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The majestic *America Bald Eagle*
Goodyear Lake, NY - 2008
Welcome to Spring

Greenleaf Gardens
Lodge No. 670
Whittier, California

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The Front Cover Picture

Our Bald Eagles

Since 2001 we have been thrilled by the sight of bald eagles on and about Goodyear Lake. There are three nesting pairs of bald eagles in Otsego County, and we are fortunate that one pair nests near our area. Scott Van Arsdale of the Department of Environmental Conservation has generously provided information about and photographs of our ravishing raptors. I have a house on Goodyear lake and have seen he eagles. We are about 15 miles South of Cooperstown. Dave Pickup

Masonic Traditions for the Twenty-First Century

W. Bro. Dennis V. Chornenky
President, Masonic Restoration Foundation

Considering the Craft's current decline in most English-speaking jurisdictions, it is important to consider what is at stake if the organization is to be preserved in its original form and its traditions are to continue to have a meaningful impact on the lives of its members.

Masons should be able to answer three questions if Masonry is to be successful. What is Freemasonry? What is its historical purpose? And what makes it different from other fraternal organizations?

The answer to the first question is that Freemasonry is a traditional initiatic order. While it has taken its modern form during the Enlightenment, its traditions, symbols and lessons, reach back to pre-modern times. If we closely investigate the lives of the individuals who were active in shaping speculative Freemasonry out of its operative roots, and particularly examine their connections to older occult societies and traditions, it becomes clear that speculative Freemasonry was designed to be foremost an initiate institution through which men could recognize their true spiritual potential.

The courtly philosophical climate of sixteenth and seventeenth century Britain, where it did not follow strictly Puritan or Anglican trends, was strongly influenced by the underground tradition sometimes referred to as Arcadia, which encompassed within its philosophy elements of Gnostic, Neo-Platonic, Hermetic, and Kabalistic thought. As Rosicrucianism surfaced in the early seventeenth century it also showed an affinity to the Arcadian stream of thought.

A close study of the literary works produced during this period reveals a distinct current of symbolism embedded inside seemingly mainstream publications. And to those well versed in Masonic symbolism the central themes of the initiate tradition become quickly evident upon examination of this literature.

It was precisely out of this philosophical climate, united through organizations such as the Royal Society, and through extensive correspondence that is now well documented, that the most well known proponents of seventeenth and early eighteenth century Freemasonry

emerged from. Men like Sir Robert Moray, Elias Ashmole, Jean Desaguliers, James Anderson, and their numerous friends and counterparts from all across Europe. Even if some of their writings regarding the history of the Craft may appear questionable to us in light of the evidence now available, it is clear that they viewed Speculative Masonry as a custodian of the initiate traditions of the past, charged with their propagation and preservation.

The general work associated with the initiate tradition, and the purpose of Freemasonry, put simply, is to provide an environment where good men can unite together to assist one another in self-improvement and the realization of their true potential. One of the underlying tenets of this initiate tradition is the belief that if even one individual becomes a better person the entire world profits thereby.

Being part of the initiate tradition is what distinguishes Freemasonry from purely social or philanthropic organizations. While there are many different organizations that contribute large sums of money to charity, offer fellowship with like minded men or provide education. Freemasonry is unique, in that it embodies all these things, but is actually focused on offering men a traditional initiation into the mysteries of life and death. The initiate tradition is the core, defining characteristic of Freemasonry, without which, there would be nothing to differentiate Masonry from other social or philanthropic organizations.

Attempts to make Freemasonry as accessible as other organizations by reducing or eliminating the initiate elements are likely to bring ruin to the Craft. One could call the new organization which would emerge from such a process anything one likes, but it would no longer be Masonic.

Much of our dilemma arises from the fact that too many men that join are not properly educated about the fraternity. Rather than coming to an understanding of the Craft based on diligent study and thinking, new candidates tend to form their opinions based on the behavior of fellow Masons, who are themselves too often poorly educated about the fraternity's history and philosophy. A disproportionately small number of serious and scholarly men within the organization has led to a general decline over the last several decades.

In efforts to arrest the decline in numbers, many jurisdictions in North America have sought to make Masons faster and to make it easier for them to join by reducing the requirements for membership. Unfortunately, in order to appeal to the greatest amount of people