

This paper was put together from two talks given in 1980-1981 by Rt. Wor. Bro. Jack Pell and updated Dec 2000.

I have chosen to speak this evening regarding the good and the bad of concordant bodies and related organizations. At a very early stage in every Masons training, in fact in the entered apprentice degree the neophyte is admonished to abstain from every topic of religious or political discussion within the Lodge for fear of creating an atmosphere not conducive to that love and harmony which should at all times prevail. Based on such strong admonitions to avoid dissension some topics worthy of discussion are often kept perpetually under wraps and do not receive the attention they deserve. I trust my discussion here this evening may shed some light on some issues which have been kept in the closet to long and which when exposed to the light of reason and charity, may enrich the ranks of our respected fraternity.

In case I step on any toes this evening I want you to know I am a member of many of the concordant bodies about which I am going to speak and each of them have, I hope, contributed to my understanding of Masonry. I do not believe any of them will question my loyalty, but if they do they should know that I firmly believe that, for each of us, our first duty and loyalty is to our old mother Lodge for we received there the highest degree we will ever receive this side of paradise - The Degree of a Master Mason. Masonry exists on various levels, the true Masonic Lodges in this jurisdiction, as we all know, confer the entered apprentice, fellowcraft and Master Mason degrees. Promotion depends on the members proficiency in learning the answers to a set of questions and of course in most cases, the obligation. The candidate should understand something of its philosophy and ethics as well; but this is often not sufficiently impressed upon him.

There is no higher degree in Masonry than a Master Masons degree. Anything we learn in the York Rite, Scottish Rite and Shrine merely elaborate on these basic principals.

The Scottish Rite did not, as you might suppose, come from Scotland it originated in Charleston South Carolina in 1801 and was based on documents which came from France. Some maintain that they arrived in France from Scotland and this could be if you believe the Sinclair stories(*). The Scottish Rite confers the fourth through the thirty-second degrees (although their constitution allows them to confer the first three degrees as well).

In this jurisdiction (Canada):

- the fourth through the fourteenth comprise The Lodge of Perfection.
- the fifteenth through the eighteenth comprise the Rose Croix
- the nineteenth through the thirty-second comprise the Consistory
- the thirty-third degree is honorary.

Ancient York Rite Masonry is considered by some to have been the source of our ritual, the original masonry, the definitive and only true Rite having been brought over from Britain either from Scotland or from the Holy city of York. This may or may not be so (*). Our current York Rite ritual was actually derived from the American Rites drafted after the American Revolution in 1776. But what its sources were remains uncertain as far as I could find out.

The York Rite confers varying numbers of degrees depending on the jurisdiction but generally the Chapter confers the Mark Master Mason degree, the Most Excellent Master Degree and the degree of The Holy Royal Arch.

The Cryptic Rite confers the Royal and Select Masters degrees as well as the Arc Mariners
the Preceptory has five orders including the Knights Templar

In addition many other bodies are appended to York Rite Masonry in various ways; some of these are:
the Conclave -(the Red cross of Constantine)
the Order of the High Priests
the Knights Templar Priests
the Operative Masons
the Knights of the York Cross of Honour
the Allied Masonic Degrees
the Rosicrucians
the York Rite College

The Shrine A.A.O.N.M.S. (the Ancient Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine) has only one ritual degree
but, like the York Rite there are various appended organisations; Shrine Clubs Parade Units, etc. which a Noble
may join.

Scottish Rite, York Rite and the Shrine then are autonomous bodies but their members have in common their
membership in the Craft Lodge and all the moral and philosophical teachings of Masonry.

Now to the meat of this paper; I would first like to speak of some of the good things about concordant bodies. Few
Masons, on receiving the third degree, realize what a treasure they have received at the hands of their brethren. As
time goes on we realize there is much to ponder. Each of us finds questions that remain unanswered, we know there
must be answers but what they are is often difficult to determine. We are all challenged to make a daily
advancement in Masonic knowledge, What better way than through membership in our concordant bodies? There
the work of the first three degrees is expanded upon and many of our questions are answered.

Through the Concordant bodies the door to a fuller enjoyment of our masonic membership is unlocked. Another
advantage of concordant bodies is that they draw their membership from many Lodges and so the members tend to
be more outward looking and it seems to me that we are all the better because of this cross fertilization of minds.
The third advantage is Charity - while the Craft Lodge teaches that the greatest virtue is Charity they do so in order
that the individual will be motivated to perform charitable works on his own account while the Lodges and Grand
Lodge look after the benevolent work. On the other hand, the various concordant bodies each support individual
charities that give each of us a focus as to where we can make our charitable gifts. In recent years the Grand Lodge
of Canada has copied this example with programs like Help to Hear. The Shrine of North America completely fund
and manage 22 Orthopaedic, Burn and Spinal Hospitals for Children.

On the positive side then the concordant bodies: aid us to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge; help
us to get new ideas and other viewpoints on masonic matters; and they provide a focus for our charity.

Before I get into details of what is wrong with the Concordant Bodies I would like to let you know why I chose this
topic in the first place. That reason was that these bodies usually require a membership in a Freemasonry Craft
Lodge or a direct family connection to a Craft Lodge member as a prerequisite for admission to their order,
therefore how they relate to and affect Craft Masonry becomes the direct concern of Grand Lodge and a proper

subject for discussion by its representatives.

Well now, what could possibly be wrong with the Concordant Bodies and their members. I'll try to enumerate a few things;

1st: it sometimes happens that some of the members of Craft Lodges get so involved in the bodies which claim relationship to freemasonry that they tend to neglect the parent body. In this case I challenge these other Masonic organisations and particularly the individuals referred to, to acknowledge by action rather than words that the Craft Lodge is the fountainhead of all freemasonry. I guess what I am saying is that before you decide to join a concordant body be sure you are willing to dedicate sufficient of your time to do it justice because if you are not prepared to spend more time in total Masonry it must follow that you will spend less time in your Craft Lodge.

2nd: because concordant bodies are able to solicit members, and like it or not compete for members sometimes newly made members are approached shortly after they are made Master Masons. This is just too early; how can the new Mason make enlightened judgements, he really doesn't even understand Craft Masonry at this point. It is my opinion, that our Grand Lodge and the Grand Bodies governing Concordant Bodies might well be advised to rethink the rules regarding waiting periods. I believe a man should be a Master Mason for at least a Year, if not longer, before he be permitted to petition for membership in any concordant body. Perhaps after a year the new master mason may start to understand what masonry is about. If he doesn't, how is he going to make a real contribution to the concordant body? How is he going to be a good and productive member for them?

3rd: Solicitation encourages the attitude that when a master mason gains membership in another body he has outgrown his ancient Craft Lodge and if any of you think that helps attendance at Craft masonry, your wrong, wrong, wrong. My Brethren, I ask you to remember that Masonry is not a weigh station on the road to Concordant Bodies. In fact Freemasonry is not a destination at all, it is a journey, a lifetime journey, Freemasonry, my Brethren is a way of life!

4th: Masonic concordant bodies are actually competing for the time, the attendance, the interest, the substance and devotion of the Master Mason. This is bad enough for the ordinary member, but think of the case where a brother is Sr. Warden in his Lodge, Second Principal in his Chapter, or, first General in the Rose Croix, or, Associate Patron in his Eastern Star Chapter or, other offices in other bodies at the same time. What happens then; I'll tell you what I think happens; the poor fellow is spread too thin; he probably goes on to become the presiding officer in two or more bodies at the same time and doesn't do justice to either. Reason: even if you are super talented, and completely dedicated, each of these positions is a full time avocation.

Enough of the negative, all this being said, I would like to back off a bit and say there are some Masons who excel at ritual, some are excellent planners and others are content to fraternize. Some take great pleasure in helping to mould the youth into thoughtful young adults. Others appreciate social and ritual work with their wives at their side. To each his own; the Shrine appeals to the Service Club oriented type of individual, the man who likes to do things, likes to run projects: to buy an ambulance for the local hospital, to sponsor a crippled child to a Shrine Hospital, to work at the Circus, to sell tickets on Shrine sponsored raffles and that's a great field for many of us to work in. The Scottish Rite puts on 29 degrees and gives many an opportunity to take part in ritual and drama and that appeals to many.

The York Rite, as I have already said is divided into many smaller organisations and so gives a lot of members a chance to go through the chairs and run the order -great experience!

The Craft Lodge, (particularly Research and Daylight Lodges) appeal to the person who is more philosophically inclined, who is interested in the Philosophy, history and moral and social virtues as we teach them.

What I am suggesting, my brethren, is that after all my critical remarks about what's wrong with the concordant bodies, I feel there is still room and need for them.

Finally, my brethren, whether you belong to some concordant body or not I hope none of you believe that "that which was lost" will be found in any concordant body. No Mason who understands that "Masonry is a search for that which was lost" ever expects to hear the true word from mortal tongue. Our search for a perfect knowledge of God and Truth; the Alpha and the Omega of Masonry, must continue throughout our lives, perhaps throughout eternity.

(*) for further discussion of these subjects see my talk on Rosslyn Chapel