



FRANK REED HORTON MEMORIAL LODGE NO. 379, F. & A. M.

UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF THE PHILIPPINES

Lecture No. 3 **MASTER MASON'S RIGHTS OF VISIT AND AVOUCHMENT**

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Quoted from Albert Mackey's "Principles of Masonic Law" and "Jurisprudence of Freemasonry"

Right of Visit

- A. Every Master Mason, who is an affiliated member of a Lodge, has the right to visit any other Lodge as often as he may desire to do so.
- This right is secured to him by the ancient regulations, and is, therefore, irreversible. In the "Ancient Charges at the Constitution of a Lodge," formerly contained in a manuscript of the Lodge of Antiquity in London, and whose date is not later than 1688, it is directed
"...that every Mason receive and cherish strange fellows when they come over the country, and set them on work, if they will work as the manner is; that is to say, if the Mason have any mould stone in his place, he shall give him a mould stone, and set him on work; and if he have none, the Mason shall refresh him with money unto the next Lodge."
 - This regulation is explicit. It not only infers the right of visit, but it declares that the strange Brother shall be welcomed, "*received, and cherished,*" and "*set on work,*" that is, permitted to participate in the work of your Lodge.
 - Its provisions are equally applicable to Brethren residing in the place where the Lodge is situated as to transient Brethren, provided that they are affiliated Masons.
- B. In the year 1819, the law was in England authoritatively settled by a decree of the Grand Lodge.
- A complaint had been preferred against a Lodge in London, for having refused admission to some Brethren who were well known to them, alleging that as the Lodge was about to initiate a candidate, no visitor could be admitted until that ceremony was concluded.
 - It was then declared, "*that it is the undoubted right of every Mason who is well known, or properly vouched, to visit any Lodge during the time it is opened for general Masonic business, observing the proper forms to be attended to on such occasions, and so that the Master may not be interrupted in the performance of his duty.*"
- C. A Lodge, when not opened for "general Masonic business," but when engaged in the consideration of matters which interest the Lodge alone, and which it would be inexpedient or indelicate to make public, may refuse to admit a visitor.
- Lodges engaged in this way, in private business, from which visitors are excluded, are said by the French Masons to be opened "*en famille.*"

- D. A Master Mason is not entitled to visit a Lodge, unless he previously submits to an examination, or is personally vouched for by a competent Brother present.
- But this is a subject of so much importance as to claim consideration in the latter part of this lecture.
- E. Another regulation is, that a strange Brother shall furnish the Lodge he intends to visit with a certificate of his good standing in the Lodge from which he last hailed.
- This regulation has, in late years, given rise to much discussion. Many of the Grand Lodges in the United States, and several Masonic writers, strenuously contend for its antiquity and necessity, while others as positively assert that it is a modern innovation upon ancient usage.
 - There can, however, be no doubt of the antiquity of certificates. That the system requiring them was in force nearly two hundred years ago, at least, will be evident from the third of the Regulations made in General Assembly, December 27, 1663, under the Grand Mastership of the Earl of St. Albans, and which is in the following words:

"3. That no person hereafter who shall be accepted a Freemason, shall be admitted into any Lodge or assembly, until he has brought a certificate of the time and place of his acceptation, from the Lodge that accepted him, unto the Master of that limit or division where such a Lodge is kept."
- F. Another right connected with the right of visitation is, that of demanding a sight of the Warrant of Constitution.
- This instrument it is, indeed, not only the right but the duty of every strange visitor carefully to inspect, before he enters a Lodge, that he may thus satisfy himself of the legality and regularity of its character and authority.
 - On such a demand being made by a visitor for a sight of its Warrant, every Lodge is bound to comply with the requisition, and produce the instrument.
 - The same rule, of course, applies to lodges under dispensation, whose Warrant of Dispensation supplants the Warrant of Constitution.
- G. The great object in all Freemasonry being the preservation of harmony among the Brethren, which our ritual properly declares to be "*the support of all well regulated institutions,*" it has been deemed by many excellent Masonic authorities, to be the prerogative of any member of a Lodge to object to the admission of a visitor when his relations to that visitor are of such a nature as to render it unpleasant for the member to sit in Lodge with the visitor.
- It is certainly much to be regretted that any such unkind feelings should exist among Freemasons. But human nature is infirm, and Freemasonry does not always accomplish its mission of creating and perpetuating brotherly love. Hence, when two Freemasons are in such an unMasonic condition of antagonism to only question to be solved is—the one being a contributing member and the other a visitor—whether shall the former or the latter retire?

- Justice seems to require that the visitor shall yield his claims to those of the member.
 - 1) If the presence of both would disturb the harmony of the Lodge—and it is known not how that harmony can be effectually disturbed than by the presence of two Freemasons who are inimical to each other—then it cannot deny not only the right, but the duty of the Master, to forbid the entrance of the one who, as a stranger and a visitor, has the slightest claim to admission, and whose rights will be the least affected by the refusal.
 - 2) If the visitor is refused admission, it is only his right of visit that is affected; but if a member be compelled to withdraw, in consequence of an admission of a visitor, whose presence is unpleasant to him, then all his rights of membership are involved, which of course include his right of voting at that communication on any petitions for initiation or membership, and on motions before the Lodge, as well as his right of advocating or opposing any particular measures which may become the subject of deliberation during the meeting.
 - 3) Hence, under the ordinary legal maxim, *argumentum ab inconvenienti plurimum valet in lege*, that is, an argument drawn from inconvenience is of great force in law—it seems clear that the earnest protest of a member is sufficient to exclude a visitor.
- And to this, it may be added, that if by the Regulation of 1721, every member present was to be allowed the expression of his opinion in reference to the admittance of a permanent member, because if one be admitted without unanimous consent, “*it might spoil the harmony*” of the Lodge, then by analogy, we are to infer that, for a similar reason, the same unanimity is expected in the admission of a visitor.

Tyler’s Oath

- A. Every visitor, who offers himself to the appointed committee of the Lodge for examination, is expected, as a preliminary step, to submit to the Tyler’s Obligation; so called, because it is administered in the Tyler’s room.
- B. As this obligation forms no part of the secret ritual of the Order, but is administered to every person before any lawful knowledge of his being a Mason has been received, there can be nothing objectionable in inserting it here, and in fact, it will be advantageous to have the precise words of so important a declaration placed beyond the possibility of change or omission by inexperienced Brethren.
- C. The oath, then, which is administered to the visitor, and which he may, if he chooses, require every one present to take with him, is in the following words:

“I, A. B., do hereby and hereon solemnly and sincerely swear, that I have been regularly initiated, passed, and raised, to the sublime degree of a Master Mason, in a just and legally constituted Lodge of such, that I do not now stand suspended or expelled, and know of no reason why I should not hold Masonic communication with my Brethren.”

Examination of Visitors

- A. The declaration having been given in the most solemn manner, the examination must then be conducted with the necessary forms.
- The good old rule of "*commencing at the beginning*" should be observed.
 - Every question is to be asked and every answer demanded which is necessary to convince the examiner that the party examined is acquainted with what he ought to know, to entitle him to the appellation of a Brother.
 - Nothing is to be taken for granted — categorical answers must be required to all that it is deemed important to be asked.
- B. No forgetfulness is to be excused, nor is the want of memory to be accepted as a valid excuse for the want of knowledge.
- The Mason, who is so unmindful of his duties as to have forgotten the instructions he has received, must pay the penalty of his carelessness, and be deprived of his contemplated visit to that society whose secret modes of recognition he has so little valued as not to have treasured them in his memory.
 - While there are some things which may be safely passed over in the examination of one who confesses himself to be "*rusty*," or but recently initiated, because they are details which require much study to acquire, and constant practice to retain, there are still other things of great importance which must be rigidly demanded, and with the knowledge of which the examiner cannot, under any circumstances, dispense.
- C. Should suspicions of imposture arise, let no expression of these suspicions be made until the final decree for rejection is pronounced.
- And let that decree be uttered in general terms, such as:
"I am not satisfied," or, "I do not recognize you,"
 - and not in more specific terms, such as,
"You did not answer this inquiry," or, "You are ignorant on that point."
 - The visitor is only entitled to know, generally, that he has not complied with the requisitions of his examiner.
 - To descend to particulars is always improper and often dangerous.
- D. Above all, the examiner should never ask what are called "*leading questions*," or such as include in themselves an indication of what the answer is to be; nor should he in any manner aid the memory of the party examined by the slightest hint.
- If he has it in him, it will come out without assistance, and if he has it not, he is clearly entitled to no aid.
- E. Lastly, never should an unjustifiable delicacy weaken the rigor of these rules.
- Let it be remembered, that for the wisest and most evident reasons, the merciful maxim of the law, which says, that *it is better that ninety-nine guilty men should escape than that one innocent man should be punished.*

- It is with us reversed, and that in Masonry it is better that ninety and nine true men should be turned away from the door of a Lodge than that one cowan should be admitted.

Right of Avouchment

- A. An examination may sometimes be omitted when any competent Brother present will vouch for the visitor's Masonic standing and qualifications.
 - This prerogative of vouching is an important one which every Master Mason is entitled, under certain restrictions, to exercise.
 - It is also one which may so materially affect the well-being of the whole fraternity — since by its injudicious use impostors might be introduced among the faithful — that it should be controlled by the most stringent regulations.
- B. To vouch for one, is to bear witness for him; and, in witnessing to truth, every caution should be observed, lest falsehood should cunningly assume its garb.
 - The Brother who vouches should, therefore, know to a certainty that the one for whom he vouches is really what he claims to be.
 - He should know this not from a casual conversation, nor a loose and careless inquiry, but, as the unwritten law of the Order expresses it, from "*strict trial, due examination, or lawful information.*"
- C. When the vouching is founded on the knowledge obtained in this way, it is absolutely necessary that the Brother so vouching shall be competent to conduct such an examination; and that his general intelligence and shrewdness and his knowledge of Masonry shall be such as to place him above the probability of being imposed upon.
 - The important and indispensable qualification of a voucher is, therefore, that he shall be competent.
 - The Master of a Lodge has no right to accept, without further inquiry, the avouchment of a young and inexperienced, or even of an old, if ignorant, Mason.
- D. Lawful information, which is the remaining ground for an avouchment, may be derived either from the declaration of another Brother, or from having met the party vouched for in a Lodge on some previous occasion.
 - If the information is derived from another Brother, who states that he has examined the party, then all that has already been said of the competency of the one giving the information is equally applicable.
 - The Brother, giving the original information, must be competent to make a rigid examination.
 - Again, the person giving the information, the one receiving it, and the one of whom it is given, should be all present at the time; for otherwise there would be no certainty of identity. Information, therefore, given by letter or through a third party, is highly irregular.
 - The information must also be positive, not founded on belief or opinion, but derived from a legitimate source.

- And, lastly, it must not have been received casually, but for the very purpose of being used for Masonic purposes.
 - A. For one to say to another in the course of a desultory conversation: "*A.B. is a Mason,*" is not sufficient.
 - B. He may not be speaking with due caution, under the expectation that his words will be considered of weight.
 - C. He must say something to this effect: "*I know this man to be a Master Mason,*" for such or such reasons, and you may safely recognize him as such. This alone will insure the necessary care and proper observance of prudence.
- If the information given is on the ground that the person, vouched has been seen sitting in a Lodge by the voucher, care must be taken to inquire if it was a "Lodge of Master Masons." A person may forget, from the lapse of time, and vouch for a stranger as a Master Mason, when the Lodge in which he saw him was only opened in the first or second degree.