
The Fellow Craft

Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Maryland

You have now passed through the Second Degree and have been made a Fellow Craft. The term, as you can readily see, comes down to us from the days of Operative Masonry. When the young apprentice had completed his training and when his 'masterpiece' had been approved by the members of the Lodge, he was declared to be a 'Fellow' with them in the 'Craft' of cathedral building. No longer a boy, he had now matured; his training had fitted him to assume the duties and responsibilities of an artisan.

As a Fellow Craft, your privileges have increased. You may now be present in a Lodge when it is working in either the Fellow Craft Degree or in the Entered Apprentice Degree. As your privileges have increased, so, too, have your responsibilities. The more you learn about Freemasonry, the greater is your duty to think and act and live in accordance with its principles.

You have perhaps noted one aspect of the Fellow Craft Degree in which it differs from the Entered Apprentice Degree. As an Entered Apprentice, your conscience was appealed to; you were reminded of that purity of *heart* and conduct which characterizes the true Mason. In the Fellow Craft Degree you were impressed with the importance of developing your *mind*.

Purity of life is the basic essential in Freemasonry. To get the most out of your Masonic experiences, however, you need also to develop your intellectual powers.

You are making progress. The Entered Apprentice Degree represents youth; the Fellow Craft Degree symbolically represents the maturity of manhood. Always you need to think of the Masonic Degrees as allegories that teach lessons. Never think of any Masonic Degree as a mere spectacle or as "play acting." The Fellow Craft Degree, like the Entered Apprentice Degree and the Master Mason Degree for which you are preparing, is intended to strengthen, elevate, and ennoble you—to make you properly mindful of your duties and your obligations to your Creator and to your fellowmen. Freemasonry is trying all the time to bring its tenets to bear on the *individual* Mason. As an institution, Freemasonry takes no part in reform movements, no matter how good their purpose may be. Its basic teachings are manifested through the attitudes and actions of Masons in their individual capacities. Freemasonry means to the world what Masons make it mean. As a Fellowcraft Mason, you are responsible to live up to the light that has been imparted to you—to exemplify in your life and conduct the principles you have thus far learned.

The underlying theme of the Fellow Craft Degree, then, is the attainment of knowledge and the cultivation of the mind. The Degree teaches you to think of yourself as a man who is beginning the journey of life and who has before his eyes and heart the great object of *improvement* in mind and character.

You realize, of course, that, like all human beings, you gain knowledge through your five senses. You see; you hear; you touch; you taste; you smell. All that you know you have learned through one or more of those senses. What you learn today is built on what you learned in days gone by; what you will learn in the future will be based on what you learn now. You want to be a true Mason; hence you are never going to stop learning about the meaning and especially about the everyday *applications* of Freemasonry.

While the Fellow Craft Degree is much concerned with education, you should understand that the whole of Freemasonry is really education in the basic principles of right living. To the extent that you think of Freemasonry merely as something abstract, to that extent also you

will fail to apply its principles thinking and living.

The Fellow Craft Degree teaches you can learn not only from your experiences, but also from the experiences of past generations. Freemasonry sums up for you—if you will but develop the will to determination to see and the determination to understand—the experiences of mankind in its constant quest values of life. Over and over again Freemasonry teaches you that what you see and hear and taste and smell is by no means the whole of life. All the time you are being with the overshadowing import spiritual and intellectual aspects of life—those aspects that you cannot measure or measure and weigh as we weight the physical things that surround us on every side.

It is for that very reason that that the Masons formulated the ritual of the Fellow Craft Degree put into it the symbolism Liberal Arts and Sciences. In a ritual of the Fellow Craft Degree widely in England, the candidate is specifically told expected to make the liberal arts his future study, so that he may the better be enabled to discharge his duties as a Mason and estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty.

You need to understand clearly, therefore, that Freemasonry is not primarily concerned with knowledge and education for their own sake. On the contrary, its constant purpose is to impart knowledge to you in order that you may get true wisdom—wisdom which will result in a right understanding and a just appreciation of the Fact of God as that Fact is revealed to you in the work of His hands all around us, as well as in the lives of good men and in the pages of the Book that lies open on the altar whenever the Lodge is at work

Be assured that no man who lives unto himself alone can possibly live a well-rounded or a happy life. If he leaves Out of his calculations the Fact of God and His overruling Providence in the world, he narrows and constricts his existence to the five senses, and thus he utterly loses the real meaning of life. Such a man becomes more self-centered—and hence, more selfish—all the time. Eventually he becomes bitter and frustrated, and thus life loses all real meaning for him.

Now, you realize that neither you nor anybody else ever attains suddenly to knowledge and true wisdom. You have to work for both. By the proper use of your God-given senses, you climb the steps which lead onward and upward to a true understanding of the real purpose of life. Furthermore, you have to work and climb in *faith*. You cannot see the way ahead with your physical eyes. Your simple duty, therefore, is to do what needs to be done today in the sure faith and confidence that the step you take now will lead on to the next step in your constant climb toward wisdom and understanding.

Though dim the light may be, there's still *some* light
To shed its rays on mind disquieted.
Seek not to scan the distant mountain height,
The future lies beyond your mortal sight.
There's light enough to take the step ahead.

Furthermore, you have been taught in the Fellow Craft Degree that the pathway of life is not a straight or level road on which you can travel without exertion. On the contrary, it is a winding path; it is beset with difficulties that are the common lot of humanity. Remember, however, that the road you travel, however steep or winding it may be, always leads onward to a higher sense of what life is and what it is meant to be.

As you allow your mind to dwell on that truth, recall that the seventh of the Liberal Arts and Sciences is Astronomy. In symbolic language you were thus taught that all true knowledge leads to Him who is not only the Creator of the solar system and the stars, but also the One by whose

infinite power and wisdom the universe is sustained. Here is where argument fails and faith steps in. Remind yourself constantly that in Freemasonry you are always engaged in the cultivation of faith—faith in God, faith in the possibilities of your better nature, faith in your Brethren. Without a growing faith, you are sure to find life empty and meaningless.

There was a time—hundreds of years ago—when the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences comprised the sum of human knowledge. For you who live in the Twentieth Century, however, they are intended to symbolize the whole realm of science and culture. Nobody in our time can make himself master of all our far-flung culture and knowledge. A man can at best acquire an understanding of only one aspect or a few aspects of knowledge. Symbolically, the emphasis which the Fellow Craft Degree puts on the acquisition of knowledge is intended to impress on your mind and heart the constant necessity of working for an ever larger comprehension of what Freemasonry is and of your duty to think and live as a true Mason.

You will recall the explanation you were given about the Orders of Architecture. That explanation plainly links the Freemasonry of today, which we properly call Symbolic Freemasonry, with Operative Masonry of the long ago. The various Orders of Architecture are documents in stone which give us an understanding of bygone eras in the history of the race. Taken in their entirety, the Orders of Architecture symbolize all those useful arts which have come down to us through the stream of time and which constantly hold before us the good, the true, and the beautiful. A beautiful structure is a joy to behold; even more inspiring is a beautiful character wrought out of the strains and stresses of life.

One of the outcomes of your daily work is the money you receive for doing it. Entirely apart from its material reward, work is a great human blessing. A profound Masonic thinker and philosopher, Albert Pike, wrote: “There is a sacredness in work. There is always hope in a man who actually and sincerely works; in idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Man perfects himself by working.” You ought to get from the work your hands and mind have found to do a sense of exhilaration, of stimulation, and of internal satisfaction. Those internal rewards should also be the outcome of the work you are doing in Freemasonry.

Still, it is true that you have to receive “wages” to support your material existence and to provide for those who are near and dear to you. Recall what you learned about the wages of a Fellow Craft. In the days of long ago the wages of a workman were corn, wine, and oil. Think of them in their symbolic meaning. For centuries, corn has symbolized plenty, wine has represented health, and oil has stood for peace. When you live and work as a true Fellow Craft, you will gradually realize that plenitude of mind, that health of the spirit, and that peace of heart which a proper contemplation and *application* of the tenets of Freemasonry can produce in you. Just so long as you are wholly concerned with the outward and material aspects of life, just so long you may be sure that real peace and happiness will be denied to you. As more and more you take into account the eternal verities which Freemasonry teaches you, so, too, will you grow in intellectual plenty, in spiritual health, and in genuine peace.

One of the fundamental facts about Freemasonry is that its Degrees sum up—in symbolical form—what thoughtful men down through the ages have learned about the enduring values of life. The language of the ritual is drawn from a variety of sources. Perhaps you will remember that magnificent soliloquy in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* which begins with “To be or not to be; that is the question.” In that soliloquy is a tremendous phrase which Freemasonry has appropriated and incorporated in the ritual of the Fellow Craft Degree—“The undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler ever returns.” It is a “country” about which, in the nature of things, you can know nothing through your five senses. Yet your experience and the experience of all mankind teach you that from that country—in very truth—no traveler ever returns.

There is nothing at all morbid about the thinking of a man who realizes that in time he, too, will join “the innumerable caravan which moves to that mysterious realm where each shall take his chamber in the silent halls of death.” Freemasonry, as you will learn, proclaims the Immortality of the Soul, as it proclaims the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. In the light which it sheds on those truths, it constantly, patiently, and persistently entreats you to walk uprightly before God and in your dealings with your fellows. To the discharge of those duties you are bound by the most sacred ties.

As a Fellow Craft in the maturity of manhood, you were made acquainted with three more working tools. In the case of each tool you were told how it was used by Operative Masons. Behind and beneath the physical tools, however, there is a meaning which applies to you in the here and now. That meaning is directly associated with your duty to God and to those with whom you establish contacts—in and out of the Lodge. It is, furthermore, tied into the life that lies beyond this mortal life. It is faith in that future life which Freemasonry constantly teaches.

In the Lodge the letter *G*, as you learned, occupies a place of honor. It has a double interpretation: (1) As it is the first letter in the word *God*, it again emphasizes the fact that you professed your belief in Him when you made your petition to the Lodge. You continually reaffirm that belief by the very presence of the Volume of the Sacred Law which lies open whenever the Lodge is at work. (2) As *G* is also the first letter in the word *Geometry*, you are thereby reminded of the unchanging laws which govern the universe. Those laws are inherent in our physical world. From time to time men uncover or discover those laws, but men never invent the natural laws of the physical universe. Those laws were laid down and made a part of the physical world by the Divine Intelligence for the welfare of humankind. Sad to say, men, when they discover those laws, too often put them to evil use.

You can see now what is meant by the statement that the Fellow Craft Degree is intended primarily to appeal to your mind and through your mind to your heart. When the ritual of the Degree was formulated some two centuries or more ago, schooling and education were much less diffused than they are now. Our Masonic forbears who put together the ritual wanted to give their fellow Masons some intellectual contact with culture. Always, however, their deeper purpose was to tie together culture and the traditions of Operative Masonry into a systematic presentation of the truths by which right-thinking men live. It is those truths that are emphasized and illustrated in the Second Degree through which you have now passed.

Again you are going to have a course of instruction on the Fellow Craft Degree. That instruction is intended to summarize for you the truths you have learned by allegory and symbol. Your mastery of what you are to learn will determine your advancement in Freemasonry. Always remember, however, that you are not to learn merely words and sentences. You are to think about the *meaning of* what you are learning. “To every Mason who knows his art,” wrote Dr. Joseph Fort Newton whose prayer you read in the booklet, *On The Threshold*, “life is an allegory, and the degrees and symbols are the comments on it, interpreting its meaning and expounding its duties and its hopes. By the same token, a literal-minded man can never know the real meaning of Masonry any more than he can read the Bible aright, since both speak in metaphors and parables, for such as have eyes to see and ears to hear. That is to say, Masonry is a kind of moral poetry, uniting the basic truths of faith with the tasks and duties of every day, seeking to build men and make them workmen in the service of fraternal righteousness. Man has made rapid advance and sought him out many inventions; but never yet has he found a profounder philosophy or a wiser way of living it than has been brought down to us from a far past in the Lodges of our gentle craft of Masonry.”

It is in that spirit and attitude that you are asked to read and ponder this booklet. Remember that Freemasonry has depths and heights of meaning. Its teachings are too far-reaching to be presented in one evening or in a series of evenings. One Degree follows another, and the members of each stand on a different level of rights and duties. While you can now be present when the Lodge is working in the Entered Apprentice Degree or in the Fellow Craft Degree, you cannot yet sit in a Lodge of Master Masons. This fact, however, does not mean that the Masonry which has been presented in the First and Second Degrees is less important or less binding on you than that which will be presented to you in the Third Degree, should you be elected to receive the Master Mason Degree. Everything that you have been taught in the First and Second Degrees belongs as vitally to Freemasonry as that which is taught in the Third Degree. No aspect of Freemasonry is subordinate to any other aspect.

Do not, therefore, at any time think of the Fellow Craft Degree as being merely a stepping stone to the Master Mason Degree. Freemasonry gives you one part of its teachings in the First Degree, another part in the Second Degree, and still another part in the Third Degree; but **it** is always Freemasonry throughout.

In both the First Degree and the Second Degree, you heard about the "Temple of Solomon." There was a time when Masons believed that Freemasonry was instituted by King Solomon and that the Symbolic Degrees have been passed down from his time to the present in unbroken succession and unaltered form. "The modern method of reading Masonic history," wrote Dr. Albert G. Mackey, one of the leading Masonic historians, "has swept away this edifice of imagination with an unsparing hand." It is a fact, however, that nearly all the symbolism of Freemasonry, as Dr. Mackey wrote, "rests upon or is derived from King Solomon's Temple." The connection between that actual Temple of centuries ago and the symbolism with you hear and see exemplified in the Degrees is so close "that to attempt to separate the one from the other would be fatal. We must receive the myths and legends that connect Freemasonry with the Temple not indeed as historic facts, but as allegories; not as events that have really transpired, but as symbols; and must accept these allegories and these symbols for what their inventors really meant that they should be—the foundation of a science of morality."

'When you grasp that fundamental fact—that Freemasonry is essentially a science of morality—many things which would otherwise puzzle you will be cleared up in your mind. You can then think about the lessons which you have learned in the first two Degrees with real understanding. You will also be prepared to receive still further light through the experiences which lie ahead of you.

