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OSMANLI'DAKİ AHİLİK KURUMU İLE  
İNGİLTERE'DEKİ FARMASON  
LOCALARININ KARŞILAŞTIRILMASI,  
FARKLILIKLARI VE BENZERLİKLERİ

THE COMPARISONS, DIFFERENCES AND  
SIMILARITIES BETWEEN OTTOMAN'S AKHISM  
INSTITUTION (ORGANIZATION) AND  
FREEMASONRY LODGE IN ENGLAND



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## ÖZET

*Bu çalışmada Osmanlı'daki Ahilik ile İngiliz Farmasonları Locasını mukayese edeceğiz. Ahilikle ve Farmasonlukla ilgili olarak sosyal, siyasi, ekonomik, kültürel, dinsel, gizemli yaşam biçimlerini, prensiplerini, organizasyonlarını, toplum hayatı ile devlet kurumları üzerindeki rollerini ve etkilerini içeren sorulara cevap vermeye çalışacağız.*

*Ahi mütevazıdır, insan haysiyeti ve onuru söz konusu olunca oldukça kibirlidir, onurludur. Ahi misafirperverdir, dürüsttür, mesleğini her şeyin üzerinde tutar ve kendini mesleğine adar.*

*Farmasonlar niçin farklı ve özeldir? İngiltere'deki Büyük Mason Locası farklıdır. Çünkü normal yaşam biçimlerinde kendilerini, üyeliklerini, gayrederini, mükafat almak için afişe etmezler. Diğer normal insanlar gibi yasalara saygılıdır. Alın teriyle çalışır, aileleriyle, çevreleriyle, toplumla ilgilenir spor yapar ve tiyatroya giderler.*

*Mason zeki, dürüst, uyumlu, kibar, hoşgörülü, adil, sadık, vatanını seven maddi ve manevi olarak açık fikirli bireydir. Yukarıda bahsedilen tanımlar arşiv belgelerinin, seçkin kitapların, makalelerin ve ünlü yazarların eserleri ışığı altında incelenerek özetlenmeye çalışılmıştır.*

*Anahtar Sözcükler: Ahi, Kardeşlik, Masonluk, Cemiyet, Loca*

## ABSTRACT

*In this study we will discuss and compare the akhism in the Ottomans with the Freemasonry Lodge in England. We will try to answer some vital questions related to the "akhis" social, political, economical, and cultural and highly secrecy life, principles, organizations and their roles and effects on the public's life and also on the governmental institutions. An "ahi" is humble by nature but on the question of human dignity he is haughty.*

*An "ahi" is a friendly, honest, devoted to his profession and holds it above every thing else*

*Why are Freemasons different or special? Masons from the Grand Lodge of All England are different because in their ordinary lives they do not advertise their membership or seek reward for their endeavors. They go about their private lives and do the same things as any other law-abiding citizens. They work, take care of their families, their*



communities and their environment, play sports, go to the theater etc. Mason has: Intelligence, Honesty, Integrity- Kindness, Tolerance Justice, Loyalty, Patriotism, and Spiritual and Intellectual open-mindedness.

The above mentioned descriptions have been outlined in the light of archive documents, selective books, articles and the studies of unique authors.

Keywords: Akhi, Fraternity, Masonry, Society, Lodge

ارمینیان

کعبه‌الغیورین اوغلی با بابا چوبان ولد اوغلی نورین کبیر اولاد  
نورین

اوغلی قیلان ایدین ولد یعقوب ولد اوغلی مراد خورشید ولد  
مراد نورین صاعش م جهان سیر

لو اولاد برادر لوان ولد سنان اولادک یعقوب ولد اوغلی کوز  
روا جهان سیر نورین لاقان

کبیر اولاد اوغلی امیر برادر کبیر سونچون اوغلی سرکند

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خانه موروج ۲۰ عوارج پناه وکیل اولادک



## 1. THE ORGANISATION OF AKHI AND AKHISM.

Akhism often is traced to the word *Akhi* meaning brotherhood in Arabic. In addition, others claim that this concept has its roots in the word *aki*, which means open handed, 'unsparing', 'courageous' in Turkish. (Kaşgarlı 1986: 90)

The term Akhism signifies an alliance that showed an influential existence for the progress of Turkish tradesmen and craftsmen in terms of professionalism and ethics between the thirteenth and the nineteenth centuries. (Şimşek 2002:5) The main purpose of the foundation of this alliance may be seen as intending to acquire jobs for craftsmen among the Turcoman, a member of a traditionally nomadic Turkish people inhabiting Turkmenistan and neighboring areas in Iran and Afghanistan, who have migrated from Central Asia to Anatolia, while urging them to compete with the local Byzantine craftsmen in Anatolia and maintaining the quality of goods in the market, regulating production as to demand, establishing an ethics of art in the craftsmen, making the Turkish community economically independent, helping the one in need in every field, defending the country along with the armed forces against foreign invaders, and spreading the Turkish-Islamic culture through the settlements (Çağatay, 1974:62). In this respect Akhism is the greatest and most organized non-governmental organization instituted in the Ottoman state. In Akhism, where Turkish traditions are melded with the values of an Islamic life, human life is bound to some specific rules. The significant moral rules of Akhism may be summarized as follows: Ülger (2005:50)

1. having a good temper and good morals;
2. being truthful and trustworthy both impersonal and business life;
3. telling the truth without any hesitation; avoiding hatred and envy;
4. being faithful to the contract, to the promise and to love the human;
5. acting in generosity, treating others with respect and honor;
6. helping neighbors;
7. staying away from conceit and prejudice;
8. being fair and just;
9. not expecting return for any goodness, working with sincerity and a smiling face for the people;
10. showing goodness to even those who act in evil;
11. giving importance to friendship, never forgetting a friend and the brotherhood;
12. protecting and taking care of the ones under the servitor;
13. giving by being satisfied with the less and thanking for the plenty;
14. avoiding wicked talk and behavior;



15. educating oneself, gaining new abilities;
16. being knowledgeable and using this knowledge for the benefit of society;
17. keeping in peace with society;
18. and treating people in the way that you want to be treated.

These principles that implicate an ideal order for the society when considered overall show in a way how Akhism supports solidarity and sharing, as well as self-sacrificing. These principles have resulted in naming Akhism as a 'school of morals' (Güllülü 1997: 71). These values may also be directly related with the moral philosophy. The method of goodness in the foundation of moral understanding and links it with a collectivist philosophy and directs our attention to some of the conceptual details that should be realized for achieving an ideal society. First of all, happiness is the greatest aspiration for the right path to the happiness passes through achieving the 'good'. Second, the concept of state is the greatest notion in regard to life in society (Timuçin 2000); so being without a state means disorder. Since people spend their lives in pursuit of happiness, only as long as the state is powerful will they attain power and happiness.

One of institutions which have been effective in attaining Anatolia's cultural unity as referred before the Organisation of Akhi (*Akhilik*). The Akhis who came in Anatolia together with Yesevi Dervishes settled in urban areas rather than rural areas since they had a profession to work on. Koşay (1979:102)

Entrance into the Organization is performed through a special ceremony. In this ceremony a special kind of belt is worn by candidate of Akhi and advised that he must show love and respect to all humanity, and be true and honest. The organization requires that all members have absolute loyalty and endless obey towards the Organization. As was the case in the Organization of Bektashi, members are subjected to such phases as to get knowledge, patience, purification of soul, loyalty, friendship, tolerance, etc. Bayram (1986:32) In addition to have such features six important principles of Akhism are as follows:

- Keep your hand open,
- Keep your dining-table open,
- Keep your door open,
- Keep your eyes tied,
- Control your waist,
- Hold your tongue.

Certain phases are applied in Akhism. One who chooses a profession is accepted first as an apprentice and later on proceeds in the profession as an assistant master and master. The apprentice chooses one of the masters as father akhi and two of the assistant masters as brothers of the way. In this way an ap-



prentice starts to work under the continuous help and supervision of three persons who are already the members of the convent.

1. Valiant,
2. Assistant,
3. Apprentice,
4. Foreman,
5. Master,
6. Akhi

### 1.1. WHAT IS AKHI INSTITUTION?

The Akhi Institution is an organization established by the Turkish nations living in Anatolia, in the Balkan regions and Turkestan between the 13 th and 19 th centuries. The Akhi institution contributed to the training in various arts and professions and to the development of moral values of Turkish nations. Ekinci (1987:105)

The Akhi is Institution played an important role in attraction of the Turkish immigrants into Anatolia and in creating new lands for them. The Akhi convents provided guest houses for these immigrants and opened work places for the skilled ones. In time, the houses and guest houses built around them by the Akhi Convents formed new slavery. It also requires being honest at work without cheating people and it stresses tolerance. Ekinci (1987:109)

A person who is called an "Akhi" should either involved in science or in a professional activity. Therefore, the Akhi institution acted as a school of moral values together with taking responsibility in the development of professional education of all people.

In the "Akhi" convents, lectures were given aimed to train "Akhis" as perfect people and Muslims. Without exception all of them were taught to read and write. In addition to these, each of them was trained according to his ability in the field of fine arts: Like an ornamental writing, illumination of books and music. Worshipping bore a great importance as well. Assistant masters were trained in military subjects like dueling (düello), riding and shooting arrows. Each convent operated like people's training board. Koşay (1979: 103)

### 1.2.MAIN PRINCIPLES OF THE AKHI INSTITUTION

The male students of the Akhi organizations were taught the following principles: Be attentive to: 1- your hand, 2- your waist, 3- your tongue. Burak (2004:204)

Osmanlı'daki Ahilik Kurumu ile İngiltere'deki Farmason Localarının Karşılaştırılması...



The Akhi institution is an organization encouraging all these principles and it is an organization of good people, the doors of whom open to anyone without any condition.

According to the Akhi principles, an Akhi must always have an occupation. He must not work only for this world. He must be generous, graceful, honest, modest and not to be greedy. He must help the poor, try to increase his knowledge and respect the scholars.

The Akhi institution created its own values in four main areas. These are the moral, economic, social and political areas. The values in all these areas have basic functions. Among these areas, the function of the moral values in professional and trade activities are very important. Moral values originally developed during old nomadic periods of the Turks and integrated with Islamic values of urban life.

### 1.3. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AKHI INSTITUTION

The Akhi institution was a well balanced and productive socio-economic system which activated the resources of the society in the most rational and humanistic way. It was a system based on equitable distribution of income, on a peaceful way of life, on brotherhood and solidarity among people. With these features, the Akhi contributed to the formation of economic foundations of national unity.

In the Akhi system of organization, solidarity of people, rather than conflicts between them, is important. Peaceful relations between the rich and the poor, the producer and the consumer, the labor and the capital, the nation and the state are basic aspects of Akhi social system. According to Akhi belief system, there is no discrimination between rich and poor. However, an Akhi person is severely against the oppression of the weak by the powerful ones and also against unjust and illegal gains. Karacabey (1967:16)

The Akhi institution has played an important role in the settlement of Turkish immigrants in Anatolia, in the foundation of Seljuk and Ottoman States. Existence of the Ottoman State for a long period of about 600 years can be explained by the existence of Akhi organizations and the principles that spread throughout the society. Turan (1971: 87)

The Akhi Organization defended and spread the principles of indiscrimina- tion towards people, of different religions, languages and races. Virtues of honesty, benevolence, charity as well as the principles like brotherhood of people, hospitality, and faithfulness and also principles relating to professional ethics were spread, too. The Akhi organization transformed the principle of solidarity into almost a new capital source. In fact, Akhism, which has guided craftsmen



and tradesmen for centuries, shows a more traditional viewpoint by pointing out its principle of discipline and authority, and in comparison to the maximum.

The Akhi organization system is the result of a national culture integrating socio-economic and democratic principles. This organization aimed to develop a professional system of education which emphasized creation of productive individuals. In this way, the socio-economic and technological problems could be solved more easily.

In the organization of human relations within a society, moral values are as important as laws, customs and traditions. A society which has not created its own moral values cannot continue its existence and the individuals of that society cannot live happily and prosperously. It should be accepted that every powerful and prosperous society which is developed in art, sciences and techniques has also a well established system of moral values, no matter what kind of socio-economic and political system it adopts. Demir (2001:77)

## 2. FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry is the world's *oldest* and *largest Fraternity*. While its traditions look back earlier, Masonry in its current form appeared when its public events were noticed by the residents of London, England in 1717. Although Masonry, particularly in its earliest days, had elements of secrecy, the first 'exposure' of the supposedly highly-secret Masonic ritual actually appeared in 1696! Egeran (1992:22)

That exposure marked the beginning of (now) more than 300 years of objections to the organization. Why Jealousy, fear of the unknown, superstition, bigotry, or a dozen other causes? The objections can be generally grouped into three categories and clicking on the hyperlinks below will bring you to additional pages which amplify what charges are being (or have been) made. Günçeliker (1968:7-8)

### 2.1. WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

It is generally accepted that Freemasonry evolved from the guilds of stonemasons and cathedral builders of the middle Ages. As cathedral building declined, some lodges of working masons began to accept honorary members. This led to the development of symbolic or speculative Freemasonry. Some Masonic historians maintain that its origins go back much further, to the ancient Egyptians and their Book of the Dead, or the sacred mysteries of the Mayas, or even the building of Solomon's Temple. There is evidence that there were Masonic lodges in Britain from the 14th century onwards. But it seems to be generally agreed that modern Freemasonry dates back to 1717 with the for-



mation in England of the first Grand Lodge, an association of lodges. Since then it has spread to many other countries. The Grand Lodge of Scotland was founded in 1736. There are estimated to be some two million Freemasons in the world of which nearly one million are in the British Isles. (Masonluk 2008:1)

The stated ideals of Freemasonry are, Universal Brotherhood, tolerance of diverse religious “denominations and persuasions” and avoidance of political controversy.

Freemasonry follows an elaborate mythology and complex rites, involving oaths of secrecy. Elements in these are drawn from many sources, including the Bible, other religions, ancient religious orders and chivalric brotherhoods.

These are often used symbolically in a way which bears little or no relation to the original context. The three basic degrees of Freemasonry are, entered apprentice, fellow of the craft, and master mason. Most Masons earn only these three. Beyond these, there are many more advanced degrees, each with its own rituals and secrets. At each stage, further secrets are revealed, safeguarded by solemn oaths. Masons of the lower degrees may often be quite unaware of the nature and wording of these advanced rituals. Some aspects of the movement which are of the greatest concern to Christians are to be found in these higher degrees. Although the Grand Lodge of Scotland regulates Freemasonry only within the first three degrees, the questions raised are still implicit in the movement as a whole. (Gün-Çeliker 1968:9-10)

There are certain differences between Freemasonry in Scotland and the movement in England or America. The Grand Lodge of Scotland which regulates some 1100 lodges is the largest of six groups. The Royal Arch chapter is an administratively separate group in Scotland. The Grand Lodge informs us that certain of the other groups will admit only professing Trinitarian Christians. (Masonicinfo.com 2008:1)

Freemasons are known for their generous giving to charitable causes. In 1986, it is estimated that donations from British Freemasons totaled some 12 millions pounds, and benefited a wide range of organizations, including schools, old people's homes and a private hospital. Although most of these are set up from the benefit of Masons themselves and their families, the Grand Lodge of Scotland supports the work of a number of charitable organizations outside the movement.

Although Freemasonry is an exclusively male society, women may join the order of the Eastern Star. This contains similar rituals and symbolic elements to Freemasonry and its members share in the charitable work of the Brotherhood.



Whether Freemasonry is itself a religion may be a matter for debate. Masons themselves deny that it is. To them it is a society of men concerned with spiritual and moral values or a brotherhood with religious overtones. Whatever they may say, the movements bear all the marks of an organized religion, with its own theology, worship and rituals and its demand for irrevocable commitment. The fact that religion is never discussed is neither here nor there. The whole movement is shot through with religious and mystical elements. The lodge is a model of a temple, Masonic hymns are sung, and the volume of the sacred law is open and prominent. There is a chaplain and an altar. Prayers are offered, though not in the name of Jesus Christ. It is the religious elements in the movement, some of which are felt to be inconsistent with the Christian faith, which most of all concern those who have pressed for an enquiry. The following are the main points which have emerged in the course of our enquiry. (Qualities of a Freemason 2008:3)

## 2.2. BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF FREEMASONRY

Beliefs and practices of a group of linked national organizations open to men over the age of 21, united by a common code of morals and certain traditional 'secrets'. Modern freemasonry began in 18th-century Europe. Freemasons do much charitable work, but have been criticized in recent years for their secrecy, their male exclusivity, and their alleged use of influence within and between organizations (for example, the police or local government) to further each other's interests. Freemasons believe in God, whom they call the 'Great Architect of the Universe'.

## 2.4. HISTORY

Freemasonry is descended from a medieval guild of itinerant masons, which existed in the 14th century and by the 16th was admitting men unconnected with the building trade. The term 'freemason' may have meant a full member of the guild or one working in freestone, that is, a mason of the highest class. There were some 25 lodges in 17th-century Scotland, of which 16 were in centers of Masonic skills such as stonemasonry.

The present order of Free and Accepted Masons originated with the formation in London of the first Grand Lodge, or governing body, in 1717, and during the 18th century spread from Britain to the USA, continental Europe, and elsewhere. In France and other European countries, freemasonry assumed a political and anticlerical character; it has been condemned by the papacy, and in some countries was suppressed by the state. In Italy the freemasonic lodge was involved in a number of political scandals from the 1980s.



## 2.5. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Regular Freemasonry requires adherence to the Ancient Landmarks: Masonic ritual, modes of recognition, and the administrative proceedings of the Craft are all secret ; a belief in the existence of God and the immortality of souls is an unalterable and incontestable cornerstone of the Craft and this tenet cannot be abolished; the Lodge must be properly styled and secured against encroachment; the Holy Book must be open in the Lodge whilst it is at work; Masonic rites and rituals are unalterable and the ritualistic character of Freemasonry must remain inviolate; the Lodge must be governed according to the Ancient Laws, Rules, Regulations and Traditions of the Craft; the Grand-Master Mason is ultimately responsible for the government of the Fraternity and his prerogatives to make Freemasons, grant dispensations, warrant Lodges to meet, and to preside over every assembly of the Craft are inviolate; the equality of the Brethren is an unalterable principle; Freemasonry is based upon the doctrine of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth; these Landmarks cannot be changed and are inviolate; The Grand Lodge of All England at York is the guardian of the Ancient Landmarks of Freemasonry.

Therefore, before any man may be made a Mason he must profess and declare a belief in God without mental reservation of any kind; the three great lights in Freemasonry, the Holy Book, the Square and the Compasses must be present in the Lodge and the Holy Book open before any ceremony takes place or degree conferred; there must be no discussion of denominational religion or party politics in the Lodge.

In addition, any Mason who is a member of The Grand Lodge of All England at York must: belong to a Lodge and abide by its by-laws and regulations; be at least 21 years of age, or 18 years of age and the son of a Mason, or admitted by dispensation of Grand Lodge; be a man of honor and integrity and free from felony; not transgress the just laws of any country or state in which he works or resides; pay due allegiance to the Sovereign Power of his native land; not seek to gain any unfair pecuniary advantage due to his membership of the Fraternity; never reveal the name or description of a brother Mason without his permission; never reveal any of those Masonic secrets entrusted to his care or communicate them to anyone who is not entitled to receive them, **and should:** to the best of his abilities, and without detriment to himself, his family or his connections, assist Brother Masons in times of sickness or distress; at all times behave with due decorum within the Lodge; when the Lodge is over, carefully exercise due moderation; generally remain a reputable, valuable and charitable member of society. (Grand Lodge 2006:1)



### 3. SIMILARITIES BETWEEN AKHISM INSTITUTION AND FREEMASONRY LODGE

1. both of the organization are employees or employers organization.
2. both of the organization encourages friendship, brotherhood, social activities, social support and improve relations' among their members.
3. both of the organization aims to built a valuable and qualified master in his field of specialization.
4. both of the organization have internal job of description, internal organization and some specific titles and degrees. Such as entered apprentice, fellow of the craft, and master mason.
5. both of the organization aims to create an excellent master and excellent members for its benefit in the future.
6. both of the organizations aims to provide and equip the members with the nationalist, morality, professionalism, patriot, honesty, loyalty, helpfulness, respectfulness, devoted, citizens in his community.
7. Akhism is the greatest and most organized non-governmental organization instituted in the Ottoman state.
8. Freemasonry is the greatest and most organized non-governmental organization instituted in England.
9. Freemasons and Akhis believe in God, whom they call the 'Great Architect of the Universe'.
- 10 An "Akhi" is humble by nature but on the question of human dignity he is haughty. An "Akhi" is a friendly, honest, devoted to his profession and holds it above everything else. He leads a democratic and friendly way of living in his town and community. When he first joins the organization, the first thing he has to do provide the help of a guardian master and friends of the way. They will be with him on his good and bad days, extend their help on sickness and will not reveal his absence to his household when he is away.
- 11 Freemasonry is -character building. What makes a Mason different and special is that when he is at work, or with his friends, or at home with his family, or anywhere else, he puts into practice those truly essential Masonic precepts so amply illustrated in his Lodge: Intelligence, Honesty, Integrity, Kindness, Tolerance, Justice, Loyalty, Patriotism, Spiritual and Intellectual open-mindedness.



#### 4. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AKHISM INSTITUTION AND FREEMASONRY LODGE.

1. Freemasonry is extremely secret, very developed and expanded secretly among its members.

2. In order to be an assistant in the Akhi organization male person should be 12 years old. Before apprentice period there is a valiant period for the new candidate.

3. In Freemasonry beliefs and practices of a group of linked national organizations open to men over the age of 21, united by a common code of morals and certain traditional 'secrets'.

4. Why are Freemasons different or special?

Masons from the Grand Lodge of All England are different because in their ordinary lives they do not advertise their membership or seek reward for their endeavors. They go about their private lives and do the same things as any other law-abiding citizens. They work, take care of their families, their communities and their environment, play sports, go to the theater etc.

5. Freemasonry is the world's *oldest* and *largest Fraternity*. While its traditions look back earlier, Masonry in its current form appeared when its public events were noticed by the residents of London, England in 1717.

6. The Akhi Institution is an organization established by the Turkish nations living in Anatolia, in the Balkan regions and Turkestan between the 13 th and 19 th centuries. The Akhi institution contributed to the training in various arts and professions and to the development of moral values of Turkish nations.

7. there are three symbols in Freemasonry, these are, the Square, the Compasses and Scale

8. According to Akhi understanding and philosophy:

"Whoever praying patience with devout in God Came to us is our member. Whoever working with wisdom and moral Exceeded us is our member".

9. Freemasonry still exists in the world, but akhism has abolished itself in the 18<sup>th</sup> century without causing any problem in the territory of Ottoman Empire.

#### CONCLUSION

An "Akhi" is humble by nature but on the question of human dignity he is haughty. An "Akhi" is a friendly, honest, devoted to his profession and holds it above everything else. He leads a democratic and friendly way of living in his town and community. When he first joins the organization, the first thing he



has to do provide the help of a guardian master and friends of the way. They will be with him on his good and bad days, extend their help on sickness and will not reveal his absence to his household when he is away.

Akhism acts as the basis of contemporary management techniques, including individual focus, standardization in quality, continuous training, motivational needs, self-control awareness, social responsibility, corporate union and solidarity. However, besides all these, Akhism reminds us of the fact that greed for money has always been a widespread moral degeneration throughout centuries. Akhism is as a Non-Governmental Association Model in the History of the Turkish Nation. Therefore, perceiving the lessons we may learn from these paths of past civilizations may be related to the conditions of our day that have a crucial implication.

“Akhilik” (Friendship) aimed to bring together all the individuals as brothers without taking into consideration whether one is poor or rich, to prevent possible disorders that may happen during economic or social activities and to take the necessary actions in time. Akhilik (Brotherhood) united all the small businessmen and artisans and in the course of time gained an economical aspect and turned into a trade’s corporation. We can look at “Akhilik” as a syndical organization in this respect. All the small businessmen without discrimination whether they are employees or employers could enter or even had to enter this organization. (Ankara Ticaret Dergisi 1972:34-38)

Freemasonry is -character building. What makes a Mason different and special is that when he is at work, or with his friends, or at home with his family, or anywhere else, he puts into practice those truly essential Masonic precepts so amply illustrated in his Lodge: Intelligence, Honesty, Integrity, Kindness, Tolerance, Justice, Loyalty, Patriotism, Spiritual and Intellectual open-mindedness.

These are essential requirements for the leaders within freemasonry lodges, nations, states and communities.

“If he wishes to partake of Masonry in its Original Purity, he will turn his attention to that source, where it has been Inviolably maintained and continued for Successive Ages to this Day, and where the Legislature of Masonry for this Kingdom stands fixed by its true Title 'The Grand Lodge of All England, Established at the City of York'”.



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