

BOOK REVIEW

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The Craft Driven Lodge

Daniel D. Hrinko

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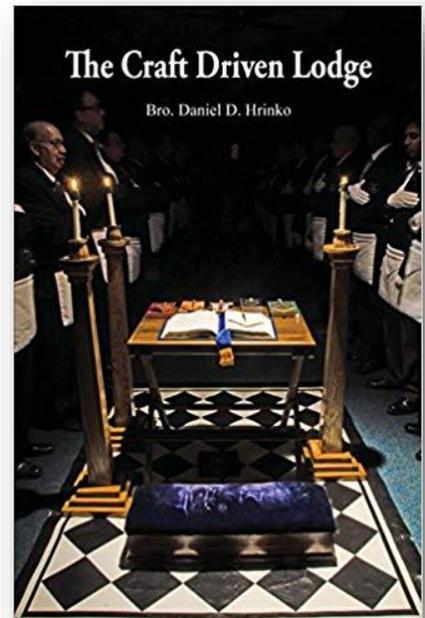
The Craft Driven Lodge, by W. Bro. Dan Hrinko, is a blueprint of the formation of Arts and Sciences Lodge No.792, chartered by the Grand Lodge of Ohio. Arts and Sciences is unique in that their primary emphasis is on “education through discussion,” rather than education through regurgitation of ritual.

Author Dan Hrinko was inspired to write *The Craft Driven Lodge* as a result of a rising feeling among the Craft, that institutional Freemasonry was falling short of its purpose in teaching the deeper meanings of the symbolism represented in the Masonic ritual. Dan Hrinko is quick to point out that meetings consisting only of the reading of minutes or general “cajoling,” do little to persuade anyone to return to their Lodge.

The first section of the book contains an introduction to the concept and the four key principles of a Craft-driven Lodge. First, every Mason has a voice within his Lodge; second, every Mason has a vision of where his Lodge should be headed; third, every Mason has a role, and fourth, the Lodge leadership should be what the author refers to as “servant leadership.” The second section is a discussion of the journey that lead Brother Hrinko and other Masons from Central Ohio to form Arts & Sciences Lodge No. 792.

The Craft Driven Lodge is extremely positive, well written, and motivating. The book offers sympathetic insights into the typical listless meetings that have become synonymous with American Freemasonry and gives a detailed account as how to reinvent one’s Lodge.

The Craft Driven Lodge is deeply thought provoking. This book begs the question as to whether all American Freemasonry is being practiced “wrongly.” The practice of Masonry is an extremely personal journey. No one man’s challenge is the same as that of another. Masonry at its core, is man’s continuous pursuit for self-improvement. Not all men need to



smooth out the same surfaces. The idea is, as part of my journey to self-improvement, I'm also able act as wise council, and charitable friend to my brothers who are also on their own journeys. This is what comprises Freemasonry -- Men improving themselves, better enabling them to assist each other's pursuits, and thus making society a better place.

Brother Hrinko points out that Freemasonry has had numerous manifested practices through the ages, and that the whole of a Lodge should be allowed to basically practice Freemasonry as they wish, as each member is viewed as an equal partner. That blueprint, as good as it sounds, cannot be sustainable, unless it is constantly evolving to satisfy the varying wills of changing membership.

During a man's Masonic journey, he needs to be challenged. Typically, part of that challenge is performing ritual. What if the Lodge membership decides they no longer like to memorize ritual, as it is too challenging? Diminishing membership begets less conversation, begets watering down requirements, begets a dead Lodge.

I love the enthusiasm that started Arts and Sciences #792. I love the optimism, and I pray for their continued success. My fear, however, is that less learned Masons, the lazy members of the Craft, will follow this blueprint and just become a more efficient fish fry, pancake breakfast Lodge, because that is the will of their Lodge.

Freemasonry deserves a more rigid structure. It needs to be challenging, but it should not change to the will of every member of every Lodge. Earlier, I stated that maybe, American Freemasonry is being practiced incorrectly. Maybe we should not be regurgitating 300-year-old rituals and, instead, contemporize our ritual. Modernize it using common language and a more relatable allegory. Maybe that would spark a new interest in the fundamental lessons that Masonry has to offer.

The Craft Driven Lodge is available through Amazon and other Masonic booksellers.

Reviewed by David V. Cassesa, Past Master of Robert Burns Lodge No. 163 and William O. Ware Lodge of Research.