

Masonic Myths

Masonic myths and outright falsehood are continually spread concerning Freemasonry. This is an attempt to set and keep the history of the Craft straight.

Throughout the centuries Freemasonry has taught its valuable lessons through allegory and symbols. The man from Galilee used parables extensively and well. Many historians and better speakers constantly employ anecdotes to illustrate the points they want to make. These methods emphasize the search for truth in an interesting and factual manner.

Myths on the other hand, can be innocent or dangerous. They can be outright lies or the perpetuation of distortions handed down through the generations. Many of these were invented by Masonic writers and speakers to enhance the image of Freemasonry. Some of these corruptions have caused the Craft problems with creditable historians because they were outrageous lies.

Freemasonry, actually, requires no exaggeration to magnify its greatness. The simple truth is all that is required to tell its story. This is the reason for this column; to attempt to destroy the myths that have been prevalent, often for centuries, by telling the truth. Let's begin with the period of the War for American Independence.

--- Myth: Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry were Freemasons. Fact: Neither Thomas Jefferson or Patrick Henry were members of the Craft.

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.

---Myth: All of George Washington's generals during the War for American Independence were Masons.

Fact: Thirty-three of the general serving under Washington were

members of the Craft, a long way from "all." The late James R. Case and Ronald E. Heaton made comprehensive studies of the Revolutionary period and debunked many of the claims considered here.

Myth: Washington insisted that

the Marquis de Lafayette be made a Mason before he would promote him to general, and the same claim has been made about the Baron von Steuben.

Fact: Both Lafayette and von Steuben were Freemasons before they arrived to help fight the British. This was true of Lafayette even though he wasn't 21 years of age when he arrived in America. It's highly likely that Washington never did know they were Masons. The stories of both of these men are highly interesting, but space prohibits the telling of them here.

Myth: The governors of the thirteen original colonies when Washington was inaugurated President of the United States were Freemasons.

Fact: From Lexington until the inauguration thirty different men served as governors. Of these ten were Freemasons. That's one-third! Wouldn't it be wonderful for the country if we could claim the same percentage today?

Myth: The Boston Tea Party was organized in St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston and its member participated in tossing the tea into Boston Harbor.

Fact: So well has the secrecy surrounding the Boston Tea Party been kept that _ tion can it be called a "T" or any other letter.

Myth: All, or almost all, Signers of the Articles of Confederation, Signers of the Declaration of Independence, and Signers of the Constitution were

Freemasons.

Fact: Ten of the signers of the Articles, nine signers of the Declaration, and thirteen signers of the Constitution -- and only this number -- were, or would become, Freemasons. Even so, this is an excellent percentage of the participants. It should be noted that Edmund Randolph, governor and Grand Master of Virginia, although an important participant in the Constitutional Convention, didn't sign the document. He did, however, fight for its ratification. 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. (For further study see *Masonic Membership of the Founding Fathers*, The Masonic Service Association, 8120 Fenton St., Silver Spring, MD 20910,)

Myth: There are many aprons owned or worn by George Washington floating around.

Fact: The only documented apron owned by Washington was one presented by the firm of Watson and Cassoul. It had been made by nuns at Nantes. It was the only apron listed in Washington's inventory that was released after his death.

Myth: Washington was Grand Master in Virginia.

Fact: Washington never was a Grand Master. At the instigation of American Union Lodge he was suggested for the office of Grand Master of a National Grand Lodge -- a non-existent body. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and some others agreed, but too

many others disagreed with the concept of a National Grand Lodge. Washington was appointed Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 22 in Virginia by Grand Master Edmund Randolph when that Pennsylvania Lodge requested a charter from the Grand Lodge of Virginia. The following year he was elected Master, but there is no record of his installation into this office, nor is there any record of him presiding over this Lodge. To keep the record straight, there is much evidence of his respect, and perhaps even love for Freemasonry. Proof? He was buried with Masonic rites!

-- George Washington has been the source of many Masonic myths and exaggerations for more than two centuries. This is unfortunate. Of all the Freemasons we can eulogize he requires no embellishment. From his childhood to his death his extraordinary wisdom, industry and patriotism predominated. Let's try to set the record straight.

Myth: George Washington was Grand Master of Masons in Virginia.

Fact: Washington never was a Grand Master. American Union Lodge, on December 15, 1779, proposed Washington become General Grand Master of the United States! This proposal speaks volumes for the character of the Commander-in-Chief. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania agreed five days later! Too many others were frightened by the concept of a National Grand Lodge. It is highly doubtful that Washington would have accepted such an office. Washington was appointed Master of Alexandria Lodge No. 22 in Virginia by Grand Master Edmund Randolph when that Pennsylvania Lodge (No. 39) requested a charter from the Grand Lodge of Virginia. The new charter was dated April 28, 1788. In December of the same year he was elected Master, but there is no record of his installation into this office, nor is there any record of him actually presiding over this or any Lodge.

Myth. Washington acted as Grand Master when the cornerstone of the Federal Capitol was laid on September 18, 1793.

Fact. It was the Grand Lodge of Maryland that was called on to lay the cornerstone. Alexandria Lodge, of which Washington was a Past Master, held a place of honor. It was Joseph Clark, the Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Maryland, who acted as Grand Master, pro tem. Clark placed the President between himself and the Master of Alexandria Lodge. The newspaper

article reporting the event mentioned Clark as the Grand Master, pro tem. on several occasions. So did the Maryland historian in 1885. Washington didn't act as Grand Master, but without question he was the most honored and influential Freemason participating in the event.

Myth. George Washington never was interested in Freemasonry. He rarely, if ever, attended Lodge meetings.

Fact. To keep the record straight, there is much evidence of his respect and even love for Freemasonry. True, he seldom attended Masonic meetings. This is understandable when it is realized that from the day he was made a Master Mason until shortly before his death he worked for his country. Did he love and respect the Craft. The ultimate proof -- he was buried with Masonic rites! And this even before the Congress knew of his death. (For further study of George Washington and a complete account of his Masonic activities see *George Washington: Master Mason*, Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., Richmond, VA.)

Myth: There are many aprons owned or worn by George Washington floating around.

Fact: The only documented apron owned by Washington was one presented by the firm of Watson and Cassoul. It had been made by nuns at Nantes. It was the only apron listed in Washington's inventory that was released after his death. The "Lafayette" apron, purportedly made by the wife of the Marquis, may be a fact as many authorities claim (and I was one who did so claim in *G. Washington*).

Myth. George Washington renounced Freemasonry.

Fact. On the contrary he remained a member of the Craft from the moment he was Initiated into the Lodge at Fredericksburg, Virginia (No. 4) until the day he died. Even then his wife, Martha, asked the Freemason of Alexandria, Virginia, to hold and conduct his funeral (see above). In 1837, at state expense, Joseph Ritner, Governor of Pennsylvania, endeavored to "save" the reputation of the first President. He had published a tract "proving" Washington had never participated in Masonic events. Earlier the Blanchards, father and son and heads of a so-called "Christian" antiMasonic organization, were among the first "Christians" to "prove" Washington wasn't a Freemason. Much of the anti-Masonic diatribe they promulgated has been carried to the present day by crusading "saints" against "secret" societies.

Myth. Washington was uneducated.

Fact. Uneducated -- no; unschooled -- yes. As far as we can determine Washington never attended any school. Through his father's vast library Washington learned the fundamentals of mathematics, surveying and many other subjects. At the age of 17 he earned a substantial wage as a surveyor. In 1749 he was appointed surveyor of Culpeper County, Virginia, having produced a certificate "from the President and Masters of William and Mary College, appointing him to be surveyor of this county." From the many military visitors to Mount Vernon he learned the principles of warfare. From the intellectuals he learned how to study and use his common sense. The history of his life proves he became one of the most knowledgeable men of his, or any, day.

Myth. Washington did not love Martha; he married her for her fortune and social position.

Fact. Although critics are adept at reading the minds and thinking of others, _ ars must agree with Sherman who said: "War is Hell!" Would a man or woman who did not love each other deeply share winter quarters together? That's what Martha and George Washington did throughout the War for American Independence. (For more on George Washington, see his biography in Book 3.)

Myth: The oldest Masonic building in the United States is that of Royal White Hart Lodge in North Carolina.

Fact: Not true. It's Masons Hall in Richmond, Virginia, the home of Richmond Randolph Lodge No. 19 and Richmond Royal Arch Chapter No. 3. The 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.

Myth: Freemasonry is a religion.

Fact: Absolutely false. This is one of several arguments employed by certain religious fanatics in an attempt to discredit Freemasonry. They quote Albert Pike and Henry Wilson Coil, among others, neither of whom was a man of the cloth, to "prove" their statements. Pike was not a researcher. Most of the hundreds of thousands of words he wrote came from his own mind, or the minds of others whom he never mentioned but with whom he agreed. Coil wrote millions of words about Freemasonry, and he was a lawyer and an excellent Masonic researcher. Most of the time the words of these and other writers are taken out of context to "prove" the thesis of the anti-Masons. Freemasonry's enemies conveniently ignore the thousands of Christian ministers, and some Rabbis, who prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that Freemasonry, although religious is far from being a religion. Here are just three of these Doctors of Divinity who have proven the critics in error: Joseph Fort Newton, Norman Vincent Peal and Forrest D. Haggard.

Myth:

Freemasonry is a secret society.

Fact: Unequivocally false. This is widely stated and believed, even by Freemasons. Many Masons believe this so strongly they won't even talk to their wives and families about the Craft. Many writers of yesteryear helped promote this error. Our ritualists have added to the belief. The critics of Freemasonry want the world to believe in this secrecy because they have little else on which to stand. Yet by no stretch of the imagination can Masonry be termed a secret organization. If it was, no outsiders would even know it exists. Anything that is known is not secret. Without question there are many secret organizations throughout the world, but only men and women within those circles are

familiar with them. Most, if not all, ritualistic religions have conclaves (literally: rooms locked with a key from outsiders). Should these be condemned along with Freemasonry? Secret means: "Kept from general knowledge or view; kept hidden; operating in a clandestine manner"; and on and on. Secret groups meet in places known only to the few. Freemasons meet in places clearly marked for the public to see. Secret outfits never record anything that might become public property. All Masonic functions are fully recorded, proceedings can be read by the general public, thousands of books have been written and published about Freemasonry, millions of words about the Craft come off printing presses every year.

The Northern Light is an excellent example. Members of secret

bands never advertise their affiliation; Freemasons proudly wear the Square and Compasses and other emblems. There are NO SECRETS in Freemasonry I've been saying for years. Many are ignorant. There are several excellent Masonic libraries such as the one in Lexington, but non-Masons rarely visit them. The so-called secrets in Freemasonry have been "revealed" over and over again in books that can be found in any library or large bookstore. With the coming of television these secrets, often distorted, have gone into the homes of millions of people. So let us dispel the myth that Freemasonry is a "secret Organization." It isn't. It never has been. (NOTE: Several Freemasons are so concerned with the statements made in their churches about Masonic secrecy they asked for help in answering their critics. This is an attempt to help them.)

Myth: Much of our Masonic ritual was written by William Shakespeare.

Fact: There is no

evidence to indicate Shakespeare even knew there was an organization of stone masons that would eventually become Speculative Freemasonry. The old Gothic Constitutions are the basis for The Constitutions of the Free-Masons compiled by Dr. James Anderson in 1722 and adopted in 1723. There is nothing in the Gothic tomes that remotely resembles the writing of the Bard. Many of Shakespeare's phrases have found their way into the rituals of the Craft, but they certainly were not written especially for this purpose. It would be nice to claim William as an early accepted member, but we can't. Let's stop trying.

Myth. There have been several women who were regular Freemasons. Many prominent Freemasons have said this is true.

Fact. The Constitutions of the Free-Masons of 1723, on which all Masonic law is based, tells us that Masons must be males. Every regular Grand Lodge in the world specifies that Freemasons must be males. There are no exceptions. To make a female a Freemason would be illegal. A few ladies have been said to have been initiated into Freemasonry for various reasons. Among them was Maria Desraismes who was initiated into Loge Les

Libres Penseurs (Freethinkers) In Paris in 1881. The Master of the Lodge was expelled. Shortly thereafter the Lodge is said to have become co-Masonic, composed of men and women. CoMasonry is prevalent today in this country, but isn't recognized by regular Freemasonry. In this country and in England there are lodges of women "Freemasons." These ladies call themselves "Brother" and use the same titles as do regular Masonic Lodges. During a forum a couple of years ago, a young Master of a Lodge said: "I have one regret. I can't call my mother 'Brother!'"

Myth. The Lodge of the Holy Saints John at Jerusalem did, or does, exist.

Fact. Symbolism is an important function in Freemasonry. Actually symbolism is found everywhere. You're reading symbols right now. The dollar sign (\$) is an excellent example. (As I understand it, this sign was originally composed of two other symbols: an "S" and a "U" joined.) As Freemasons are craftsmen, and St. John the Evangelist and St. John the Baptist were chosen as patron saints of Freemasonry perhaps about 1598, they had to belong to a Lodge, didn't they? What better Lodge than an imaginary one. And shouldn't it be at Jerusalem? No such lodge ever existed. Symbolically, though, it constitutes an ideal. As Carl Claudy said: "The thought ... is that we come from an ideal or dream lodge into this actual workaday world where our ideals are to be tested.... Masons mean only that their Craft is dedicated to these holy men, whose precepts and practices, ideas and virtues, teachings and examples, all Freemasons should try to follow."_ a book entitled Whence Come You? It was published in 1957. Among the many far-fetched "facts" he recorded was the finding of this Lodge of the Holy Saints John. He claimed its ruins were still standing in Jerusalem, and he had a picture to prove it. This was discredited. Later another claim that this lodge existed in London was also discredited by Harry Carr.

Myth.

Freemasonry began when Noah recovered from the big flood.

Fact. Wonderful, if true. Dr. James Anderson in his 1723 Constitutions, gathered information from old Masonic documents. He believed Noah and his sons, Japhet, Shem and Ham, were "all Masons true." There are those who take the Craft back even further -- to the days of Adam. Actually no man knows when, where, or how Freemasonry as we know it began. Athelstan is said to have convened a meeting of Masons at York, England, in A.D. 927. There are signs that some form of Masonry existed from the 13th century on. Masonry's oldest known document, The Regius Poem, was written about 1390 and is based on older documents. We do know that operative craftsmen employed a form of teaching that has come down to us. Speculative

Freemasonry officially came into being with the formation of the first Grand Lodge of England in 1717. From this organization, which began as an annual, or quarterly series of feasts, has evolved the Freemasonry we have today. It is a result of growth, taking the teachings from the better religions, philosophies, using the symbolism of the operative masons to teach the neophyte valuable lessons. Since man began building with stone,

there has been some form of masonry. Whether a connection can be made between the craftsmen of yesteryear and the modern era, has yet to be determined.

Myth. The story of Hiram as we portray it in

our Lodges is based on truth.

Fact. It isn't. It has been called an "allegory," but factually it isn't. An allegory is a story within a story. What we portray is actually a fable. But it's a fable that teaches valuable and unforgettable lessons. The Temple Solomon had built to the glory of God was a fact. The story as told in the third, or Master Masons degree, is not meant to be factual. In a broad sense it can be called a legend. The "Hiram Legend" is an important part of the teachings graphically imprinted on the mind of the candidate. I put it this way in *The Craft and Its Symbols*: "The lessons found in the Legend of Hiram Abif reach to the roots of the soul and spirit. They are instilled in the heart forever. You were an active participant, so that these lessons would be deeply implanted, never to be lost.... "The ultimate triumph of good over evil, and life over death, has been depicted throughout the ages in drama, song and story. Legends depicting a central figure being killed and then returned to life were common to many religions and rites. These undoubtedly had a bearing on the development of the lessons the ritualists of Freemasonry believed had to be taught. But the Hiram Legend is more intense, moralistic, and meaningful than any that preceded it. "Hiram Abif did exist. He was a skillful worker in brass and other metals. He was sent to assist King Solomon.... [But] the Hiram Abif who actually worked at beautifying the Temple of Solomon lived to an old age! He died of natural causes!"

Myth: All, or most, of the Freemasons in Germany were murdered during the Nazi regime.

Fact: The truth about the horrors of Nazism will never be known. The number of German Freemasons sent to concentration camps, the gas chambers, prisons, tortured or murdered in their homes will never be known. Masonic leaders into believing he was writing legitimate accounts of Freemasonry. Unscientific research, the only kind possible in this case, indicated to Boyd that about two-thirds of the then 85,000 Masons in Germany were injured in some manner, this left one-third untouched. The number actually murdered or tortured is open to conjecture. It must be remembered that the Nazi horror reached into other countries and the Freemasons in them.

Fact: However we do know without question that Freemasonry is the first organization proscribed by dictators. An organization that believes in and teaches the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, that believes in the search for truth, cannot be allowed to exist under a despot.

Myth: Adolf Hitler hated and feared Freemasonry.

Fact: Not exactly. Oral histories (or accounts) can easily be fabricated, as was at least one concerning Harry Truman. This is especially true when publication comes after the

subject's death. With this in mind a sketch of one such conversation recorded from *Gesprache Mit Hitler* was reported in *Seekers of Truth*. Herman Rauschnigg, the writer, said that Hitler told him Freemasonry "has always been harmless in Germany." It "achieves the fruition of fantasy through the use of symbols, rites and magic influence of emblems of worship. Herein lies the great danger which I have taken in hand. Don't you see that our party must be something very similar, and order, an hierarchic organization of secular priesthood? This naturally means that something similar opposing us may not exist. It is either us,

the Freemasons or the Church but never two side by side. The Catholic Church has made its position clear, at least in regard to the Freemasons. Now we are the strongest and, there, we shall eliminate both the Church and the Freemasons."

Myth: Freemasonry did not operate during World War II in the countries controlled by the Hitler thugs.

Fact: It did, but not openly. (Even today there are countries in which Freemasons must meet in secret.) In the infamous Buchenwald concentration camp the Masonic popular reached close to 100 in October 1944. According to M. Jattefaux, a French Freemason, the known Masons met daily. By occupying the minds of these men with Masonic ritual and lessons helped relief them of their anxieties. Masonic subjects were selected and by word of mouth transmitted block by block. There quiet discussions would take place. Then block by block the results of their debate returned.

Myth: Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany.

Fact: Not so. He was appointed by Chancellor by President Paul von Hindenburg. In July 1932 the Nazi received 37% of the vote; on November 6, 1932 the Nazi party dropped about five points. This alarmed the German industrialists who were backing Hitler. They persuaded their president to appoint Hitler as Chancellor. A short time later the Reichstag was ravaged by fire. The communist party was blamed, and as a result outlawed. Nazi terror followed; the Third Reich was formed; the rest is history. _ned it as a means of evading the Gestapo; Batham claims it was simply an emblem selected because the Square and Compasses wasn't worn by Freemasons. Most important, though, the early accounts and Batham do agree the blue forget-me-not was worn throughout the Nazi terror. This emblem was chosen to honor Masonic writers and educators through The Masonic Brotherhood of the Blue Forget-Me-Not.

Myth: All, or most, of the Freemasons in Germany were murdered during the Nazi regime.

Fact: The truth about the horrors of Nazism will never be known. The number of German Freemasons sent to concentration camps, the gas chambers, prisons, tortured or murdered in their homes will never be known. We do know, through research done by Lt. Col. David Boyd and others, that nowhere nearly the often quoted 80,000 Masons were killed. We do know that a French historian named Bernard Fay turned the names of Freemasons

over to the Nazis. Fay had obtained many of these names from American Masonic sources. He had conned some Masonic leaders into believing he was writing legitimate accounts of Freemasonry. Unscientific research, the only kind possible in this case, indicated to Boyd that about two-thirds of the then 85,000 Masons in Germany were injured in some manner, this left one-third untouched. The number actually murdered or tortured is open to conjecture. It must be remembered that the Nazi horror reached into other countries and the Freemasons in them.

Fact: However we do know without question that Freemasonry is the first organization proscribed by dictators. An organization that believes in and teaches the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, that believes in the search for truth, cannot be allowed to exist under a despot.

Myth: There have been lady Freemasons, so claim many Freemasons even today.

Fact: There have been none, nor are there any. Irately I was taken to task for claiming in this column a short time ago that this had to be a myth.

Why did I make this claim? Because the Constitutions of the Free-Masons of 1723 said only males can be Freemasons. all legitimate Grand Lodges still follow, to a great extent, these Constitutions. I was told the Grand Lodge of Ireland recognized Elizabeth St. Leger as a Mason and she was made one in 1912. The date the lady was purportedly made a "Mason" was closer to 1712 (she was born in 1693), about 18 years before the Grand Lodge of

Ireland was constituted. The so-called "initiation" or "Raising" would have taken place at least 20 years before the Master Mason degree was known to exist.

To settle the question I wrote to Michael W. Walker, Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. His reply (used with permission): "Elizabeth St. Leger was initiated before the formation of the Grand Lodge of Ireland and long before Freemasonry was regulated under the Laws & Constitutions which we have to-day and which have developed over nearly 3 centuries. I think it fair to say that subsequent to the formation of the Grand Lodge, and certainly in to- day's situation, the initiation of the Lady Freemason would certainly not be recognized as regular. It is an interesting and intriguing little bit of _ Lodge said he would like to be able to call his mother, the Master of her "Lodge," "Brother!"

Myth. The formation of the English Grand Lodge in 1751 came about because of a schism; its founders were Masonic traitors.

Fact. Absolutely false. It's one of the stories perpetuated by well-known and well-respected Masonic historians that refuses to die. And there is no excuse for its continuation. In 1887 Henry Sadler proved Irish Freemasons, mainly, founded the "Antients" Grand Lodge. They had never been a part of the "Moderns" Grand Lodge formed in 1717. In the pages of The Philalethes magazine for February 1974 Lionel Augustine Seemungal of the West Indies helped destroy this myth. He quoted Henry Sadler, Librarian of the Grand Lodge of England. Recently Cyril N. Batham used this myth to emphasize "that just because a theory has always been accepted throughout the whole masonic [sic] world, it is not necessarily correct."

Myth. Pythagoras was Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

Fact. So say the ritualists of yesteryear, and their successors have compounded the fabrication. Pythagoras was indeed a great man (see the forthcoming The Mystic Tie for his story). Although he left behind no writings of his own, his students did. His influence has extended to the present day. It is little wonder his teachings have reached into Freemasonry, even if only fragmentarily. But, even if a form of Freemasonry was known while he lived (582-507 B.C.), he could not have been made a Master Mason. This degree wasn't invented (or had it evolved) until the late 1720's. Actually there are those who believe that the Freemasonry that did mature into what we have today was influenced by the Pythagoreans.

Myth. The Chapel of the Four Chaplains in Philadelphia, a non-sectarian foundation, has been accepted by all religions.

Fact. Not so. Briefly: the story begins on February 3, 1943 when the U.S. Troop ship Dorchester was torpedoed. As it was sinking four chaplains (Methodist, Rabbi, Catholic Priest, Reformed [Dutch] Church Minister) handed their life jackets to soldiers as they plunged into the sea. With arms linked, and singing, the chaplains went down with the ship. In 1948 Dr. Daniel A. Poling, father of one of the chaplains, became Chaplain of the Chapel. The father and son were Freemasons. Men of all faiths were invited to memorialize the heroism of the chaplains in 1951. Congressman John F. Kennedy was invited and accepted. He didn't show up -- his Cardinal Dougherty wouldn't let him! Later General James O'Neil, Deputy Chief of Chaplains of the U.S. Army was invited to dedication ceremonies. He accepted, but he, also, didn't show up. The same Dougherty wouldn't let him! Two employees of the government had refused! During the latter dedication Brother Harry S. Truman said these chaplains had obeyed a Divine command, and "this is an old faith in our country. It is shared by all churches and all denominations." This is one time Brother Truman erred.

(NOTE: What follows has been prompted by an unsigned letter by a fellow who says he's a veteran of World War II. He is a member in a midwestern jurisdiction, and he said he has received no answer to the several letters he has written The Northern Light. Herein

we attempt to answer his basic questions.)

Myth. There are no "legitimate" Black Freemasons.

Fact. Each Jurisdiction (state Grand Lodge) is sovereign, has its own rules, regulations and laws. Freemasons, even those who are officers and members of appendant bodies, must adhere to those laws. As far as I can determine, no Grand Lodge has a law prohibiting a Black man from petitioning one of its Masonic Lodges. There, as with all petitioners, the results of a ballot box will determine if he is elected. The individual members of each Lodge will determine how he ballots. As Freemasons we know the only criteria for election to receive the degrees are the petitioners moral qualifications. Religion, race, color, creed should never enter into this decision. We also know many of us are fallible.

Freemasonry is in a predicament. There is an excellent Black organization of predominately Black Freemasons called "Prince Hall Masonry." Throughout the United States there are Prince Hall Grand Lodges, composed mainly of Black men. This group traces its origin to 1775 (older than the United States) when 15 Black men, including one Prince Hall, were made Master Masons. In 1784, this loosely knit group received an English charter as African Lodge No. 459. This gave birth eventually to the present day Prince Hall Grand Lodges.

Although there are Black Mason in many recognized lodges, Prince Hall leaders would prefer to have these men petition Prince Hall lodges. Understandably, they do not want to give up their heritage. Some "regular" Grand Lodges have taken this into consideration and have recognized the Prince Hall Grand Lodge in their state. These Grand Lodges permit inter-visitation. Other Grand Lodges are considering much the same action.

Myth. World War I and II veterans petitioned Freemasonry in great numbers, but no Vietnam veterans are Freemasons.

Fact. Partially true and completely false. Veterans of the World Wars did come into Freemasonry in great numbers. During those wars they found the principles taught in Freemasonry in action. This was especially true during the second World War. Freemasonry, through The Masonic Service Association, went into action even before the United States entered the conflict. It was aided by Congressmen and Senators who were Freemasons, with Harry S. Truman taking the lead. Until long after the war the MSA, with the support of the Grand Lodges and such bodies as the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction provided a "Home Away From Home" for service men and women in this country and overseas. Freemasonry was highly visible. The political climate wasn't the same during the Vietnam "Police Action."

In an attempt to contain communism, Brother Harry S. Truman sent 35 "advisors" to help the French in Vietnam in 1950. Later, after the French had capitulated, Eisenhower answered a request by South Vietnam and sent a handful of American "advisors"; John F. Kennedy (rarely mentioned in connection with this fiasco) greatly escalated American involvement, turning it into a political war. It continued to be mismanaged by politicians.

The hands of military strategists were completely tied. The furor created in the Congress overflowed to the streets and especially universities and colleges in the country. The war, as with all _ reemasonry on several occasions with Conrad Hahn, then Executive Secretary. This isn't the time or place to relate what was discussed, except to say he was deeply concerned. The Hospital Visitation program was the only important link Freemasonry had with our Vietnam veterans. It remains an important link.

It's false to say no Vietnam Veterans have become Freemasons.

A check with several folks and organizations such as the National Sojourners proves many of the men who upheld the honor of the United States by serving in Vietnam are Freemasons today.

ADDENDUM. In my segment about the Chapel of the Four Chaplains I wasn't as clear as I should have been. (May I blame this on space constraints? - Nahhhh.) I wrote: "Dr. Daniel A. Poling, father of one of the chaplains, became Chaplain of the Chapel." True. But I added: "The father and son were Freemasons." A son was -- but not the chaplain who gave his life jacket to a soldier. (Later the father did say this son planned on becoming a Freemason.) I didn't mention (and should have) that George L. Fox, one of the four chaplains, was a member of Moose River Lodge No. 82, Concord, Vermont. In World War I he had earned a Purple Heart, a Silver Medal, the Croix de Guerre with palms, and the Victory Medal with six battle bars.

Myth. All Freemasons realize they should, among other important things, continue searching for truth; that exaggerations and out- right lies have no place within Freemasonry.

Fact. The search for truth can be dangerous. Fifth hand I learned several highly placed members of the Craft are being urged to have me expelled from Freemasonry. The reason? I'm destroying Masonry! And how am I doing this? By seeking the truth; by attempting to destroy the myths that well-meaning (I hope) Freemasons have perpetuated throughout the years.

Item. Roger Sherman's Masonic apron [in] the Museum at Yale University. If one knew not[h]ing more than that Freemasons wore Masonic aprons in their service, would one need more evidence that Roger Sherman was a Mason?" A direct verbatim quote from my critic.

Fact. You will have to supply your answer to his question. If you

are seeking truth, it seems to me that much more evidence is needed. When we search for this truth we can turn to the late James R. Case who, along with the late Ronald E. Heaton

thoroughly researched Freemasonry during the beginning of our country. Sherman and Case were both Connecticut Yankees. This is what Case wrote concerning Sherman: "Not a Freemason. Two of his sons were. 'His' apron, once in Yale memorabilia, cannot be traced to him. There is no evidence of any kind to support the opinion that Roger Sherman was himself a Freemason." This, plus

other evidence, convinces me the good man and patriot named Roger _ lodge [sic], and [a] Physician in F we knew, we would

need no more evidence, but there is more, much more, only one must be able to read it." The critic cites no further evidence for me to attempt to read.

Fact. Again you supply your answer. Actually, I've never touched

the Madison question! Here's the reason: True it is that Governor John Francis Mercer of Maryland congratulated James Madison "on becoming a free Mason -- a very ancient and honorable fraternity." It's also true that Madison was attacked by the anti-Masonic loonies of the late 1820s and 1830s. Heaton found other indications that Madison MAY have been a Freemason, but there is no proof that stands up under close scrutiny. There is unquestioning proof, however, that neither Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Jefferson was ever a member of the Craft. This has been covered at length in many legitimate Masonic publications.

Item. "Your implication is that Lafayette caused his wife to make a Masonic apron for Washington, that Lafayette then brought it to Washington as a gift, but the Masonic implications of such an apron was not mentioned in the giving of the gift," says my critic. "Even if I could accept the notion that the word Mason was not mentioned in the giving of the gift, I assure you that a very meaningful communication was passed between Washington and

Lafayette in the giving of that gift that has been heard by millions of Freemasons, and continue to be heard as they view the apron in the Museum in Philadelphia."

Fact. First an explanation. It has been claimed that Lafayette wasn't made a general by Washington until Lafayette was initiated into Masonry. I said then, and continue to claim, this was false. It's highly questionable that either discussed Freemasonry. At any rate, Lafayette, although a teen-ager, was a French Freemason before he set sail for America. In addition, Freemasonry played little, if any, part in Washington's selection of officers.

The apron in question is reported as having been presented to Washington by Lafayette in 1784! That's long after the period I questioned. In my G. Washington: Master Mason I fell into the

trap so many have. I claimed this presentation of an apron made by the hands of the wife of Lafayette actually occurred. I now question this claim. Nowhere in the 1,005 page volume of Lafayette in America by Louis Gottschalk is there any reference to this apron. Gottschalk does tell us of Lafayette's Masonic affiliations, however. At the moment I have several inquiries out for further information on the facts concerning "the Lafayette apron." As of now I have been able to document only one legitimate "Washington apron." This is the one made by nuns in France and presented by the firm of Watson and Cassoul to Washington. This was acknowledged, in writing, by George Washington. No other apron was ever mentioned in the writings of the first President of the United States.

My critic is also condemning Henry C. Clausen, so I'm in good company. The critic doesn't appreciate Clausen asking Freemasons "Why Paint the Lily?" Says the latter: "Unfounded assertions, or _ en. However, millions of the world's better leaders have been, or are, members of the Craft.

Myth. Pope Clement XII condemned Freemasonry in 1738.

Fact. THE POPE DIDN'T DO IT There are many sources to prove Clement XII was not mentally or physically able to preside over his religious kingdom. What follows is based on information from several of these sources, particularly Papes, Rois, Franc-Macons: L'histoire de la franc-maconnerie des origines a nos jours (Popes, Kings, Freemasons: The History of Freemasonry from its origins to the present) by Charles V. Bokor, 1977. For the whole term of his papacy, Pope Clement XII was blind and sick. He didn't sign the Bull condemning Freemasonry that bore his name. His church has been living under false assumptions as far as it concerns this organization of friends and brothers.

Clement, 78 when he assumed the papal throne on July 30, 1730,

shortly after became seriously ill. His health continued to

rapidly deteriorated. Within two years after assuming the papal throne he became completely blind. His hand had to be guided to the place where his signature was required on documents.

The pope reportedly said, when he heard about something his

nephew and others did that made him unhappy: "Well, let them do as they wish, since they are the bosses anyway."

The suffering of the pope was graphically described by Boker,

whose information from many authentic sources was carefully documented. Clement's gout was particularly severe causing him to practically lose his memory. Until his death he was, without question, senile. But it served the purposes of those surrounding him to keep him on the throne.

With the continual deterioration of Pope Clement, Cardinal

Nerio Corsini ran the Holy See with tyrannical power. It was he

who called together his cohorts to produce the condemnation of Freemasonry. Among these conspirators was the Chief Inquisitor of Florence. The dastardly deed was done on June 25, 1738. Bokor proves that none of these participants were theologians; none were knowledgeable about what they were asked to rubber stamp.

"You don't have to be very clever to see that a man who had

been completely blind for six years, who had taken no part in Church business for even longer, who had been suffering from senile debility for two years, could not have been the one who drew up the Bull," writes Boker. "The fact is, he didn't even sign the Bull that was proclaimed in his name." In an accompanying photo copy of the document only one name appears. And it's written in the calligraphic style of the balance of the document! Not a single name of those taking part in the atrocity appears anywhere on it!

Freemasonry, if Pope Clement knew anything about it, was never condemned by him. The hierarchy of the Roman Church has been aware of this deception for more than two and one half centuries.

For several years I have asked many Roman Catholic theologians

and educators if they could refute the above. Although some of discussed other topics with me, none would, or could,

touch this subject. This leave me with but one conclusion. . .

The Pope didn't do it!

oOo

Myth. Lafayette presented George Washington with a Masonic apron embroidered by Madame Lafayette.

Fact. Highly unlikely. In the last issue I questioned the trap that I, and thousands of others have fallen into. We believed, and I so stated in my book *G. Washington: Master Mason*, this was an accomplished fact. I said in the last issue that the subject must receive more extensive research. Here's an update. John E. Foster, a Past Grand High Priest of Connecticut, sent me correspondence he had with the late James R. Case of Connecticut.

(It caused me to remember Jim cautioned me about this apron when he learned I was writing about Washington.)

"That Madame Lafayette embroidered the apron with her own

hands is possible but rather unlikely considering her status in society and family responsibilities," wrote Jim. "But where did she find the symbols to copy? They are typically 'English' rather than pertaining to any French Rite. And that Mark degree emblem dated 1784 is pretty early."

It appears this apron was first mentioned by Hayden in his

Washington and His Masonic Compeers. (Remember Weems and the cherry tree that appeared in one of his late editions?) Remember, also, that Washington only mentioned one apron -- the WatsonCassoul apron.

A brief background. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania met in

quarterly session on September 7, 1829. It reported: "A

communication was received and read from the Washington Benevolent Society of Pennsylvania dated 3d July, 1829, accompanied by the Masonic Apron of our deceased Brother George Washington which had been presented to that Society by his Legatees." Gratefully the Grand Lodge accepted this generous gift. Nothing was mentioned about the where, when, who, why, or how the apron came into the possession of the legatees. This beautiful apron is still on display in the Philadelphia hall. How did Lafayette enter the picture?

Let's continue our search for the truth. I suspect we'll find

it's much more interesting than the myth.

oOo

Myth. The chief architect in the building of King Solomon's

Temple, Hiram Abif, was slain before its completion.

Fact. According to Biblical accounts, this "worker in brass and

other metals" lived to a ripe old age. Yet, every Freemason for centuries has portrayed Hiram Abif -- a legendary Hiram Abif. They have been the principal actor in a scene that never transpired. Naughty? No. There's a vast difference between the myth that's passed off as the truth, and one that's taught as allegory, or legend. In this case, as I wrote in *The Craft and Its Symbols*: "The Masonic Hiram Abif was 'born' -- and died -- to instill in the hearts, minds, and souls of Freemasons symbolic lessons of life. These include, but are not limited to, Perseverance, Lodge of mankind, Courage, Patience, Devotion to God, Fortitude, Justice, Fidelity to a trust, and the Immortality of Man. He is symbolic of what happens to man day by day.

"_ States Presidents

were Masons. All signers of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution were Masons.

Sound familiar? These are among the less harmful of the myths concerning Freemasonry that have been traveling about for years. And these are the type propagated by well-meaning leaders of the Craft.

Are they harmless? Not by any stretch of the imagination.

These are what the enemies of the Craft leap on to "prove" Freemasons can't be trusted. This organization whose members say they are seeking truth too often spreads untruths. And these untruths can easily be discredited.

We don't need to exaggerate or lie. Freemasonry is by far the

oldest and largest fraternal association in existence. It has existed in its present form (Speculative) since 1717. It can trace its ancestry back another 300 years, at least. It still employs the tools of operative masons to teach wise and moral lessons.

One-third of the signers of the Declaration and the

Constitution were or would become members of the Craft. An excellent percentage without exaggerating. Many, but far from all, of Washington's general officers were Freemasons. That's good enough. We don't have to lie. Without the expertise of nonMasons we wouldn't have the United States of America. Washington knew this and trusted them.

"The story of the Masons begins by some eager accounts with

Adam, who 'received (the Craft) from the great Architect of the Universe and practiced it in the garden of Eden,'" will appear in a Catholic publication before you read this. The same article lists Patrick Henry and Alexander Hamilton as Freemasons; neither were.

And that article doesn't overlook the time-worn myth of the

"Boston Tea Party" and the "Masonic Indians" who turned Boston Harbor into a giant tea party. Again -- Saint Andrew's Lodge didn't meet, "the lodge's logbook is empty but for a large 'T' scrawled at the bottom." The "T" actually was a scroll, nothing like a "T." And to this day not a single "Mohawk" has been identified positively. There may have been Freemasons among them,

but we don't know that.

We know that no one man can speak for the Craft as a whole.

Grand Masters can for their jurisdictions, but only for the time they are in office. This can create problems if they believe and spread the myths floating around. Writers are often quoted out of context by the antis trying to "prove" some point. And there are occasions when these writers are quoted verbatim causing the Masonic world no end of trouble. We know Masons can only speak for themselves, but others don't know this.

We have problems with interpretations because "meanings are in

people, not in words." Then, too, the 500 most common words have over 15,000 dictionary meanings. Myths, parables, legends in

many _ on degree.

Parables are simple stories used to illustrate moral or religious lessons. Example: "... neither cast ye your pearls before swine...." (Could this be a warning to the Freemasons to come?) Myths are half-truths; outright lies; fiction; imaginary stories. The grammaticians can have a field day with this!

Checking the "swine" quote caused me once again to read the

"Sermon on the Mount." It also reminded me how I stopped a religious fanatic from insisting I appear on his program. I simply suggested he study this portion of the Bible.

Myth. Masonic Landmarks are well defined; we know exactly what

they are; and we must follow them meticulously.

Fact. These landmarks are far from being known. Recently I

pleaded for all of Freemasonry to work toward bringing harmony out of chaos within the Craft in France. The Grand Loge Nationale Francaise is recognized by the United Grand Lodge in England and our American Grand Lodges. Others are not. In my search for the truth I've received varying tales. A well known writer informed me that the Grand Orient in France is condemned because it had removed a landmark -- the belief in God. Is a belief in God a Masonic landmark?

What are THE Landmarks? Where can we find an accurate list? In

1858 Albert G. Mackey wrote: "... the unwritten laws or customs of Masonry constitute its Landmarks,..." Then he proceeds to give the Craft a list of 25 "landmarks!" Perhaps not surprisingly, 13 Grand Lodges adopted his list; eight use them by custom; ten have their own list; the balance cite none. Among Mackey's detractors was the great Roscoe Pound who agreed with only two of Mackey's list.

Let's see what James Anderson in his The Constitutions of the Free-Masons had to say about deity. In his Article I. "Concerning GOD and RELIGION" he said: "A Mason is oblig'd by his Tenure to obey the moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid Atheist, nor an irreligious Libertine." With this statement an overwhelming majority of Freemasons will agree. But where does it say a Mason must believe in God?

Before I'm condemned to a fate worse than eternity in Hades,

let me hasten to add that I agree with Anderson. Those who don't believe in, trust in, and revere God are stupid. And there is nothing to keep any Grand Lodge from adopting rules and regulations which its members must follow. All of them, as far as I can determine, absolutely do require a belief in one God, but leave the resolution of that belief to the individual. Most, if not all,

Grand Lodges have minimum requirements which must be met before new Grand Lodges can receive recognition. This is as it

should be. But these requirements are not Landmarks.

I believe, as did the great English Freemason, Robert Freke

Gould in speaking of Masonic Landmarks: "Nobody knows what they comprise or omit; they are of no earthly authority, because everything is a landmark when an opponent desires to silence you; _ in his own way."

Then, too, one must consider the reasons why certain actions

were taken by the organizations involved. It's easy for those of us who enjoy religious and political freedom to condemn those who must live under political and religious dictators. And, unbelievably, we even have dictators within Freemasonry. There are those jurisdictions, and you know it, where one man can and does set the policy for all, and no one dare deviate from that policy.

We must also consider many other factors. Not the least of

these is expecting the uninitiated to know anything about Freemasonry. Even 90% or more members of the Craft don't understand what it is. That goes for the leadership as well.

Myth: This column has been successful; Masonic writers and

speakers now check the facts before taking action.

Fact: If only we could have really earned this accolade! We may

have made some inroads, but not too deeply. We got nowhere with the publisher of a high priced "educational" periodical coming out of California. He continues to tell us that Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, and several others who never received a Masonic degree were members of the Craft. Those who dare question this publisher are, at times, presented with third or fourth-hand "proof" of the publisher/editor's "facts": i.e. "So and so said Benjamin Franklin said...." Sadly he can use as his "authority" a high-ranking Freemason who continues to claim in speeches that all signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were Masons. This "authority" so states even though he has been presented with Henry Clausen's booklet: Why Paint the Lily? and other legitimate publications.

But what can be even more damaging to Freemasonry is a play

the publisher has written entitled "Freemasonry's Contribution to the U.S. Constitution: A Two-Act Play: (A True Story)." By no stretch of the imagination should it be called "true." It is scheduled to be performed by the California Scottish Rite in September. Leaders in the educational field will be invited to see the production. Without question it will cause irreparable harm to the cause of Freemasonry. Time, space and fear of nausea won't permit a full review here. Briefly: the writer has five main characters: George Washington; Benjamin Franklin (who is called "Worshipful Ben"); Edmund (called "Ed) Randolph; James Madison (called "Jim"); and Robert "Bob" Morris. The latter, Madison and Morris, were never Freemasons. These five men supposedly conspired to make what would become the Constitution of the United States a strict Masonic document -- and the writer of this trash swore the participants to secrecy.

During the course of this piece of garbage, Madison says "Ben"

and Lafayette "converted" Jefferson to Masonry "in the Nine Muses Masonic Lodge." (Could he mean "Nine Sisters"?) Hogwash! And he has Washington say: "My generals at Valley Forge had little trouble making Lafayette a Mason." More bilge! Lafayette was a Freemason before he first came to the colonies. And it goes on and on. Should this trash become public, Freemasonry will never recover from the repercussions.

Did we do some good with the column? Thankfully, yes. We've _ this in depth in this publication) has caused more constructive meditation. Comments from readers, pro and con, in the last two issues proves we ignited some tender (tinder?) sparks. One of the readers says about this recognition: "If the current trend continues, the next thing we know we will be admitting gays, lesbians, convicts, feminists and any other group that may want to associate with our lodges." I don't believe lesbians would be interested, but if he thinks we don't have gays and convicts, he's living in a dream world. It will take time to remove old barriers and prejudices, but only good can come from this meditation.

The last issue proves we've done something. The Pusan Masonic

Club, and the work of Freemasons for thousands of children, was noted in a letter from a reader. I strongly suspect 95% of the other readers didn't know about this. Members of The Philalethes Society did. Several of its issues discussed this Brotherhood in Action by our Freemasons in the Armed Forces over there.

The comments about the item "The Pope didn't do it!" were

indeed interesting. I claimed, and still claim, the Pope didn't do it! Did it make any difference? Perhaps not, but perhaps it did. If succeeding Popes had know

who the lackies were who did the dastardly deed, would they have jumped on the bandwagon from 1751 onwards? Would they have condemned an organization that believes in the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, an organization that has done nothing but good throughout the ages? They knew the truth. In spite of what our respondent from the "Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights" (I find these last two words ironic!) says, the Pope didn't do it. It's true, I didn't "define a Papal Bull." So? He also wants us to know "the title of the Pope Clement XII Bull of 1738" was "'In Eminentia' and did bear his seal and is therefore authentic." And he calls my column "mythical"!! Wow! IF there was a seal on it, who placed it there? It's interesting to note that my critic didn't endeavor to refute my main premise -- the "bull" was the work of the Inquisition - - not Pope Clement XII.

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