

More Light in Masonry



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FOREWORD

This publication has been prepared for presentation to you, a Fellowcraft Mason, after your receipt of the Fellowcraft Degree. It is hoped that you will welcome "more light" on the Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons.

Masonry has a sincere concern for education, enlightenment and culture. Feel free to ask your Counselor for assistance in understanding the true meaning of the Fellowcraft Degree. If your Counselor does not have an immediate answer to your question, he will try to obtain the answer for you.

MORE LIGHT IN MASONRY

The Meaning of "Fellowcraft"

You are now a Fellowcraft Mason. The title has a particular significance to Freemasonry and is seldom found elsewhere. A "craft" is an organization of skilled workmen in some trade or calling; masons, carpenters, painters, sculptors and others. A "fellow" is one who holds membership in such a craft. Since the skilled crafts are no longer organized as they once were, the term is no longer in use in its original sense.

In Freemasonry, the word "Fellowcraft" possesses two separate meanings. One of these we may call the operative meaning, and the second is the speculative meaning. During the period in which Freemasons were the skilled workmen engaged as architects and builders of the great cathedrals, they were Operative Masons. Like other skilled workmen of the time, they had an organized craft of their own, the general form of which was called a "guild." A lodge was a local, usually temporary, organization within the guild. The guild had officers, laws, rules, regulations and customs which were binding on all members.

During this operative period, membership was divided into two grades, the lower of which was composed of Apprentices. Operative Freemasons recruited boys of ten to fifteen years of age to learn the building trade. When a boy proved acceptable to the members, he was bound over to a Master Mason. When he proved himself worthy, his name was formally entered in the books of the lodge, thereby giving him his title of Entered Apprentice. Generally, this boy lived with his Master, gave him implicit obedience in all things and toiled without pay other than board, lodging and clothing. During his long apprenticeship, he was really a bonded servant, with exact duties, few rights and little freedom. This subordinate position also existed within the Lodge, as the Apprentice had no voice or vote and could not hold office.

At the end of his apprenticeship, he was examined in Lodge. If his record was good, if he could prove his proficiency and if the members voted in his favor, he was released from his bond and made a full member of the Craft, with the same rights, privileges and duties as the other members. In the sense that he thus became a full member, he was called a "Fellow of the Craft." In the sense that he had mastered his art and no longer needed a teacher, he was called a "Master Mason." During the operative period of the building of the great cathedrals, the terms "Fellow of the Craft" and "Master Mason" meant much the same thing.

Operative Masonry began to decline at about the time of the Reformation in the 16th century. Lodges declined in number and membership. A few Lodges in England began to admit men who had no intention of practicing Operative Masonry. They probably had social reasons for joining, but were, no doubt, also attracted by the Craft's antiquity. These new "Accepted Masons" were also called "Speculative Masons." At the beginning of the 18th century, these Speculatives had so increased in numbers that they gained control of the lodges; and during the first quarter of that century they

completely transformed the Craft into the Speculative Fraternity as we now know it.

Although the Speculative Masons adhered to many of the old customs, they made some radical changes. One of the most important of these changes was to abandon the old rule of dividing the membership into two grades or degrees. They adopted a new rule and divided the fraternity into three degrees. It was at this point that the Master Mason Degree became the third Degree, completely separate from the second or Fellowcraft Degree.

The term Fellowcraft is used today as the name of the Second Degree. Fellowcraft refers to the ritualistic ceremonies in that degree, to a member of that degree and to a lodge when opened in that degree.

Importance of Fellowcraft Degree

Freemasonry is too expansive to be presented to a Candidate in one morning, afternoon or evening. Each Degree is a part of the whole. The lessons of the First and Second Degrees are as much a part of Freemasonry as the Third Degree. If you wish to understand Freemasonry, you must understand the Fellowcraft Degree. Fellowcraft Masonry is Masonry, Just as a house is the same house, whether you view it from the front, side or back.

Freemasonry has many faces. The First Degree is the Masonry of the conscience, where you are taught the necessity of obedience, apprenticeship and industriousness. The Second Degree is the Masonry of the intellect, with its teachings of experience, knowledge and wisdom. In the Third Degree, you will find the Masonry of the soul, in which a Candidate learns the importance of spiritual life.

Do not, therefore, be tempted to look upon the Fellowcraft Degree as a mere stepping stone to the Third Degree. A Master Mason, in a real sense, always remains an Entered Apprentice Mason and a Fellowcraft Mason.

An Interpretation of the Ritual of the Second Degree

There are many great ideas embodied in this Degree. If you understand them, you will advance in an understanding of yourself and others. One of the major lessons is that of adulthood.

The Entered Apprentice Mason represents youth standing at the portals of life. His eyes are on the rising sun. The Master Mason is the man of years. He is on the further slope of the hill with the setting sun in his eyes. The Fellowcraft is a man in the prime of life ... experienced, strong, resourceful and able to bear the heat and burden of the day.

Only in its narrowest sense can adulthood be described in terms of years. The mere fact that a man is 30, 40 or 50 years of age has little to do with it. Adulthood is a condition, a state of life, charged with responsibilities.

A man in the middle years carries the *responsibilities*. It is he *upon* whom a family depends for support. He is the Atlas on whose shoulders rest the burdens of business. By his skill and experience, the arts are sustained. To his keeping are entrusted the destinies of his community, state and country.

According to Masonic tradition, King Solomon employed 80,000 Fellowcrafts in the building of his temple.' These Fellowcrafts were the hewers in the mountains and in the quarries. The description teaches that men in the Fellowcraft period of life do the hewing in the mountains and quarries of life.

Youth is enthusiastic, carefree and filled with high hopes, with the approaching upward sloping path bathed in morning light. Old age is mellowed, with the battle behind and the landscape still visible in the light of the dying sun. Young men see visions, old men dream dreams.

The Fellowcraft walks in the full blazing light of the noon day sun. Everything stands starkly before him in uncompromising reality. The boyish illusions as to the ease of life and the sufficiency of his strength have evaporated in the heat of the day. After a few more years, he will learn the virtues of patience, peace and resignation, but that time has not yet come. The Fellowcraft must bend his back and bear the load.

What does the Second Degree say to the Fellowcraft, whether in Masonry or in the world at large? The answer brings us to the concept that the Fellowcraft must so equip himself that he will prove adequate to the tasks which will be laid upon him.

What is that equipment? The Degree gives us at least three answers

Experience

First, the Fellowcraft must gain direct experience from contact with the realities of existence. You will recall what was said about the Five Senses: hearing, seeing, feeling, smelling and tasting. That portion of what Masonry calls the Middle Chamber Lecture is not intended to be a short course on either physiology or psychology. The symbolism represents the trust that a man must learn from his own contacts with situations. These experiences are accumulated only with the passage of time. That which a man learns one day must be added to the next, and so on from year to year until at last, through his senses, he comes to understand the world and how to deal with it.

Education

An individual's possible experience is limited. If a man learned only that with which he was brought into direct contact by his senses, he would be poorly equipped to deal with the complexities and responsibilities of life. Man must add the experiences of others; and his own knowledge must be supplemented by the knowledge of mankind.

Freemasonry illustrates this. In the days when Masons were builders of the great cathedrals, the Apprentice was a mere boy, ten to fifteen years of age, scarcely knowing one tool from the other, ignorant of the secrets of the builders' art. Yet, after seven years he was able to produce his master's piece and perform any task which the Master might have assigned to him. How was this accomplished? Not by the Apprentice's unaided efforts but by education supervised by the Master Mason, through wise and patient guidance.

Education is symbolized in the Second Degree by the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences: grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. You may have wondered what such schoolroom topics had to do with Masonry. You should now understand. The explanation of these subjects in the Degree was not intended as an academic lecture. Like so much else in the Degree, the presentation of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences is symbolic. It is intended to show that by education one can obtain knowledge through the experiences and teaching of others.

Even if a Fellowcraft is equipped with experience and education, he must be equipped in a third way, which is more important than the other two.

Wisdom

Experience provides awareness of the world at points of immediate contact, and knowledge gives competency for more difficult tasks. Wisdom, however, is the ability to use one's experience and knowledge in a proper manner.

If man is to be happy in his life on earth, he must be able to understand and cope with the complex whole. Imagine symphonic music being rendered by an orchestra. Generally, each player must be able to see, to touch and to hear if he is to play the instrument. He must have knowledge of his own musical score and the capacities of his instrument. The conductor must have all this, plus an understanding of all of the instruments and of the composition as a whole. His skill and knowledge must embrace not only each instrument and each player's score, but he must understand how to bring all of them together. He must have the wisdom that is the competency, to deal with the complete situation.

The Middle Chamber, which is so conspicuous in the Second Degree, has many meanings, but it is a symbol of wisdom. By the experience of the Five Senses, through the knowledge gained of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Candidate is called to advance as on Winding Stairs, upward toward a balanced wisdom of life in which

the senses, emotions, intellect, character, work, deeds, habits and the soul of man are knit together in unity and balance.

Lessons and Symbols of the Second Degree

A brief explanation of some of the symbols of the Fellowcraft Degree will continue to show that the ritual is filled with significance.

Winding Stairs

There is symbolism in the fact that the stairway winds. Everything in life is not easy, and no man can completely foresee everything that lies before him. Perhaps he can only see the next step. In spite of a lack of knowledge of what is at the top and in spite of difficulties he may encounter, man keeps climbing. According to Masonic tradition, when our ancient Brethren arrived at the Middle Chamber they received their wages of corn, wine and oil. The ultimate goal, of course, is to enter into that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Grammar and Rhetoric

These are methods of communication. The need for proper communication is as timely today as it was when the ritual was developed. Whether that communication is in our family, business, or Fraternal lives, the improvement of communication is necessary.

Logic

We must have a sufficient understanding of logic in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions. Simply because a few individuals within a certain group may engage in unacceptable or illegal actions does not necessarily or logically cause us to conclude that all persons within that group engage in the same type of behavior.

Arithmetic and Geometry

While this appears to deal only with mathematics, it alludes to the importance of having a basic understanding of all the Sciences.

Music

This symbolizes not only harmonious sounds, but all beauty, poetry and art. Life becomes more enjoyable, if not more meaningful, through a proper appreciation of these areas.

Astronomy

This suggests not only a study of the solar system, but alludes to and symbolizes a supreme creative power and wisdom without which the universe could not exist.

Letter G

This symbol has a double interpretation. It symbolizes the first letter of the name for that Deity in whose existence all Masons believe. The existence of a Supreme Being is further symbolized by the presence of the volume of sacred law on the Masonic altar. Secondly, the Letter G symbolizes the initial of Geometry, regarded as the basic science of Operative Masonry. It symbolizes to Speculative Masons the unchanging natural laws which govern the whole material universe.

Overall, the Degree deals with the Fellowcrafts arrival into King Solomon's Temple. This allegorical entrance can only be achieved by perseverance and toil. Masonry teaches that the satisfying goods of life (spiritual, moral, intellectual and physical) cannot be won by luck, like 'a lottery prize. The goods of life do not come by chance solely to the fortunate. Work and changes in our own nature, which are often painful and costly, are an integral part of the philosophy which Freemasonry teaches.