

A Deadly Deception?

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The History Channel gets a lot of things wrong. That is, they get facts wrong concerning certain details of say, Freemasonry. Considering that Freemasonry is the History Channel's biggest obsession, just behind World War II, this is a rather serious offense. They take an obviously negative attitude towards Masons, connecting them to conspiracies left and right. One special about the alleged 2012 shift even mentioned that Freemasonry is inherently a conspirator in the matter. The program alluded to the "secrets" that Masons have, but gave no evidence to definitely connect the two. That form of ignorance is frustrating. The paranoia that has arisen in the general public is unfounded. There is no plot to create a "new world order." Masons are not that coordinated. Instead, they focus on making their members better people, and helping their communities. Freemasonry is a benevolent society and is unjustly connected to conspiracy theories and plots for a new world order.

I am not a Mason. I am a woman, but I have extensive observations of the "Craft" of Freemasonry from my father and grandfather's extensive involvement in the fraternity. My father started in the Blue Lodge, the basic Freemasonry. He was a member of Camelback Daylight Lodge No.75 in Mesa, Arizona. Yearly installations of officers are held and are often open to the public. Camelback Daylight Lodge's membership consisted of elderly gentlemen, so the Regular Installation of Officers were usually an event with ill-fitting and wrinkled tuxedos, walkers, bolo ties, oxygen tanks, and hearing aides buzzing away, but also warm handshakes, and big hugs for me. It was always astounding to think that these men were accused of plotting world domination.

The fear comes from the unknown. Freemasonry still has some traditions that have been lost to the ages in common society. While ignoring the symbolism, people get hung up on the details—"Why are they wearing aprons?"—and jump to the conclusion that these gentlemen are obviously conspirators. Freemasonry began as an operative masonry guild—thus the aprons—that transformed into a gentlemen's club that fostered the ideas of tolerance and truth during the Enlightenment. "Speculative" Freemasonry (as opposed to operative masonry) and the Illuminati were formed during the same era, so they are often connected. The Illuminati was formed on the same basis, tolerance and truth, but was not able to continue due to persecution by the Bavarian government. The Illuminati is no longer in existence, despite what Dan Brown says, and it is definitely not connected to Freemasonry. The fear in America that comes from the term "Freemasonry" is based on Americans' general paranoia of anything they don't yet understand. My challenge to you, then, is to join the fraternity and judge for yourself.

It is unlikely that such a plot for world domination or a new world order could be conceived in Freemasonry, even in the higher levels of the organization. The Blue Lodge is not governed by an international, or even national leader. In the United States, every state is autonomous. The Grand Lodge of the state regulates and directs the local lodges in their jurisdiction. The many different Grand Lodges are kept in check by a process of recognizing each other. If the Grand Lodge of one area decrees something that is against Masonic teachings, the Grand Lodges of other areas will declare it a "clandestine" Lodge, and members are forbidden from attending lodge meetings there. This system makes it nearly impossible to create a viable conspiracy of the magnitude of a new world order. There are other branches of Freemasonry, such as the York Rite and the Scottish Rite, but

to join these appendent groups, one must first be a member of the Blue Lodge. There is no conspiracy within these branches because the Grand Master, the leader of the Grand Lodge, ultimately controls those branches as well. The fabled 33rd Degree Masons are often charged with making malicious plots in the dark smoky room. First of all, smoking is not allowed in lodge rooms. Secondly, these men are just Scottish Rite Masons, still subordinate to the Grand Master. Thirdly, many of these men are also Shriners, the same elderly gentlemen who wear the funny red hats, dress as clowns and do tricks in miniature cars in parades. The finger pointing must stop.

Many people and groups today attack Freemasonry without looking into the truth. Thousands of web sites claim things like “Freemasonry is a Non-Christian Occult Religion,” “Christians Beware – of Freemasonry,” (Keohane) and “Freemasonry proven to worship Satan, as its symbols venerate the sex act.” Bad grammar, poorly constructed HTML layouts, and “telling” photographs of “Masonic” symbols and regalia accompany these sites. The experts referenced have Masonic titles, like 33rd Degree, slapped at the end of their name. Anti- Masonic literature has the same fallacies. The Indiana Freemason web site analyzes one such book, *The Deadly Deception: Freemasonry Exposed by one of Its Top Leaders* by James Shaw, and finds four outright lies on the front cover alone. The various arguments against Freemasonry are baseless and uninformed.

Yes, Masons keep secrets. When you were little, did you ever have a club? Did that club have passwords that you kept secret from “outsiders”? Did it make you feel special to be a part of that club, especially because it had secret passwords? Apply that same concept to a club for older men, and you get the idea. While a Mason may not tell

you what the passwords are, they are not really secrets anymore. If someone is really curious, the Masonic "Ritual," a book containing Masonic ceremonies is already published in various forms. Charles William Heckethorn (1965), secret society expert, says, "The outside world, who cannot believe that Masonic meetings, which are so jealously guarded against the intrusion of non-Masons, have no other purpose than the rehearsal of a now totally useless and pointless ritual, followed by conviviality [a break for refreshments], naturally assume that there must be something more behind; and what seems to fear the light is usually supposed to be evil." The ceremony to initiate new members has always been an object of attack because of the seemingly strange things parts of the ceremony. Essentially it involves the reenactment of a story. Various objects and words are used to represent a lesson that the initiate should always bear in mind. The phrase "on the level" comes from one such lesson.

What is the creed of Freemasonry? What do they believe? Much confusion has arisen over the issue, and anti-Masonic groups do all they can to keep it that way. Freemason Roger Firestone articulately answers, "Freemasonry strongly encourages its members to belong to an established religion, although that is not a requirement for membership (only that a candidate profess a belief in a Supreme Being). Masonry is a fraternal organization that encourages morality and charity and studies philosophy. It has no clergy, no sacraments, and does not promise salvation to its members." Every Masonic activity starts with a prayer (and the presentation of the national flag, when appropriate). John the Baptist and John the Evangelist are the patron saints of Freemasonry, keeping high ideals and high pursuits at the forefront. Freemasonry is not a religion itself, but it strengthens the beliefs and morals of its members.

Members of the fraternity enjoy the privileges of having brothers all over the world. Masons and their families can always call upon other members in times of need. Travelers, the infirmed, those in distress can take comfort when they meet up with another Mason, whether they have known him previously or not. The Masonic family, including the women's and youth groups, is a tight-knit community. Often a Masonic ring on a man's right hand signifies that he will meet you on the level.

Freemasonry is dedicated to the betterment of its members, but also its community. Shrine hospitals, the Arizona Masonic Foundation for Children, the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, the Hearing Impaired Kids Endowment, the Amaranth Diabetes Foundation and Scottish Rite hospitals are all beneficiaries of Masonic sponsorship. The South Carolina Freemasonry web site says, "The Freemasons of North America contribute over two million dollar a day to charitable causes." Local Lodges also have programs to help the nearby schools, hospitals and youth organizations. If Freemasonry had malicious intentions, would not these resources be better employed elsewhere?

Suggesting that Freemasonry is anything but benevolent is ludicrous. Implying that it is involved in conspiracies is ignorant. Americans worried about a new world order should turn their attention to other groups with that goal. And the History Channel needs to get these facts correct. Factual errors and dramatization are unacceptable. In the war for public opinion, Freemasonry should be the benign and prestigious organization that teaches belief in a Supreme Being, high ideals for living, and brotherly love.

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