



## “The Book of Constitutions”

### ***Lodge Presentation:***

*The following short article is written with the intention to be read within an open Lodge, or in fellowship, to all the members in attendance. This article is appropriate to be presented to all Master Masons. Master Masons should be invited to attend the meeting where this is presented. Following this article is a list of discussion questions which should be presented immediately following the presentation of the article.*

### **The Book of Constitutions**

Having been raised to the Sublime degree of Master Mason, we are told that we have access to all the tools of Masonry, indiscriminately. In essence, you have proven your worthiness and now all the secrets of Masonry can be shared with you. With that comes great responsibility. In the Master Mason degree we are then taught the importance of the Book of Constitutions, guarded by the Tiler’s sword.

Claudy tells us that “The Book of Constitutions, guarded by the Tiler’s sword” is a comparatively modern symbol. He attributes it to Thomas Webb, circa 1800. Just because it is comparatively new, does not mean it has any less significance than other Masonic symbolism.

“The Book of Constitutions, guarded by the Tiler’s Sword, reminds us that we should be forever watchful and guarded in our thoughts, words and actions, particularly before the enemies of Masonry, ever bearing in mind those truly Masonic virtues, Silence and Circumspection.”

The Book of Constitutions is not a book that is meant to be kept secret. It is a book of Masonic law. (“To this book, reference is to be made in cases where the by-laws of the Grand Lodge are silent or not sufficiently explicit” – Mackey, Lexicon of Freemasonry) It was first ordered printed by the Grand Lodge of England circa 1723 (and a subsequent one was published in 1738) and anyone can find copies on Amazon.com or other booksellers. Mackey, in his book, Lexicon of Freemasonry, points out that the first notice we have of a “constitution” is in York in 926 under the name of the “Gothic Constitutions”, but says they were found to be “erroneous and defective”.

So if it is not meant to be kept secret, why are we admonished “to be guarded in our thoughts, words and actions”? And why the Tiler’s Sword?

Just as the compasses teach us to “keep our actions within due bounds” in our daily life, we are also admonished to keep our thoughts, words, and actions aligned with Masonic Law and the Ancient Landmarks. The Tiler’s Sword is less about imposing physical harm than it is a symbol of



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guarding against unwanted intrusions. In this case, the unwanted intrusions are our own habits, thoughts, and words.

Allen E. Roberts, in his book *The Craft and its Symbols*, says, “Not the enemies of Freemasonry, necessarily, are to be feared. The greater danger comes from the uninformed Mason. He has learned just enough to cause the craft irreparable harm. Not always by saying too much, but by saying too little. He knows so little about the Fraternity that he believes everything is secret. Actually, there are few things that are secret.”

The idea of being guarded in our thoughts, words, and actions, has value in our personal lives as well. Whether we know it or not, we are constantly impacting the quality of our lives every moment. Every man-made thing in our world first began as a thought in someone’s mind. Our thoughts, persisted on, create the habits, beliefs, and filters through which we view and engage the world and others around us.

“We become what we think about most of the time”. – Anthony Robbins

Words are thoughts expressed. How we talk to others, and how we talk to ourselves (self-confidence/self-doubt, etc.) can impact the quality of all of our relationships; business, social, and personal.

Actions are the manifestations of our thoughts and our words. We are exactly where we are in life as a result of all of our thoughts, words and actions we have taken in life to this point (This includes decisions, habits, behaviors, etc., as they are all a result of thoughts, words, and actions). If you don’t like where you are at in life, there is a good chance you can change it by changing your thoughts, words and actions.

“Not what he wishes and prays for does a man get, but what he justly earns. His wishes and prayers are only gratified and answered when they harmonize with his thoughts and actions. - James Allen, from his book, “As a man Thinketh”

In Freemasonry, it is the alignment of our thoughts to our words and to our actions and to the Book of Constitutions, or the Masonic principals and ideals, which demonstrates we merit the honors bestowed upon us.

Fraternally,

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Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Wisconsin



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### **Discussion Questions**

*The following discussion questions are written to be presented immediately following the presentation of the topic above. There is no right or wrong answers to these questions, they are designed to promote thought and engage all the members that are present in conversation. Take care that the presentation of the topic and the discussion questions does not exceed 30 minutes. The presenter can present any part of the questions below, or any additional questions, he feels is appropriate.*

- What are some of the Ancient Landmarks?
- Where can they be found?
- In Freemasonry, what is the definition of an Ancient Landmark?
- Why is it important to understand the Ancient Landmarks?
- How does it benefit you as a Mason to be aligned with Masonic Law and the Landmarks?
- What are some consequences of not upholding the Law and Landmarks? (For you, your lodge, or the craft)
- Is there anything in the EA Charge that you think could resonate with this symbol?
- Who wrote the Constitutions in 1723, and again in 1738? Where was he from?
- Why is this author and his works significant to Freemasonry?
- Freemasonry and the Book of Constitutions aside, discuss the importance of being mindful of your thoughts, words and actions in your daily life. How would this benefit you at work? With your family? In your social life? How does this affect your behavior, decisions, habits, etc.?
- Freemasonry, from its early inception, has been thought of as a “Fraternity of Gentlemen”. Discuss how guarding our thoughts, words and actions, both in our personal lives as well as with the book of constitutions is still relevant to maintaining the character of being a “gentleman” to this day.
- What is the difference between guarding our thoughts, words and actions and sharing the principals of Freemasonry with non-Masons?
- What are some of the things that are commonly not shared with non-Masons that could be?