

Critical Reading of Masonic Literature

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Introduction

We, as freemasons, are encouraged to “make a daily advancement in masonic knowledge”. Information on Freemasonry is available from many sources - official publications of Grand Lodge, books, periodicals, encyclopedias, CDs and audio and video tapes, to say nothing of other learned brethren in person, lodges of instruction, lodges of research and their transactions, seminars and study courses offered in some jurisdictions, etc. In recent years the Internet has become another important source. There exist numerous masonic websites and lively discussions are going on in masonic forums. The problem is that the information available from many of these sources is not always accurate or correct. Just because something is said by some brother or found in some masonic writings, including research papers, does not necessarily mean that it is true. And the mere fact that someone has written a book does not always make him an “authority”.

Printed material is still one of the key sources of information on the Craft. In order to gain masonic knowledge and form a balanced view on Freemasonry, we should read Widely. And in so doing, we should hopefully be able to evaluate objectively what we read and draw our own well-reasoned conclusions. With full awareness that no single style of reading is equally workable for everyone or suitable for all different kinds of material, this paper offers a few pointers on critical reading of masonic literature for beginning students. Some of the pointers might be applied to casual reading also.

Masonic misinformation

While masonic information is widely available, masonic misinformation is also in circulation. The types of misinformation often observed include: simple factual errors; fanciful speculation of the origin of Freemasonry; far-fetched interpretation of masonic terms, symbols, furniture and ritual itself; unsubstantiated claims of famous people belonging to our fraternity and of the fraternity's connection with other groups or historical events; unfounded attribution of various problems of the world to the fraternity; etc. Erroneous information is often found in the writings of non-masons including anti-masonic writers, ranging from inaccurate accounts and inadvertent, misleading statements to ill-intended, made-up stories. Misinformation is also seen in the writings of members of our fraternity, as they fail to examine sufficient material, misinterpret available information, make exaggerated statements, draw illogical conclusions, include irrelevant or wrong information or make other errors.

An article 'Masonic Facts and Oddities' appeared in a publication of one of the appendant masonic bodies in the United States a short while ago, in which quite a few interesting items were included. Some of them, however, contained errors. One reads as follows:

'Oldest Lodge: Formerly known as Kilwinning No. 1, it is now known as St. Mary's Chapel; it will be 402 years old this year on July 2001. The jewel issued in 1999 to commemorate the 400th anniversary has the words "SIT LUX ET LUX FUIT" and under that is "The Lodge of St Mary's Chapel Edinburgh No. 1 ". It is generally accepted as the oldest Lodge, constituted in 1599, but the Grand Lodge of Scotland gives two more which claim to date back to 1598: Lodge 0 Mother Kilwinning (Kilwinning, Ayrshire) founded before 1598 and Lodge No. 12, the Lodge at Melrose St. John (Roxburgh), also 1598 .12

Boasting a history of over 400 years, The Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No. 1 is one of the oldest lodges in Scotland or in the world for that matter and makes an interesting subject for masonic historians. But the preceding paragraph seems to have been written without much checking. This lodge has never been called or known as "Kilwinning No. 1". It was referred to as "Edinburgh" in the Schaw Statutes of 1599³ and the title of "The Lodge of Edinburgh" was mainly used for the most part of the 17th century. 'Mary's Chapel' is mentioned for the first time in its minutes of November 25, 1613: 'The qlk day in presens of ye decone of ye maissounis and ye haill rest of his brethren being convenit in ye maries chaipill in nidries wynd...' The brethren continued to meet at Mary's Chapel until 1787 when it was demolished. In 1770 the lodge adopted the name of 'The Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel)' and over the years it has been popularly referred to as 'The Lodge of Edinburgh' or 'Mary's Chapel' - but seldom as 'St. Mary's Chapel'.

There exists no evidence to prove that the Lodge of Edinburgh was constituted in 1599. Its minutes date back to July 31, 1599. There is no mention of its foundation in the minutes. According to the Roll of Lodges in the *Year Book* of the Grand Lodge of Scotland published annually, the date of its foundation is before 1598 and Mother Kilwinning and the Lodge of Melrose St. John were also founded before 1598. We do not know for sure which lodge is the oldest. So it is a moot question whether the Lodge of Edinburgh can be 'accepted as the oldest lodge', although the Schaw Statutes of 1599 says 'it is thocht neidfull and expedient be my lord warden generall, that Edinburgh salbe in all tyme cuming, as of befoir, the first and principal lodge in Scotland; and that Kilwynning be the secund ludge, as of befoir is notourlie manifest in our awld antient writtis; and that Stirueling salbe the thrid ludge, conforme to the auld privileges thair of.'⁵ As to the location of Mother Kilwinning, 'Aysrshire' should be 'Ayrshire'. The lodge number of the Lodge of Melrose St. John is "No. 1² - not 'No. 12'".

The following is an excerpt from *Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia 2001*. The article is said to have been reviewed by another appendant body in the United States:

'Introduction: Freemasonry, largest and most widely established fraternal order in the world. The masons' guilds were originally restricted to stonecutters, but with the completion of the building of the cathedrals in the 17th century, and especially in England during the Reformation, they admitted as members men of wealth or social status. The guilds thus became societies devoted to general ideals, such as fraternity, equality, and peace, and their meetings became social rather than business occasions. Four or more such guilds, called lodges, united in London on June 24, 1717, to form a grand lodge for London and Westminster, which, within six years, became the Grand Lodge of England. This body is the "mother" grand lodge of Freemasons in the world, and from it all recognized grand lodges have been derived. The Grand Lodge of All England was formed at York in 1725, that of Ireland at least by June of the same year, and of Scotland, in 1736. The York body came under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge at London later in the century.'

Unlike in Scotland there were few operative lodges in England in the 16th and 17th centuries and there is no evidence of English operative lodges having admitted non-operatives in the manner described above during the Reformation, i.e., in the 16th century.⁶ It is erroneous to designate those four lodges that founded the first Grand Lodge as four 'guilds'. From the *New Book of Constitutions* of 1738, we assume the premier Grand Lodge was formed on June 24 1717 - not within six years (*vide supra*). As to the statement that 'This body [the premier Grand Lodge] is the "mother" grand lodge of Freemasons in the world, and from it all recognized Grand Lodges have been derived', it must be noted that while the brethren in York, Ireland and Scotland were or could have been inspired to form their own Grand Lodge as a result of the foundation of the Grand Lodge in London, the Grand Lodge of All England at York and the Grand Lodge of Scotland did not develop directly from the premier Grand Lodge and that we do not know when or how the Grand Lodge of Ireland came into being. An old York lodge that had existed before the formation of the premier Grand Lodge came to assume the status of a Grand Lodge in 1725 but it became extinct in 1790s. We have no knowledge about the origin of the Grand Lodge of Ireland except that from an account of *The Dublin Weekly Journal* (26 June, 1725), we know it was in operation in 1725 and

assume it had existed for sometime previously.⁷ The Grand Lodge of Scotland was not 'mothered' by the premier Grand Lodge but by local lodges.

In the same article of *Encarta Encyclopaedia*, reference is made to American Freemasonry. Here again we find an erroneous statement: 'American Freemasons today make up about three-fourths of the total number of all members throughout the world, world membership exceeds 6 million.' This is to say there are more than 4.5 million freemasons in the United States alone. But today's masonic population in America is less than half that figure.'

As Cerza has said, 'When we exaggerate we hurt ourselves in a number of ways. Our members are misled, and they repeat the item and they perpetuate the misinformation. The outsider laughs at us and considers our statements "bragging" to secure unwarranted prestige.'

Critical reading

In order to evaluate properly what we read, we should be able to 'think critically' with an attitude of open-minded scepticism. Most attributes of a critical thinker, cited by Sharon K. Ferrett, author of *Peak Performance*, are applicable to a student of the 'authentic school'. In her views the critical thinker is someone who:

- asks pertinent questions;
- assesses statements and arguments;
- is able to admit a lack of understanding or information;
- has a sense of curiosity;
- is interested in finding new solutions;
- is able to clearly define a set of criteria for analysing ideas;
- is willing to examine beliefs, assumptions and opinions and weigh them against facts;
- listens carefully to others and is able to give feedback;
- sees that critical thinking is a lifelong process of self-assessment;
- suspends judgment until all facts have been gathered and considered;
- looks for evidence to support assumption and beliefs;
- is able to adjust opinions when new facts are found;
- looks for proof;
- examines problems closely;
- and is able to reject information that is incorrect or irrelevant. 10

What are the Author's Qualifications?

When we talk about any subject to other people, we better know what we are talking about. Thus there should be no harm in checking the author's qualifications. The following questions may be asked:

- What kind of credentials does the author have?
- What is his background?
- What is his reputation for scholastic work in masonic circles?
- .If he has written any other books or articles, how are they accepted by established masonic scholars? Check the reviews of his writings.
- In the case of articles. where have they been published? In respected journals that require certain standards?
- Are those works good enough to qualify him as a credible author?

As said before, the mere fact that someone has written a book does not always make him an 'authority'.

What Are the Author's Purpose and Main Idea?

The author must have some purpose in writing the paper or book. There are several points to check in this connection:

- What is the author trying to prove?
- What are his main points or claims?
- Are all key terms clearly defined?

- What are his assumptions?

Inat Are the Author's Conclusions?

In order to analyse the author's reasoning by which he reaches his conclusions, we might identify what are his conclusions at this point.

Does the Author Provide Full References?

We might also check the references to see the range of the author's sources. Any scholarly paper or book should come with such references. If insufficient or no references are provided, a question arises: Is it because of the author's laziness, lack of space, lack of evidence, or what?

What Evidence goes the Author Offer?

Next comes the analysis of his reasoning. What evidence does he offer to prove his points? We should refrain from accepting various claims made at face value. They should be judged on the basis of the evidence presented. As to the appropriateness of the evidence, the following factors may be considered, among others:

- Relevance;
- Accuracy;
- Objectivity;
- Reliability;
- Representativeness; and
- Up-to-dateness.

1. Relevance

No matter how accurate, objective, reliable, representative and up-to-date the evidence may be, it would be of no use unless it is relevant to the subject under discussion.

2. Accuracy

Is the evidence accurate? Each piece of evidence and source should be cross-checked and compared with other related sources and pieces of evidence.

It is also important to determine if the claim made by the author is based on a fact or his or someone else's opinion. Some author's intention could be not to inform but to persuade, in which case the evidence might be manipulated and some pertinent or even essential information left out.

One of the earliest Japanese nationals initiated in England was Count Tadasu Hayashi, a career diplomat stationed in England at the beginning of the last century. Kiyoko Imizuka, an authoress who wrote several books on Freemasonry, said in one of them:

'He [Bro. Hayashil had been in London for the preparation of concluding the Treaty of Alliance several years before and he must have joined the masonic fraternity in order to win the confidence of the British political circles.'

The fact of the matter is he was appointed Japanese Minister in Peking (Beijing) in 1895, transferred to St. Petersburg in 1897 and appointed Minister in London in 1900. He signed the Treaty of the Alliance with Great Britain on behalf of Japan in 1902. His initiation in the Empire Lodge No. 2108 took place in February 1903. In 1905 he renewed the treaty and became the first Japanese Ambassador to Great Britain. So Inuzuka's statement is inaccurate and away from the point.

3. Objectivity vs. Bias

Objectivity in writing is of particular importance. However, some people tend to produce work that leaves much to be desired in this respect. Bias often creeps into such writing. So the question is, is the author being objective or biased? Barbara Doyle, developmental reading expert, lists the following elements as characteristic of biased writing:

- emotional words or inflammatory statements;
- name calling;
- contradictions;
- false assumptions;
- stereotyping or over-generalization;
- statements that oversimplify or distort the issue being discussed;

- irrelevant or unsupported evidence;
- mudslinging, or attacks on people or groups rather than the issue itself; and
- references to or quotations from the Bible or historical figure even though there is no connection to the issue.

And the author is also being biased when he:

- leaves out or suppresses information or evidence; and
- appeals to the emotions rather than reasonable evidence."

One of the most famous (or rather infamous) anti-masonic books published in the 1980s was Stephen Knight's *The Brotherhood*. Containing various elements listed above, it is the epitome of biased writing. For instance, one of the author's false assumptions is that the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite is 'truly Britain's highest Freemason, whatever might be said of the Duke of Kent, the current Grand Master of Craft Masonry'.¹³ This is not true. As Jackson says in his book, *Beyond The Craft*, 'that which can produce the oldest authentic records must naturally be ... the senior and highest, and this of course is the Craft.'" The Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite came into being much later than Craft Masonry. Those masonic bodies that confer 'beyond-the-Craft' degrees are often referred to as 'appendant bodies', especially in the United States. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word 'appendant' in the sense applicable to our fraternity as 'attached in a subordinate capacity or relation'. There are many appendant bodies, one of which is the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite. Needless to say, these appendant bodies have no bearing on or authority over the Craft. And yet, strangely enough, anti-masonic writers often make the same kind of allegations as Mr. Knight.

Unfortunately those works written by biased authors tend to contain cheap and often commercially exploiting sensationalism and appeal to uncritical readers. When we detect any of the above-mentioned elements or something of a similar nature in what we read, we should question the author's credibility.

4. Reliability

Masonic historians use a variety of sources. The question is, are the sources reliable? Source materials can be categorized into one of the two types - primary and secondary. A tertiary type is occasionally cited.

Primary sources are raw, original, uninterpreted materials or direct evidence concerning a subject or event under investigation or made close to the time of the event recorded. They are highly important to the study of historical events. To judge the quality of a primary source, the 'time and place rule' may be used. The closer in time and place a source and its creator were to an event in the past, the better the source will be. Based on this rule, better primary sources might include:

- Direct traces of the event;
- Accounts of the event, created at the time it occurred, by firsthand observers and participants;
- Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by firsthand observers and participants; and
- Accounts of the event, created after the event occurred, by people who did not participate or witness the event, but who used interviews or evidence from the time of the event."

For freemasons, the primary sources would be: lodge minutes, the *Book(s) of Constitutions* and other official documents, letters, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, speeches, newspaper articles, etc. Just because the author uses primary sources does not necessarily mean that the contents of his writing are reliable, however. The quality of primary sources should be examined. The following questions might be asked:

- Who created the source and why? Was it created as a spur-of-the-moment act, a routine transaction or a thoughtful, deliberate process?
- Did the recorder have first-hand knowledge of the event? Or did the recorder report what others saw and heard?
- Was the recorder a neutral party or did the creator have opinions or interests that might have influenced what was recorded?

- Did the recorder produce the source for personal use for one or more individuals or for a large audience?
- Was the source meant to be public or private?
- Did the recorder wish to inform or persuade others? Did the recorder have reasons to be honest or dishonest?
- Was the information recorded during the event, immediately after the event, or after some lapse of time? How large a lapse of time? 16

Minutes of old lodges are primary sources of vital importance to masonic historians.

Take an example of the minutes of the Lodge of Edinburgh. At the bottom of its minutes of 8 June, 1600 are found the name and mark of John Boswell, Laird of Auchinleck. From this record, we consider him as the first non-operative who was present at a meeting of operative masons. It is not clear, however, in what capacity he was in attendance. It was not an ordinary masonic meeting but a trial of its Warden 'Jhone Broune'. Some believe he was there as a member" or an honorary member"" of the lodge and that this is the first evidence of a non-operative being a member of an operative lodge, while others say he could have been there only as counsel for prosecution or defence or for some other reason.¹⁹ Then there are those who assume, without knowing what can be deduced from the primary source mentioned above, that this was the first instance of a non-operative having been initiated in an operative lodge, or claim that he was initiated even before that date without any proof." But there is no evidence of his initiation in the lodge on that occasion or any other occasion. The meeting of 8 June, 1600 was the only occasion to which Boswell's connection with the masonic Craft can be traced. Secondary sources are materials written about the event with the benefit of hindsight.

They interpret, analyze or restate primary sources. They are useful in that they provide interpretation, overview, commentary, etc., as long as the authors are on the right track. They include books, articles, dissertations, newspapers, dictionaries, cncyclopaedias, reference books, treatises, etc.

Tertiary sources compile, analyze and digest primary and secondary sources.

Being human, we are bound to err. Top-notch masonic scholars are no exception. Gould, one of the greatest among the early masonic historians of the 'authentic school', wrote several important books and many articles. His magnum opus, *The History of Freemasonry*, is still a standard reference work for masonic students today. However, we find erroneous statements and assumptions in some of his writings. For instance, it is a well-known fact that he held to the idea of the Antients Grand Lodge having developed from a schism in the premier Grand Lodge, even after the publication of Sadler's notable work, *Masonic Facts and Fictions*. Sadler presented the theory that the Antients Grand Lodge was created by a group of unattached masons of Irish origin. Crowe, who revised Gould's *Concise History of Freemasonry* several years after his passing, wrote in the preface to the revised edition: '... the principal change I have made is to re-write the first part of Chapter VII [The Great Division in English Masonry ...] Since Bro Sadler made his most valuable researches in the archives of Grand Lodge and elsewhere, it has become clear to all students of our history that his view of the Irish origin of the Grand Lodge of the Ancients is the correct one, and I feel sure I shall be supported by all lovers of truth in the changes I have made.'" There is no doubt that Bernard E. Jones' *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium* is one of the best books on Freemasonry published in the English language. Nevertheless, there are several errors to be found in it." Among the more distinguished masonic writers of the last century in America are Harry Haywood and Henry Coil, both of whom produced a large volume of masonic literature. And both had their share of errors in their writing. ²³ Bearing in mind that even these foremost authorities and distinguished authors could sometimes be in error, we should be careful in reading masonic publications.

5. Representativeness

'One swallow does not make a summer.' Likewise a couple of incidents cannot necessarily be considered as representative of the whole. A case in point are the two operative lodges that emerged in England at the beginning of the 181 century - one at Alnwick in Northumberland (1701) and the other at Swalwell in County Durham (1725). Their proximity to Scotland and method of working indicate

Scottish influence rather than evidence of an indigenous growth. The emergence of these operative lodges cannot be considered as examples to support the 'transitional' theory. According to Hamill, it is 'a red herring' .24

6. *Up-to-dateness*

There are masonic classics which are often used as secondary sources today but since they were published, new material may have become available or new theories may have been introduced. When was the work cited published? Is the information found in it upto-date? In the case of a book, is it the original or latest edition?25

Other Pointers

1. *Depth & Breadth*

We should see if the subject is dealt with as thoroughly as it should. If the subject is a complex one, it should be examined from all different angles, as required. Does the author address the issue in a comprehensive manner? From the opposing viewpoints as well?

One of the archaic words used in Freemasonry is 'hele' (or 'hail'). Disputes still arise from time to time among some brethren about the word, especially about its pronunciation. Some say it should be pronounced 'heel' to rhyme with 'meal', while others say it should be pronounced 'hail' to rhyme with 'mail'. Most masonic reference books touch on this word but, all in all, their explanations are very brief, ranging from but a single sentence to a few paragraphs. Most fail to tell the reader why the word should be pronounced the way suggested. Articles on this subject may be found in past masonic journals but those I have checked did not deal extensively with the matter and besides, some gave wrong information. E. H. Cartwright, Bernard E. Jones and Harry Carr all wrote on this theme. Their comments are noteworthy but not particularly extensive. As a consequence I decided to write a paper of my own.

In this paper 'Notes on "Hele" ~,26 the subject is addressed from multiple angles to draw conclusions, taking into consideration various points, e.g., the definition of the word in old dictionaries such as *Saxon-Latin-English Dictionary (1659)*, Lye's *Saxon Dictionary (1772)* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*; its usage in early masonic documents; transformation of the English language, especially Middle English and Early Modern, English, including 'great vowel shift'; the use of rhymes in the early days; the pronunciation of the word in the days of and after the Union of 1813; a question and answer about its pronunciation which appeared in the *Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror* in the mid 191h century; its spelling and pronunciation used in different parts of England in the past as recorded in Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* compiled about 100 years ago; its pronunciation used in some old-established lodges of instruction - the Stability Lodge of Instruction and the Emulation Lodge of Improvement - which are believed to have handed down the ritual procedures approved by the United Grand Lodge in 1816, though the purity of their teachings was at times contested; comments on the word by Cartwright, Jones and Carr; and word pairs.

2. *Historical Contexts*

When we read books or articles, we have a tendency to judge their contents on the basis of our own experience. It should be remembered that people's customs, values and attitudes often change in the course of time. This point is particularly important, when we read masonic histories. Things were quite different in many ways in the past.

For example, some think that freemasons of yesteryear were, on the whole, a bunch of uncouth drunkards. Indeed heavy drinking was very popular and considered an indispensable accompaniment to good fellowship in England in the 18th century. According to a report made by the magistrates of Middlesex in 1725, in the metropolis alone there were over 6,000 houses and shops where gin and other spirits were sold and in the largest parish this amounted to one in every five houses .27 People were less refined in their manners and tended to be more quarrelsome. Gentlemen often wore side arms and duels were quite common. Ladies of even the highest social status were quite accustomed to expectorate and

swear loudly in public .28 Under such circumstances, the brethren were not immune from the common customs of their times. Therefore, if we are to judge them, we should do so by the standards of their times - not ours. It is true that turbulence, inebriety and irregularity were observed in some lodges. However, such should be considered as exceptional cases in view of the large number of lodges then in existence. In fact, Freemasonry exercised a salutary, moral and social influence with most members conforming to the rules of conduct in an age which was quite different from ours .29

3. Interpretation of Symbolism

Freemasonry is said to be 'a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols'. Symbolism is used throughout the ritual to teach masonic philosophy and moral lessons. When used properly, it makes an effective means of instruction but it can be abused. There are many who become quite carried away in their attempts to attach a symbolical meaning to anything masonic and others who would posit an esoteric meaning to every part of the ritual. Masonic ritual has evolved over many years and was to be found in very crude and simple form in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. While some symbolism is to be found in the early catechisms, it is not until the second half of the 18th century that the ritual became more elaborate, symbolic attributions together with moral lessons being added to it. One thing to ask when interpreting masonic symbolism is, could it be within the intent of the compilers of our ritual?

It is true that each member is free to interpret masonic symbolism as he thinks fit. By conducting a balanced study of the symbolism, he will cultivate his mind, develop a deeper appreciation of the ritual and find Freemasonry more meaningful. However, there is a danger that 'over-enthusiastic members will impose upon Freemasonry highly idiosyncratic interpretations not intended by the originators and achieved by taking similarities between masonic symbolism and symbolism in other fields to be actual correlations and evidence of actual links, interpretations that are alien to most members and at times distasteful to them', warns Hamill .30 Citing an example of a paper on the meaning of Masonry submitted to him for criticism, Carr says, 'The writer was clearly a "teetotaler" with strong views on the drink question and in two separate pieces of interpretation of masonic ritual he showed that they meant, respectively, "the virtues of teetotalism" and "the evils of drink". He was probably astonished when I pointed out that he was not giving an interpretation of Masonry, but of himself] Similarly I am convinced that real damage is done by those inveterate symbolists who need the dimensions of the pyramids, the mysteries of the heavenly bodies, the Tarot Cards, the Zodiac and other equally complex paths towards truth. 131 Indeed there are those who are inclined to push their personal interpretations as if they were absolute truth. We should watch out for such 'symbologists' and their writings. There are lots of them out there. McLeod calls them 'mystical nuts' and counts such writers as Foster Bailey, Albert Churchward, Manly P. Hall, A. E. Waite and Arthur Ward among them. His advice: 'Avoid them like the plague.'" Hepburn even recommends that as far as newly made masons are concerned, symbolism be left alone till they have acquired a reasonable amount of masonic background, because many masonic writers with no qualifications except membership of the Craft have regarded themselves as authorities on masonic symbolism and those brethren with more enthusiasm than knowledge have written a great deal of nonsense about the subject: 'All this is misleading to new masons and much of it has provided ammunition for our enemies.' Thus we should take extra care when reading masonic literature on symbolism.

Has the Author Proved His Points?

Finally we may ask the following questions~ among others, to determine whether the author has proved his points:

- Has he addressed all key questions?
- Are his arguments consistent and logical?
- Has he provided ample evidence for his arguments?
- Has he dealt with alternative evidence and arguments, if any?
- Has he quoted others' arguments accurately?
- Are there any points that are ambiguous, confusing, oversimplified, contradictory, false, wrong or irrelevant in his arguments?
- Are his conclusions reasonable and justified?

- Has his work lived up to our expectations?

The results of our evaluation of masonic literature may differ from others'. Such difference is normal in the realm of critical reading, because when exercising our judgment, we apply our personal experience and values which are often different from others'.

Apply Critical Skills to Our Own Writings.

The pointers mentioned above for critical reading may also be used when it is we who do the writing. As we become more skilled in critical reading, we become more sensitive to our own work. By applying such critical skills to our own, we can improve our writing. We should, after all, be the strongest critic of our own work. As we improve our evaluation skills, so shall we become better readers, writers and observers.

Conclusion

As we are initiated, we begin our masonic journey. There are lots of things for us to learn, in addition to ritual, to become a well-informed, fully-fledged freemason. Printed material is still the most widely used means to disseminate masonic information. To get the most from what we read and acquire the right kind of knowledge, we might consider the use of critical reading. This paper has attempted to present a few pointers. Interested readers might formulate their own reading style by adopting whatever ideas they may find useful in this paper and adding more steps to suit their needs. It is to be hoped therefore that new students of the Craft will endeavour to enhance their learning experience, expand their masonic knowledge and deepen their interest in our beloved fraternity by reading widely and judiciously.

Notes

I What is good about AQC in this respect is that in addition to the papers presented in the lodge which are, as a whole, very high in quality, comments by other members on those papers are included, e.g., additional information on the subjects discussed, opposing views, corrections of statements made in the papers and the presenters' responses, thus making the transactions all the more valuable and also preventing those unsubstantiated or erroneous statements made from being accepted as truth by future readers.

'Masonic Facts and Oddities', *Knight Templar Magazine* (April 2001 issue), p. 16.

History of the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel) No. 1, Lyon, David Murray (Edinburgh, William Blackwood and Sons, 1873), p. 12.

1 Lodge of Edinburgh, The (Mary's Chapel) No. 1, Quatercentenary of Minutes 1599-1999, McArthur, J.E., rEdinburgh, The Lodge of Edinburgh [Mary's Chapel], 1999), p. 6.

Lyon. *op. cit.*, p. 12.

From the surviving records of account books dating from 1619 of the London Masons' Company, it seems that non-operatives and operatives were accepted into its inner circle. Thus some believe this proves the existence of a transitional lodge in England practising speculative Masonry. However, it seems from these accounts that both sorts were joining a separate group, not gentlemen joining the London Masons' Company. 'The evidence is, to say the least, confusing,' in the words of Bro. Hamill ('Whence come we?' *Masonic Perspective*, The Australian Masonic Research Council, 1992), p. 14.

I *History of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland*, Lepper, John Heron & Crossle, Philip, vol. I (Dublin: Lodge of Research, CC, 1925), pp. 52-64.

I i.e., total membership of 51 mainstream Grand Lodges in that country based on the figures given in 2001 *List of Lodges - Masonic* (Bloomington, Illinois, Pantagraph Printing & Stationery Co., 2001). Even when the membership of those recognised Prince Hall Grand Lodges is added, it still falls far short of the figure given in the article.

I 'Masonic Misinformation', Cerza, Alphonse, Paper No. 94 (November 1976), Educational Lodge No. 1002, AF&AM of Minnesota.

" *Peak Performance*, Ferrett, Sharon K., (1997). Critical Thinking across the Curriculum Project, Longview Community College. Retrieved 1 April, 2002. <<http://www.kcmetro.cc.mo.us/Aongview/ctac/definitions.htm>>

11 *Fwimeson no Semyo Kakumei*, Inuzuka, Kiyoko, [Freemasons' Occupation and Revolution] (Tokyo: Shin Kokuminsha, 1985), p. 98.

12 'Critical Reading.' Doyle, Barbara S., Arkansas State University. Retrieved 23 March, 2002. <[http://www.cit.astate.edu/ibdoyle/Notes on Critical Reading.htm](http://www.cit.astate.edu/ibdoyle/Notes%20on%20Critical%20Reading.htm)>.

Brotherhood, The: The Secret World of The Freemasons, Knight, Stephen, (Dorset Press, 1984), p. 43.

Beyond The Craft, Jackson, Keith B., 211 & revised edn (London, Lewis Masonic, 1982), p. 4.

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16 *Ibid.*

11 Lyon. op. cit., pp. 51-52; *Genesis of Freemasonry, The*, Knoop, Douglas & Jones, G.P., (London, QC Correspondence Circle, 1978), p. 142.

11 See the first quote in n. 22.

" *Minutes of the Lodge of Edinburgh*, Carr, Harry, (*Quatuor Coronati Lodge*, 1962), pp. 49-51.

20 See Heywood's statement quoted in n.23.

21 *Concise History of Freemasonry, The*, Gould, Robert F., 1903. revised Crowe, Frederick JW. (London: Gale & Polden, 1951), p. xi.

21 *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium*, Jones, Bernard E., revised edn (London, Harrap, 1988). Among those erroneous or confusing statements found in this book are:

On page 127 Jones states that 'Mary's Chapel Lodge of Edinburgh had admitted a gentleman honorary member about forty years before the date of Murray's admission; he was John, of the famous Boswell family of Auchinleck.' As stated in the text, we do not know for sure in what capacity John Boswell

attended the meeting of June 8, 1600. There is no positive proof that he was there as an honorary member. He could have been there in that capacity or in some other capacity.

- On page 170 he says, '...and Grand Masters' Lodge, No. 1, founded in 1756, alone precede it in the list of lodges' but on page 223 he says, '...making their Grand Master's lodge, founded in 1759, No. 1 on the new combined list'. In the first instance he uses the date of foundation and in the second that of Warrant/Constitution. The *Directory of Lodges and Chapters (2000)* of the UGLE lists this lodge as founded in 1756.

He says on page 218, '...in 1803, the 'Modems' expelled Bro. Edwards Harper, who although a member of a 'Modern' lodge was an influential officer of the 'Antients'. (The resolution of expulsion was rescinded in 1810)'. But it was his father, Thomas Harper, who was expelled by the Modems Grand Lodge and restored later,

On page 534 he says, 'Failing in its attempts to make the chapter [the Bon Accord Chapter of Aberdeen] recall the warrant, the Scottish Grand Lodge suspended the chapter in 1855, but by this time the daughter Mark lodge in London had a membership of more than 120.' It was the Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland - not the Grand Lodge of Scotland - that suspended the Bon Accord Chapter of Aberdeen in September 1855.

23 Here are just two examples to illustrate the point - one from Haywood's work and the other from Coil's.

- Haywood states in his *Symbolical Masonry*: 'A certain Boswell was initiated as a speculative Mason in Scotland in 1598, the first event of such a character in the records of Masonry' (Kingsport, Tennessee: Southern Publishers, 1923, p. 25). Evidently he is referring to John Boswell of Auchinleck but provides no evidence for his claim. As far as we know, there exists no record of John Boswell having been initiated in 1598 or 1600 in the Lodge of Edinburgh or any other lodge.

- In *Conversations on Freemasonry* Coil says, 'Upon the formation of the Grand Lodge of Ohio in 1809, the oldest lodge in the state, American Union, after participating in the preliminary proceedings, withdrew and claimed to be free of Grand Lodge authority, because it had existed before the Grand Lodge was organized. This was similar to the contention made by William Preston on behalf of Lodge of Antiquity in 1787, which ultimately led to the expulsion of Preston and the erasure of the lodge from the roll of the Grand Lodge of England' (Richmond, Virginia: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1976, pp. 52-53). Indeed Preston and some members of the Lodge of Antiquity No. 1 (now No. 2) got into trouble with the premier Grand Lodge as a result of having returned from a church service to the lodge wearing masonic clothing in public on 27 December, 1777. It was in 1778, not 1787, that Preston asserted before the Committee of Charity an inherent right of the Time Immemorial lodge to act the way they did regarding the public procession in masonic clothing. Preston was expelled by the Grand Lodge. He later withdrew his former assertion and was reinstated. The Lodge of Antiquity then expelled three members including Noorthouck, the then Treasurer, who had been at the bottom of the bad feeling. The Grand Lodge ordered their reinstatement. Preston and his supporters voted against it at the lodge meeting on 4 November, 1778 and decided that 'the Officers of the Lodge of Antiquity do not any more attend the meetings of the Grand Lodge,

now held at Free Masons Hall, & that the Lodge of Antiquity do withdraw themselves from the said Society, called the Grand Lodge'. Consequently they were expelled by the Grand Lodge. These brethren met as an independent lodge and soon started a new Grand Lodge in London under the sanction of the Grand Lodge of All England at York. But this new Grand Lodge ceased to operate in 1789 when Preston and those Antiquity members who had been expelled were reinstated. So during this period there were two lodges that claimed to be the Lodges of Antiquity - one being Noorthouck's lodge which was acknowledged by the premier Grand Lodge and the other, Preston's lodge which came to operate under the authority of the York Grand Lodge. In any case, the (original) Lodge of Antiquity was not erased from the roll of the premier Grand Lodge.

24 *History of English Freemasonry, The*, Hamill, John, (London, Lewis Masonic, 1994), p. 3 1.

2' Normally the newer the edition, the better. But that is not always the case. For instance, Gould's *Histon of Freemasonry* revised and updated by Dudley Wright in the 1930s is not the most reliable edition.

" 'Notes on "Hele" ', Washizu, Yoshio, the *Philalethes* (June 2000 issue), pp. 57-60. An expanded electronic version is also available from the present writer.

" *Ancient Freemasonry and The Old Dundee Lodge, No. 18*, Heiron, Arthur, (London, Kenning & Son. 1921), p. 57.

11 'Eighteenth Century Masonry', Bracey, W.E., *Transactions of the Somerset Masters' Lodge (1938)*, pp 539-540.

" 'Random Notes from Masonic Records', Calvert, Albert F., *Transactions of Authors' Lodge vol. 3* (London, Kenning & Son, 1919), p. 311.

"Sins of Our Masonic Fathers-, The', Hamill, John, *AQC 101 (1988)*, p. 135.

31 *Freemason at Work, The*, Carr, Harry, 1976, revised by Frederick Smyth (London, Lewis Masoruc. 1992), p. 321.

32 'Masonic Symbols - Their Use and Abuse', McLeod, Wallace, delivered at the annual banquet of the Allied Masonic Degrees, February 25 1995. Retrieved 6 April, 2002. <<http://www.aasrvoc.com/symbols.htm>>

33 'Masonic Education - Part F, Hepburn, Ross, *AQC 86 (1973)*, p. 270.