

# REFLECTIONS

Masonic Education Articles

For Ontario Masons - By Ontario Masons



Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada  
in the Province of Ontario

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*Ensuring the Timeless Vitality of Freemasonry in Ontario*



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Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada  
in the Province of Ontario

Brethren,  
Welcome to the new electronic version of Reflections, a publication that has had a longstanding presence within our jurisdiction. As the cover of this publication states; Reflections aims to present articles that are **written by Ontario Masons, for Ontario Masons** and I strongly encourage you to be active in both your contributions and use of this publication.

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**GET KNOWLEDGE – GET WISDOM – GET UNDERSTANDING**



## For Ontario Masons – By Ontario Masons

The goal of this publication is to foster a spirit of sharing, while at the same time create a cultural change that will see Masonic Education become a mainstream activity in every Lodge. This can only be accomplished if the Masons of Ontario share their research work and articles that are presented annually around the jurisdiction. This may include a story of significance from your Lodge or District, it may be a Brother's view on "WHY" we do things as we do, or it may be a historical paper that includes a Masonic connection. All of these, through their presentation, broaden a Brother's perspective on Freemasonry and in and of themselves assists greatly in the general desire to Get Knowledge – Get Wisdom – Get Understanding.



### Duality – The Masonic Sword as a Ritual Object

*A paper presented by W. Bro. Ian Troyer, in Templum Fidelis Lodge No. 746 on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016*

The Masonic sword as a ritual object; I've been wanting to write this paper for quite some time now, and finally had enough small hints to put it together and form some themes with this idea of the sword as a ritual symbol. Our upstairs papers are primarily derived from and refer directly to an exploration of the ritual and the objects and ideas associated with it, and as you will see, the sword as a Masonic symbol is no exception. As in many other seemingly simple ideas in the Craft, scratch the surface and go deeper, and you will find many levels of meaning awaiting you.

So I invite you to join me on this line of thought around the Sword as a Masonic object of ritual, and to moralize and contemplate the beauty and uniqueness of this symbol. I would submit to you brethren that the sword is somewhat of an overlooked object, not spoken of or observed as often as the 9 WTs, the ashlar, or many other objects that we generally associate with Freemasonry. I would submit and would like to demonstrate in this paper that the sword is on a different continuum than that of say the CG and of other objects. We recognize the CG as an instrument to demonstrate the power of labour for instance, and in its operative form it's used for brute force generally. That continuum from the extreme of operative as a hammer or striker implement to the other end as a speculative object to depict the importance of labour is clear. But let's look at the sword, which in many ways has a longer thread from one extreme to another, existing on a starker continuum. On one end, the operative, it's a killing weapon, meant to eviscerate or remove limbs. On the other end, the speculative extreme, it's what? Well, therein lies the reason for this paper, an exploration of that journey of the sword on the continuum of operative to speculative.

But first, a story about one particular sword, which inspired me to write this paper; it can be found in Prince of Wales No. 146, in Napanee, my mother Lodge in Frontenac District. One evening a few years ago, after the Lodge had closed, some of the brethren had gathered around our Tyler's sword, and were holding it up and examining it, and commenting excitedly on it. So I went over and listened in on the discussion too, which was all about the origins of that sword. It can be described as a straight sword, not long, with a large basket guard covering the hilt. It has a scabbard, with two loops. Unremarkable, in fact I confess to having barely noticed it in my time at the Lodge. I never consciously focussed on it, until I saw these newer brethren excitedly pouring over it. So I took some pictures of our Tyler's sword, and started doing some research on it. It turns out that the Lodge sword is actually a cavalry sabre, per its markings, and is described in commonwealth military terms as "Sword, Cavalry, Pattern 1908", this is a new issue of sword that the British military required in 1908, as a result of some lessons learned on the field of combat. The following is an excerpt that I found from the Imperial Museum in London's display of 1908:

The Pattern 1908 cavalry sword was the last new sword designed and accepted for service in the British Army. The design had its origins from complaints received about the effectiveness of existing swords during the Boer War. A committee was set up to select an improved pattern. The outcome was revolutionary in concept, as it featured a thin, tapering blade, intended entirely for thrusting. The sword was superbly designed, having perfect balance in the hand and an unusual 'pistol' type grip, which automatically brought the sword into thrusting position when correctly gripped. The sword proved successful in the mounted actions in which it was employed during the First World War.



It was then that I realized our sword is a rare find, especially one that is in such great shape. Further, it's clear from stampings that our sword was part of a famous Kingston based artillery regiment, the historic RCHA, which previously had "A Battery" based in Kingston, dating from 1871. Our sword also has markings that represent an issue date, which I've researched and figured out as August 1912, prior to WW1. As well, it has a serial number, issue #50. Could our sword have gone overseas with the RCHA? Exciting to think about! And the big mystery, likely unsolvable, is how did this sword become the Tyler's sword for Prince of Wales? The answer may lie in our Lodge minutes. But that is possibly for another paper!

So let's think about the life of this sword, brethren. It was conceived in combat, and has been celebrated as one of the best side arms in the history of the British cavalry. By its dates, we can infer that it potentially was used in a theatre of war. And now, it lays with us, in the quietness and solitude of a Lodge, as an object of ceremonial significance, a small piece of history, unnoticed. Let's take a look at that journey and that duality that this one sword of thousands that was issued, has had.

So thereby lie's my desire to explore the sword, this sword in particular, but really all Masonic swords, as objects of ceremony and philosophy. Why do we feel the need to use what is clearly designed for brutal warfare, up close and personal as they say, in a wholly different sphere, in our case that of the ritual object? Let's think about the distinct dichotomy and duality that exists represented by this sword's journey. Conceived in warfare, designed for thrusting, maybe and arguably the ultimate Operative tool, and now more than a century later, still deadly sharp, being viewed and used as a speculative instrument in a body dedicated to adorning the inward man. Let's explore the duality that this suggests to us

So let's begin with the ritual. There are only a few mentions of the Sword in the ritual, but they are significant ones. The first one well known, as we hear it for every meeting in this jurisdiction from the SW, this meeting being no exception. When referring to the duties of the Outer Guard or Tyler, the Warden's reply is ..... Which of course begs another question, what is a Cowan? We'll get to that one in a bit, as it is relevant.

Another spot, is in the investiture of both the IG and the Tyler, where their sword is depicted on their collars as the "jewel of your office" and is then presented to them as the "instrument of your office." Most importantly and the most interesting and impactful spot, is in the Secret Work of the 1<sup>st</sup> degree. The IG also makes use of the sword of his office in the 1<sup>st</sup> degree upon receiving the candidate, where it is later referred to as a SI, an interesting difference. However, the one where it is again mentioned by name, to follow up on the IG's use of it, is in the explanation after the candidate is revealed to light, where it is noted how the sword is presented to the Candidate ..... and it's that last part of this presentation that gives us a clue to the first deeper part of the sword as a ritual object, the concept of duty.

Well, whose duty are we talking about? On the surface, it's the Tyler's duty, of course. But let's look a little deeper and realize that the Tyler and the IG are defending something, and we then see another duality of the edged weapon, that of it's use on offense and that of defense. Back to a Cowan, which relates to the defense of the craft represented by the Tyler, and his sword.

Bro. Harry Carr, who first quotes the Oxford dictionary: *"One who builds dry stone walls (i.e., without mortar); a dry-stone-diker; applied derogatorily to one who does the work of a mason, but who has not been regularly apprenticed or bred to the trade."* *"Cowan is an essentially Scottish trade term, and it belongs to the time when lodges, as trade-controlling bodies, put restrictions against the employment of cowans, in order to protect the fully-trained men of the Craft from competition by unskilled labour. The earliest official ban against cowans appeared in the Schaw Statutes in 1598."*

And there is this definition from a Short talk bulletin from 1953 which reads: *"... and means to moderns an un instructed and ignorant person, one not of the Fraternity, just as eavesdropper means to us one who attempts to gain the secrets of Masonry unlawfully."* So, what is the Tyler defending against? What's his and our duty? Ignorance? Misinformation? Uniformed opinions about the Craft? Or let's take that to another level. Symbolically the Tyler and all MMs are defending the West Gate, with our figurative swords, guarding it so to speak to ensure that those who are really ready to hear the message are admitted. Whether that's our duty on committees of investigation, or when balloting or when sponsoring, I think the parallel is a clear one. If we think about ourselves as ambassadors of the Craft, by our wearing of the S & Cs, then the duty that is emblematically tied up in the Tyler's swords guarding against the attacks of the Cowans, is clear.

It refers to the figurative consequences of divulging those secrets in this character, as well as the fact that there are consequences to our actions, and there will be an accounting, as all brethren profess to believe and are taught. So, the sword then in these illustrations refers to the secure guarding of morality, ovetop of and contained within the VO SL. The point of a S pressing ....., or the later sign which we say, shields our hearts ....., and



the warning to your own heart that is referred to in the NE angle lecture, all speak of duty and morality. There are several references in different ritual traditions that I found around the sword being used at key parts of the MM degree as well, even to them being worn openly in Lodge by the brethren at the time. Let's keep in mind that in society, a sword was not only a badge of one's position in society, but could also be an object of self defence, another duality. Now, before closing out this avenue of thought on the sword, is the duality of being too secretive versus too free with our so called secrets. As ambassadors the sword tells us we need to be as open as we can, within the bounds of our OB. We are getting at another concept closely associated with the symbol of the sword: justice.

So, again we are seeing a distinct emergence here of the duality of the Sword. Offense versus defense, operative versus speculative, ornamental versus menacing, openly sharing concepts versus being too secretive.

As we move on, and go deeper into the meaning of the sword, let's take a look at what Mackey and McClenachan had to say about the sword, in the 1921 Encyclopedia of Freemasonry, the 2 volume version. Sword, Tilers: In modern times the implement used by the Tyler is a sword of the ordinary form. This is incorrect. Formerly, and indeed up to a comparatively recent period, the Tilers sword was wavy in shape. And so made an allusion to the "flaming sword which was placed at the east of the Garden of Eden, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." It was, of course, without a scabbard, because the Tilers sword should ever be drawn and ready for the defense of his post.

Well here's the passage from Genesis about Adam being evicted: *"Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."* - Gen.3:23-24

I'll let each of you interpret that passage as you will, and undoubtedly if you are a York Rite Mason, you have a better concept of it than I do too. Suffice to say though, that here we have another duality, flame of the forging of the sword and the flames from Genesis versus the coldness of steel and bare metal.

We would be remiss if we did not briefly note the sword as a weapon borne by our other body, which we keep seeking to join threads; the Knights Templar. While I don't want to go down this path very far at all, it is interesting to note the strictures around the sword that the Knights used. Each Knight swore that they would never draw their sword unless convinced of the justice of the cause in which they were engaged, nor to sheathe it until their enemies were subdued. Many swords, especially those from Spain, often had the following engraved on them usually in Latin, which translated is *"Do not draw me without justice, do not sheathe me without honour."* And from Justice, flame, and duty, it's a short jump from there to power, and even fear. Let's be honest a drawn sword, held at the ready is a little unnerving at times, even in the Lodge, let alone in the hands of our Cerubim from Genesis! As alluded to, that idea of power and authority can be easily seen today, as many Grand Lodges, including our jurisdiction appoint a "Grand Sword Bearer" who leads the delegation into Grand Lodge.

As we approach the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the first Grand Lodge in England in 1717, it is interesting to note that the United Grand Lodge of England has had a sword bearer since 1741. In most cultures, any weapon symbolizes power - but this power can go both ways. On the one hand it kills and destroys, yet on the other it protects and is a central symbol for chivalry.

So back to the sword as one of the central symbols of our Craft, light. Swords are also closely linked to light. Swords glitter, and the Crusaders used to call them "fragments of the Cross of Light." While I don't need to explore light in much depth here, I think it's sufficient to note the connection we make to light as knowledge, as a representation of the GAOTU, which is what a Knight Templar would likely have thought in his own way, and particularly as a search for that knowledge and the path we are all on to raise our own superstructure.

So to conclude, we have seen the sword as the ultimate example of operative to speculative. I have tried to illustrate here the themes and speculative ideas of a Masonic sword, and the dichotomy and duality of its meanings. We have seen war to peace, violence to meditation and contemplation. We have briefly explored the ideas of justice, duty, morality, power and flame, including that of heavenly flame and of course a strong affinity to light, as our central idea in the Craft. Let's also go full circle, and recall to our minds our Prince of Wales 1908 as a perfect and deep example of a real weapon of war, and now as an object of introspection.

I invite you, brethren, when you next attend your own Lodge, to view the sword as a deeper object of ritual, and to moralize on it, and not ignore it like I have until now!

Brethren I leave you with this final thought: Is it any wonder that a sword is often symbolically double-edged?



## The Secret Knowledge of Masonry

By W. Bro. Dennis H. Wilson F.C.F.

Antoine Faivre, Professor of Esoteric and Mystical Currents in Modern and Contemporary Europe at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Sorbonne), in Paris says that since its first use in 1828, the term "esotericism" has generally referred to three different areas of interest:

- 1) Secret knowledge or secret science preserved as arcana and passed on to only a select few.
- 2) Paths or techniques addressed to the truths hidden or secluded within Nature or Man, the knowledge of which is attained by only those who have achieved or received a gnostic or transformative experience.
- 3) Groups of works and currents dealing with perennial philosophy, Hermeticism, alchemy, astrology, Kabbalah, Christian theosophy, and so on, which can be subjected to historical studies.

What is the secret knowledge of Masonry that is only known to the few, and what is the path to learning those secrets?

The Druids, the Egyptians, the Greek Mystery cults, the Pythagorean School, and Mithraism are all Mystery cults.

The Mystery cults seem to have been engaged in finding the philosopher's stone, and the elixir of life. If a part of the philosopher's stone was put into molten lead, the lead would become gold. The elixir of life was reputed to give life eternal. So far, Masonry has revealed neither the philosopher's stone nor the elixir of life to me.

The Pythagoreans focused on many things, including number. But what I know about numbers I learned in public school; Masonry has not revealed anything new to me about numbers.

Other groups were interested in the destiny of the soul, and man's path through life. Certainly, Masonic ritual does mimic one's journey through life by allegory in the three degrees. The immortality of the soul, and not the material man, is illustrated in the third degree. Such information is not hidden, and is to be found in many religions.

What about brotherly love, relief and truth? Doesn't the aphorism, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" cover those Masonic attributes? Those attributes are hardly secret.

So, what is the "secret knowledge? The "secrets" of [each] Degree are explained as consisting of certain signs, tokens and words. These, of course, are figurative emblems of them. It is really what they signify that constitutes the secrets and is for the Candidate to meditate upon, and put in practice. That is the only way that he can really learn them, and begin to understand why they are called "secrets". They can never be orally communicated, except in symbolic form. The secrets of spiritual progress are learned only by those who actually live them ("skill without exertion is of little avail"). They are pointers to spiritual progress rather than confidential communications of secret information.<sup>1</sup>

[The] rituals point to certain ancient mysteries which have been taught from time immemorial. These ancient mysteries (sometimes called The Divine Wisdom or, in modern times, Theosophy, Anthroposophy, and Rosicrucianism) all teach, in a nutshell, the following:

- 1) The Unity of the Creator (unity meaning: there is only one, and everything is part of the One and are all therefore connected);
- 2) The immortality of the soul and its reincarnation;
- 3) That any deed, word, or thought has a consequence, and
- 4) The necessity of understanding the former and learning to connect one's soul to the spirit, in order to get closer to the Divine Source.

Masonry does not teach [the] hidden mysteries but, in our ritual, it does allude to them, like signposts, leaving it up to the individual to seek and understand them.

From the preceding, it can be learned that the esoteric secret of Masonry is that each candidate must learn how to decipher the figurative emblems of Masonry himself. Because the secrets of spiritual progress are learned only by those who actually live them, each Mason will discover different secrets depending on his own life experiences.

It follows, then, that the secrets can never be orally communicated, except in symbolic form because they are unique to each Mason.



## THREE LEGGED STOOL

*R.W. Bro. Glen Notman – PDDGM Hamilton District C*

### **A Lodge is not a building ... it is the Men that form it.**

The foundation of the Masonic family is the Masonic lodge. It is here that Masonry teaches its lessons: kindness in the home, honesty in business, courtesy in society, fairness in work, concern for the unfortunate and respect for one another.

Our Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Donald A. Campbell, has stated that "the quality of our membership must always remain foremost, in our hearts and minds, when we consider proposals for change. We must not lose the true perspective of the function of a Masonic Lodge. Its function primarily, is not to initiate candidates or merely to enlarge its membership. Its chief concern is - or should be – education, learning, being happy within ourselves and more importantly, communicating that happiness to others. That is what Masons do."

Years ago, I read a series of three books by Ken Blanchard and Sheldon Bowles around leadership and developing a winning organization. This series of books "**Big Bucks**", "**Raving Fans**", and "**Gung Ho**" describe a three legged stool that every organization needs to consider in order to grow and prosper.

Three is an important number to masons, three degrees, three pillars, three principal officers, three Grand Masters, three sets of three tools. Consider that Masons participate in three progressive degrees, each one teaching an important lesson through the use of symbols. The degrees help a Mason think about the big questions: Where did I come from? What am I doing here? And what comes next?

The first of these books, **Big Bucks** is about having a sense of business acumen in delivering your offerings. By focusing on concepts like commitment, intensity, purpose, and even fun, you can create an irresistible paradigm for success.

**Big Bucks** asks you to consider three tests for success.

- The Test of Joy, - Do you enjoy the Work that you do? That your lodge provides?
- The Test of Purpose, Do you understand the purpose of being here, why your presence matters?
- The Test of Creativity – Do you greet challenges as opportunities? Are you willing to commit to making your Lodge successful?

The Grand Master has said we need to engage all of our members, use their strengths and align their skills to get involved in making Masonry matter. The Test of Creativity is about using everyone's strengths to overcome any challenges facing the Lodge.

The Second book, **Raving Fans** is about delivering value to your customer. In Masonic terms, **Raving Fans** is about attracting the right people, getting them engaged and keeping them committed. Three must be an important number to Ken Blanchard as well, because Raving Fans is about executing Three Secrets.

### **First secret, Decide what you want:**

To create raving fans, we need to first be clear on the types of men who will be interested in Masonry. First you will need a detailed vision. Creating a vision of your future Lodge, centered on our core values and personality will take time and effort but without it you will not be able to progress.

Defending the west gate is about filtering through the wannabees and identifying the individuals who comprise our core values. By being clear on our purpose, we connect to the right minded men who will thrive in Masonry.

### **Secret 2: Discover what the Members want:**

A lodge is made up of the men who form it. It therefore follows that you canvass your members for their needs and expectations and be prepared to respond to their feedback. Our newer members are Seekers, our mentors and leaders need to work with them to illustrate how the degrees answer their big questions. Get them involved and help them understand the deeper meanings of the Work.

To develop understanding we are taught to ask questions and sincerely listen. Past experience has taught members that chances are you don't really want to know what they think and feel. If they are going to open up, you have to first gain credibility. An aside, the Brother to Brother program is full of ideas and techniques for gathering insight into what the membership want. A caveat here, the disillusioned customer votes with his or her wallet, the disillusioned mason votes with his absence.



### **Secret 3: Deliver plus one percent**

Members want consistency. We need to deliver what they expect plus one percent. Small incremental gains for growth drive engagement. Consistency creates credibility. Credibility inspires confidence. Good execution of the Work and ritual creates a common sense of accomplishment. Lodges exist to communicate our core values and teachings; passing on the values and lessons we all have adopted. The Work provides us with a consistent and detailed toolkit that drives an inward perspective and lets us all contemplate our individual journey. The work shapes our habits, and inculcates those moral tendencies and our core principles in our hearts. A well delivered degree makes everyone want to stay engaged and participate in growing the Lodge.

The Third of three books, is **Gung Ho**. Gung Ho means "Work Together" or "Work in Harmony." Something that we all aspire for in Masonry. The Gung Ho theory comprises three key principles.

#### **First Principle: The Spirit of the Squirrel (Doing Worthwhile Work)**

Squirrels work with purpose and dedication. As Masons our Work is meaningful on an intellectual, physical and spiritual layer. It sharpens our saw. The Spirit of the Squirrel, speaks about an understanding that what we do makes the world a better place. Everyone works toward a shared goal. In Masonry that goal is to make good men better. Memory work, to strengthen the mind, enlightenment to strengthen our spirit, support of the Supreme Being to strengthen our faith... Trust and putting each other first leads to support and harmony. When you put the effort into doing the Work well...in a timely fashion...in harmony with each other...so that all parts are done equally well, then we see confidence grow. The result? Self-Esteem – internal happiness and contentment that makes each of us feel good about our Lodge and the work we do.

Within a lodge the masons support best that which they help create. The goal of excellence in the Work focuses collective attention. Our values are then derived from the work and guide our individual plans, decisions and actions.

#### **Second Principle: The Way of the Beaver (In control of achieving the goal)**

Beavers do their work their own way. They work freely and get the job done at the same time.

I can attest that the words of the Work are consistently delivered, but the intonation, delivery and style is so varied. Each Mason puts his own stamp on how they achieve the goal. Gung Ho requires work that stretches people's ability, that demands people's best, and allows them to learn and move ahead into uncharted territory. How many of us have taken a part in the work and not had a big gulp before our first time delivery? from the lesser lights, to an apron charge, to the obligation. Our work stretches each of us, and once you understand the part, enables a deeper sense of understanding and enlightenment.

#### **Third Principle: The Gift of the Goose (Cheering each other on)**

Geese honk and encourage each other during flight. The way of the goose speaks of active or passive congratulations that must be TRUE (i.e. Timely, Responsive, Unconditional, Enthusiastic) Congratulations are affirmations of who and what people are and that they do matter, and that they are making valuable contribution toward achieving the shared mission.

Telling people what a great job they've done or presenting an award is an active congratulation. Passive congratulations are such things as stepping aside and letting a team member go forward with a tricky, complicated, and important part, mentoring as necessary, gaining satisfaction when the Work is delivered well. Remember to cheer the progress, not just the results.

#### **A LODGE IS NOT A BUILDING...IT'S THE MEN THAT FORM IT.**

Masonry exists as a benevolent fraternity. Individuals come together as Brothers to provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on the important matters. Teach each other what matters, prioritize our lives and learning to look beyond today's horizon and consider the meaningful elements of our lives. To add value everywhere we go.

To each of you here, I ask, can you pass the three tests?

The Test of Joy? Will you work with each other to define and explain the joy you receive from Masonry?

The Test of Purpose? Can you explain the purpose of your Lodge and why it matters? Are you willing to commit to making your Lodge Successful?

The Test of Value? What value do you place on the privileges and mysteries you have been exposed to, mused upon and practiced?

