



Education Monthly

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R.W.Bro John Forster, Chairman, Masonic Education

M.W.Bro. David C. Bradley. R.I.P.

It is with deep sadness that we record the death of our Past Grand Master, M.W.Bro. David C Bradley. He was an important Masonic scholar and leader, the originator of "The Masonic Manual", "Penetrating the Veil", and the writer of many pieces of Masonic scholarship. M.W.Bro. Bradley served as Curriculum Chairman of the College of Freemasonry and was a mentor and inspiration to all of us.

We give thanks for his life of scholarship and service to the craft and mourn his passing

The Ritual is neither literal nor historical

(condensed from a lecture given by R.W.Bro. Brian Griffin, District Deputy Grand Master of Ottawa District 1 at Mississippi Lodge No.147 On Nov 15th 2012)

We have heard many times that our degrees may not be entirely historically correct, or to be taken literally, as some license has been taken in reconfiguring events in ancient history to illustrate moral truths through symbols and allegory.

A perennial Masonic quiz question in our jurisdiction is, "what is our authorized work?" The answer of course is, "the English Ritual with slight modifications adopted by the Grand Lodge of Canada in 1859, as amended from time to time ..."

At every lodge of instruction we have heard, with authority, Article 7 of the Constitution: "No addition or alteration of the Ritual shall be made except that authorized by the Ritual Committee. " That committee is composed of the Grand Master, Past Grand Masters, Deputy Grand Master, and from them, the Custodian of the Work is appointed. The spoken ritual (as opposed to the signs and the mechanics of ritual) has been passed down largely unaltered since 1859. It was probably pulled together from various writings and sources, edited, revised, copied, and re-copied. We may not know who specifically is speaking to us through the ritual, but as the Masonic writer, Joseph Fort Newton wrote, "***What a legacy of inspiration and instruction they left for our guidance ... they told us what they have learned by living, leaving their marks on the walls and arches of the Temple.***" Joseph Fort Newton, Short Talks on Masonry, page 14

Many of the ancient writings are held sacred by various religions as the basis of faith: it cannot be determined authoritatively who their author was. Even though the author may be obscure, the strict governance surrounding the copying of those writings through the centuries can illustrate the word as being passed down (and held sacred) for its message regardless of whom precisely it can be attributed to.

Ecclesiastes and the Wisdom of Solomon are both traditionally attributed to King Solomon and form the basis of some of our ritual in the memorial service and the Craft degrees. Based on a more scholarly examination, there

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were other writers later in history involved in writing these scriptures. But knowing that fact, does it take away from the wisdom and insightfulness of these writings? We have a ritual that has been preserved even to the point where the use of words and their original intended meaning of some words may no longer be apparent. This is where a greater understanding through the study of the Work comes into play.

The pairing of words – “true and proper”, “answer and obey”, go back to a time when words were used in pairs to avoid confusion and ensure understanding.

I would like to quote the words of our late former Grand Master, M.W. Bro. David C. Bradley who was Grand Master in 1989-90. He authored “*Penetrating the Veil*” published in 1997 (available from the Grand Lodge office). He addresses the nature of our ritual but, more importantly, how it must be conveyed:

***“The ritual is neither literal nor historical, but a dramatic allegory to explain the tenets and principals of the Craft. The delivery of the work is of crucial importance. The ritualist ought to remember that he has placed himself in the position of a Master of the Craft to his apprentice. His responsibility therefore, is to convey the stories of the ritual to the candidate clearly and interestingly. The general meaning of the ritual can be sensed in the feeling and flow of the words. They are not meaningless. The ritual must impress the candidate with awe and wonder and fill his mind with intelligent information. The Work must be sincere and, although accuracy is pleasing, there must be communication. The right words can be pronounced, but it is unavailing unless the message comes across. Ritual is the performance of a ceremony to illustrate a mystery. The intent of Masonic ritual is to bring a man into a brotherhood of men, who believe in right thinking and right action.*”**

***The ritual is a path to greater understanding and the absence of such understanding means that members are simply going through the motions. It must exude life energy. In essence, the ritual is a play and each man must attend to his cue. The greatest danger is that ritual may become a mechanical performance. The ritualist must have some empathy with what he is saying. When told properly, the degrees provide more light to a candidate that his eye can see. The result of such teaching will be a candidate who remains an active, interested member, who understands Masonry and who ultimately becomes a more mature individual.*”** 1 David C. Bradley, Penetrating the Veil, Page 13 – 14

An important Masonic Education Event

The Charles A. Sankey Lecture Series

Prof. Joy Porter University of Hull, Hull U.K.

Native American Freemasonry: Joseph Brant to the 21st Century

Sunday, March 24, 2013 3 p.m.

**Brock University Thistle Auditorium, Room Th325, 500 Glenridge Ave.
St. Catharine’s, Ontario**

**In lieu of charging for admission, a [tax deductible] contribution is requested to:
Masonic Foundation of Ontario, Brock University Partnership - Project Number 2937**

<http://www.sankeylectures.ca/>

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