SUMMARY OF ADJUSTMENTS TO CEREMONIES

In June 1816 Grand Lodge approved new post-Union Ceremonies to be used by all Lodges. Freemasonry has evolved since then (though its principles have remained constant) and a small number of adjustments has been approved over the intervening years, most recently in 1986, when the penalties were removed from the obligations and moved to other parts of the Ceremonies. Now, following the recent case between UGLE and the Metropolitan Commissioner of Police for London, a Working Party, authorised by The Grand Master, has reviewed the Craft Ceremonies with the aim of addressing the allegations made by the Commissioner and those advising him.

The Working Party deplores the manner in which the Commissioner has quoted selectively from the Craft Ceremonies in such a way as to be positively misleading and, in particular by placing the worst possible construction on the words quoted. Most egregious are the allegations that Freemasons are obliged, under cover of secrecy, to favour each other at the expense of other members of Society, to show obedience to those superior to them in Masonic rank, and to conceal wrongdoing by other Freemasons. Freemasons under UGLE know that those allegations are untrue.

Nevertheless, with the aim of refuting categorically those unfounded and unjustified accusations, the Working Party has concluded that it is appropriate and desirable to make minor adjustments to the wording of the Ceremonies, which have deliberately been kept to the minimum necessary to achieve the objective.

1. In the First Degree

   (a) every use of "secrets" has been eliminated, generally in favour of "mysteries";

   (b) after the Obligation the wording has been strengthened to make it clearer that the penalty was always regarded as purely symbolic;

   (c) the following clarification of the word "mysteries" has been added:

   "The term "mysteries" dates from Medieval times and refers to the skills, knowledge and modes of recognition of his trade or guild in which an experienced Master undertook to instruct his Apprentice.";

   (d) the explanation of the grip or token has been expanded by the addition of:

   "This grip or token, together with the word which is about to be communicated to you, is derived from the modes of recognition adopted by our operative predecessors to distinguish genuine stonemasons from impostors. In modern times it must only ever be used in open Lodge or to test or "prove" an unknown Brother who is seeking to be admitted to a Lodge meeting."; and

   (e) in the Charge after Initiation "Discretion" has been substituted for "Secrecy", and it has been made plain that Obedience is restricted to Masonic matters and then only while the Master and his Wardens are acting in the proper and lawful exercise of their offices within the Lodge.

2. In the Third Degree

   (a) the word "secrets" has been retained in the Opening and Closing but qualified by "legendary" and "lost" respectively, for consistency with the legend in the Traditional History, where the word has also been retained.

   (b) the preamble to the Obligation has been amended to read:

   "It is but fair to inform you that a most serious trial of your fortitude and fidelity and a more solemn Obligation await you. When you were made an Entered Apprentice you were informed that our signs, tokens and words are derived from the modes of recognition adopted by stonemasons. Certain of the elements of this obligation are derived from the moral precepts of our speculative predecessors and are founded on that mutual trust and affection that should at all times exist between all persons of goodwill, whether or not they are Freemasons. Are you therefore willing to proceed?";

   (c) in the Obligation, the order of the wording for the fourth of the five points of fellowship has been amended to

   "that, with the special exception of murder, treason, felony, and all other offences contrary to the laws of God and the laws and ordinances of the realm, my breast shall be the sacred repository of his lawful confidences when entrusted to my care"; and

   (d) "wife" and "sister" have been amended to "spouse" and "sibling" to take account of modern trends in society.

3. Changes to the Second Degree and Installation Ceremonies are minimal, and track adjustments made in the First and Third Degrees (*e.g.* "mysteries" for "secrets").

Approved

G.M.

13th October 2026