

**Appropriate Conduct or Etiquette**  
**by Worshipful Gary A. McAlexander, PM**

Although we all know that we should live up to our obligations and live in accordance with the principles of Freemasonry, this does not happen automatically. So the purpose of this program is to remind each of the Brethren of the need to rededicate themselves to those principles of conduct. And in the spirit of “whispering good counsel,” it is for each of us to urge those who have not diligently studied these responsibilities to begin that study as befits the true Mason.

One place to begin that study is by reading “The Constitutions of Masonry,” which is found for our convenience as the very first section of the *Presentation Volume* that is available for purchase from the Grand Lodge. Indeed, so important is this book that many Lodges provide every new Master Mason with a copy when he is raised.

As you will recall, the “*Constitutions of Masonry*” was originally called the *Ahiman Rezon* which was derived from three Hebrew words; ‘ahim’, brothers, ‘manah’, to prepare, and ‘ratzon’, the will of the law; and literally translates as “the law of prepared brothers.”

It contains among the various duties, rights, and ceremonies, the fundamental principles of our Order. While not a requirement for membership in the Craft, every Mason would greatly benefit from knowing the content of at least the sections of “The Book of Constitutions” that lay down for us the

expected conduct of the Mason. In fact, they were once regarded as the “requisite” temper and qualities for all Masons.

Studying the first twenty pages of our *Presentation Volume* will remind each of us of our duties and the responsibility to conduct ourselves in the way “genuine” Masons have ascribed for centuries. We owe it to the Craft, our Brethren individually, and to ourselves to subscribe to, and live by, these requirements.

You will recall that there are sections which discuss our obligations concerning various subjects ranging from our relationship to God and religion to our interaction with government and the civil magistrate.

For purposes of this discussion, however, we call your attention to those sections that focus principally on what might be termed “Masonic etiquette,” that is those that are concerned with our conduct as Masons, as we deal with each other in and out of the Lodge, and how we deal with those who are not members of our gentle Craft.

We know from the “Book of Constitutions,” the ritual at the opening and closing of our Lodges, and the Charges after the Degrees, that we are to avoid all irregularity and intemperance, keep sacred those things that distinguish us from the rest of the community; and not argue with those who, through ignorance, may ridicule our Institution.

We learn early on about the conduct within the Lodge, including such things as how to approach the Worshipful Master when he recognizes and invites us to the East and the appropriate use of the correct due guard.

But, of course, there is more to “Masonic etiquette” than our stylized conduct in the Lodge.

How many times have you witnessed a Brother (whom you recognized because of his ring) use his Creator’s name in an objectionable manner and, thus, violate the charge he received even in our first Degree? Is that not a violation of “Masonic etiquette”? How can it not be?

How often do you see a Brother failing to hold a door open for an elderly lady, or act rudely toward others?

How often do you see a Brother drive in a discourteous way? You are embarrassed not simply because he has a Masonic license plate and is giving the Fraternity a bad name, but just because you know it is improper and a breach of “Masonic etiquette.”

Being human, we tend, all too often, to be too quick to speak, to speak in harsh and critical tones, and to jump to conclusions about another’s motives or intentions.

We do not have to have the wisdom of King Solomon to remember the lesson that we should love of each other and approach every subject with the golden rule in mind. But we often forget this essential tenet of “Masonic etiquette,” and have to relearn it time and again.

The point we must keep in mind is that there are two types of breaches of “Masonic etiquette.” We tend to be aware of and avoid the first kind. Thus, we know that it is proper ‘Masonic Etiquette’ to always address a Brother with his correct title, that if he is a Past District Deputy Grand Master, he should be addressed as Right Worshipful, and that it is a sign of respect to properly address our distinguished Brethren. And we know it would not be a breach of ‘Masonic Etiquette’; if unaware of his title, position, we simply call him “Brother.”

But a second and more serious breach of “Masonic etiquette” occurs when we act poorly toward our fellow man or conduct ourselves in a manner that would bring shame or discredit to our Fraternity.

To be concise, this writer believes that “Masonic etiquette” can be displayed, if we simply take the advice of the 161st Grand Master of Masons in Virginia and “Live Freemasonry Daily.” Thus, while it may be that “Masonic etiquette” cannot easily be defined, this writer dares to say that we all know, or should know, when we have violated it. We cannot go far wrong if we “walk humbly in the sight of God, do justice, and love mercy.” At bottom, it is that simple.