, allowing them to travel from house to house and still be known.

(6) Masonry is a religion, right?

Wrong.

Masonry is not a religion "by the definitions most people use. Religion, as the term is commonly used, implies several things: a plan for salvation or path by which one reaches the after-life; a theology which attempts to describe the nature of God; and the description of ways or practices by which a man or woman may seek to communicate with God. Masonry does none of those things. We offer no plan of salvation. With the exception of saying that He is a loving Father who desires only good for His children, we make no effort to describe the nature of God. And while we open and close our meetings with prayer, and we teach that no man should ever begin any important undertaking without first seeking the guidance of God, we never tell a man how he should pray or for what he should pray. Instead, we tell him that he must find the answers to these great questions in his own faith, in his church or synagogue or other house of worship. We urge men not to neglect their spiritual development and to be faithful in the practice of their religion. As the Grand Lodge of England wrote in 'Freemasonry and Religion', 'Freemasonry is far from indifferent to religion. Without interfering in religious practice, it expects each member to follow his own faith, and to place above all other duties his duty to God by whatever name He is known.' Masonry itself makes only a simple religious demand on a man--he must believe that he has an immortal soul and he must believe in God. No atheist can be a Mason." (Dr. Jim Tresner, 33rd degree)

"Freemasonry has no dogma or theology. It teaches that it is important for every man to have a religion of his choice and to be faithful to it. A good Mason is made even more faithful to the tenets of his faith by membership." (Rev. Norman Vincent Peale, who is also a Mason)

(7) Are Masons really controlling the world/meeting with the Bavarian

Illuminati/members of the Trilateralist Commission/etc?

Yes, not to mention the International Jewish Conspiracy, the Elders of Zion, Inver Brass, S. P. E. C. T. R. E. , and the minions of Cthulhu.

Anyone who believes that Masons are the Master Puppeteers of the globe either is pulling your leg, has read too much Robert Anton Wilson, or is in need of serious psychotherapy.

(8) Masons are anti-Catholic, right?

Wrong. There is nothing anti-Catholic in Masonry, in its traditions, its rituals, or its beliefs.

(9) Masonic rituals are demeaning or embarrassing to the candidate, right?

Nothing could be further from the truth. The rituals (degrees) are designed to reinforce virtues that the Craft finds desirable, such as Justice, Brotherly Love, Truth, and the like. The rituals are actually quite beautiful and filled with ancient language and much symbolism. At no point, however, is the candidate asked to do anything that would embarrass or demean him, nor anything that would violate his obligations to his faith, country, or the law.

(10) I heard/read a Mason talking about a "Masonic Bible". Do Masons have their own Bible?

"No. The Bibles sometimes called 'Masonic Bibles' are just Bibles to which a concordance, giving the Biblical citations on which the Masonic Ritual is based, has been added. Sometimes reference material on Masonic history is included. Anyone is welcome to read one." (Dr. Jim Tresner, 33rd degree)

(11) I see that Masonic buildings are called Temples. Does that mean that Masons worship there?

No. "Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary provides a definition for the word 'temple' which is as good an explanation as any: 'a building, usually of imposing size, serving the public or an organization in some special way; as, a temple of art, a Masonic temple'". (Dr. Jim Tresner, 33rd degree)

V. HOW DO I BECOME A MASON?

- (1) What are the requirements for becoming a Mason?
- (2) Can s be Masons?
- (3) Can homosexuals be Masons?
- (4) I have a physical disability. Can I be a Mason?
- (5) Can be a Mason?
- (6) Can Catholics be Masons?
- (7) Can Wiccans be Masons?
- (8) What if my religion does not allow the swearing of oaths?
- (9) Do I have to be invited?
- (10) OK, I'm interested-- how do I proceed?

(1) What are the requirements for becoming a Mason?

Candidates must be male, at least 21 years of age, able to profess a belief in God, and of good character.

For information on mixed-sex Masonry, see the discussion on Co-Masonry in II, 7.

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Some Grand Lodges also have a residency requirement; for example, the Grand Lodge of Michigan requires candidates to have lived in its jurisdiction (Michigan) for a minimum of one year.

There are some exceptions to the age requirement. For example, in England and Virginia, the direct relatives of Master Masons in good standing are eligible to join at the age of 18. In some jurisdictions, DeMolays may join upon reaching their 18th birthday.

(2) Can s be Masons?

Any human who meets the requirements listed in question (1) of this section is eligible, regardless of race or color.

Some have speculated that while there is no official prohibition against, say, blacks or Asians from becoming Masons, there is a de facto prohibition because they would never be voted into a lodge. This is false. There are Masons of all ethnic backgrounds.

However, it is fair to state that Masons, as humans, are prone to the kinds of prejudices that all humans may succumb to. Since the vote to admit a candidate is anonymous and must be unanimous, one man's unspoken prejudice is sufficient to deny entry to a man (except, of course, in those jurisdictions which require more than one 'no' vote to deny entrance, but you get the idea). Prejudice is inexcusable and irreconcilable with Masonry, but then, it is also irreconcilable with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and there are certainly Christians, Jews, and Muslims who harbor prejudices.

So it is possible that a Mason, acting unMasonically, could act to keep a member out without due cause. But this is not common, nor is it representative of Masonry in general, nor does it conform to the high ideals of Masonry.

(3) Can homosexuals be Masons?

Yes, and there are homosexual Masons. Everything said in question (2) of this section holds true in this case as well. There is the consideration that some men may view homosexuality as being immoral, i.e., that homosexuals are not men of "good character". This is generally not due to any specific prejudice but rather due to religious belief (depending on how one interprets St. Paul, for example). However, judging by conversation on alt.freemasonry, it is safe to say that Masons generally would not regard homosexuality as a barrier to membership.

(4) I have a physical disability. Can I be a Mason?

The answer is almost certainly yes, provided you can attend Lodge (and meet the non-physical criteria in question (1) of this section). Paraplegics have been made Masons, as have the blind, the deaf, and others with a variety of physical handicaps. Minor modifications may need to be done to the rituals (e.g., employing sign language, modifying points where the candidate stands if the candidate is in a wheelchair, etc.) but most Lodges are willing to accommodate candidates.

In medieval times, the requirement to have a sound body free of physical defect was a serious one, since the work of stonemasonry was physically difficult. Some Grand Lodges did carry this requirement into symbolic (i.e., non-operative) Masonry. However, in recent times this has all but been eliminated. Talk to your local Lodge if you have any questions.

(5) Can be a Mason?

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The only religious requirement is that candidates believe in the Supreme Being. If you can in good faith profess a belief in the Supreme Being, you are eligible to be a Mason. No atheists will ever knowingly be made a Mason.

There are Christian (Catholic, Protestant, Mormon), Jewish, and Muslim Masons. It would be tedious and pointless to go into a religion-by-religion (and then denomination-by-denomination) discussion. The key points to remember are the requirement of belief in the supreme being and the fact that Masonry is a fraternity, not a religion.

(6) Can Catholics be Masons?

Yes.

Catholicism is only mentioned specifically because it has generated a lot of traffic in the past on the Masonic newsgroups. There is no prohibition in any Grand Lodge jurisdiction against Catholics being made Masons. The answer on the Catholic side of the coin is also yes. If you have questions, please contact your local Lodge or Grand Lodge, or your priest. Andrew Fabbro (afabbro@umich.edu) (who is both a Catholic and a Mason) would be happy to discuss this with you at greater length if you need more information.

Please bear in mind that discussion of this subject on the Masonic newsgroups invariably generates a very high noise-to-signal ratio.

(7) Can Wiccans be Masons?

This religion is specifically mentioned only because it has been often debated on alt.freemasonry. It is possible to get into very involved discussions on the nature of Wiccan beliefs and their compatibility with Masonry, but the only possible arbitrator is your Grand Lodge. To that end, it is suggested that if you have more specific questions, contact your local Lodge.

Again, the same could be said about a number of religions, and Wicca is only mentioned specifically because it has been brought up repeatedly on the Masonic newsgroups. Please bear in mind that discussion of this subject on the USENET Masonic newsgroups invariably generates more heat than light.

(8) What if my religion does not allow the swearing of oaths?

Some Grand Lodges allow affirmations to be used instead of the traditional Masonic oath. This is more common in Europe than in the United States. In all cases, it is best to check with the Grand Lodge in your jurisdiction (or your local Lodge) for more specific information.

(9) Do I have to be invited?

Don't wait to be invited-- you will die waiting. Masons are prohibited from actively recruiting or asking non-Masons to join the fraternity, to insure that candidates come of their own free will.

(10) OK, I'm interested-- how do I proceed?

If you know a Mason, ask him about membership. He will be glad to tell you all about the Craft and the local lodge, and give you a petition if you wish to join.

If you do not know a Mason, drop a letter to the local lodge, and one

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of the officers will call you (or call the lodge, though you may not get an answer unless someone is actually there).

Typically, the process is as follows:

(a) the applicant fills out a petition. The petition asks for two sponsors, though if you meet and talk with the officers, they can usually find sponsors or act as sponsors themselves if you do not know anyone in the lodge.

(b) the petition is read at the lodge during the next business meeting, which for many lodges is during the first week of the month. A committee is formed to investigate the candidate. The petition also asks for two character references.

(c) the committee meets with the candidate to answer questions, ascertain that he meets the criteria for membership, and find out a little about him. This is not a "grilling session", but rather a friendly and casual chat to make certain that the candidate has been properly informed about Masonry and that he is a worthy candidate. The committee also contacts the character references listed on the petition (typically asking if they know any reason why the candidate should not be accepted, etc.)

(d) The committee reports back to the lodge during the next business meeting and the candidate is voted on. If accepted, someone from the lodge (often the Secretary) contacts the candidate and informs him that he has been accepted and schedules a date for the Entered Apprentice degree.

NOTE: This is based on the summation of several experiences in the U. S. Your mileage may vary.

VI. HISTORY

- (1) Where did Masons come from?
- (2) What US Presidents have been Masons?
- (3) Was Thomas Jefferson a Mason? Patrick Henry? Abraham Lincoln?
- (4) What famous people have been Masons?
- (5) What famous buildings in the US have been laid Masonically?
- *(6) * What's the difference between AF&AM and F&AM?
- (7) Was Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church, a Mason?
- (8) What is the oldest Lodge Room in the world? In the US?
- (9) Is it true that all of George Washington's generals during the Revolutionary War were Masons?
- (10) Is it true that all the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons? The Articles of Confederation? The Constitution?
- (11) George Washington turned down the title of "Grand Master of the United States"-- true?
- (12) Why do some Lodges meet on a certain day of the week "following the full moon"? Are Masons some kind of moon worshippers?
- (13) Did Masons suffer at the hands of the Nazis?
- *(14) * Are Masons connected to Greek-letter college fraternities?
- *(15) * I want information on Masonic history. What books would be good introductions?
- (16) My local Library doesn't have any books on Freemasonry, where can I find them?
- *(17) * What movies/books feature Masonry?

- (1) Where did Masons come from?

A fascinating question! And, alas, impossible to answer

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within the confines of this FAQ. There are a number of theories, a lot of debate, and a lot of musty history books. Some of the books listed in question 15 of this section should be of help. As a *very* brief overview, here is part of an essay by Henry C. Clausen, a noted Masonic author. This is, of course, just one point of view-- many other theories exist, but Clausen nicely covers the basics:

"Our Masonic antiquity is demonstrated by a so-called Regius Poem written around the year 1390, when King Richard II reigned in England, a century before Columbus. It was part of the King's Library that George II presented to the British Museum in 1757. Rediscovered by James O. Halliwell, a non-Mason, and rebound in its present form in 1838, it consists of 794 lines of rhymed English verse and claims there was an introduction of Masonry into England during the reign of Athelstan, who ascended the throne in A.D. 925. It sets forth regulations for the Society, fifteen articles and fifteen points and rules of behavior at church, teaching duties to God and Church and Country, and inculcating brotherhood. While the real roots of Masonry are lost in faraway mists, these items show that our recorded history goes back well over 600 years. Further proof is furnished through English statutes as, for example, one of 1350 (25 Edward III, Cap. III) which regulated wages of a "Master... Mason at 4 pence per day." The Fabric Role of the 12th century Exeter Cathedral referred to "Freemasons."

The historical advance of science also treats of our operative ancient brethren who were architects and stonemasons of geometry. It is apparent from this portrayal that they had a very real and personal identification with the Deity and that this fervent devotion provided energy to build cathedrals. They embraced the teachings of Plato and understood and applied Pythagorean relationships. Just as there is a beauty of harmony credited to mathematical relationships on which music is based, in precisely the same way these master geometers treated architecture. The architects and stonemasons became the personification of geometry, performing extraordinary feats with squares and compasses. Geometrical proportion, not measurement, was the rule. Their marks as stonemasons were derived from geometric constructions. The mighty works they wrought, cathedrals with Gothic spires pointing toward the heavens, and especially their "association," were not without danger and opposition, bearing in mind the Inquisition established in 1229, the Saint Bartholomew's Eve Massacre of 1572, and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. These historical points remind us of the need for our cautions against cowans and eavesdroppers.

Our operative Brethren of the Middle Ages thus were the builders of mighty cathedrals throughout the British Isles and continental Europe, many of which still stand. These skilled craftsmen wrote in enduring stone impressive stories of achievement, frequently chiseled with symbolic markings. With these architectural structures of these master builders there was a companion moral code. These grew up together. Out of this background modern Freemasonry was born.

Although "Lodges" had existed for centuries, four of the "old" Lodges met in London on St. John the Baptist's Day, June 24, 1717, and formed the first Grand Lodge of England, thereafter known as the Premier Grand Lodge of the world. No longer operative as of old, the Masons carried on the traditions and used the tools of the craft as emblems to symbolize principles of conduct in a continued effort to build a better world.

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The American colonial Masonic organizations stemmed from this Grand Lodge of England and were formed soon after 1717. Its then Grand Master appointed Colonel Daniel Coxe as Provincial Grand Master of New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania on June 5, 1730, and Henry Price of Boston as Provincial Grand Master of New England in April 1733." -- Henry C. Clausen

(2) What US Presidents have been Masons?

George Washington
James Madison
Andrew Jackson
James Polk
James Buchanan
James Garfield
William McKinley
Theodore Roosevelt
William Howard Taft
Warren Harding
Franklin D. Roosevelt
Lyndon B. Johnson
Harry S. Truman
Gerald R. Ford

It should be noted:

William Howard Taft was made a Mason At Sight by the Grand Master of Ohio and later raised to Grand Master of Ohio in 1909. Harry S. Truman was also Grand Master of his home state, Missouri. Lyndon B. Johnson only took the Entered Apprentice degree. Bill Clinton was not a Mason, though he was involved in DeMolay for a time.

Many other leaders in government have been Masons: "They have included fourteen Presidents and eighteen Vice Presidents of the United States; a majority of the Justices of the United States Supreme Court, of the Governors of States, of the members of the Senate, and a large percentage of the Congressmen. Five Chief Justices of the United States were Masons and two were Grand Masters. The five were Oliver Ellsworth, John Marshall (also Grand Master of Masons in Virginia), William Howard Taft, Frederick M. Vinson and Earl Warren (also Grand Master of Masons in California.)" -- Henry C. Clausen

(3) Was Thomas Jefferson a Mason? Patrick Henry? Abraham Lincoln?

No, no, and no. As for the first two, "an exhaustive search of Masonic records in Virginia, and elsewhere, offers no iota of evidence to make them Freemasons. Jefferson participated in the cornerstone laying of his University at Charlottesville, which was done Masonically. He praised Freemasonry and his own words proved he had never been a member of the Craft." (FMBITS.TXT)

There is some evidence that Abraham Lincoln intended to become a Mason when he returned to Springfield after his second term in office, had he not been assassinated in 1865.

(4) What famous people have been Masons?

This is by no means a complete list.

FROM THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION (other than Presidents): Benjamin Franklin, John Hancock, Paul Revere, John Paul Jones, LaFayette, Rufus King, James Otis, Baron von Steuben, Joseph Warren

POLITICAL LEADERS: Winston Churchill, Simon Bolivar, Edmund Burke,

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Benito Juarez, Edward VII, George VI, Bernardo O'Higgins, Jose' de San Martin, Francisco de Paula Santander, Jose' Rizal, Jose' Marti, Pandit Nehru, Lajos Kossuth, Jonas Furrer, Guiseppe Mazzini, Eduard Benes, John A. MacDonald, Aaron Burr, George McGovern, Barry Goldwater, Estes Kefauver, Adlai Stevenson (not the governor of Illinois, but his father who was Vice President in 1892), Thomas E. Dewey, Alf Landon, Hubert H. Humphrey, Wendell Wilke

MILITARY LEADERS: Omar Bradley, John J. Pershing, Douglas McArthur, General Winfield Scott, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, Jimmy Doolittle

REPUBLIC OF TEXAS: Sam Houston, Stephen Austin, Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William B. Travis (and, it should be added, General Santa Ana)

FINE ARTS: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig von Beethoven, Jean Sibelius, Franz von Liszt, Josef Hayden, Irving Berlin, Gutzon Borglum, Charles W. Peale, Alfons M. Mucha, John Philip Sousa, both Gilbert & Sullivan, George Gershwin, George M. Cohen

ACTORS: John Wayne, Red Skelton, Clark Gable, W.C. Fields, Will Rogers, Burl Ives, Roy Rogers, Danny Thomas

INDUSTRY & LABOR: Henry Ford, Samuel Gompers, Walter P. Chrysler, John Wanamaker, S. S. Kresge, J. C. Penney, John Jacob Astor, John L. Lewis

ADVENTURERS: Lewis & Clark, Charles A. Lindberg, Kit Carson

PHILOSOPHERS: Francois Voltaire, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Gotthold E. Lessing

ATHELETES: Bob Feller, Tris Speaker, Ty Cobb, Paul "Dizzy" Trout, Harry Carey, Dell Rice, Jimmy Fox, Joe Tinker (of "Tinker to Evers to Chance"), Jack Dempsey, Arnold Palmer

ASTRONAUTS: Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr., Leroy Gordon Cooper, Donn F. Eisele, Virgil I. Grissom, Edgar D. Mitchell, Walter M. Schirra, Jr., Thomas P. Stafford, Paul J. Weitz, James B. Irwin, John Glenn, Wally Schirra.

WRITERS: Mark Twain, Sir Walter Scott, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Burns, Wassily I. Maikow, Heinrich Heine, Jean P. C. de Florian, Leopoldo Lugoner, Antonio de Castro Alves, James Boswell

LAW: John Marshall, Earl Warren

MEDICINE: Drs. Alexander Fleming, Jules Bordet, Antoine DePage, Edward Jenner, Charles and William Mayo, Karl and William Menninger

SCIENCE: Hans C. Orsted, Jons Jakob Frk. von Berzelius, Alfred Edmund Brehm, Luther Burbank, Johan Ernst Gunnerus, Albert Abraham Michelson, Gaspard Monge, C. F. S. Hahnemann, Pedro N. Arata

... as well as Norman Vincent Peale, David Sarnoff, Thomas J. Watson, Giuseppe Garibaldi, Cecil J. Rhodes, Marvin Zindler, and many, many more.

(5) What famous buildings in the US have been laid Masonically?

The U. S. Capitol
The Smithsonian Institution
Jackson Hall
The National Education Association Building
The Army War College Building
House of Representatives Office Building

The Washington Monument

The Washington Monument is in Alexandria, Virginia, and honors our first President and Brother Mason, George Washington. (FMBITS.TXT)

(6) What's the difference between AF&AM and F&AM?

F&AM means "Free & Accepted Masons."
AF&AM means "Ancient Free & Accepted Masons".
In practical terms, there is no difference, since the jurisdictions that are termed "ancient" F&AM are no different than those that are simply F&AM. The distinction is a historical one, owing to differences in Grand Lodge names. (someone will provide more information on this topic, I hope)

(7) Was Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church, a Mason?

(This section provided by Brother Bob Dixon; the use of the first person is his)

"Joseph Smith was a mason, as were the following four presidents of the LDS church.

From about 1839 to about 1846 most of the members of the church gathered to Nauvoo, Illinois, and there were at least four lodges in operation there. Joseph Smith was a very flamboyant individual and had a disagreement with the Grand Lodge of Illinois over the way the Nauvoo lodges were operated. Accordingly, their charters were revoked by the Grand Lodge.

He was murdered by a mob in 1844, and Brigham Young felt it was as a result of a masonic conspiracy. He prohibited Mormons from being Masons, which remained in effect until the last ten years or so. The ill feelings went both ways, as the Grand Lodge of Utah refused to accept Mormons as members until about 1984.

There are no particular restrictions on Mormons being Masons. We are continually counselled to put our families and Christ first, which many interpret as counsel to avoid most activities outside family and church. This is a personal choice, though, and not a matter of strict doctrine.

We perform certain ordinances such as baptisms for the dead and eternal marriages in our temples, and minor portions of those ordinances bear very surface similarity to parts of the Masonic degrees. The whole scope and character is much different, though. Where (I feel, anyway) that the masonic degree work revolves around our place in God's kingdom here on the earth, our temple rituals deal with creation and our place in the eternities."

(A minor historical note: Smith was made a Mason at Sight by the Grand Master of Illinois)

(8) What is the oldest Lodge Room in the world? In the US?

"St. John's Chapel, Edinburgh, Scotland is said to be the oldest Masonic Lodge Room (1736) in the world. The oldest known Lodge Room in the U.S. is situated in Prentiss House, Marblehead, Massachusetts (1760). The oldest Masonic Lodge Building is the Lodge Hall of Royal White Hart Lodge No. 2, Halltax, Northings, North Carolina (1771)." (FMBITS.TXT)

Other information disagrees with this, stating that the oldest American Lodge Room is "Masons Hall in Richmond, Virginia, the home of Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19 and Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3. The

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building owned by Royal White Hart Lodge wasn't built until 1821. Masons Hall was built in 1785. It was originally the home of Richmond Lodge No. 10, the first wholly new Lodge chartered by the Grand Lodge of Virginia. It was also the first permanent home of the Grand Lodge of Virginia." (from Northern Light)

- (9) Is it true that all of George Washington's generals during the Revolutionary War were Masons?

No. 33 of the generals serving under Washington were Masons. A substantial number, but not "all".

- (10) Is it true that all the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons? The Articles of Confederation? The Constitution?

No. Masons constituted ten of the signers of the Articles, nine signers of the Declaration, and thirteen signers of the Constitution.

Additionally, Edmund Randolph, Grand Master of Virginia, was an active participant at the Constitutional Convention, though he didn't sign the document. It should also be noted that four Presidents of the Continental Congresses were Freemasons: Peyton Randolph of Virginia, John Hancock of Massachusetts, Henry Laurens of South Carolina, and Arthur St. Clair of Pennsylvania. (Northern Light)

- (11) George Washington turned down the title of "Grand Master of the United States"-- true?

Yes, sort of. The American Union Lodge proposed that Washington become "General Grand Master of the United States", a title to be held in the "National Grand Lodge". However, there were many others who also disagreed with the idea, so it was never a serious proposal.

Washington was Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 22 in Virginia, whose Grand Master was then Edmund Randolph. Washington was never Grand Master of Virginia (or any other jurisdiction).

- (12) Why do some Lodges meet on a certain day of the week "following the full moon"? Are Masons some kind of moon worshippers?

The reason is actually simple practicality. Masonic Lodges meet at night, since their membership typically works during the day. Before street lights were available in the 19th century, men walked to Lodge in the dark of night and it was common to schedule Lodge meetings shortly after a full moon to provide maximum illumination for Brothers' walk to and from Lodge.

Obviously, this is no longer an issue, though some Lodges whose history stretches back into the 19th century or earlier still schedule their meetings by the moon's period. These are sometimes referred to as "moon Lodges".

- (13) Did Masons suffer at the hands of the Nazis?

Yes. The exact numbers are unknown. Lt. Col. David Boyd wrote that 85,000 German Masons were killed by the Nazis, though other research has found that this number may be off by as much as a third. This figure does not include any of the nations the Nazis occupied.

Regardless of the actual number killed, it is clear that Hitler viewed Masonry, which exalts truth, toleration, brotherly love, and free thought, to be dangerous and a threat to his regime. Ironically, in his last days in his bunker in Berlin, Hitler had a painting of Frederick the

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Great in his chambers. Frederick the Great was a Mason.

(14) Are Masons connected to Greek-letter fraternities?

(15) I want information on Masonic history. What books would be good introductions?

Virtually anything by Allen Roberts.

Robinson, John J. A Pilgrim's Path
Robinson, John J. Born in Blood

Stevenson, David, PhD. The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century 1590-1710 (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia is an excellent reference.

Any book by Bro. Allen Roberts

(16) My local Library doesn't have any books on Freemasonry, where can I find them?

Many Lodges maintain their own libraries as do the Grand Lodges. Some larger public Libraries also may have a better collection than a smaller Library. Unfortunately, bookstores do not typically carry a wide assortment of Masonic related books, however, there are several sources to purchase books:

Macoy Publishing (804) 262-6551
P. O. Box 9759
Richmond, VA 23228

Anchor Communications (804) 737-4498
110 Quince Ave. Drawer 70
Highland Springs, VA 23075

(17) What movies/books feature Masonry?

The Man Who Would Be King, by (Brother) Rudyard Kipling. A good story, later made into an excellent film, starring Michael Caine, Sean Connery, and Christopher Plummer. Its portrayal of Masonic history is quite fanciful, of course.

Murder by Decree A Sherlock Holmes movie, concerning the Master Sleuth's hunt for Jack the Ripper. It does not portray Masonry in an honest, accurate, or favorable light. A good movie, but it is important to remember that no Mason would ever knowingly commit a crime for a Brother. Incidentally, Edward VII was actually a Mason. (The story is not one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's).

There is also a modest body of Masonic poetry: Kipling's "The Palace" and "Mother Lodge," Burns's "Masonic Farewell," Goethe's "Mason Lodge," Leigh Hunt's "Abou Ben Adhem," Carruth's "Each in His Own Tongue," Burns's "On the Apron," Meredith's "Ebony Staff of Solomon," Bowman's "Voice of America," Malloch's "Father's Lodge" and Nesbit's "I Sat in Lodge with You." (Carl H. Claudy)