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

Much political debate has been occurring across America in recent months. While Freemasonry does not get involved in politics, individuals do become active. Does Masonic experience impact on how an individual citizen reacts in the political arena? An article in this month's Short Talk Bulletin published by the Masonic Service Association () by Bro. John Melius 32 °, a member of Potomac Lodge #5 in the District of Columbia addresses the issue. A shortened version of this article is reproduced below. The entire article is published in the new edition of "Reflections" (see below)*

Bro. Melius is a professional artist and has accomplished a large number of paintings and portraits on display at the House of the Temple in Washington, the headquarters for the southern Scottish Rite, Southern jurisdiction.

Does Freemasonry work political miracles? By John Melius

Freemasonry has played a powerful role in creating the highest moral ideals that led to the political compromises that established the checks and balances that helped to unify the USA into a nation. What was not clear was how well Freemasonry accomplished this political miracle. A recent book, "The Righteous Mind, Why Good People Are Divided By Politics And Religion", by Dr. Jonathan Haidt, helped me to understand the psychology of men and men working together in groups and how Freemasonry can change their moral values to work together better.

Sampled data shows that our moral judgments arise automatically, instantaneously and long before we can reason out our judgments. Our morality is formed by our innate and involved intuition and shaped by social learning mostly by the people that we trusted in childhood. Moral judgments are more reflex than reason. However through a trusted institution like Freemasonry we can work through our reasoning and our faith to hone and shape our moral values. Dr. Haidt's test data reveal six fundamental moral values, which form the basis for our moral judgments. They are: 1. Caring (or charity); 2. Fairness (or equal opportunity); 3. Loyalty; 4. Authority; 5. Sanctity; and 6. Liberty. Liberty was found to be valued more or less equally by both liberals and conservatives. It is noteworthy that liberals and conservatives do not equally esteem the other five values.

Change is inevitable. How society deals with change is a question that all politics and governments must handle to be successful. Perhaps the differences between conservative and liberal valuations stem from their differing desires regarding change. When conservatives and liberals basically disagree on the moral values for changing or maintaining the status quo, there can be little hope for compromise.

Enter the brilliance of Freemasonry. It helps conservatives and liberals appreciate and respect all six moral values. When the United States had a high number of Freemasons per capita in the 1940s and 50s, we had political compromise and cooperation through which World War II was ended, developed a strong economy

and physical infrastructure in the world, created the broadest reaching and most successful education system in the world, among many other significant accomplishments. Coincidence? On the other hand, when we had a low number of Freemasons per capita, we had the American Civil War with massive confrontation and destruction. Coincidence? And what about today? We have seen several decades of membership decline in Fraternity with a parallel decline in civility between our politicians. Coincidence ?

By building an appreciation for all six moral values, Freemasonry helps to build mutual respect and deep lasting friendships between conservatives and liberals in a neutral trusting environment.

**(Condensed from the October edition of "The Short Talk Bulletin". This excellent publication is published monthly and is available to Masons for a cost of \$9.00/yr. Send requests for publication to:*

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"Reflections": The Newsletter of the Committee On Masonic Education

"Reflections" is a newsletter published four times a year by the Committee of Masonic Education. Its primary aim is to make available articles and presentations for Ontario Masons. The publication is a rich resource for every Mason to help him make his daily advancement in Masonic knowledge.

Freemasonry links men through time and space & strengthens that thread that gives, purpose, meaning and direction to daily life. The publication provides its readership with interesting papers and informative learning opportunities to increase one's Masonic knowledge and understanding as well as providing a forum for discussion among Brethren. It is shortly to be available on line to registered subscribers. Back copies over 12 months old are already available on the Grand Lodge website/members area.

The Committee on Masonic Education is focusing on making Reflections an important part of Masonic Education in this Grand Jurisdiction. We call on each Mason, each subscriber, and each Lodge to promote readership of the newsletter. "Reflections" is nothing without you and your support to make it a vibrant, thriving part of our beloved Order. You can to subscribe by sending \$18.00 to

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On behalf of the members, team leaders and Chairmen of the five committees that comprise Masonic Education I wish all readers the joy of the festive season and our best wishes for the New Year.

If you received this Bulletin by e-mail please pass it on to as many of your brethren as you can
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