

"Why Ethiopia?"

Unknown

It was at the end of a District Education Meeting. Problems of ritual and floor work had been hashed and rehashed. One of the Brethren, who had been attending the District Meetings for years, commented that this would be the last meeting he would attend. He wasn't getting anything out of them anymore. It was always the same old stuff – never anything new.

An old Past Master dryly said, "Well, son, if you know it all, I guess there's no reason for you to attend ... unless you might be able to teach some of us that don't know it all." He paused, letting his remarks sink in, and then asked, "By the way, why Ethiopia?"

A quizzical look spread across the face of the younger man, as the wise old Past Master suggested that maybe at the next meeting he would explain "Why Ethiopia" as a place of refuge referred to in the Hiram legend.

Well, sir, that did the trick. It was something the younger man had never considered. For the next several days the question, "Why Ethiopia? "Why Ethiopia?" ran through his mind. Finally, when time permitted, he started looking for a clue to the answer in his personal Masonic library. At the next District Education Meeting, he reported that he hadn't come up with the answer, but was still working on it.

He wrote letters to friends asking their help. He called the Grand Lodge Library. His queries started others on the fascinating, frustrating, and fanciful search. 'Twas contagious.

Finally, the pieces fell into place. Enthusiastically, he set down the results of his study in a paper he read to the District Education Meeting. With all of the reading he had done on this, it wasn't surprising that he found a host of other questions that tickled his fancy. (Editor's Note: We could give you the results of his search on the "Why Ethiopia?" question, but refrain from doing so, that you may enjoy some of the thrills of Masonic research yourself.)

The contagion of his enthusiasm for Masonic research was soon to produce a Masonic study group, which later developed into a Research Lodge. Bored by ritual, our hero found a deeper relationship to Freemasonry as a result of two words – "Why Ethiopia? "

In another case, another type of Masonic research was initiated when a Brother was asked, "What were the first words you ever spoke in a Masonic Lodge? Scratching his head and

thinking back to that distant day when he was initiated, he finally was able to come up with the answer, "In God." The wheels began to turn. Those were two of the most important words he had ever spoken. They reflected his basic beliefs, his inspiration and his better understanding of the degrees. He, too, found the words haunting. How many times he had noticed the references to God in the various Masonic rituals. In retrospect, he realized how much reliance there is in that belief. It is a common denominator of Masonry. It is that thread of common belief that completes the bonds of brotherhood, concern, of faith, hope and charity.

He, too, was inspired to do more research on the subject, and in doing so, stimulated the thinking process of many of his Brethren. His papers were delivered on the subject of belief in God in lodges, district seminars, and research lodges.

From the youngest Entered Apprentice in the Northeast corner to the greatest of Masonic scholars, there is a constant search for "more light in Masonry." This is evident by the increasing number of Masonic study groups, research lodges, and Masonic periodicals.

Every knowledgeable Mason will subscribe to one or more Masonic periodicals. Many Jurisdictions publish "official publications" which enunciate the official thinking of the Grand Lodge on Masonic subjects. There is also a wide variety of "commercial" Masonic publications, many of which contain a wealth of good and wholesome Masonic information. Of course, many of them serve only as meeting notices for the local area. A current list of Masonic periodicals, with subscription rates, is available at nominal charge from the Masonic Service Association.

Masonic study groups are usually found a lodge level. Their interests cover a wide scope. Some are primarily attuned to the interpretation of ritual. Others deal with philosophy and ethics. Some center their interests on the local issues and local history.

Research Lodges also are a "mixed bag." There is a wide variety of them with areas of interest and emphasis equally varied. The most scholarly is the famous Quatuor Coronati Lodge # 2076 of London, England, which justly proclaims itself as "The Premier Lodge of Masonic Research." Each year it publishes a valuable volume of its Transactions, containing papers presented at its meetings, together with transcripts of the discussions generated by the papers.

The Lodge was formed in 1884 by nine of the greatest students of Masonic research. Their first objective was to imbue Brethren everywhere with a love for Masonic research. Their standards of excellence resulted in their being called the "authentic school," because they shunned the baseless and imaginary studies which had bedeviled Craft historians for more than a century.

From the beginning, membership in Quatuor Coronati Lodge was by invitation, extended only to Brethren who had done distinguished work in Masonic study. The number of members was limited to forty, although that number has never been attained.

However, soon after the Lodge was consecrated, the membership of the Correspondence Circle was founded. All Master Masons in good standing under Grand Lodges in amity with the

United Grand Lodge of England are eligible to join. Many American Brethren, Lodges, Study Circles (clubs), Libraries and other regular Masonic bodies are members of the Correspondence Circle.

In the United States, one of the foremost research lodges is The American Lodge of Research. Warranted on May 7, 1931, by the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York, The American Lodge of Research has published some of the most important papers dealing with Masonry in American History. It is only natural that the bulk of their papers deal with Masons and Masonic history of The Empire State. They, too, permit corresponding members from other Jurisdictions.

Periodically, The Masonic Service Association publishes a current listing of Research Lodges. Because the varied need for Masonic Light is so different in each Brother, no effort is made by M.S.A. to recommend one Research Lodge over another. They are all good in their particular fields of interest. It might be well to investigate the ones closest to home first, and then branch out to join others as your Masonic knowledge broadens and your interests develop.

Research is such a broadening experience. Masonic Research is a fascinating and rewarding endeavor as you apply the symbolic square, plumb, and level to each bit of Masonic information – separating fact from fantasy-truth from myth – and as you learn how Masonic principles have been applied in the development of your community, state, and nation. You cannot help but have a greater awareness of the worth of our beloved

Fraternity as you search and research. You'll have the opportunity to "work in the quarries" and receive the symbolic wages.

To start you on your way on the fascinating journey of Masonic Research, you may have an unanswered question about Freemasonry. Don't keep it cooped up! Ask some knowledgeable Brother where you might find the answer. Dig it out, and note the interesting by-paths which will invite you to do more study along the way.

Keep in mind as you search, that the Masonic Service Association has a vast amount of information available in capsulated form. Since January, 1923, it has published The Short Talk Bulletin every month. All back issues are maintained in print. An index of Short Talk Bulletins is available FREE from your Masonic Service Association.

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