

**T.F.S.**  
**Three, five, and seven**  
**3 5 7**

By Ed Halpaus, Grand Lodge Education Officer.  
Number 125 – June 20, 2008

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**“Masonry is not ‘speculative,’ nor theoretical, but experimental; not sentimental, but practical. It requires self-renunciation and self-control.”** Brother Albert Pike

A while back I had an article in my publication *Mehr Licht* called “A Moment in time” by R.W.B. Paul Alexander of the Grand Lodge of Ohio.<sup>i</sup> I received a lot of feedback on that issue; both in agreement with what was written and in opposition to what was written.<sup>ii</sup> If you don’t recall the particular article by Brother Alexander here is a part of what he wrote: *“He explained that he had been thinking of dropping out of Lodge for several years. Not for financial reasons, but that a problem had been bothering him for a good while. He went on to explain that while in lodge everything was so serious and proper with teachings from the Bible and the Masonic code of conduct, then as soon as lodge was closed we went out for fellowship, then he would hear FOUL language and off color jokes, and since he was a Christian this type of fellowship did not appeal. So he thought his money would be better spent in supporting his church, so therefore he would not be paying his dues any longer. What a moment in time that was for me.”* What Brother Alexander was referring to was the reason a Mason was resigning from his Lodge.

I think it is good for a Brother to ask another why he no longer attends Lodge, but when we do, we may not like to hear the reason. Also by asking the question we also assume a responsibility to try to correct a problem, (perceived or actual,) that we hear as the reason for his inactivity. For these reasons, many times, it is easier not to ask.

Witnessing what we could say would be conduct unbecoming a Freemason is, to say the least, sad; we are Freemasons and should act as such, but Freemasons assembled together in a Lodge are first men, and products of our environment as well as our past; possibly we bring too much of that part of ourselves into our Lodges with us. Brother Pike wrote in *Morals and Dogma*: *“Many a man earnestly desires to be a good Mason. He says so, and is sincere. But if you require him to resist a certain passion, to sacrifice a certain indulgence, to control his appetite at a particular feast, or to keep his temper in a dispute, you will find he does not wish to be a good Mason, in that particular case; or, wishing, is not able to resist his worst impulses.”*<sup>iii</sup> ‘His worst impulses,’ to me, implies what we have all learned outside of Masonry and our houses of worship, and which we don’t shed when we walk into a Masonic Lodge.

The beautiful ceremonies and lectures of our fraternity, and especially the opening ceremony of the Lodge, are to help each of us to put behind us those parts of our nature that are not in Harmony with what we learn in Masonry and in our houses of worship. It is the hope that what we learn in studying the lessons of Freemasonry will help us to be better men and Masons in all aspects of our life.

You may notice I include the lessons and values learned in both Masonry and in houses of worship: It seems nearly impossible to separate the two when it comes to the lessons we, as Masons, would want to learn to become better men.

One thing that can be done in our Lodges, (which seems to be done on a sporadic basis,) that would help us in remembering the lessons we have learned in Masonry, similar to the purposes of the opening ceremony, is to include in the closing ceremony of the Lodge – the Charge at Closing. Possibly, if we hear that charge often enough, (i.e. at the close of every communication of our

Lodge,) take it to heart, and then study it some, we might all notice an improvement in the conduct of Masons in Lodge and elsewhere, and if we do notice something from time to time we will ourselves be more inclined to not contribute to an infraction, but to truly whisper good counsel in a Brotherly fashion.

One of the best ways for a Masonic Lodge to assure its members of the purity of life and conduct expected of us, as Freemasons, is to include the 'Charge at Closing' as often as possible in our Lodges. Most Masons are familiar with this Charge; in the book 'The Freemason at Work,' by Brother Harry Carr, there is a small section about the 'Charge at Closing.' The various charges in Freemasonry are always worth hearing, learning from, and studying. It seems we don't hear them often enough to keep them fresh in our minds: For this reason, the charge at closing is actually looked forward to and enjoyed, and having this Charge read doesn't add significant time to the Lodge Communication.

In Brother Carr's commentary about the Charge at Closing he mentions a question in the<sup>v</sup> proceedings of the ARS Quatuor Coronatorum, (AQC,) volume 82 (1969.) The answer to the question was supplied by Brother R.H. Brown, who was at the time the editor of the Transactions of the American Lodge of Research, saying the earliest copy of the Charge at Closing he knew of was from 1792. He included a copy of it along with the information he had about it. I will reproduce the information he had here: ". . . *The earliest appearance of it, I find, is in Thaddeus Mason Harris's Constitutions, published under the sanction of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, in 1792. Coill's Encyclopedia calls Harris a writer of 'high but not wide reputation'. The Constitutions is monitorial in form and contains a great deal of material from Anderson. Entick and Preston, with some original work by Harris himself. It includes a 'Charge at the Closing of a Lodge' which is credited as 'by Brother T.M.H.'* (Also, the quotation in the penultimate paragraph is here credited to Isaiah xlix, 4'; this does not appear in later printings.) *This, I believe, is the first appearance of this piece of work. Slightly amended, it was included in Frederick Dalcho's Ahiman Rezon (Charleston, S.C., U.S.A., 1807). and Dalcho's version appears in many later American monitors; Cole's Ahiman Rezon, Baltimore 1817, Sickels's Ahiman Rezon NY. 1864; (Ahiman Rezon was a popular American title for monitors in the 19th century—no debt to Dermott, save the name...).* *When I became a Mason in 1921, the Simons-Macoy Monitor was a popular book, and the 'Charge' appears therein. It is still included in some Grand Lodge monitors, including Florida, Pennsylvania, and the State of Washington, so it has been far-flung. ... it has never been used in New York during the fifty years I have been a Mason and so far as I am aware it is never obligatory' in any of the jurisdictions where it is allowed."*

I thought you might like to know a little bit of the history of the Charge. Some will ask if the Charge at Closing is part of the official ritual in a Grand Lodge, and the answer is, as far as I know, no. In most jurisdictions I am aware of the Charge is not printed as part of the closing of a Lodge, but it may be included at the discretion of the Master.

As far as having it read during the closing of a Lodge is concerned, the Master of the Lodge, if he wishes, could have it read by a Past Master of his Lodge. In one Lodge I am familiar with, the Master; wanting to involve as Many Masons as possible, asks a Past Master to deliver the Charge at Closing at each Lodge Communication.

#### **A CHARGE AT THE CLOSING OF A LODGE - By Brother T.M.H.**

*Brethren, you are now about to quit this sacred retreat of friendship and virtue, to mix again with the world. Amidst its concerns and employments, forget not the duties you have heard so frequently inculcated, and forcibly recommended in this Lodge. Be. therefore, diligent, prudent, temperate, discreet. And remember also, that around this altar you have solemnly and repeatedly promised to befriend and relieve, with unhesitating cordiality, so far as shall be in your power, every Brother who shall need your assistance: That you have promised to remind him, in the most tender manner, of his failings, and aid his reformation: To vindicate his character when wrongfully traduced; and to suggest in his behalf the most candid, favorable, and palliating*

*circumstances, even when his conduct is justly reprehended. That the world may observe how Masons love one another.*

*And these generous principles are to extend farther. Every human being has a claim upon your kind offices. So that we enjoin it upon you to "to do good unto all", while we recommend it more 'especially to the household of the faithful'.*

*By diligence in the duties of your respective callings, by liberal benevolence, and diffusive charity, by constancy and fidelity in your friendships, by uniformly just, amiable, and virtuous deportment, discover the beneficial and happy effects of this ancient and honorable institution.*

*Let it not be supposed that you have here "Labored in vain, and spent your strength for naught; for your work is with the Lord, and your recompense with your God.\*" (\*Isaiah 49:4)*

*Finally, Brethren, be ye all of one mind, live in peace, and may the God of love and peace delight to dwell with, and to bless you.*

When you hear this charge in your Lodge, or in one you happen to visit, know that you are hearing a reminder that has been important to Freemasons for over two hundred years.

**“Most men have sentiments, but not principles. The former are temporary sensations, the latter permanent and controlling impressions of goodness and virtue.”** Brother Albert Pike

**From the Great Light of Masonry:** “Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.” Proverbs 16:32

**Words to live by:** “Masonry is action not inertness. It requires its Initiates to work, actively and earnestly, for the benefit of their Brethren, their country, and mankind.” Brother Albert Pike

**“A man has honor if he holds himself to an ideal of conduct though it is inconvenient, unprofitable, or dangerous to do so.”** Walter Lippmann

Please remember: if you would like to participate in the latest Masonic Monday Question, please go to <http://www.lodgebuilder.org> and click on the Lodge Education forum. When you have an answer send it to [masonicmonday@gmail.com](mailto:masonicmonday@gmail.com) the Masonic Monday Question for the week of 06/16/08 is: **What does the term ‘Masonic Father’ mean to you? Do you have one? If so how did he become your Masonic Father? Are you someone’s Masonic Father? If so, what makes you a Masonic Father?**

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With “Brotherly Love”,  
Ed Halpaus  
Grand Lodge Education Officer

**“Always two there are, a master and an apprentice.”** Yoda

<sup>i</sup> Mehr Licht #173 May 22, 2008

<sup>ii</sup> If you would like to read that issue of More Light in PDF here is the link:  
<http://www.halpaus.net/ML173.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Morals & Dogma page 151L

<sup>iv</sup> Thaddeus Mason Harris is the TMH listed as the author of the reproduced Charge at Closing.

<sup>v</sup> Isaiah 49:4