

Unity Lodge #58, A.F. & A.M. Thorndike, Maine



<<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

<<Address 1>>

<<Address 2>>

<<Town>> <<State>> <<Zip>>

February 15, 2018

Greetings Brother:

<<Raised this month wording>>

Coming events:

February 21, 2018, Our stated communication. 6:30 pm pot luck supper, 7:30 pm meeting.

Feb. 24, Maine Masonic College Class: Critical Thinking
George Macdougall & Don McDougal. Benevolent Lodge, Carmel 9:00am - 12:00pm

Feb, 26, Belfast Lodge #24 in Belfast, Maine special meeting Master Mason degree by the "Widows Sons" degree team. 6:30 Supper,

February 28, 12th district Masters and Wardens meeting 6:30 pm at Fairfield.

Please notify the secretary if your address changes..

Thank you to those who have paid their dues.

Stated meeting are on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 with a 6:30 supper
Bruce Hutchins, Secretary, 1053 Halldale Rd, Montville ME 04941. tel/fax 382-6226, email bruce@hutchinsbrothers.com
District Calendar <http://east.our.calendars.net/glme/glmedist12>
<http://unitylodge.hutchinsbrothers.com/>

So, what is up with three? As it happens, there are a couple of different ways to answer this question, depending on where one happens to trace the origins of Freemasonry.

Medieval Stonemasons

The received wisdom is that modern-day Freemasonry traces its origins to the customs and rituals of the medieval stonemasons who built the cathedrals of Europe. (This much is hardly disputed by anyone; the big and exceedingly controversial question is, does Masonry go back farther?)

These medieval stonemasons were of the Christian faith, and as such, the number of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—would have been sacred to them. To this way of thinking, the incorporation of the number three into the stonemason's ceremonies would have been an expression of their Christian faith; the symbolism was passed on to the Freemason's lodge, even though Freemasonry is not restricted to Christians at all. (Candidates for Freemasonry must declare belief in a Supreme Being, but no further specification of that Supreme Being, and no specific religious affiliation, is required.)

There are, of course, those who have claimed that the Freemasons are connected to the medieval Knights Templar. The Knights, of course, were Christian as well.

The Ancient Mysteries

There have long been those who have connected the customs and rituals of Freemasonry to the ancient “mysteries” (ceremonies of initiation), to spiritual groups and philosophical brotherhoods of the ancient world. One of the more prominent of these was the aforementioned Albert Mackey, who wrote the following:

Three was considered among all the Pagan nations as the chief of the mystical numbers, because, as Aristotle remarks, it contains within itself a beginning, a middle, and an end. Hence we find it designating some of the attributes of almost all the gods. The thunder-bolt of Jove was three-forked; the sceptre of Neptune was a trident; Cerberus, the dog of Pluto, was three-headed, there were three Fates and three Furies

The Druids paid no less respect to this sacred number. Throughout their whole system, a reference is constantly made to its influence; and so far did their veneration for it extend, that even their sacred poetry was composed in triads.

In all the mysteries, from Egypt to Scandinavia, we find a sacred regard for the number three. In the rites of Mithras, the Empyrean was said to be supported by three intelligences, Ormuzd, Mithra, and Mithras. In the rites of Hindostan [that is, within Hinduism], there was the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva [that is, Shiva]. It was, in short, a general character of the mysteries to have three principal officers and three grades of initiation.

[Albert G. Mackey. (1845). *Lexicon of Freemasonry*, from the entry for “Three.”]

So that is another possibility: the number three is considered sacred in a number of ancient spiritual and initiatory traditions. Whether these traditions actually had some input into Freemasonry—mmm, hard to say.

One of the traditions that Mackey did not mention here is the Jewish mystical tradition, known widely as Kabbalah. The central diagram of Kabbalah, the Tree of Life, is usually drawn in such a way that it has three ‘pillars,’ or lines of divine qualities known as the sephirot: the Pillar of Mercy, the Pillar of Severity, and the Pillar of Balance or Beauty. Several authors have speculated that, given the interest in Kabbalah that some early Freemasons of the 17th and 18th centuries seemed to have, perhaps kabbalistic symbolism has been incorporated into Freemasonry here and there.

Certainly the idea of two extremes coming into some kind of balance through a third point has a certain appeal on a philosophical level. Thus may the symbolism of three have entered the Lodge, where notions of balance and beauty show up repeatedly.

Anything I have written above connecting Freemasonry to anything beyond the association to medieval stonemasons should be considered highly speculative.

But that doesn't mean it's wrong.