

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

BOOK REVIEW

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Managing the Future of Freemasonry: The Book of Optimism

Dr. David J. West

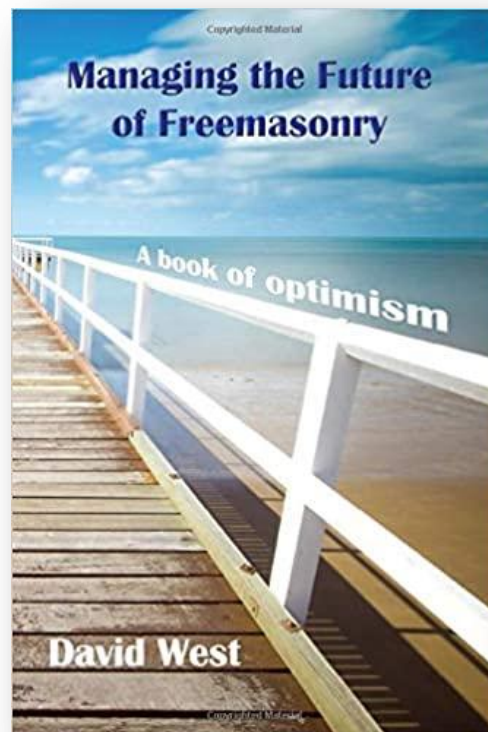
Review by John W. Bizzack, PM, Lexington Lodge No. 1 and Member of William O. Ware Lodge of Research

While there's a surplus of contemporary Masonic writings available today, precious few delve as thoughtfully and thoroughly as Dr. West does into the critical issues surrounding the management of the future of Freemasonry.

As he points out in *Managing the Future of Freemasonry*, "The golden years of the fraternity have passed with the departure of a world never likely to return" and then follows up by contributing toward the understanding of why those golden years existed in the first place.

His examination also helps us understand why Freemasonry continues in attempting to behave as if it were still in that golden era even though our membership has steadily declined: the appearance of our lodges are in a state of decay; Masonic education sorely lacking; and the proficiency of ritual work is commonly described as slovenly, among other reasons he offers.

West presents the facts of how Freemasonry has increasingly become a reflection of the society around us instead of an example against which society may find useful today in gauging its decency, values, and behavior. He lays out his arguments in a logical, accurate, and sometimes humorous manner. His optimism about how all of this this can be turned around is contagious.



West chronicles the social change that has taken place - social change that has directly and adversely affected our fraternity since the early 1800s not just since membership sharply declined in the mid-1900s. His analysis of what he classifies as social “phases” from the period of 1950 to the present, however, most aptly summarizes how and why Freemasonry slowly began to lose its once wide appeal, and even took on the appearance of a counter-culture. Importantly, West shows how our institution walked blindfolded in this perfect storm because of an “almost complete lack of leadership” as the old source for candidates dramatically shifted. He argues confidently how society now may seem less than welcoming to the ideals of Freemasonry today, yet there is ample audience of men who are hungry for the fellowship and moral meaning the fraternity offers.

West’s writing rings of the tone set by Andrew Hammer’s work *Observing the Craft*, and Kirk White’s, *Operative Freemasonry: A Manual for Restoring Light and Vitality to the Fraternity*. He underscores throughout his work that the revitalization of Masonry is not a matter of tinkering with the periphery but requires a focus on the meaning of Freemasonry to reverse its course.

It is clear from this book that whatever course is taken by Freemasonry in the future will be guided by men who have become Masons - not just those who were made members.

Masons should add *Managing the Future of Freemasonry* to their list of books most often recommended to members of the Craft.

This book is available from Amazon and other online booksellers.

About the Author

Dr David West gained his first degree in Philosophy from the University of Exeter and his doctorate of and in Philosophy from the University of Leicester. He taught at universities in England and Canada and his later business career included Ford and Xerox. He served on government committees on the future of work, was an adviser to a Cabinet Minister and founded The Working Manager Ltd, creating the core content of its management education process. An active Freemason, he is a member of four lodges and four chapters under the English Constitution. His mother lodge is St Laurence No. 5511.