



**Internet Lodge 9659**  
**United Grand Lodge of England**  
**Province of East Lancashire**  
<http://internet.lodge.org.uk>

**Short Papers Competition 2007**

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**Paper 53/2007**

**Title** **Four Things Wrong With Freemasonry**  
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Freemasonry in North America is dying, our numbers are dwindling, our lodges are amalgamating and our temples are closing. These are truths which are self evident to our fraternity.

However, as I stated this is a fact pertaining to Canada and the United States only. Although no definitive study exists, a brief investigation into other Grand Lodge memberships show an increase in brothers. Why is freemasonry dwindling in North America and not the rest of the world?

Our ritual is the same or very similar, and our Grand Lodges are very similar in structure as well. The problems in my opinion are;

1. Freemasonry in North America is not a secret.
2. We lack discipline in our lodges.
3. We are cheap.
4. We let anyone in.

1. Freemasonry in North America is not a secret.

"Freemasonry is not a secret society. Our buildings are in plain view with symbols on the front. Our members wear rings, we have books titled 10,000 famous freemasons. The only secrets are passwords and modes of recognition and if you want you can see them on the Internet or in the public library."

How many of you believe this? How many of you have said this? How many of you have heard this? How many of you believe saying this improves the image, the prestige or the privilege of freemasonry?

First of all freemasonry is a secret. Our meetings and transactions within them are prohibited to be released to the clandestine world. Our modes of a recognition, passwords, history, lectures, and the legend of our dear GMHA are secret. Everything we learn in lodge is a secret and we swore oaths to protect them. When anyone speaks about a secret society we are often the first to be used as an example. Why are we are ashamed of it?

When we say that Freemasonry isn't secret and anyone can learn our secrets we are saying to non-Masons "hey, this stuff isn't important, I don't care about it and neither should you". If you instead approach the subject with respect and reverence it will flow through to a non-Mason that Freemasonry is serious, it is life changing and it is a privilege obtained through discipline and hard work.

Freemasonry is a secret society, if you don't like it quit and go join the ELKS!

2. We lack discipline in our lodges.

Have you ever heard a cell phone ring in lodge? Have you heard someone jingling beads on his apron during prayer? What about a short lecture or part of a degree so terribly performed you wish you stayed at home? How often do you see brothers cut corners at squaring the lodge? Have you seen a DDGM sit in the East and not stop talking or laughing with the WM while trying to perform a degree?

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I have seen all this in almost every lodge I have every sat in. We don't have discipline in the lodges. And this is a culture problem inside our lodges. I believe one reason is that over the years lodges became slack with the decrease in candidates. And, as we needed new members and feared losing current ones, we eased up on discipline not wanting members to become upset and leave.

This lack of discipline makes for poor lodge work which makes for poor meetings. It produces poor degree work which produces poor Masons.

Discipline yourselves! Demand excellence. Hone your work into the perfect cube. If no one demands it of you, demand it of yourself!

3. We are cheap.

"We don't have many new candidates coming in. There's absolutely nothing we can do but keep our fees low and hope some poor fool stumbles in the door. We'll keep costs low, and keep our dues low so we can have large amounts of members and no one gets excluded."

This is called the Wal-Mart business approach to provide low quality products at low prices and it has worked well for Wal-mart. It, on the other hand, does not work well for Freemasonry, for what we have is not of low quality and is in fact very pricey. We have buildings to pay for, charities, dinners, regalia and all sorts of other costs which somehow we manage to keep below \$200 per member per year, some lodges manage at \$100 per year! A feat that I must say is very remarkable but has come at a terrible cost.

We have old smelly buildings, we eat cheap bland meals and limit our events to two or less a year. If a good man wanted to join a group for quality social interaction he would be very disappointed with our Freemasonry. In fact a candidate who was sold on Masonry based on our past members and accomplishments may say he was lied to when discovering what Freemasonry today really is.

The argument has been said that some people can't afford more than the \$250 initiation dues. This is true - not everyone can. But if someone can't afford say \$500 to join our organization it is either because they do not believe we are worth it or their lives are so disheveled that we should not accept them. We are in the business of helping GOOD men to make themselves better, not making Mac-Masons.

Freemasonry is not cheap so don't treat it like it is. If you don't like it leave.

4. We let anyone in?

When was the last time anyone remembers a ballot returning unfavorably? Or an investigation committee returning with an unfavorable outcome? Why do we even bother balloting?

Have we come to be so desperate that we do not even bother to screen candidates and only go through the motions of petition to satisfy Grand Lodge requirements? How do you know that we haven't initiated, passed and raised a convicted paedophile still on probation?

Our petition process is so weak and we are so desperate that we let anyone in. It doesn't matter how little education they have, how little they earn per year, how badly they keep their home or how annoying they are to be around. This desperate need for new candidates and allowing anyone to carry our secrets do more harm for our fraternity than any anti-Mason website out today.

If Freemasonry is to get back on its feet, I would recommend the following changes to the petition process.

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All petitioners would supply:

- An up to date criminal record check.
- Two letters of reference from men of good standing in the community who are not Masons.
- Evidence of one's good nature, a 100 word letter should do.
- A photograph posted in every lodge room in the district.

And all those who support a petition of recommendation should advocate their opinion on the petitioner before investigation in open lodge. Also the petitioner should be invited to a non-tyled Masonic event to meet the brothers of the lodge so as to see whether or not he is fit to become a member of our Masonic family.

The problems with Freemasonry are in reality very small. It is still the most prestigious organization in the world and will remain so for many generations ahead. Please take my opinions to heart whether you agree with them or not.

The important thing to know is that if you have made it to the end of this paper you are not the problem because you cared enough to read it.

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