

BOOK REVIEW

WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

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WEEKLY MASONIC DOUBTS

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Canadian Freemason Istvan Horvath offers *Weekly Masonic Doubts* as a tool to stimulate critical thinking and open new dialogues with respect to issues that confront Freemasons, both inside and outside the confines of the Masonic Lodge.

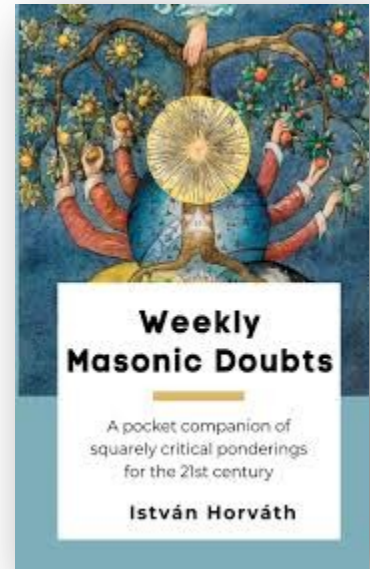
Worshipful Brother Horvath uses the “doubt system” of philosophy to frame the issues. The development of the “doubt system,” or “Cartesian Doubt,” is generally attributed to 17th Century philosopher Rene Descartes. The process is fairly straightforward: one subject his beliefs to skepticisms, our doubts, until he has resolved the validity (or invalidity) of such beliefs. In other words, the “doubt system” is the application of reason to one’s set of beliefs. Both within and without Freemasonry, the challenge is to submit long-held beliefs to objective questioning and reason.

As the title implies, Worshipful Brother Horvath raises fifty-two issues for Freemasons to consider. Some of the issues represent Freemasonry’s most universal tenets. Others are curiosities that vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. All are worthy of consideration.

Here are a handful of topics that Worshipful Brother Horvath addresses:

Chapter 6 – Why Do We Need God?

A belief in the existence of a Supreme Being is perhaps the most universal of all the beliefs in Freemasonry. With only a few exceptions, Masonic jurisdictions worldwide require that a candidate for Freemasonry profess a belief in God. In this brief chapter, Worshipful Brother Horvath examines the basis for the requirement of this belief and poses significant questions about the nature of God, and the nature of man’s relationship to Him.



Chapter 9 – One Day Masons

Turning to an issue that is less existential, yet still very relevant in contemporary Freemasonry, Worshipful Brother Horvath discusses the use of one-day classes to make new members in the Masonic Fraternity. What has Freemasonry accomplished in these instances? Have we really made Masons? Or have we merely added more men to the rolls of Freemasonry. The author asks the telling question, what is the relationship of the one-day class to the quality of the ritual being performed? A discussion of that question would be most interesting.

Chapter 17 – On Time

Time is man's most precious commodity. Once it has been expended, it can never be regained or replaced. Worshipful Brother Horvath examines the time that we spend engaged in Masonic activity and poses the seemingly simple question: is this time well spent? While all Freemasons would be inclined to immediately answer with a loud, "yes!" a closer review, for many, would challenge that response.

Chapter 27 – On Secrecy

Much of the public fascination with Freemasonry stems from the misconception that Freemasonry is a secret society. Nothing could be more false. Yet, Freemasonry does have some secrets. Some generations of Masons have been so secretive that they were unwilling to reveal their membership in the Craft even to close relatives. What is secret about Freemasonry? Why do we continue the tradition of holding certain secrets? This chapter helps us understand how secrecy is less about withholding information, and more about developing personal integrity.

Chapter 44 – On Spirituality

Freemasonry is a holistic experience. It affects all parts of a man's life, including his spiritual nature. Men, being men, frequently overlook their spiritual well-being. An effective Masonic experience is one that reminds man that he is a spiritual creature, and that our Lodges are places of reflection and development of our spiritual selves. Joseph Fort Newton described Masonry not as a religion, but as a worship. The discussion of the spiritual aspects of Freemasonry has innumerable facets to examine.

As you may have surmised, reading *Weekly Masonic Doubts* is not necessarily a comfortable experience. It was not designed to be. If anything, the exact opposite is true. The writings are designed to get the reader outside his comfort zone – to challenge, or "doubt," what may be long-held beliefs. It is outside that comfort zone that growth occurs. The honest thinker will either return to his previous convictions with his faith therein strengthened, or he will adopt new attitudes, based on his exploration and revelations. In both instances, the man, whether or not a

Freemason, who honestly confronts his most deeply held beliefs, will, as a matter of course, meet himself. That may be the most valuable application of Worshipful Brother Istvan Horvath's *Weekly Masonic Doubts*.

Weekly Masonic Doubts may be effectively used by the individual Mason, who wishes to further consider his various beliefs with respect to Freemasonry. Its best use, however, may be as a tool for Masonic Lodges or study groups to collectively examine their practices and principles.

Weekly Masonic Doubts is an important addition to the library of any person who seriously considers Freemasonry and who is unafraid of confronting their own system of beliefs.

Weekly Masonic Doubts was published in 2023 by Cravat Books. It is currently in print, and is readily available from the inventory of online booksellers.