



**MASONRY -
How do we make Good Men
Better?**

By Bro. Dr. Paul Uslan



RISING POINT
INTERNATIONAL MASONIC REVIEW
PUBLISHED BY BONISTEEL MASONIC LIBRARY

PRESENT

**MASONRY -
HOW DO WE MAKE GOOD MEN BETTER?**

By Bro. Dr. Paul Uslan

Ann Arbor Fraternity Lodge No. 262

September 2 2015



www.bonisteelml.org

us, the outerworld loses its hold, freeing us to fulfill our deeper inner needs.

The word Enlightenment, what does it actually mean. We all know from history in school that this was an age in time the produced some of the greatest minds, art, music and architecture. The advancements made during this time have continued to evolve to the present day. This is the period of time that many consider the start of mankind on a higher road. But what does the term enlightenment mean for us. Is this what starts each of us on a higher road?

Can we intertwine enlightenment and spirituality? I propose yes, the words are interchangeable.

When you first fall in love with another person, you picture their face, or simply think about them, and it makes you smile, laugh, or even get giddy. You feel your heart expand, overflow with love. You feel as if the entire world is wonderful. That is enlightenment. When you hear a certain song, chord progression, or for that matter Brother Steven playing his music at the beginning of Lodge, certain notes can cause you to tear up or get goosebumps. You feel all your senses awakened. That is enlightenment. When you pick up your newborn child in your arms and look into their eyes, you are not thinking, you are only feeling love, awe and wonder of the universe. Your heart opens and you feel it expand and transcend outward beyond the physical limits of your own body. That is enlightenment, and it occurs because all of your senses are focused on the joy you feel in your heart.

This is that single thread that binds all men, especially this brotherhood of ours. We have all felt that feeling or sensation and it has awakened something extraordinary inside of each of us. We want that feeling

I am honored to be giving this first lecture after our Lodge has come back to light. This is actually the perfect time for this talk and hopefully it will impact how you see and use our Lodge. I wrote this lecture out because like our Masonic Travels, it must have a beginning, middle and end. I knew I would get so excited that I would go off on a tangent. This topic begs three questions: how, why, and what's with the secrecy. What are my masonic qualifications for giving this lecture, none. I am not a masonic historian, nor have a magic word or any answers. But what I do have is a lifelong pursuit of the process that will give me all those answers. I have not researched this talk, but will speak from my heart, for this is where I believe all answers lie.

What I am going to speak about and propose is just my perspective. It may have tremendous value, provide light and deepen the Masonic experience for some, while providing absolutely nothing for others. At the end of this presentation, some of you may conclude that this is just the ramblings of an old man in his dotage, or an amazing opportunity in Masonry. Either way, it is up to each of you to decide. It really matters not to me because this is my journey, and each of you have your own. We all go up the steps of the temple at our own pace. At no point do I wish to disparage any masonic learning, reading, or discussions you may have, I just want to present an alternative way to look at our practice. Spirituality is the real, sacred, and unperceived mission behind our masonic order. Masonry is the spiritual regeneration of man and this occurs with our deeper understanding of the hints and suggestions in the ritual. Ultimately, as the temple grows deep with

to last longer. The great news is it is possible. The only thing stopping it from happening is our minds and egos keep getting in the way. In the Bruce Lee movie, Enter the Dragon, Bruce as Master was training an apprentice in the marshal arts. He admonished "Don't think Feel"! This is a very simple and basic lesson for as long as you are in your head thinking, you can not be in your heart feeling. When you think about it, the lesson bypasses your own inner sanctum. If however you feel first, understanding and knowledge will follow.

The men who were the founders of Masonry, and those that followed the founders path, were nothing short of extraordinary. They developed a process whereby the individual man could develop spirituality or enlightenment. They made it accessible to all men, regardless of their state of inner growth. All you have to do is "Just Ask". It didn't matter if you were rich or poor, educated or not. All you need to do is Just Ask and you will be met on the level! We are all different, yet all the same.

The beauty and strength of masonry lies in its simplicity. It does not require following diety, religion, or dogma. As such, it doesn't become loaded with worldly possessions. Do you have a penny? If not you are truly poor. It only requires a belief in the Supreme Being. Without that, it is impossible to progress further. It's amazing that all you need to do is believe and ask, then everything becomes possible. Masonry is the individual quest to perfect our own ashlar used on building the Temple within. "Making Good Men Better". Our Lodge is not in the Grange, it is in the center of our hearts and being. Going to Lodge, makes good men better. Our Lodge, as the EA lecture

explains "extends even as high as the heavens." Our tenents, Faith (that we can attain), Hope, the ability to continue to attain), and Charity (the resultant love and enlightenment) become our new way of life, rich beyond any measure.

This explains why so many groups and religions have tried to demonize and demagogue Masonry from its beginnings. These groups originally were founded as a sytem of initiation to a higher path, but the message has got lost or muddled. Masonry has never its way, as it is about the individual, not about some external or outward group or show. It is however good and pleasant when a group of like minded individuals come together in a Brotherhood, all in pursuit of the same thing: becoming better men leading to a better, richer, and more fuffilling life. What incredible wages to earn.

Masonry has evolved over the past 300 years to our current practice, and I suspect it will continue to evolve long into the future. That is not saying certain practices will not or should not remain the same. Rituals may vary, but the truths remain the same. So what is this process. Simply put, it is 3 degrees culminating in our becoming a Master Mason. But are we really Master Mason's at this point? Is becoming conferred a Master Mason the endpoint we are striving towards. I personally don't think so. Getting conferred a Master Mason means we have been given all the working tools required to assist us in our indivual journey to the Enlightenment I spoke about earlier. It helps to fuffill our own deep inner need of wanting something more. Masonry is a multilevel aspect that allows each of us to plug in at our appropriate level and begin our own journey or travels.

And it is a journey, a continuous lifetime pursuit of trying to smooth down our rough ashlar. When I think about and reflect on this journey, I realize it is not simply going from point A to B to C. There are no tokens to collect along the way, but there sure are lots of treasures to find. It is a simple process, profound in its simplicity. As we do the labor laid out on the tressel board, both our understanding and life evolve. Each and every step of the way will produce sweetness, joy, and love in your life. As you smooth your ashlar, you not only become a better man to yourself, but also to all those around you. It is our own openness that provides the brotherly love and relief to those around us.

The saying you can lead a horse to water but you can't make it drink is true for Masonry. It is impossible to judge which man will drink, or how much they will drink. For some, they will take a small sip, feel completely satisfied, and wander off. Others will drink fully and realize that what we have here is something very special. Where this leads will vary and manifest differently for everyone. Many are called, but few are chosen. I can say with absolute certainty that if you drink, you will become a better man. For myself, I see this as a path towards my own enlightenment and a way back home. It doesn't get much more exciting than that!

Early Masons developed our Ritual, loading it with symbols, allegory, and deeper meaning. Each truth must be learned and deeply absorbed. This prepares the initiate to learn and absorb the next lesson. As we are all taught "where were you made a Mason: In your heart!" Assimilating all these truths together in our heart or center provides the answers to the ancient

sacred mysteries as well as the question "Who am I". You are a good man and now have been made better. But for some, this will become a great intellectual process of trying to understand all the answers. For those of you so inclined, I urge caution, as this will actually hinder rather than enhance the process. Remember, Don't think, Feel! Our Ritual, while teaching many life lessons, is just a process that enables us to get out of our own way. It is a way to focus our attention. With our attention focused, it allows the natural process, the gift of the Great Architect, to begin as a seed planted deep inside us and begin to grow and evolve, culminating in the lasting enlightenment we receive when we arrive at our final place of rest and hear the words "good sir, well done". By learning the lessons taught in each ritual and obligation, we receive the tools required to move onto the next degree. Without these tools and understanding they give, moving onto the next degree is meaningless. Breaking our obligation is akin to putting crap into a milkshake. If we do either, we lose the ability to receive nourishment and nothing is left to sustain us.

So if this is the case, what is the purpose of the symbols, allegory and obligation in our Rituals. Why are they so important to understand. I mean after all, we can all read books, look up the symbols, figure out where, when, and how they all came about. Is this what is going to make me a better Master Mason? Why not just combine all three degrees into one so we can simplify things and study them at our leisure. Why even continue to go to Lodge? When we pass thru the portals into the Lodge, we leave the outer world behind and move to the Lodge within. Our values change to the common work amongst brothers before God. We

detach from the outer secular world and focus on our own inner work. We make Good Men Better! Our rituals while not historical, are myths containing all philosophical truths. When you take these principles deep within your heart, you become able to receive the offered light.

Symbols and allegory are just words, Only when you feel and take them deeply inside your heart, do they become working tools. Each tool exists to allow us to go deeper into our hearts and inner being, assisting us on our journey to reach that point within the point. You would never try to teach a young child calculus, biochemistry or expect them to write a symphony without first giving them the building blocks and the basic principles of math. Without building blocks, the higher lesson becomes meaningless and lost forever. Masonry is no different. We have all asked for more light. What does that mean. Is it the sun, a lightbulb, or burning taper? I believe it is the lightness that comes into an opened heart. It is this light that allows us to grow both as a man and a mason. This growth not only nurtures us, but all those around us as well. It is contagious like a person laughing hysterically in a movie theater. Pretty soon those around them are also laughing. Their lives have been changed in that moment! Light is the greatest gift from the Grand Architecht. We first recive it when we are born into this world from the mystical East, and then proceed to immediately lose it. I believe the light is enhanced consciousness. By simply asking for more, and working hard to receive it, we can learn the secrets and mysteries that lie within our hearts that will ultimately bring us back to the East. Masonry thus allows all of us to pursue a higher and more noble path than what we normally might tread.

This is why the true lessons given in each Degree must be taken deeply inside, as they are the building blocks to receive more lessons. When we take these lessons inside, they provide us with nourishment and we in turn grow and become better men. Masonry makes good men better. For me, taking in the nourishment is similar to eating a meal. Trying to understand it only in your head, and not feeling it in your heart is like only eating the appetizer. It may look perfect and taste great, but it does nothing to sustain us for the long run. For real nourishment to take place, you must eat the entire meal. As it is a really good meal, why not take the time to savor and enjoy it, rather than trying to stuff it all into your mouth at once to eat it at the same time. You eat a good meal slowly, allowing time for your body to digest while making room for more. This allows you to take advantage of everything that has been put on your plate. And what is the final part of the meal, the dessert. The dessert allows you to know you have just eaten something really wonderful, leaving you full, happy, content, and with a sweet taste in your mouth. Isn't this starting to sound like our degrees?

The same is true of our Ritual. Each degree is able to provide a level of nourishment, but the degrees must all be taken together for digestion and sustainability to occur. And just like that wonderful meal, you can't eat it once and expect sustainability for the rest of your life. This is why we must keep returning to Lodge. Lodge will continue to provide us with more meals and nourishment. By sitting in Lodge, Masonry continues to feed us for the rest of our lives. When properly pursued, this will sustain us, and those around us. This personal growth provides limitless rewards. It is this growth that makes us better men. Skipping

Lodge is like skipping a meal. I understand it may not always be possible to attend, but that does not mean you need to miss that meal. If you must skip, read your copy of your ritual book. It has the ability to sustain you until your next meal. I completely understand that for some, the fellowship, comradary, or doing good works is enough, but why not have it all?

We all will not follow the same path as we are all different and as such must follow our own paths. This is the beauty of Masonry, it bears the fruits of the lessons learned for each individual. As we meet on the level, we connect into the process, and it will work for everyone. Sometimes you will be completely unaware that something is happening while at other times it will rock your very essence. It is this process that makes good men better. What do I mean by better. Better is not the building upon ourselves so we become more and more. In fact, it is just the opposite. Becoming a better man involves destroying the existing one so a new and purer one filled with light can emerge. We start with the cornerstone in the NE Corner, build our inner Lodge and Temple, and then gain the ability to destroy it. Only then can we be rebuilt in the proper form by the Supreme Architect. The resulting sweetness of this process will not only have a positive effect on you, but on all those around you. Without realizing it, good men getting better makes others better as well. When you nourish your self, you become capable of providing nourishment for others. As such Masonry has the power to change the world. What an incredible gift Masonry has the potential to give us. To be part of a Brotherhood that promotes this is one of the finest ventures we could ever participate in.

The answers to my other questions are simpler. Why me, why not me! We all deserve to be happy and continue to grow as human beings. This is the gift that is available to everyone that joins Masonry. The only caveat is that you need to ask the questions and work very deeply inside your heart to find the answers. No person, sign, ritual, word, nor token alone are going to give you anything. It is strictly up to you to use your working tools to find those answers on your own. If you persevere, you will find your life changing in ways you could not imagine.

This is what makes our brotherhood so profound and special. It is a place where we can each find brotherly love, charity, and faith. We can then internalize these values and live them in our every day lives. By doing this, then and only then do you become a Master Mason. Don't become discouraged, because as ritual teaches, it is a long demanding journey that takes a lifetime. It is the fruits of our labors that will nourish and sustain us along the way as we perfect our ashlar. Only then is it possible to build our temple and find true fulfillment.

So why the secrecy? Masonry must be treated with nothing short of the complete love and respect it deserves. By secrecy, we are not trying to hide these lessons from others, but without the working tools and required effort, it is impossible to understand the them. To treat Masonry any other way would be to demean it and diminish its value. Without value, it loses its ability to affect positive change in the lessons being expressed. As a result, nothing can be gained. When I was a young boy, I would look at the rings, and ask my dad, uncles, and grandfather to tell me about masonry.

They all told me the same thing: Ask me when you are older. At the time, I was mad that that they were all keeping a secret from me. Now I realize that I was not capable of dealing with the answer. As I am writing this, I understand why Masonry has never fought to defend itself from outside attacks. It is simply that without the working tools used to learn the lessons, it is impossible to accurately portray what it is we are doing. So we simply say: we are making good men better.

When we come together in Lodge, everything we see and do is just a manifestation of ourselves. Everything in Masonry is simply figurative of man. As we each progress and internalize the degrees, we awaken our own inner consciousness and spirituality. Masonry in its complex simplicity is our individual road map to travel back to the Spiritual East. Because it is only in the East, can we once again become that point within the point. The place where you transcend the physical world and become the universe while at the same time the universe becomes you.

All of this is why I am so very proud to be a Mason and to call each and everyone of you my Brother. WB Brian told me a long time ago, you get so much more out of it than what you put in. What a simple profound truth. This is an important lesson that we need to always remember. Another simple truth is that if there are any new brothers here who have yet to go thru all the degrees, my advice is do not read anything about them in a book or online. It is best to approach them in the dark without thinking so you can fully experience all they have to offer and take it deeply into your heart. When we close our eyes as we pray, cry, or kiss, it is because the most beautiful things in life are not seen, but are felt within our hearts. The only preparation is prepared to be amazed. Don't think, feel! I am grateful each and every day to be a travelling man and look forward to travelling this amazing journey with each of you. Thank you all for letting me give this lecture as preparing it has richly deepened my understanding of myself as well as my commitment to Masonry and our wonderful Brotherhood.

Bro. Dr. Paul Uslan



Bro. Dr. Paul Uslan is a member of Ann Arbor Fraternity Lodge No. 262, Grand Lodge of Michigan.



risingpoint
emagazine

is the official publication of Bonisteel Masonic Library and is published two times per year. The primary objective of Rising Point is to provide a wide access information of reviewed Masonic research publications. The publications of

Rising Point are dedicated to Freemasonic information and education and is available in electronic vision as PDF file and you can download for free.

Mitchell Ozog
Editor-in-Chief,
Rising Point.
Bonisteel Masonic Library
mozog@bonisteelml.org