

## A Masonic Minute

### *Words are highly prized among Masons – A Cautionary Note*

Freemasonry is the beneficiary of many eloquent expressions of its ideas and ideals by our Grand Masters, international scholars and renowned orators. We have all been inspired by a well crafted and powerfully delivered address explicating the core values of Freemasonic philosophy. On a personal note, I well remember a speech by W. Bro. Victor Popow to The Heritage Lodge some years ago that completely changed my perception of Freemasonry. For me it was an epiphany! Such is the power of words.

Yet there is an inherent risk. It is very easy to be 'lost in the web of words.' What happens after the glow of the evening fades? Do we transform those beautifully expressed concepts into actions? Do they change our behaviour in a positive direction? Bro. Albert Pike put the purpose of all Masonic studies simply: "*To learn and to do.*"

From ancient times, 'The Mason's Word' has occupied a significant position in our Ritual. 'Words' play an important part in the modes of recognition given as 'secrets' in the several degrees. We must ever be mindful that it is our Ritual that defines Freemasonry and distinguishes us from every other society, organization, or club.

**Ritual** is of supreme importance in an initiatory Order. In Freemasonry it is the vehicle by which the precepts and doctrines of the Fraternity are transmitted to successive generations of those seeking answers to the pervasive basic questions of life: *Who am I? Why am I here? What am I doing here? Where am I going from here?*

In an essay entitled **Time to modernize the Ritual – the Language of Mystery**, the English Masonic scholar John Hamill wrote: "*Our Craft rituals were developed over a long period, from the late 1600s until they were formally codified by the Lodge of Reconciliation from 1814 to 1816. They inevitably include words and phrases with meanings that have changed in the past two hundred years. Many of those words are still in common usage and so can cause confusion for a new member. ... Occasionally, we hear calls to modernise those ceremonies, to take out old words and phrases and replace them with modern, instantly comprehensible ones. I hope those calls are never answered. Our ceremonies contain some wonderful set pieces of English language that would be destroyed if we modernised them. Freemasonry is a learning process, and if we have to resort to a dictionary to fully comprehend what we learn, that can only enrich us.*"

English Emulation Ritual was adopted by our Grand Lodge in 1859. In our Grand Jurisdiction, the Ritual is monitored and protected by the Ritual Committee <sup>1</sup> under the provisions of Section 7 of the Constitution. The Work is exemplified in the annual fall tour of the Lodge of Instruction headed by the Custodian of the Work and in District Lodges of Instruction called by the District Deputy Grand Master. <sup>2</sup>

Ritual must not only be memorized and accurately recited – it must be internalized. Lectures must not only be delivered – they must be exemplified, both within and without the lodge. Speeches are not only spoken – they must be lived. Do we understand the words we speak? Do we mean what we say? Most important, do we practise what we preach?

RSJD September 2015

Brethren,

Another season of Masonic activity is underway. Enjoy all the benefits and privileges of your membership in the world's oldest and greatest fraternity.

Sincerely and fraternally,

Ray Daniels

#### DISCLAIMER

These *Masonic Minutes* are intended to supply a short instructional note that may be used by the Worshipful Master to provide a *Learning Opportunity* at every meeting of the Lodge, thereby fulfilling his stated duty: “*to employ and instruct the Brethren in Masonry.*”. Ideally, they could be used to initiate a discussion among the Brethren present. The ideas expressed and the interpretations suggested are strictly personal, and are not sanctioned or authorized by the Grand Lodge or any of its Committees.

As free-thinking or Speculative Masons, I cannot tell you *how* to think, nor can I tell you *what* to think, but hopefully I can give you something to *think about*.

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution Section 6 The Grand Master, the Deputy Grand Master, all Past Grand Masters

<sup>2</sup> Constitution Section 102