

**ONE-TWO-THREE**  
**A SYSTEM OF MASONIC PHILOSOPHY**  
**BY**  
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The number “Three” has a prominent place in the ritual of our Masonic degrees. The first mention of the number three comes when we are introduced to the Three Great Lights in Masonry illuminated by the Three Lesser Lights. The Next mention of the number three is when the new brother ascends a staircase consisting of three, five, and seven steps. The meaning of the number three is explained in the ritual and lectures.

The number three also finds importance in the discipline of philosophy. The noted philosopher, Ayn Rand in her book, *Philosophy, Who Needs It*, defined philosophy as, “...the fundamental factor in human life. It is the basic force that shapes the mind and character of men. It shapes them for good or evil. “Philosophy studies the fundamental nature of existence of man and of mans’ relationship tom existence.

Ayn Rand goes on to state that a man’s choice is not whether to have a philosophy, but which philosophy to have. In order to make a rations choice of philosophies, Ms. Rand feels that each man much find the answer to three questions. These questions are: 1) Where am I? 2) How can I discover where I am? And 3) What should I do?

How, then, do the answers to Ayn Rand’s three questions apply to my relationship to Freemasonry? First of all, in response to the first question, Where am I? I am a Mason and I belong to a brotherhood whose main reason for existence is to make good men better. How can I discover it? This relates to my membership in a lodge of my brethren. What should I do? The answer to this query is to attend lodge and become a student of the history, philosophy, and symbolism of our Masonic ritual.

One of the most noted Masonic philosophers is the Honorable Judge and Brother, Roscoe Pound. In the 1915 issues of Joseph Fort Newton’s Builders Magazine, Brother Pound writes a series of articles on the Philosophy of Freemasonry. He posits three questions that every Mason must answer for himself.

The first question is “What is the nature and purpose of Freemasonry?” The second question is “What is, and what should be, the relationship of Freemasonry to other human institutions?” The third question is, “What are the fundamental principles by which Freemasonry is governed in attaining the end that Freemasonry seeks?”

Brother Pound answers these questions by writing the responses of four noted Masonic brethren, William Preston, Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, Albert Pike, and George Oliver.

William Preston is said to respond to the above questions in the following manner. For what does Freemasonry exist? What is the end and purpose of our craft? The purpose of Freemasonry is to diffuse light and thereby to make men better and happier. How, then, does Freemasonry accomplish the task? Preston state that the achievement pf this task is by the acquisition of knowledge.

In response to the question what is the relationship of Masonry to other human institutions? Preston responded that the state attempts to make men happier and better by preserving order. The church answers this question by cultivating the moral person. Masonry answers this query by diffusing knowledge and teaching members of the brotherhood.

I response to the questions, how does Masonry seek to achieve its purposes, and what are the principles by which Masonry is governed in achieving its end, Preston responded that the Mason should be admonished to study and acquire learning. Freemasonry's goal is achieved by gaining a complete system of organized knowledge.

Next we look at the methods by which the answers to the three philosophical questions are given by Karl Christian Friedrich Krause, a German philosopher and Freemason. In response to the first question, Krause stated the ultimate purpose of Freemasonry is the perfection of humanity. The immediate purpose is to organize the universal moral sentiments of all mankind and then to organize the system of human disapproval.

Krause replied to the second query by stating all human institutions, Masonry, the state, and the church, for example, seek to gain human perfection. However, to realize this common end, each institution should work in harmony and in cooperation with each other.

Krause now looks to the third question, what are the fundamental principles by which Masonry is governed to achieve its end? Krause declared that Masonry had to deal with the internal conditions of life. He said that this is the way to achieve human perfection.

George Oliver was an English Roman Catholic priest and historian. With his background in the teachings of the church, it is acknowledged that his opinions and answers to the three questions would be contained in his religious background.

Oliver felt that knowledge had to be reconciled with religion. He stated that religion and Freemasonry were one and the same in defining their end. The method advocated for achieving this end was to gain knowledge.

Oliver was influenced by the beliefs of William Hutchinson who was one of the earliest of Masonic philosophers. Hutchinson felt that the lost word was symbolical of lost religious purity. Hutchinson's opinions were colored by his belief that Masonry was a body of traditions to be found in our earliest history as recorded in scripture.

Oliver was of the strong opinion that Masonry was strictly a Christian tradition. Oliver went on to state that the earliest of Masonic symbols were Christian in nature. He said that those early Masonic symbols were also symbols of the Trinity and that the Grand Architect of the Universe was symbolical of Christ.

In response to the first question, Oliver stated that the end of Freemasonry is one with the ends of religion and science. In answer to the second question, Oliver said that Freemasonry achieves its end by preserving, handing down, and interpreting a tradition of immemorial antiquity, a pure tradition from the childhood of our race. When replying to the third question, Oliver responded that the principles of religion, and therefore, Freemasonry are the basic principles of a moral world.

We now arrive at the last of Pound's description of the philosophy of Freemasonry. Pound felt that the last Freemason to be understood came from a radically different perspective. In describing the Masonic philosophy of Albert Pike, Pound declared that to Preston, Masonry was a traditional system of knowledge. Masonry was to be taken in relation to a system of education. To Krause, Pound stated that Masonry was an organized system of morals and its end is to put mankind in conjunction with the universal moral ideas of humanity. To Krause, thought of the relationship of Masonry to law and government. To Oliver, Pound said that Masonry is a mode of approach to God, and its end is to bring mankind to the Absolute, by means of a pure tradition. Oliver thought of the relationship of Masonry to religion.

Albert Pike is well known to all who have read his book "Morals and Dogma". Pike was the central figure upon whom the Southern Jurisdiction of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite is based. Pike looks to metaphysics to describe Freemasonry. To Pike, Masonry is a mode of first studying its principles and its end is to reveal and give us the possession of the universal principle by which mankind may master the universe.

In answer to the first question, "What is the end of Masonry and for what is the purpose for which it exists", Pike would respond that the end of Masonry is the pursuit of light. For Pike, light means the attainment of the fundamental principles of the universe and bringing ourselves into harmony, finding the ultimate unity which alone is real.

Pike answered the second query, "What is the relation of Masonry to human institutions", by stating Masonry seeks to interpret in light of Freemasonry, making them more vital for us, and to make them more efficacious for their purposes by showing the ultimate reality of which they are the manifestations.

Finally, Pike would answer the third query, "How does Masonry seek to reach its ends", by asserting that Masonry would reach its ends by a system of allegories and of symbols handed down from antiquity. These allegories and symbols would be the means by which the ends are achieved through study and reflection until they reveal the light to each Mason individually. It is for each brother of Freemasonry to interpret the symbols and allegories for themselves.

Brother Roscoe Pound then tries to bring all of these philosophical views into harmony. For Pound the end for which Freemasonry is seeking is the same as for all social institutions, that is, to preserve, to develop, to transmit, for posterity the civilization shaped by our forefathers, and passed down to the current generation of Masons.

Pound framed the second question as follows, "What is the place of Masonry in a ration scheme of human activity?" Pound indicated that Freemasonry is an organization of human effort upon which there is the universal lines upon which all may agree in order to realize our faith in the efficacy of conscious effort in preserving and promoting civilization.

As for the third and final question, "How does Freemasonry achieve its ends?" Pound declared that Freemasonry insists that civilization is created by the unity of humanity and an insistence on universality, and by the preservation and transmission of a long standing tradition of human solidarity and of universality.

IN order to bring together the principles of the philosophy and teachings of Freemasonry, it seems to be in order to comment that what Freemasonry believes depends on the belief system of the individual brother. Freemasonry cannot be all things to all brethren. The success of our brotherhood, making it the oldest continuous fraternal organization in the world, is its ability to be interpreted for the values and philosophies of the individual brother. That is what makes Freemasonry the successful brotherhood that it is today/