



Freemasons Lodge #363

790 N. Van Buren St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202



Lodge Activity

September 24	5:30pm	Degree work	HRSMC
October 1	5:30pm	Stated meeting	HRSMC
October 22	5:30pm	Degree work	HRSMC
November 5	5:30pm	Stated meeting	HRSMC
December 3	5:30pm	Stated meeting/Holiday party	HRSMC

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Freemasons Lodge #363, Milwaukee, WI

www.freemasonslogde.org

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Trestleboard Editor: Thomas A. Baas II

STATED MEETING:

1st Wednesday, monthly

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Junior Warden	Thomas P. Curtis II	(262) 703 – 0797
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Junior Deacon	Michael Reindl	(262) 821 – 1815
Chaplain	David R. Miracle	(414) 839 – 0948
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Junior Steward	Jeff Day	(262) 784 – 6311
Deputy Jr. Steward	Vincent J. Michuda	(414) 764 – 5773
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End of Summer outdoor Craftwork

Brothers Mike Miller, the MWGM Dr. John Wilke, Dan Reidel and Jason Steibs.





The Sound of the Gavel

Master's Message

by Bob Roth

As you spend time in the East, you begin to have a deeper appreciation for the “wages of a Mason.” There are so many examples of why I feel so privileged to be your Worshipful Master this year. And it is that sense of privilege and humble thanks that is the base of my wages received as a Mason this year.

To have Rich Loch and his family spend hours and hours preparing a great picnic venue at their home in New Berlin, giving of their time and their care for all of us, to see our degree teams stretch themselves to the point where we have conferred, passed and now raised more Freemasons, using the traditional process, than anyone could have thought possible, and to have three of our Fellowcrafts complete their journey to Master Mason through the gracious support and special efforts of our most Worshipful Grand Master Doctor John Wilke and the Grand Lodge officers, all speaks to the wages we all have received from working in the Craft this year. Grand Master Wilke is right. With industry and with care we do our work as we concern ourselves about each other, and the result is a great lodge experience and a clearly discernable improvement in the development of all of us as good men. Those are good wages indeed.

As we return to stated meetings in September, we find us continuing our work on degrees, planning more interaction with our EAs and FCs and getting ready for our annual Holiday party after the Lodge meeting on 3 Dec 08. As we did last year, we will repair to the Steak Out in Hales Corners and have a grand time toasting a great year of fellowship and fraternal growth.

For all of you I have a request. We need good volunteers to be sponsors for our new Masons. JW Tom Curtis continues his search for you to do that work. Whether you are a past lodge officer or a Master Mason who has just been visiting lodge when you can, all of you can be a sponsor to a new Mason. It's not hard work to call a new Mason, wish him well, remind him of our events, and offer to answer questions he may have. You don't have to have the answers, and if you don't those of us who are serving officers and many others will be glad to help out so you can serve these new brother s and let them know that they are part of a unit of men who care about each other and demonstrate it every day.

We are planning a Master Mason degree on September 24th and October 22nd and hope that some of you that have not been on a degree team will consider joining with us as non-speaking participants if you would like. It's a great way to help the new Mason along his on his journey.

There is so much more to tell you about, and we will do some of that at the next stated meeting. I look forward to seeing you there, my brothers.

s/f

Bob Roth
Worshipful Master



Junior Wardens Station

By Brother Tom Curtis

"To call the craft from labor to refreshment..."

Brethren:

As we travel into the Fall of the year, we will be continuing with special emphasis on degree work, as noted by our Worshipful Master. In keeping with that effort, the Lodge Sponsorship Program takes on real importance... and I thank all of you who have volunteered to be part of this action. We want to make the candidates feel not only welcome but a part of our Lodge during this process. Toward that end, I ask all those who have signed up to be sponsors to keep in touch with your candidates, encouraging them as they work their way through the Master Mason degree and beyond. We're still short of sponsors for some of our new EAs and I ask that you, if you're not already a sponsor, give me a call to help (262-703-0797). It's one of the things each of us can do as a Mason and for the future of Freemasonry.

Fraternally

Tom Curtis
Junior Warden



Senior Stewards Station

By Brother David W. Alderfer

I'm preparing a log of lodge activities for 2008. I have found a great deal in the Lodge's minutes, Trestleboards, Wisconsin Masonic Journal, etc., however I am sure many individual efforts have not been identified.

Lodge members who have performed individual activities in either of the following areas during 2008 please contact me. The activities are: SERVICE TO OTHERS (e.g. Children's Hospital, V.A. Hospital, Nursing Home, School, etc) and PERSONAL VISITATIONS (e.g. Shut-ins, Hospitalized, Health Center, Widows, etc.). For example a number of our lodge members volunteer with the 32⁰ Children's Learning Center.

David W. Alderfer
Senior Steward

By Special Dispensation...

Three lucky Fellowcrafts were passed on Sept. 6 on Dr. Wilke's farm in a once-in-a-lifetime experience & a most noble gesture by the MWGM to help out our Lodge with the large palette of new candidates we've been fostering.

L to R: JW Tom Curtis, the new FCs Dan Reidl, Mike Miller, & Jason Steibs, and Frank Mayer



On 6 September 2008, a carload of 363 brothers traveled up to Kendall, Wisconsin at the invitation of the Most Worshipful Grand Master John Wilke to participate in a unique Masonic ceremony. There, off in the rolling farm country of Northern Wisconsin, far from the maddening crowd, Brothers Dan Reidel, Mike Miller and Jason Steibs were raised to the sublime degree of MM. The event took place in a forest glen not far from the Wilke hunting lodge and all the degree work was done by officers of the Grand Lodge. In addition to our three candidates, 363 was represented by JW Tom Curtis, SS Dave Alderfer, and Frank Mayer as observers and PM Bob Strader as a participant.

It was, all-in-all, a wonderful experience... there among the forest trees with the sun shining through the leaves down on our Grand Lodge brethren as they brought our three EA brothers to further light in Masonry. Even the simple luncheon of delicious fried catfish, served back at the Wilke home, was the the stuff of memories. Our thanks, indeed, to all those who made this occasion so memorable...particularly to our MW Grand Master and his Lady. It was a rich and beautiful adventure for all involved!

TPC



The Winding Stairs

Editor's Light ~ By Brother Tommy Baas

Gnostic Roots of Masonic Symbolism & Ritual

The secret Lion's Grip used to lift the candidate from a symbolic grave raises him up to the highest degree of Masonry, that of Master. It is then when the blindfold is lifted and his eyes are opened so he can see by a new "light" and begin a "new life." The initiate goes from what Gnostics would call "spiritually dead" to "spiritually alive." Esoterically the lion lifting the son/sun from darkness to light symbolizes the sun rising in the sign of Leo.

Willis Barnstone, editor of *The Other Bible* reveals that the very act of shaking hands was original to the Gnostics. Quite appropriately, it was done as a "sign that they themselves are of those saved from the Darkness (43)." From the Manichean Creation myths, we read (48):

The Light-Jesus raised Adam up and made him eat of the Tree of life. Then Adam glanced upward and wept, raising his voice powerfully like a lion roaring. He tore his hair, beat his breast, and said: "Woe, woe unto him, the Sculptor of my body, woe unto him who has shackled my soul, and woe to the rebellious ones who have enslaved me!"

Here indeed the serpent is referred to as Jesus and the newly enlightened Adam even makes threats against his creator, who is also his oppressor, for having left him in darkness for so long. This is essentially the Gnostic attitude. It explains why the orthodox church was so threatened by Gnosticism and why they have always been so eager to dismiss and persecute it so vehemently.

Somewhere in Southern Iraq where the bones of Ancient Mesopotamia lie buried in a millennia of war-torn oil fields, the Manicheans are the only genuine Gnostic sect surviving today. Many neo-Gnostics exist in esoteric circles, particularly anywhere there is an Ordo Templi Orientis lodge, but they are just revivals. Gnosticism can be considered to be Johannite Christianity, in that it focuses more on John the Baptist than Jesus Christ. Similarly, mention of Jesus in Masonic ritual is categorically avoided, assumably in the name of perennality, whereas John the Baptist is one of the two patron saints of Masonry. Even more interesting, they use a handshake eerily similar not to the Lion's Grip, but to that of a Master Mason.

Finding an integral connection between the Gnostics and Masonry, perhaps at the latter's roots, may prove controversial, particularly among Masons who are orthodox Christians. The aforementioned similar handshake, as far as we know, may only belong to the rituals of that particular sect of Gnosticism. Like the orthodox, Gnosticism is a much divided blanket philosophy, varied in versions yielding a wide array of interpretations.

The *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* has it that Freemasonry is "[a]n occult movement of the Seventeenth Century... [that] emerged as the British form of revived gnosticism analogous to the Rosicrucian movement in Germany," and that "modern Masonry is rooted in the post reformation revival of Gnostic thought and occult practices."

Many Gnostic sects used a formulated initiation process for a candidate wishing to attain gnosis. The path and the outcome would by definition be quite private and individualized according to the seeker's personal internal disposition and intellectual approach. This is basically the same case for the Masonic candidate. Both groups require potential candidates to come knocking on their door completely of their own free will and desire for Light. This helped to ensure and preserve the ingenuity and commitment of the organization. In both cases the rituals and lessons remained unwritten but in symbol, reserved for a more memorized and personalized verbal instruction. This ensured a responsibility toward a more selective, individualized attention to the mode of the lesson based on each candidate's beliefs and his suitability and capacity for new knowledge. Men had to really earn their advancement in the degrees by a reflection of their characters. The memorization and secrecy also besets access to the organization, by a conscientious screening and filtering of potential adepts through a suspension of full knowledge, based on the individual's growing understanding of the mysteries as he passes each rung up the philosophical ladder. This also serves in turn to raise the value of each lesson taught and received in proportion to the ever-graduating, meditated yearning for such knowledge. Like priesthood or Buddhism, such a discipline only appealed to a select brand of person who felt the calling. One would have to assertively seek out even the doorway to the path if they felt it was important enough to do so. This and the secret, memorized modes of recognition, like the handshake, kept the spiritually immature from infiltrating its temple and potentially vulgarizing and/or corrupting its spirit.

Contributing to the controversy over both Masonry and Gnosticism, the exclusive and secretive nature of the initiatory process toward certain knowledge made opponents and outsiders that much more contemptuously suspicious of their instruction and power. They wanted to know what was so special that it had not only to be hidden, but stretched out and symbolized in clandestine rituals, and how such might oppose and/or fancy itself to be that superior to what more public institutions of worship have to offer.

Freemasonry has been careful in modern times to stress to its individuals the importance of remaining active in their respective churches, of whatever particular creed that might be. The symbols and rituals of Masonry have been left openly abstract enough and loosely impregnable to each individual's interpretation so that none of its members could find any conflict between their Masonic affiliations and their church of choice or even with that of other members. They just can't stray toward polytheism, atheism, or anything that might breach the laws of their locality or cause harm to others. To this day it faces as much slander and criticism from certain fundamentalists as ever before since the Dark Ages. For some who still live in its shadows it would seem the enlightening sun has yet to rise against the Dark Ages. Or maybe they just keep their shutters closed.

The perspectives and methods of the Gnostic faith, on the other hand, consciously did not lend itself to mass dissemination. However it lent itself all the more to persecution and book-burning, and eventually to a fading out into obscurity for centuries until the time capsule of its remaining texts was stumbled upon in 1945. Such, as well as its small size due to its exclusiveness and the

dividedness of its more personalized doctrine made it all the more vulnerable for persecution by the unified governing powers of the public. The orthodox yields the power to control its adherents simply by how it twists the dogmatic myths. The simple-minded moral fables of the orthodoxy are conveniently more pragmatic to the social conventions of the laity than that deeper, less tangible philosophy that Gnosticism tried to preserve in parable. Literalized myths certainly lend the opportunity for those in charge of deciphering their meaning to control their adherents however they like. As pioneer semanticist Alfred Korzybski said, "Those who control our symbols, control us."

In their shared persecution by the orthodox in power and because of their compatibility in individualized, progressive values, Gnostics were once harbored protection by the Knights Templar. The Templars as we know were the alleged predecessors of the Freemasons through the Middle Ages, having taken refuge in their ranks. The Gnostics share the same special reverence for the Gospel of John as do the Templars and the Masons, it being the New Testament gospel they felt most accurately conveyed the "truth." For Gnostics it is apparently the most true to the truth of the orthodox texts.

A shallow survey of the different texts and sects of Gnosticism may prove a claim to monotheism shaky at best, which is a requirement in Masonry, but a deeper investigation reflects Gnosticism to be no different than Judaism, Hinduism, and, yes, paganism in that its seemingly variant manifestations of god characters with different names simply reflect different aspects of the One all-encompassing God. I would argue that Noah's concept of the Unity of God which paved the way for Masonic philosophy and all Western monotheistic religions is not so much an insistence against "polytheistic" faiths (if such even exist when it comes down to it), but rather an insistence against the divisiveness of monotheistic faiths who would boast that their creed's interpretation of God is the one true interpretation and that all others are false (such a hasty interpretation would actually imply the existence of other gods, and would render King Solomon himself a polytheist). Thus it is concept proposing tolerance and unity in discourse. No doubt this idea beats at the very heart of both Masonry and Gnosticism.

Both Masonry and Gnosticism have mounted historical plights for open-minded, individual-orientated democracy against the reigning system of "Divine Right" and dictatorial monarchy. Such sentiment was reflected both in their brand of spirituality and their modes of organization and not just to the royal and clerical leaders in the society. They both offer initiations of holy grandeur to men of all walks of life so long as they prove morally mature.

As Elaine Pagels points out of the Gnostics in *The Gnostic Gospels*, "Instead of ranking their members into superior and inferior 'orders' within a hierarchy, they followed the principle of strict equality." Compare this to how all Master Masons—regardless of their stature and occupation outside the lodge, or even their degree level along the path of Masonry—are to "meet and depart on the level." The Gnostic take on this attitude goes so far as to include women in the equation, even ordaining them as priestesses. This would line Gnosticism up less with mainstream Freemasonry and more with the Egyptian Rite, where a possible Gnostic heritage would be the more readily accepted. This is not to say that there is anything "sexist" about mainstream Masonry, only that it is a fraternity in the strictest sense.

Like Gnosticism esoteric Masonry too has a philosophical background in the Egyptian Mysteries. The history of the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry is intertwined with that of the mysterious Order of the Illuminati, of which Egyptian Masons Count Cagliostro, Adam Weishaupt, and Benjamin Franklin were founding members around the time of the American Revolution. It is common knowledge that many of the founding fathers of the United States, including George Washington and the majority of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Supposedly it is the New World Order prophesized by the fabled Egyptian star, which in the French language of the Templars was called "l'America." According to conspiracy theorist David Icke, it was for this star that America was named, and not for the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. Besides being the fabled protectors of the Ark of the Covenant and propagators of the ancient Mysteries through such semi-Masonic societies as the Ordo Templi Orientis, there is evidence that the Templar fleets fleeing persecution, looking like pirate ships with the a skull and crossbones flag, arrived in Nova Scotia with a treasure long before Columbus arrived on the continent with a fleet bearing Templar flags. So the spirit of the Mysteries, the principle of democracy, and the focus on individual freewill, as substantiated by the Freemasonic principles of founding fathers, was brought to America via European Freemasonry.

The idea is to give good, free men who come seeking "light" of their own assertive freewill and unsolicited accord the opportunity to do so by their own creative path in respect to their individual interpretation of salvation. Such personal salvation is perhaps only possible only with a belief in some singular, yet multi-faceted supreme being one can meditate upon so as to become. In this way the requirement for belief in some sort of god, along with their fraternal commitment to each other, contributes a lot to the success of Masons. God's name being ineffable as his/her/its essence is intangible, it matters not what one chooses to call he/she/it. It is important however to be faithful to that name and not take it in vain, thereby denouncing one's own personal depiction of that ideal. Simple words, with the connotations we give them, can be to a mind a poison, a drug, a spell, a veil, a key, and a god. So Masonry teaches one to be faithful to oneself and one's personal beliefs in both word and action. As a fraternity made up of men along similar, personal paths, it provides the perfect platform for a successful life while being helpfully active in one's community.

On pg. 80 of Albert Pike's *Morals & Dogma*, you see a lion pulling the Egyptian Mystery god Osiris from the "dead" using the "lion's grip," the same used to pull Hiram out of his tomb. According to C.W. Leadbetter, "the lion symbolizes the will or the mental aspect (air)." Need we even mention the association of the lion with kingship? The word "will" here is especially relevant since upon initiation, a Mason is inquired very seriously whether his decision to become a Mason was of his own assertive free will and accord. It must be a fully conscious decision or it won't work. You are being charged as a Master Mason to be "courageous like a lion" over your will; indeed to be your own king. You must be assertive like the hand of God that took the initiative to create life. It is for just such reasons that traditionally, membership should never be solicited. This helps to maintain a genuine sense of enthusiastic participation among everyone involved. Every piece of "rough ashlar" that becomes a part of the "temple" must come to shine like gold of its own glow. Being the ultimate fraternity of the community, it should be the embodiment of the masculine/yang energy in society.