

VOICES OF FREEMASONRY

Welcome to the third edition of **Voices of Freemasonry**.

In 1875 Albert G. Mackey wrote his famous essay, “Reading Masons and Masons Who Do Not Read.” Nearly all Masons, even the ones who do not read, have at least, at some point, heard of Mackey’s essay.

This edition of **Voices of Freemasonry** focuses on the extent to which reading comprises a part of one’s Masonic experience. Unsurprisingly, members of Research Lodges and other study groups, formal and informal, tend to be readers.

For those Masons who are inclined to read, never before in the history of the Fraternity has there been so much material available for perusal. For those who prefer the tactile experience of holding a book in their hands, online book sellers provide contemporary volumes on Freemasonry as well as the time-honored classics, and, for the more diligent researcher, obscure and long out-of-print works.

Numerous websites (including this one) offer book reviews, articles, books online, and author interviews. National and jurisdictional publications are available, as are journals designed for members of appendant bodies.

Information about Freemasonry, and information about where to obtain information about Freemasonry, is readily available for public and private consumption.

But back to Brother Mackey. Mackey wrote that Masons will “pay \$50 for a jewel, but not fifty-cents for a book.” In that respect, Masonry has changed little since Mackey’s time.

Consider Brother Andrew Hammer’s preeminent work, ***Observing the Craft***, published in 2010. It is, without any doubt, the most significant writing on Freemasonry specifically intended for Masons to appear since W. L. Wilmshurst’s ***The Meaning of Masonry***. (Many of the Masons who responded to this survey pointed to both books, by the way, as being among their favorites.) One hundred years from now, Masons will mention Hammer in the same way that we now refer to Mackey and Wilmshurst. And yet, only the tiniest fraction of Masons has heard of Worshipful Brother Hammer, or have read his book. With so few men willing to invest the time and intellectual energy required to read about our Fraternity, especially in the instance of such an inspiring work as ***Observing the Craft***, one is left to wonder just how much of the spirit of enlightenment remains among the Brethren.

In reviewing the responses to this survey, ask yourself the following questions:

- What book, other than my personal Volume of Sacred Law, has influenced my life?
- Have I made any life choices inspired by reading a specific book?
- What does the level of my reading about Freemasonry say about the level of my commitment to the Fraternity?
- What is my plan to expand my knowledge of Freemasonry?
- Am I a “reading Mason, or a Mason who does not read?”

William O. Ware Lodge of Research is grateful to the 20 men who responded to this set of questions. The Masons who participated in this exercise hold memberships in eleven U. S. Grand Lodges (including Kentucky), two Canadian Grand Lodges and the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria. In terms of Masonic experience, the range of their years of membership falls between 5 years and 48 years.

Here is a final thought: All Freemasons have a voice. We deeply appreciate the efforts of the 20 men whose voices are heard here. Is your voice heard?

William O. Ware Lodge of Research – May 7, 2021.