

Good Books, Great Books: How to Have a Dialogue With the Past

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I. Introduction

Esteemed brother Freemasons and honored guests, it is with a profound sense of gratitude and joy that I stand before you tonight. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each one of you for gracing this Festive Board with your presence and camaraderie, and my most sincere thanks to the brothers of the Rubicon Masonic Society who invited me to speak this evening. It is on occasions like this, when brethren from across the country of all walks of life gather together in the spirit of brotherhood, that the true essence of Freemasonry can be felt alive and well.

Tonight, I invite you to embark on a journey with me, a journey that is not only through the pages of time, but also through the corridors of wisdom that have been left to us by our predecessors. The theme of my address to you this evening, "Good Books, Great Books: How to Have a Dialogue with the Past," will, I hope, invite you to explore the treasure trove of knowledge that lies within the written words of those who have come before us, but especially so the esteemed authors who have contributed to the rich tapestry of Masonic literature.

As we sit together in this beautiful hall, a hall of fellowship, please take a moment with me to pause and reflect on the power of books. In particular, their ability to transcend the boundaries of time and space, and their unique capacity to preserve the thoughts, experiences, and wisdom of those who have long since departed from this mortal coil. The great philosopher Francis Bacon, who was honored with a Masonic festive board himself for his 60th birthday, said "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." It is these few, these great books, that beckon us to engage in a dialogue with the past. And you may be already wondering: what distinguishes a good book from a great book? We'll get into this a bit more later, but I'll tell you a definition that has long stuck with me for distinguishing between the two is this: a good book teaches you something new, but a great book teaches you how to say something you've always known but never knew how to express.

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Many Masons have written both good and great books throughout the ages in their pursuit of knowledge, light, and truth. In our own pursuit then, let us together turn to the written word for guidance. Our four venerable authors selected for this weekend of inquiry – A.S. MacBride, Joseph Fort Newton, Dwight L. Smith, and Thomas W. Jackson – have left us with a profound legacy of wisdom that continues to resonate with the hearts and minds of Masons who engage with them today. Through their writings, they extend an invitation to us, a call to embark on a journey of self-discovery, personal growth, and intellectual enrichment.

“The enduring legacy of Freemasonry, a legacy that is preserved not only in the pages of books but also in the hearts and minds of all those who carry the light of the craft within them.”

Tonight and tomorrow, my brothers, we have the privilege of taking on this dialogue with the past, as we delve into the works of these illustrious authors and draw inspiration from their insights. Together, we shall uncover more about the timeless principles that form the bedrock of our craft and learn how to apply them in our daily lives.

And remember, as we partake in this Festive Board, let us savor not only the fine dining but also the fine company of one another. Let us toast to the wisdom of the past and the boundless possibilities of the future. And, above all, let us celebrate the enduring legacy of Freemasonry, a legacy that is preserved not only in the pages of books but also in the hearts and minds of all those who carry the light of the craft within them. It is my sincere hope that you will leave this talk inspired to be a more engaged reader, which in turn, I hope will make you a better Mason and a steward of the principles that Freemasonry upholds. I would ask you to apply these tools to all books, but especially so for our esteemed authors who are the focus of this weekend. So among the many toasts tonight, please do not forget to drink to the enduring knowledge and wisdom of the ages, and the unbreakable bonds that tie us to the ancients which are as strong as the bonds that tie you and I together tonight.

Thank you once again, and let us now embark on what I hope will be an enlightening journey together!

“The dialogue between the reader and the author is not confined to a single moment; it is a timeless exchange.”

Here is a fact that I think of which you will need no convincing: books have power. It is a power that transcends time and space and connects us with the wisdom of the past and illuminates the path to a brighter future. Books, my brothers, are not mere objects made of paper and ink; they are vessels of knowledge, portals to different worlds, and gateways to the thoughts and experiences of those who have come before us. Through books, we can engage in a timeless dialogue with the great minds of history: philosophers, scholars, and yes, our esteemed Masonic authors, who have bequeathed to us their profound insights and teachings. And, yes, I do mean a dialogue. Did you know that you can have a conversation with Plato? Yes, indeed! Through this enduring power, Plato can talk directly to you, reaching across centuries to share his wisdom, insights, and ideas. And the most amazing part of this is that it is a meeting of the minds that can defy the boundaries of time.

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In the world of Freemasonry, books have always held a sacred place. From the earliest days of the craft, Masons sought to preserve what they could of the teachings and traditions of the fraternity in written form, passing them down from generation to generation. It is through this tradition of preserving knowledge in books that we are able to maintain a living connection with the past, allowing the light of wisdom to guide us in our journey as Masons. As we delve into the wisdom of our authors – MacBride, Newton, Smith, and Jackson – we too engage in a living conversation with these revered authors, and we learn how their works continue to enrich our understanding of Freemasonry today. Their words, penned long ago, still resonate with relevance and significance right now. Believe me when I tell you that as you turn the pages of their writings, you embark on a voyage that traverses the annals of history, discovering truths that you may have always known, but never quite knew how to express -- the hallmark of a great book.

In turning to the pages of specific books by these authors, it is in *Speculative Masonry*, that we find A.S. MacBride's insightful exploration of the evolution of our craft and the importance of preserving its core landmarks. Through *The Builders*, Joseph Fort Newton imparts to us the significance of the spiritual and moral dimensions of Freemasonry, guiding us to seek deeper meanings in our Masonic journey. Dwight L. Smith, in *Whither Are We Traveling?* reminds us of the vital role that Masonic education plays in the growth of the individual and the fraternity. And within the writings of Thomas W. Jackson's *North American Freemasonry*, we uncover the profound effect that journeying through knowledge has, which transcends even national boundaries.

Brethren at this time, I would ask that we take a moment to appreciate what a privilege we have tonight—the privilege of being able to converse with the past through the medium of these great books. And as guides to moderate those conversations, we have four of the most accomplished Masonic writers today: Andrew Hammer, Dan M. Kemble, Christopher L. Hodapp, and John W. Bizzack. As we explore and reflect on the insights of all these authors together, let us remember that we are not passive recipients but active participants in this dialogue. Their words are not relics of a bygone era; rather, they are living entities that continue to shape our understanding and inform our actions.

And that is part of the beauty of looking at books as a dialogue. It offers the opportunity to renew our commitment to learning and seeking knowledge. So let us cherish our libraries, treasure our books, and share the wisdom we discover with our brethren. For, as we engage in this exchange of ideas, we not only honor the legacy of the authors but also contribute to the timeless and ever-evolving story of Freemasonry.

Allow me to now set the stage for how the wisdom of the past can guide us today. As I immerse myself in the pages of MacBride, Newton, Smith, and Jackson, I am reminded of the profound legacy of wisdom left to us by esteemed Masons who have come before me. Their writings are not ancient tomes gathering dust on library shelves; they are living testaments to the enduring truths of Freemasonry. And I mean enduring in the sense that they are still true even a century later. Tonight, I offer up the call not only to read these great books but to embrace the wisdom they offer and carry it forward into your own Masonic journey. Their words regularly offer invaluable insights into the essence of our craft, often inviting us to ponder the very foundations upon which our fraternity stands, such as the importance of maintaining our traditions while embracing the inevitable winds of change. And they call us to contemplate the spiritual and moral dimensions of our Masonic institution, reminding us that our fraternal bond extends far beyond the confines of the lodge room.

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As Masons, we are entrusted with the preservation and perpetuation of Masonic heritage, a heritage built upon principles that have withstood the test of time, but it is through learning from the works of those who have come before that we gain a deeper understanding of the symbolism, the allegory, and the profound teachings that are interwoven within the fabric of Freemasonry. Just as a well-crafted arch, standing the test of centuries, requires the careful maintenance of its foundation and pillars, so too does our fraternity call for us to cherish and uphold its guiding principles. The books of MacBride, Newton, Smith, and Jackson remind us that the strength of our fraternity lies not only in its history, but in our commitment to the Craft today.

In the words of Newton, Masonry is indeed "a system of moral and spiritual education" that beckons us to live our lives with integrity, compassion, and a dedication to the common good. Jackson would say it is a "journey through knowledge." But again brothers, it must be through Masonic education, as advocated by all of these authors, that we gain the tools to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the craft, ensuring its continued relevance and resonance. Furthermore, MacBride's exploration of Masonic symbolism reminds us that the teachings of

Freemasonry extend far beyond the surface, so let us be reminded that this extends to every aspect of our lives. These authors' words call upon us to delve deeper into the hidden meanings of Freemasonry, seeking illumination that can only be found by those who are willing to journey beyond the superficial. And this journey, I claim to you today, begins by reading books.

"It must be through Masonic education, as advocated by all of these authors, that we gain the tools to deepen our understanding and appreciation of the craft, ensuring its continued relevance and resonance."

As we transition now into the power of books as a tool to break down the barriers of time, I hope that we can be reminded here tonight that we can also break barriers that may divide us and embrace the unity that Freemasonry symbolizes through the breaking of bread together in this Festive Board. Let us remember that we are part of a global brotherhood, united by a shared heritage and a shared pursuit of enlightenment. For as MacBride wrote, "Masonry is a great brotherhood that transcends all barriers, bringing together men of different races, religions, and cultures into a bond of unity and understanding."

II. The Power of Books as a Dialogue with the Past

Let us now dive deeper into the essence of books and their invaluable role as a bridge to the past. In this age of technological advancements and instant information, in the age of the 5 second youtube advertisement and however many seconds long a tiktok is, it is easy to overlook the timeless allure of books. It is easy to forget their ability to transport us across time and space, connecting us with those who have come before. You see my brothers, where a video might show you a glimpse into some time and place, lasting for only a short while, books are vessels of knowledge and gateways to diverse realms of thought. They are windows into the minds of the great thinkers, philosophers, and Masonic scholars who have walked this path long before our time. When you open a book, you embark on a journey. It is a journey of discovery and enlightenment, guided by the insights of the author.

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As I have said, in the act of reading, we engage in a conversation with the past. Each word penned by an author is a testament to their dedication to something they feel, or felt, is worth writing about and their desire to share that wisdom with future generations. This is especially true of our esteemed Masonic authors. By studying their works, we enter into a dialogue with the great minds of Masonry of the past, drawing inspiration and guidance from their collective experiences and reflections.

Through the pages of *Speculative Masonry*, we explore the foundations of our fraternity, contemplating the enduring landmarks that have guided Masons for centuries. MacBride's words resonate with the wisdom of ages past, calling upon us to cherish the core principles that define the craft while adapting to the ever-changing landscape of the world around us.

In *The Builders*, Newton's eloquent prose opens our hearts to the spiritual and moral dimensions of Freemasonry. His insights invite us to seek a deeper understanding of the craft's purpose—a purpose that transcends the material and touches even upon the very essence of our existence.

Dwight L. Smith's *Whither Are We Traveling?* urges us to recognize the importance of education within the fraternity. Because it is through knowledge that we become the architects of our own growth, and through learning that we ensure the preservation and enrichment of the Masonic legacy.

"Each word penned by an author is a testament to their dedication to something they feel, or felt, is worth writing about and their desire to share that wisdom with future generations."

Within his book *North American Freemasonry*, Thomas W. Jackson guides us through the labyrinth of Masonic idealism and realism, revealing a clear path for Masons to ask themselves "Where were we? Where are we now? And where do we want to go?" His work beckons us to explore the layers of meaning within why our rituals and teachings are the ways that they are, providing us with a deeper appreciation for the profound symbolism that underpins the craft.

So for those of you who choose to immerse yourselves in the writings of these venerable authors, I hope that you are able to approach their works with open hearts and receptive minds. And that you are able to recognize that their insights have the power to illuminate our own Masonic journeys, guiding us along the path of personal growth and understanding. Because when we engage in this dialogue with the past, we become part of an unbroken chain, which is a chain of Masons stretching back through the ages, each link connected by the pursuit of light and knowledge. Just as our predecessors sought wisdom in the written word, so too do we continue this noble tradition of learning and self-improvement. The chain that has been forged before us is long, but it is up to us to decide that when the mantle passes to the next generation of Masons, the chain is one link longer.

Allow me to now explain how books allow us to tap into the collective knowledge and experiences of those who have come before us, offering many valuable insights and lessons. In this age of constant change and rapid advancements, it is easy to become swept up in the currents of modernity. Yet, within the pages of any great book, we find a steadying force—a timeless anchor that guides us. Another way to distinguish a great book from a good book could be to consider how many people have been affected by it. Does it speak to all of humanity? Are its lessons applicable to anyone

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who reads it today? I happily tell you that the insights of MacBride, Newton, Smith, and Jackson are not leftovers of a bygone age, but rather, they are guiding lights that can continue to illuminate the path for all Masons everywhere today.

From MacBride we learn the importance of upholding the landmarks of the craft while adapting to the evolving needs of our communities. His work challenges us to honor the past while embracing the present, and to recognize that the core principles of Freemasonry remain ever-relevant and ever-necessary in a changing world.

Joseph Fort Newton calls us to action—a call to infuse the spiritual and moral dimensions of Freemasonry into our daily lives. Beyond the rituals and symbols lies a profound philosophy that has the power to shape our character and guide our actions as Masons and as individuals. As we tread the paths of life, Newton's teachings remind us to walk with integrity, compassion, and a commitment to the common good.

Through the lens of the writings of Dwight L. Smith, we are urged to invest in our own education and in the education of our brethren. The pursuit of knowledge is not a mere academic exercise; it is a means of personal transformation and an essential building block of a vibrant and informed Masonic community.

And it is Thomas W. Jackson's exploration of the Craft which invites us to explore the depth and meaning behind our own rituals and teachings. His work reminds us that Freemasonry contains within it a symbolic language—a language that speaks to the heart and soul of all mankind, imparting profound truths that transcend the limitations of words.

To put it another way, I would ask you to not merely admire these teachings from afar but to embrace them wholeheartedly. Let us make these principles a living reality in our Masonic journeys, in our lodges, and in our interactions with others throughout our lives. We are gathered tonight in the spirit of fellowship, so let us remember that the true test of Freemasonry lies not in the solemnity of our rituals but in the sincerity of our actions. And I say that as someone who believes strongly in the solemnity of ritual. But again, as we break bread together, let it be a reminder for us to also break barriers that may divide us and extend the hand of brotherhood to all who seek to learn to improve themselves. Through our words and deeds, let us be beacons of hope, compassion, and unity in a world that often seems fractured and divided.

Just as these great authors left their mark on the world through their writings, let us, too, leave a lasting legacy through the impact we have on the lives of others. As Freemasons, we have the power to be architects of positive change, weaving the principles of Freemasonry into the structure of our lives such that through our own improvement, we can improve our communities and the surrounding world.

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"Brethren, our fraternity is not a static entity frozen in time; it is a living, breathing organism that evolves with each passing day. The true legacy of how Freemasonry will be a force for good in the world lies not in its rituals or symbols, but in the hearts of its members, in the people who strive to live up to its lofty ideals."

Let me now take a moment to emphasize that books are not static records, but living conversations, by turning our gaze toward the future, a future shaped by the wisdom encountered in these great books. As I said earlier, when we engage in a dialogue with the past, we discover not only a treasure trove of knowledge but also a roadmap for the path ahead. The insights and teachings of great authors are not confined to the pages of books. Is it not the dream of every author that their writings will be lived and embodied in the actions of future readers? This could be no truer for our four Masonic authors, who are all but begging us to listen to them. This weekend, let us recommit ourselves to carrying the torch of wisdom into the future and building bridges that span generations. Brethren, our fraternity is not a static entity frozen in time; it is a living, breathing organism that evolves with each passing day.

The true legacy of how Freemasonry will be a force for good in the world lies not in its rituals or symbols, but in the hearts of its members, in the people who strive to live up to its lofty ideals. And four of those people are speaking to you today, screaming it out from the pages of books.

The writings of MacBride, Newton, Smith, and Jackson serve as lighthouses which can guide us through the turbulent seas of change. As we face the challenges and opportunities of the future, let us remember the timeless values and principles that underpin our craft.

In the ever-shifting sands of the modern world, let us anchor ourselves to the landmarks of Freemasonry, those unchanging principles that provide stability and direction in times of uncertainty.

Let us continue to embrace the spiritual and moral dimensions of Freemasonry, recognizing that our fraternity's true power lies in the transformative effect it has on our lives and the lives of others.

Let us heed the call for Masonic education, ensuring that the flame of knowledge continues to burn brightly in our lodges.

And, let us explore the depth and richness of Masonic symbolism, unearthing the profound truths that lie beneath the surface and infusing our rituals with renewed meaning and significance.

Let us not only celebrate the wisdom of the past but also look to the future with hope and determination. Just as the authors we have studied tonight contributed to the legacy of Freemasonry, so too can we leave our mark on the fraternity and the world. As we forge ahead, let us strive to be living examples of Masonic principles, demonstrating to the world the transformative power of brotherly love, relief, and truth.

Let us be ambassadors of Freemasonry, spreading its light and teachings beyond the walls of our lodges and into our everyday lives.

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And, most importantly, let us pass on the torch of wisdom to future generations of Masons, ensuring that the legacy of our authors continues to inspire and guide those who will follow in our footsteps.

III. A.S. MacBride and His Perspective on Freemasonry

Brethren, let us now venture into the realm of A.S. MacBride, an esteemed Masonic scholar whose insights have left an indelible mark on our understanding of Freemasonry. MacBride's significant work, *Speculative Masonry, Its Mission, Its Evolution, and Its Landmarks*, stands as a testament to his deep commitment to exploring the essence of our craft. Within the pages of this monumental work, MacBride invites us to delve into the intricacies of Freemasonry, unraveling its history, its evolution, and its guiding landmarks.

Within *Speculative Masonry*, MacBride masterfully guides the reader through the evolution of Freemasonry, a journey marked by change and adaptation. He imparts a critical lesson: while the tides of change may sweep across societies and eras, the core landmarks of Freemasonry remain steadfast. MacBride's insights illuminate the necessity of embracing change while anchoring ourselves to the bedrock principles that define us. Just as skilled builders adapt structures to withstand changing environments, so too must we adapt while being able to maintain the pillars that have upheld Freemasonry for generations.

MacBride's work serves as a poignant reminder that the principles we hold dear – brotherly love, relief, and truth – are not just arbitrary words, but they are guiding lights on our Masonic journey. Just as the foundations of a great cathedral provide stability amidst change, so too do these enduring principles give us an unshakeable foundation in times of transition. MacBride beckons us to reflect on the teachings that transcend time, teachings that urge us to reach beyond the superficial and embrace the profound. In our modern world, where the currents of change can be tumultuous, MacBride's words are a compass steering us towards the core of what it means to be a Mason.

Brethren, as we explore the wisdom of A.S. MacBride, we are drawn into a dialogue that transcends eras. MacBride's work challenges us to preserve tradition amidst change, to hold fast to our landmarks while adapting to evolving circumstances. He reminds us that the heart of Freemasonry beats with the rhythm of enduring principles, guiding us forward as we navigate the currents of change. So, if tonight you should drink to MacBride's legacy, let it be a toast to the timeless wisdom that continues to shape our Masonic journey.

IV. Joseph Fort Newton's Emphasis on the Spiritual and Moral Dimensions of Freemasonry

Let us now turn our focus to the profound insights of Joseph Fort Newton, a distinguished Masonic writer whose impact on our understanding of the craft is immeasurable. At the heart of Newton's legacy lies his seminal work, *The Builders: A Story and Study of Freemasonry*. This work is more than a mere book, it is a gateway to the profound depths of Masonic philosophy. Through *The Builders*, Newton beckons us to explore the spiritual and moral dimensions of our craft, guiding us towards a richer understanding of our purpose as Masons.

Newton's emphasis on the spiritual and moral aspects of Freemasonry resonates as a call to elevate our lives as Masons. If *The Builders* imparts one vital lesson, I say it is this: our craft is not

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confined to the physical construction of temples; it extends to the construction of a virtuous character. Newton draws our attention to the spiritual foundations upon which Freemasonry rests, challenging us to infuse our daily lives with the virtues we espouse in our rituals. He teaches us that the rituals we enact within the lodge room are not performances but blueprints for living with integrity, compassion, and purpose.

Newton's work inspires us to embark on a quest for deeper meanings and applications of Masonic teachings. He invites us to view our rituals as allegorical narratives that hold profound truths applicable to our individual journeys. *The Builders* encourages us to transcend the literal and embark on an exploration of deeper truths. Through his words, Newton reveals that our Masonic journey is not confined to the moments spent in the lodge; it extends into our interactions with the world. By seeking to embody the principles of Freemasonry beyond the lodge room, we become the true builders of a better world.

Brethren, as we reflect on the wisdom of Joseph Fort Newton, we recognize that his insights reach beyond the pages of a book—they permeate the very fabric of our Masonic experience. Newton's work encourages us to embrace the spiritual and moral dimensions of Freemasonry, urging us to construct our lives on the foundations of virtue and truth. He challenges us to seek deeper meanings within our rituals and to let the light of Masonic principles guide our every step. So if tonight you should drink to Newton's legacy, let it be to the transformative power of *The Builders*, and let its teachings continue to guide us on the path of light and enlightenment.

V. Dwight L. Smith and the Significance of Masonic Education

Our exploration of Masonic wisdom continues now and brings us to the enlightening perspective of Dwight L. Smith. Central to his legacy is the work *Whither Are We Traveling?*—a title that beckons us to reflect deeply on the direction of our Masonic journey. Smith's contribution extends beyond mere words, however, for it is a clarion call for Masonic education as an essential facet of our growth as individuals and as a fraternity.

Smith's insights on Masonic education echo as a resounding reminder of its paramount importance. In *Whither Are We Traveling?* he emphasizes that to truly understand our craft, we must engage in a lifelong pursuit of knowledge. Just as our Masonic forebears passed down the wisdom of the ages, so must we continue this tradition of knowledge-sharing. Smith's work reminds us that Masonic education is not just an intellectual exercise; it's a sacred obligation we bear to honor the legacy of Freemasonry and to pass on its teachings unblemished.

Smith's legacy challenges us to be the custodians of Masonic knowledge, to uphold the spirit of learning throughout our Masonic journey. His call to be lifelong learners prompts us to actively seek opportunities for education, to delve into the history and philosophy that underpin our rituals and traditions. Through his work, Smith ignites a passion for discovering the hidden gems within Freemasonry, inviting us to find deeper meanings and a renewed appreciation for the craft's complexities.

Brethren, as we navigate the intricate tapestry of Freemasonry, let us heed Dwight L. Smith's profound call. Let us embrace the gift of Masonic education, recognizing that it is a privilege and a responsibility. By embracing the mantle of learning, we ensure that the flame of knowledge continues to burn brightly in our lodges and in the hearts of Masons around the world. So if you raise a glass to

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the legacy of Smith tonight, let it be to the transformative power of education, and to a legacy that urges us to be both seekers and stewards of Masonic wisdom.

VI. Thomas W. Jackson and the Symbolic Language of Freemasonry

Finally, brethren, our exploration now turns to the illuminating contributions of Thomas W. Jackson, a figure whose Masonic legacy spans across continents and cultures. At the heart of his impact lies the work *North American Freemasonry Idealism and Realism*, a compendium of many of his writings and ultimately a masterpiece that enriches our understanding of the universal nature of Freemasonry. Through Jackson's lens, we are invited to uncover the profound layers of symbolism and allegory that shape Masonic journeys across even cultural divides.

Jackson's unique legacy lies in his distinction as an honorary member of 111 lodges around the world. His status transcends geographical boundaries, underlining the universal nature of Freemasonry. Through *North American Freemasonry Idealism and Realism*, Jackson encourages us to view our fraternity not as a collection of isolated lodges, but as a global brotherhood united by shared principles. His legacy resonates as a testament to the idea that the Masonic journey extends far beyond individual lodges, reaching across cultures and borders.

But Jackson's work also propels us to seek deeper insights into the rich tapestry of Masonic education. He points to the profound truths hidden within symbolism and allegory, challenging us to transcend the surface and embrace the layers of meaning that lie beneath. His writings inspire us to approach our rituals with a keen sense of curiosity, recognizing that within each gesture and symbol lies a treasure trove of wisdom waiting to be discovered. Jackson's legacy urges us to become active participants in our Masonic journey, continuously seeking to unearth the gems of knowledge that enrich our lives.

Brethren, as we honor the contributions of Thomas W. Jackson, let us celebrate the universality of our craft. His work reminds us that the principles of Freemasonry are not confined by borders, and that our journey of discovery is boundless. By delving into the depths of symbolism and allegory, we honor Jackson's legacy and enrich our understanding of the craft. So for a fourth and final time, tonight if you drink to the legacy of Thomas W. Jackson, let it be in remembrance of the ongoing pursuit of uncovering the profound truths that Freemasonry holds for us all.

VII. Conclusion

As we draw our evening to a close, let us reflect on the journey we have undertaken through this talk of "Good Books, Great Books: How to Have a Dialogue with the Past." We embarked on a voyage through the corridors of time, exploring the profound value of books as vessels of dialogue with the past, and we delved into the timeless wisdom of A.S. MacBride, Joseph Fort Newton, Dwight L. Smith, and Thomas W. Jackson, and discovered their striking relevance to the intricate tapestry of Freemasonry today.

In our exploration, I implored you to discover the remarkable capacity of books to bridge the gap between generations, enabling us to converse with the luminaries of history. These revered authors, each with their unique perspective, spoke to us across time, reminding us of the enduring power of their words to illuminate our path. From MacBride, we learned the art of preserving tradition while navigating the currents of change. Newton taught us to illuminate the spiritual path, weaving

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Masonic principles into the fabric of our lives. Smith emphasized the lifelong pursuit of knowledge, reminding us that education is a cornerstone of our fraternity. Jackson led us into the realm of studying the Craft itself, revealing the layers of profound meaning that underlie our universality.

The wisdom found within the pages of these great books is nothing short of timeless. Their insights will continue to inspire and guide Masons in our modern era and serve as a guiding compass in a world that often tugs us in various directions. It is in these words that we find solace, reassurance, and a sense of purpose in what can only be described as a testament to the unwavering endurance of Masonic principles.

As we conclude, let us embrace the legacy of these authors and the tradition of learning from the past. Let us, like them, become torchbearers of knowledge, extending the dialogue beyond the pages of books and into our lives. May we never underestimate the power of the written word to connect us with the minds of those who came before us. By cherishing and embracing this tradition, we foster a deeper appreciation for the craft and its profound teachings.

Brethren, as we carry forward the torch of wisdom ignited by MacBride, Newton, Smith, and Jackson, let us remember that our journey does not end here. The dialogue with the past is ongoing, and it is our privilege and duty to ensure that it remains vibrant and alive. As we bid adieu to this gathering, let us embrace the boundless possibilities that arise from engaging with the wisdom of the ages.

Thank you, brethren, for your unwavering dedication to the craft and for embarking on this dialogue with the past with me. May the flame of knowledge continue to illuminate our path, and may the echoes of this evening's discourse resonate in your hearts as you go out into the world.

Thank you once more to the brothers of The Rubicon Masonic Society for inviting me to speak this evening. You are an inspiration, and you are clearly forging the next link in the chain for future Freemasons.

And finally, if you only leave remembering one thing, I hope it's this: a good book teaches you something new, but a great book teaches you something you always knew, but just never knew how to say.

Thank you.