

BEYOND THE NORTHEAST CORNER

By Richard H. Sands

Foreword

This book was developed at the request of the Future Program Development Committee of the Grand Lodge F. & A. M. of Michigan in the Fall of 1998.

Its purpose is to provide “further light in Masonry” for the newly-made Master Mason and his family. The only secrets of Freemasonry are the grips, words and signs and the verbatim ritual. Everything else you are free and encouraged to talk about, just do so in your own words. It is a fact of life that in order to improve your own understanding of a subject, you need to try to explain it to others. By sharing this book with the family, a newly-made Master Mason will discover what he does not understand, and then he will seek answers to his questions from his peers, from the Committee on Masonic Service and Education and through additional reading. (If your Lodge did not assign you an Intender, it is suggested that you obtain an Intender Handbook from the Grand Lodge Office (800-632-8764) and read that along with this book.)

We are indebted to the Grand Lodge of A. F. & A. M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario for allowing us to use much of the material contained in their own similar book entitled, “Beyond the Pillars.” The remainder of this book was written by several dedicated Masons from our own Grand Jurisdiction.

Chapter VII is the text of a talk given to the Victoria Lodge of Research and Education on May 7, 1976, by Worshipful Brother Harry Carr, then Secretary and Editor of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, the prestigious Research Lodge in London. It is reproduced here by permission of the Victoria Lodge of Research and Education.

The book is in loose-leaf format to permit the newly-made Master Mason to add to it easily as he discovers relevant material, and to allow the Grand Lodge to expand and update it at minimal expense. Toward this latter purpose, please send suggested changes to the Grand Lodge Office, 233 E. Fulton St., Suite 20, Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3270 Attn: R. H. Sands.

The cover of this book shows the Northeast Corner of the lodge room of Alexandria – Washington Lodge in the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Alexandria, VA, by permission of the Memorial Association.

This book is published by The Committee on Publication of the Grand Lodge of F. & A. M. of Michigan.

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CHAPTER I

*..... And Then
There Was Light!*

The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it.
- John Ruskin

Introduction

FREEMASONRY is first and foremost a fraternity. It is also "A Way of Life." The brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God is primary – this means that its activities should always be designed to promote friendship, morality and brotherly love.

Freemasonry is a unique institution that has been a major part of community life in America for over two hundred and fifty (250) years. It is America's largest and oldest fraternity, and one that continues to be an important part of many men's personal lives and growth.

Although Freemasonry is not a religion, its emphasis on the Fatherhood of God ensures that the Brotherhood of Man follows naturally. This coupled with the obligation to abide by the Golden Rule, particularly with a fellow Mason, makes for one of the strongest bonds of society. When you meet another Mason, the odds that he will treat you as you would like to be treated are very high indeed.

Who are Masons?

Freemasons come from all walks of life – from the rich and famous to the poor and obscure. Masons are men who have joined together to improve themselves. The latter is accomplished through the principles and ceremonies of the fraternity and the application of those in their homes, in their work, and in their communities. They endeavor to extend Masonic lessons into their daily lives in order to become positive influences in their homes, communities, nation, and throughout the world. They base their efforts on morality, justice, charity, truth and the laws of God. Worldwide, membership encompasses millions of men who believe and support the same fundamental principles.

What Is A Mason?

(One man answered as follows)

A Mason is a man who professes a faith in God. As a man of faith, he uses the tools of moral and ethical truths to serve mankind.

A Mason binds himself to like-minded men in a Brotherhood that transcends all religious, ethnic, social, cultural, and educational differences.

In fellowship with his Brothers, a Mason finds ways in which to serve his God, his family, his fellowman and his country.

A Mason is dedicated. He recognizes his responsibility for justice, truth, charity, enlightenment, freedom and liberty, honesty and integrity in all aspects of human endeavor.

A Mason is such a man.

What is Masonry?

A generally accepted definition is "Freemasonry is an organized society of men, symbolically applying the principles of Operative Masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building." The working tools and methods of the ancient craftsman are used to help portray fundamental truths.

As an example, let us look at the working tools of the Entered Apprentice, the 24-inch gauge and common gavel. These were used by the operative mason to measure lengths, widths and heights and to break off the corners of rough stones, but a speculative Mason is taught to use these to manage his time and to remove the roughness from his character, thus making him a better person.

What is Freemasonry to you?

(A Minnesota Mason answered this as summarized below)

If a non-Mason were to ask you, "What is Masonry?" how would you answer? To me, Masonry is the following:

1. In the lodge room, Speculative Masonry is information and inspiration
2. In the home, Masonry is kindness and fidelity.
3. In business relationships, Masonry is honesty and veracity.
4. In my daily work, Masonry is thoroughness and dependability.
5. In social contacts, Masonry is moderation and self-control.
6. Toward the fortunate, Masonry is congratulations and best wishes.
7. Toward the weak, Masonry is compassion and assistance.
8. Toward wickedness, Masonry is rebuke and resistance.
9. Toward the penitent, Masonry is forgiveness and another chance.
10. Finally, toward God, Masonry is reverence, love and obedience.

The Lessons of Freemasonry

The quotation by John Ruskin at the beginning of this chapter summarizes the lesson that Freemasonry would like to give to the world. It is often said that the purpose of Freemasonry is "to take a good man and help him to become a better man." It does so by offering a man who becomes a Mason opportunities to improve himself.

If you are to profit from Freemasonry to the fullest extent, you must work at applying the lessons in your daily life. The lessons of Freemasonry are timeless, but we learn from them by doing. Nothing worthwhile has ever been achieved without effort.

It takes effort to understand the teachings of Freemasonry, because they are illustrated by symbols and taught by allegory. What are the lessons taught by a "flight of winding stairs," or the importance of "the point within a circle?" Why were you the central character in the play set around events connected with the building of King Solomon's Temple? What do the ruffians represent and why were you blindfolded when you met them?

When you teach by symbols and by allegory, you are talking to each man as an individual, because he interprets the symbols and the allegory according to his own experiences. That is the strength of the method, and it provides ample opportunity for men to share their interpretations with each other thereby broadening the perspectives of everyone. We call our form of Freemasonry "Speculative", because we are encouraged to ponder the meanings of the lessons taught in terms of our own experiences.

Whenever you teach by symbols or allegory, it is possible that your message may be misunderstood. There is the apocryphal story of the elementary school teacher who brought two jars of worms to school one day. In one, she poured some water and the worms continued to wriggle and squiggle like all healthy worms do. In the other, she poured some alcohol and the worms shriveled up and died. She then asked the class, "Did you all see what happened?" "Yes, teacher!" "Did you all learn from this?" "Yes, teacher!" "Well, what did you learn?" One little boy waved his hand. "Johnny, what did you learn?" "I learned that if you drink gin, you won't get worms!" Now, that probably was not the lesson that the teacher intended with this demonstration, but such are the dangers of free interpretation. To prevent such misunderstandings, it is necessary to ask questions of those men whom you respect for their interpretations or explain yours and ask for comments. Open discussions in Lodge are necessary and a useful part of our education.

What are Lodges?

A Lodge is a constitutional number of Masons, meeting together in a specific location (sometimes also called a Lodge, but more correctly a Temple or Center) to conduct business, confer degrees, socialize and share ideas and efforts for the benefit of themselves, their fellowmen and their communities. This Lodge operates under a charter from a Grand Lodge, which teaches and enforces agreed upon rules of conduct and ritual guidelines for uniformity in the degree work.

These rules and guidelines are written down in the Book of Constitutions and a Ritual Book available to all Master Masons (ask your Secretary). The Officers of the Lodge are elected or appointed, in accord

with the Lodge Bylaws, each year.

Masonic Education

Every Lodge is asked by the Grand Lodge to designate a Lodge Education Officer to put on five or ten minute programs in Lodge each time the Lodge meets on some topic of Masonic education. These can be explanations of our Bluebook law, discussions of the lessons taught by many of our symbols, excerpts from some of the many recent books on Freemasonry such as Robinson's A Pilgrims Path to Freemasonry or Knight and Lomas' The Hiram Key or perhaps a discussion of Chapter VII of this book, Six Hundred Years of Craft Ritual, or possible community projects for the Lodge. The topics are nearly infinite – all that is needed is a dedicated Mason to present them. You could be that individual, if your Lodge does not already have a Lodge Education Officer. All you have to do is volunteer and, as you teach, you will learn about Freemasonry.

If your Lodge has a Lodge Education Officer, then volunteer to be an Intender (a Master Mason who acts as a "big brother" to a new candidate and member) or to learn a lecture or to take a part in a degree team. You might even wish to be a candidate for the Officer line. In other words, learn by doing. Make your wishes known to the Master and the Senior Warden.

Lodge and Grand Lodge Libraries

Most lodges have libraries from which you can borrow books to increase your knowledge of Freemasonry. If your Lodge does not have one, or if it is sadly out-of-date, you can provide a real service by recommending a few books for immediate purchase and then one per year thereafter. For guidance in this direction, ask the Secretary for a copy of the Michigan Masonic Manual and look in the Chapter on Lodge and Grand Lodge libraries or look in Chapter XIX of this book. The Intender Handbook, located under The Lodge System of Education in the Michigan Masonic Manual also lists a good starter library.

You will find the Michigan Masonic Manual excellent reading for someone such as yourself. This will be particularly true if you have any thoughts of entering the Officer Line of your Lodge, and we hope that you do. Freemasonry needs strong leadership as do most volunteer organizations. You could provide a great service to Freemasonry by sharing your talents.

The Grand Lodge has an excellent Masonic Library located in the Grand Rapids Temple, 233 E. Fulton St., Grand Rapids, MI. Unfortunately, it is not a lending library – you must go there to use it. We suggest you call the Grand Lodge Office (800-632-8764) to ascertain the hours of operation of the library.

There is an outstanding lending library which is operated by the Grand Lodge of Iowa. To use it just write the Assistant Librarian, Grand Lodge of Iowa, P. O. Box 279, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406. He will research any topic of interest to you and send you several books on the subject. All that it costs you is return book-rate postage to return the books after 3 weeks. Please avail yourself of this service.

Masonic Correspondence Courses

Correspondence courses are designed to broaden your understanding of Freemasonry in all of its facets. You are encouraged to avail yourself of these.

The Committee on Masonic Service and Education offers one such course through the Grand Lodge Office. You may register for the course by writing to The Grand Lodge Office, 233 E. Fulton St. Suite 20, Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3270 or by calling 800-632-8764 (only good within Michigan) and paying a fee of \$20.00 (Make check or money order to "Grand Lodge F&AM of Michigan). They will send you assignments and test questions through the mail, which you are to return for grading and feedback.

Another more extensive course is offered on the internet by the Masonic Leadership Center of the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. If you have access to the internet you may wish to avail yourself of this 10-part course as well. For a fee of \$25.00, a subscriber will receive a copy of Allen Roberts' book, Masonic Lifelines, and a "pin" number for accessing the assignments and examinations. After

downloading and working, the subscriber comes back on line and e-mails his answers to the course tutor who reviews the answers and provides a new "pin" number for part 2 of the course, et cetera. You may write or fax to the Masonic Leadership Center, c/o George Washington Masonic National Memorial, 101 Callahan Drive, Alexandria, VA 22301. Fax (703) 739-3295.

Community Involvement

No man feels better about himself than when he is working side-by-side with another Brother on a project designed to help others. You reap a tremendous reward when you see the tears of gratitude on the part of the recipient. And, most importantly, you grow as a result of your efforts. For this reason, every Lodge should be actively involved in its community and in charity, providing opportunities for its members to reap these rewards.

Often, these activities require only two hours a week, but the rewards are endless. As an example, consider that there are some 400,000 adults in the State of Michigan who cannot read, even at the first grade level. Every County has a Literacy Council to which adults apply for help. The Literacy Councils are in dire need of volunteer teachers and space for them to meet with their pupils, so much so that they will train the individuals. (Such training requires about 16 hours of your time). Think about how you and your Lodge could help. This could even involve the wives. If you prefer to teach children, there are Read to Succeed programs in most elementary schools wherein you meet with a child having reading difficulties to help them outside of school.

Character Development

A man develops his character by being tested. That testing can take many forms but, most often, it occurs when he meets a situation for the first time and has to decide what his position will be in the matter. It is said that the business of Freemasonry is character building, just as the business of the operative mason is the building of edifices. Every man needs something greater than himself to guide him. Sometimes he needs his fellowman to help him by showing the way. This is where the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God has its greatest utility and meaning.

As Masons we are taught that the Great Light in Masonry "will guide us to all truth. It will direct our paths to the Temple of Happiness and point out the whole duty of man." But, often, those paths are dimly lit and we need our fellowman, or better, our fellow Mason to help point the way. An arm around the shoulder or under the elbow has a wonderful and powerful effect- there is nothing so strong as brotherly love and affection unless it is the love of God. In Freemasonry we have both!

". . . Illustrated by Symbols"

Masonry is said to be "a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols". While allegory and symbol play a prominent role in the Craft, they are by no means restricted to it. Brethren who develop a clear understanding of these roles will find a deeper understanding of how Masonry operates and what it means. The lessons learned in the Lodge must be practiced outside the lodge in order to truly understand.

A symbol is "something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention or accidental resemblance" (Merriam-Webster Deluxe Dictionary). Some symbols occur so frequently in daily life that we have stopped thinking of them as symbols. Most familiar are the letters of the alphabet. There is no clear reason why the shape S should stand for a hissing noise, but we all accept it as such. Other symbols in common use include the numerals, mathematical and monetary signs, musical notation and scientific formulas. Such symbols are indispensable for almost any sort of communication. Without them the marvels of modern science could never have been achieved.

Another type of symbol is found in the arts, both graphic and verbal. It represents something which is abstract, or hard to visualize, in terms of something which is material and which can be perceived by our senses, above all by sight. In this way purity is symbolized by the color white, peace by the dove and olive-branch, poison by the skull and crossbones, The United States of America by "Uncle Sam", Christianity by the cross, Judaism by the star of David. Sometimes in the world of advertising, symbols

are registered as "trademarks". The ancient messenger god Mercury, speeding through the air with winged hat and winged sandals, represents "Floral Telegraph Delivery".

In literature the symbol often occurs in combination with one of the traditional "figures of speech", simile, metaphor, or metonymy. In a little poem by W.S. Landor, life is compared to and symbolized by a warm fire.

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
Nature I loved, and after Nature, Art.
I warmed both hands before the fire of life.
It sinks. and I am ready to depart.

Certain symbols might conceivably stand for a number of different things, and their precise application is derived from the immediate context. Thus, warmth, light, fire and day regularly stand for "life".

A symbol's associations go far beyond its simple pictorial meaning. It can sometimes be used not merely to facilitate thought, but even to shape it. Who can be afraid of death if it is symbolized by putting out to sea or falling asleep?

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea....
[Tennyson, Crossing the Bar]

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.
[Bryant. Thanatopsis]

For the Freemason, an ear of corn near a stream of water denotes plenty, the Doric order of architecture is strength, the sprig of acacia reminds us of immortality. The symbols need not always be consistent, but can stand for different things. The twenty-four-inch gauge can represent the twenty-four-hour day, and also accuracy. The square stands for morality, but also for the Worshipful Master. In the First Degree the darkness is the darkness of ignorance; in the Third, it is the darkness of death. Nor are all the symbols explained for us. If you have a flair for recognizing them, there is ample opportunity to indulge your talents. Every character, figure and emblem has a moral tendency and serves to inculcate the practice of virtue in all its genuine professors.

"Veiled in Allegory . . ."

An allegory is a "narrative description of a subject under guise of another suggestively similar" (Concise Oxford Dictionary). That is, it is a story in which the characters are symbols. An allegory may be sustained for quite a while. At first an unwary reader may believe that he is beginning a novel. As he proceeds, it gradually dawns on him that he is reading about something quite different from what he thought.

The best known allegory in English literature is Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Ostensibly it is a series of random adventures met with by a hero named Christian on his journey to the Celestial City. On another level it portrays the tribulations endured by the soul of a believer in the course of his life. Even today the use of an allegory is far from dead. The reader of the C.S. Lewis series of Narnia stories gradually comes

to the realization that the compassionate, just and awesome lion Aslan is none other than God. J.R.R. Tolkien's magnificent trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings*, is in some sense a portrayal of the struggle between good and evil. Not infrequently, allegory is combined with satire. In George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the beasts take over and proceed to behave like various recognizable breeds of politicians.

Allegory always strives to combine entertainment with instruction. As a teaching method, it is sanctioned by long usage. The older and briefer specimens are known by other names. Aesop's fables, with their moral lessons, are nothing but allegories. The greatest teacher of all time taught by allegories, but he called them parables; everyone will recall, for example, the Prodigal Son.

In Masonry, the sequence of the three degrees is itself allegorical and represents the course of human existence. In like manner, the building of the Temple prefigures the erection of our moral edifice. Of cardinal importance is the Traditional History of the Third Degree. Because it is an allegory its truth does not reside in its factual narrative. The literal minded can always find flaws in it. For example, how came "those secrets" to be lost at the death of our Grand Master? There were, after all, two other Grand Masters who presumably knew them. The truth of the story is rather to be sought in the moral lesson it intends to teach.

The words "veiled in allegory" imply that some of the truths of Masonry are concealed from the uninitiated, but that they can be discovered by one who is privileged to join. It takes practice to learn how to recognize and appreciate symbol and allegory. Only through sincere, intelligent and sustained effort, reinforced by imaginative and emotional sensitivity, can we reap the reward.

The Origin of Freemasonry

It is not yet clear at what point in time our Craft was born. This question has been investigated by hundreds of Masons, but no conclusive answer has been found, and perhaps it never will be. Our origins are lost in antiquity. We do know that the earliest written record of the term "Master Mason" appears in the *Regius Manuscript*, written about 1390 and which is now kept in the British Museum. Its mention of the "Master Mason" refers to the stone masons of the Middle Ages. The tools of the stone mason date back, of course, to the earliest periods of history and are lost in the mists of time. This is also true of the geometry and geometric symbols used in the craft building.

Over the ages Freemasonry, as we know it, slowly took form. (See Chapter II for a more detailed history). It has evolved into a comprehensive and effective form of fraternal teaching of basic morals, truths and personal fulfillment. It ranks the development of the individual's reasoning capabilities highly and encourages the questioning mind.

Masonry in Literature

From time to time as you browse in the classics of literature you will meet episodes and phrases which are evidently inspired by Freemasonry. Some of them are quoted below.

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?", he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the Masons."

"Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A Mason?"

"A Mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said.

"It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my roquelaire.

—From Edgar Allan Poe's story, *The Cask of Amontillado*.

"Now I must reveal to you the chief aim of our order," he said, "and if that aim coincides with yours, you may with profit enter our brotherhood. The first and greatest aim and united basis of our order, on which it is established and which no human force can destroy, is the preservation and handing down to posterity of a certain important mystery . . . that has come down to us from the most ancient times, even from the first man—a mystery upon which, perhaps, the fate of the human race depends. But since this mystery is of such a kind that no one can know it and profit by it if he has not been prepared by a prolonged and diligent self-purification, not every one can hope to attain it quickly. Hence we have a second aim, which consists in preparing our members, as far as possible reforming their hearts, purifying and enlightening their intelligence by those means which have been revealed to us by tradition from men who have striven to attain this mystery, and thereby to render them fit for the reception of it. Purifying and regenerating our members, we endeavour, thirdly, to improve the whole human race, offering it in our members an example of piety and virtue, and thereby we strive with all our strength to combat the evil that is paramount in the world. Ponder on these things, and I will come again to you," he said, and went out of the room....

Half an hour later the rhetor returned to enumerate to the seeker the seven virtues corresponding to the seven steps of the temple of Solomon, in which every Freemason must train himself. Those virtues were: (1) discretion, the keeping of the secrets of the order; (2) obedience to the higher authorities of the order; (3) morality; (4) love for mankind; (5) courage; (6) liberality; and (7) love of death.

—From Part 5, Chapter 3, of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*.

Not surprisingly, much of the poetry by Robert Burns, the great Scottish poet and Brother Mason, contains Masonic phrases and allusions. See, for example, his "Farewell to the Brethren of St. James Lodge", Tarbolton.

[Leopold Bloom looks down on the face and form of Stephen, his young friend, who is asleep. 1 (Communes with the night.) Face reminds me of his poor mother. In the shady wood. The deep white breast. Ferguson, I think I caught. A girl. Some girl. Best thing could happen him.... (He murmurs.) ... swear that I will always hail, ever conceal, never reveal, any part or parts, art or arts . . . (He murmurs.) in the rough sands of the sea . . . a cabletow's length from the shore . . . where the tide ebbs . . . and flows.... (Silent, thoughtful, alert, he stands on guard, his fingers at his lips in the attitude of secret master....)

—From the end of Part 2 of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Es siegte die Starke, und krönet zum Lohn
Die Schönheit und Weisheit mit ewiger Kron!

(So Strength is triumphant, and wreathes in renown
Both Beauty and Wisdom with unfading crown!)

—From the Finale to Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute*.

His [that is, Kim's father's] estate at death consisted of three papers—one he called his "ne varietur" because those words were written below his signature thereon, and another his "clearance-certificate". The third was Kim's birth-certificate. Those things, he was used to say, in his glorious opium hours, would yet make little Kimball a man. On no account was Kim to part with them, for they belonged to a great piece of magic—such magic as men practiced over yonder behind the Museum, in the big blue and white Jadoo-Gher—the Magic House, as we name the Masonic Lodge. It would, he said, all come right some day, and Kim's horn would be exalted between pillars—mon-strous pillars—of beauty and strength.... So it came about after his death that the woman sewed parchment, paper, and birth-certificate into a leather amulet-case which she strung around Kim's neck

—From Chapter I of Kipling's *Kim*.

What then is this Freemasonry, which has so kindled the imagination of these authors, and for which such lofty claims have been made? That is one of the questions which we hope to answer in the pages

that follow.

Masonic History In the United States

Freemasonry followed the colonists to America and played a most important role in the establishment of the thirteen colonies and in the formation of this country. The Grand Lodge of England formally recognized Freemasonry in America for the first time with the appointment of a Provincial Grand Master for New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania in 1730. It was not until 1731 that the first American grand lodge was established in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Prior to that time, all lodges in America were under some foreign jurisdiction.

The story of the part played by Freemasons in the formation of our country is little known outside of Masonic circles. Freemasonry and Masonic thinking played a very large part in the founding of this Republic and its laws. Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the drafters of the Constitution, were members of the Fraternity. George Washington was a staunch Freemason. He was the first of fourteen Masonic Presidents and the only one to serve as Worshipful Master of a Lodge and President at one and the same time. Presidents who were Freemasons after Washington were Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Polk, Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, Garfield, McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Taft, Harding, Truman, and Ford. Truman and Andrew Jackson served also as Grand Masters in their lifetimes.

Many well known patriots, such as Ethan Allen, Benjamin Franklin, Nathaniel Greene, John Hancock, John Paul Jones, Marquis de Lafayette, Israel Putnam, Paul Revere, Baron von Steuben, Joseph Warren and, of course, George Washington were members of the Craft. Freemasonry greatly influenced much of their thinking and opinions. In addition, the Fraternity provided an important avenue for Benjamin Franklin to obtain a hearing in the Courts of France at a crucial time to win the support of that Country in helping to finance the Revolution. As Americans, we also owe a great debt to the teachings of the Craft in the establishment of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Privileges and Responsibilities

Mature men who have been received into the Masonic fraternity have been admitted to a privileged group. The new Mason must be aware of the responsibilities that are associated with the privilege of becoming a member of a Masonic lodge. The person seeking membership, the petitioner, probably knows that he must ask a Mason to support his application. Each petitioner has different reasons for wanting to join. His interest may be traced to some relative or friend who belongs to a lodge, or he may have followed with interest the activities of a neighbor or someone in his community whom he knows to be a Mason. Whatever the circumstances, his interest has been aroused. He wants to know more about Masonry. He wants to become a Mason.

Most people are acquainted with the emblem of the Square and Compasses but not with its significance. It may be used to mark the meeting place of men who belong to a Masonic lodge. It may be used on jewelry to indicate that the wearer is a member of a Masonic lodge. It may be used on books and stationery. But wherever it is found over the face of the earth—and it is found in countries on each of the continents—its meaning remains the same. It indicates that in some way there is a relationship between the place, article, or person and Freemasonry. Some may think that the most significant aspect of the Square and Compasses is the element of secrecy associated with them. This is not so. To be sure, a Mason does have certain commitments that are communicated only verbally or by example. These are secrets in the sense that they are not published but are passed from individual to individual. But the basic concerns of Masonry are not secret. They are the consideration of others, the provision of assistance for them, and the exercise of a high sincerity of purpose for the betterment of mankind.

Wherever the Square and Compasses appear as the designation of the meeting place for a Masonic lodge, they tell a story. No matter whether the meeting place is located in the far north or in the tropics, those who meet there have a common purpose. Men who have been accepted into a Masonic lodge are gathered in one place to work and study together for the improvement of mankind. Their work will be centered on the teachings and principles of Masonry, which are universal in application. The men who meet

there are committed to live up to its standards and ideals. The emblem of the Square and Compasses identifies Masons who have a responsibility to share the principles of Masonry with others.

The Letter "G"

Here in the United States, the emblem of the Masonic Fraternity is the Square and Compasses enclosing the letter "G". The letter "G", whether in the East or enclosed in the square and compasses, stands for both "God" and "Geometry." The reason for the latter is that Geometry was once synonymous with Freemasonry because of the place that architecture has within the operative craft. Also, it is very appropriate that "God" should be at the center of the emblem because He is at the center of Freemasonry.

Rules Against Solicitation

Because a candidate for Masonry must declare that he seeks admission of his own free will and accord, it is unMasonic to urge or solicit a person not a Mason to become such; however, it is lawful to furnish a non-Mason with information about Freemasonry including the procedures to become a Mason and to offer assistance should he declare his desire to join. You may remind him once of your offer of assistance, but no more.

Technological Change

In a most interesting way the establishment of Masonic lodges runs parallel to the early growth and development of the Michigan Territories. The pioneer settlers took full advantage of the lakes and rivers in choosing sites on which to establish homes. So also with the lodges. The age of a Masonic lodge is indicated by its number on the Register of Grand Lodge; a low number signifies that the lodge was established very early in our history, while a high number means that it is of later foundation. Thus the most recently constituted lodge, Britannia in Plymouth, bears the number 601. The low numbers assigned to the following lodges show the close relationship between the water-ways and the location of the earliest Masonic lodges: No. 1, Zion (Detroit); No. 2, Detroit (Detroit); No. 3, Union of S.O. (Detroit); No. 4, St. Joseph Valley (Niles); No. 5, Stony Creek (Rochester); No. 6, Mount Clemens (Mount Clemens); and No.7, Washington, B.T. (Tekonsha); and No. 8, Trenton (Trenton).

Then, as Michigan gradually was opened up, systems of transport were developed, and roads and railroads were threaded across the State. Meeting places for Masonic lodges followed the lines of communication, particularly the railroad system. A number of lodges were grouped together to form a Masonic district. The network of transportation influenced, indeed dictated, the district boundaries. As one examines these early boundaries, particularly in the rural areas, it becomes obvious that the location of the railroad was a dominant factor in grouping lodges to form a district.

Later the train declined as a means of transportation. The automobile, improved highways and air travel have changed old patterns and habits. Our Masonic districts were changed to match county lines. This evolution in transportation may serve as an example of technological change. Technology, which in simple terms is the application of discovery or invention to practical use, is continually changing our patterns of living. Technological change in communications, in industrial development, in food production systems, to name but a few examples, has altered the environment in which people live. It has not altered the responsibility of Masons. It has however presented Masons with a very real challenge, and that is to determine how they can most effectively discharge their responsibilities in a twenty-first century environment.

Technology has and is influencing Freemasonry in many ways: Initially, the lessons of Freemasonry were communicated by word of mouth and hand-drawn or woven pictures only. Now we have the printed word and video tape to aid in the dissemination. Before radio and television, it was necessary for men to gather in a central location to hear the news as well as to share their interpretations of our Masonic symbols and allegories. We used to depend on district meetings to discuss upcoming legislation. Now with e-mail and the internet, we can converse with well-informed brethren on a variety of topics including Masonic events statewide. We learn early about upcoming legislation and can ask questions of our Grand Lodge officers and share our opinions as to the desirability of the legislation. We learn quickly about the needs for local charity or disaster relief and can organize appropriate help. (See Chapter XVI

for more details about the Internet and Freemasonry.)

The Selective Nature of Masonry

Candidates for Masonry are carefully investigated before they are accepted for membership. Few organizations are more selective. In the first instance, one half of the population is ineligible because it is of the female sex. Another large segment is disqualified because of age. By long-standing tradition, members of certain religious bodies do not choose to join, although the Craft makes no impediment to their actions. Yet others are actively debarred because they have no religious convictions at all. In fact at any given time only a small proportion of the total population qualifies for membership. Clearly then those who do qualify and are accepted are a privileged few. The Mason should ask himself, "What are my responsibilities in return for the privilege that has been extended to me?" The responsibilities are great because the number accepted is small.

Because a Mason is one of those few, he must not become introverted and assume that Masonry is only for his personal use, his own self-satisfaction. This would be selfish. On the contrary it is his duty and responsibility to share the teachings and philosophy of Masonry with those whom he meets. A practicing Mason has a day-to-day duty to be an effective promoter of the Art. It would be unfortunate if he took the view that he could discharge his responsibilities simply by attending regular and emergent meetings of his lodge. This is but one type of activity expected of him. He will endeavor to make a daily advancement in his own understanding of Masonry and will apply and extend his influence for the betterment of mankind in whatever environment he finds himself.

Therefore, one of a Mason's prime responsibilities lies in helping to recommend and sponsor worthy candidates for membership. After an aspirant has stated his wish and indicated his intent, his sponsor must be certain and satisfied that, if he is admitted, he will fully meet the requirements for membership. The Committee of Investigation appointed by the Master of the lodge will seek information about the applicant, such as who he is and with whom he associates, where he lives, when he became interested in Masonry, what his reasons are for submitting an application and how he intends to serve Freemasonry.

As a Mason ponders how best to discharge his Masonic responsibilities, the following quotation might well serve as a guideline.

I shall pass through this world but once; any good thing therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now, let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.

_Ascribed to Etienne de Grellet 1773-1855

These lines impart a message as important and as relevant today as it was when they were penned over a century ago. Their meaning is particularly applicable to any Mason and might be paraphrased, "Use your time to good advantage; act now". Interpret the meaning of Masonry's teachings and philosophy, incorporate them into your daily activities and, by example, influence those with whom you associate.

The Predicament of Mankind

It is an understatement to say that we live in changing times. We are surrounded by and indeed are a part of ongoing change. Four scientists of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology undertook a study for the Club of Rome, on a project dealing with the Predicament of Mankind. Their results were reported in *The Limits of Growth* by Dennis Meadows and others; this book forecasts that the world will face Doomsday in just over 100 years. With the help of a computer model of the world, and by extrapolating current growth trends, the study finds that our system on this earth planet will reach a state of collapse by A.D. 2100.

The intent of the study was to examine the complex problems troubling men of all nations: such things as poverty in the midst of plenty, degradation of the environment, loss of faith in institutions, insecurity of employment, alienation of youth, and inflation and other monetary and economic disruptions. A formidable list, isn't it? Yet the problems all have three characteristics in common: they occur to some extent in all societies; they contain technical, social, economic, and political elements; and, most important of

all, they interact with each other.

A Mason must ask himself, "How am I involved in the complex problems troubling all men?" And, more important, "Can I make a contribution, however small, to a solution?" The answer to the first question must be, "I am a part of mankind", and to the second, "I must".

The problems associated with the Predicament of Mankind are aggravated by the fact that the world is changing so rapidly. People are conscious of change and of how it is affecting their way of life. They are looking to the future, hoping and trying to do something to ensure that it will not be a wasteland. People are not quite certain as to how they can make a significant contribution, either as individuals or collectively. Those who perceive the problem have a challenge to prepare for and accept change, rather than merely to wait until the results of change are forced upon them.

It would not be wise, nor indeed possible, to turn back the clock. Yet if we are to prevent the crumbling away of all that up to now has comprised the essence of social, religious, political and economic life, it is essential to hold firm to certain fundamental truths that come to us from the past. To be sure, not all men agree what the "certain fundamental truths" are; so far as some of them at least are concerned, a Mason has no doubt. At this point in time man appears to have learned how to dominate his universe. Now he must learn to control his own actions and thoughts.

What are a Mason's responsibilities as they relate to the complex problems troubling men of all nations? In the chapters that follow you will read about the lessons contained in the several degrees. You will realize that the Masonic philosophy and teachings are designed to help alleviate the troubles of mankind. As you become more familiar with the meaning of Masonry, you will inevitably be moved to share its truths with others who do not have, and in many cases will not have, an opportunity to learn about them.

Share what? The whole domain of Masonry's teachings, its history, its ideals, its philosophy, its literature. Share where? Wherever you are in the company of other people, not just in formal meetings with other Masons. Once you enter Masonry, you have an opportunity to practice its principles whenever you are doing anything, whatever you are doing. One of the greatest challenges of today is to change people's attitudes toward the complex problems which confront all men everywhere. Share when? Now is the time for such action.

"Does Honor Have a Future?"

William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education under President Reagan, wrote an article for the December 1998 issue of the *Imprimus*, a publication of Hillsdale College, under this title. The following contains some excerpts of that article:

"The modern age brings to mind Christian apologist C. S. Lewis's chilling words in *The Abolition of Man*: 'We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.'"

"America is the greatest nation in the history of the world – the richest, most powerful, most envied, most consequential. And yet America is the same nation that leads the industrialized world in rates of murder, violent crime, imprisonment, divorce, abortion, socially transmitted diseases, single-parent households, teen suicide, cocaine consumption and pornography production and consumption."

"America is a place of heroes, honor, achievement and respect. But it is also a place where heroism is often confused with celebrity, honor with fame, true achievement with popularity, individual respect with political correctness. Our culture celebrates self-gratification, the crossing of all moral boundaries, and now even the breaking of all social taboos. And on top of it all, too often the sound heard is whining – the whining of America – which can be heard only as the enormous ingratitude of we modern men toward our unprecedented good fortune."

"Despite our wonders and greatness, we are a nation that has experienced so much social regression, so much decadence, in so short a period of time, that we have become the kind of place to which civilized

countries used to send missionaries.”

“In *One Nation After All*, Alan Wolfe writes, ‘Middle-class Americans are reluctant to pass judgement on how other people act and think.’ Of course, all of us are in favor of tolerance and forgiveness. But the moral pronouncement on fundamental matters of right and wrong – for example, that a married 50-year old commander-in-chief ought not to have sexual relations with a young intern in his office and then lie about it – it has lost its way.”

“The problem is not with those people who are withholding judgement until all of the facts are in, but with the increasing number of people who want to avoid judgement altogether. Firm moral convictions have been eroded by tentativeness, uncertainty, diffidence. ... During the last 30 years we have witnessed a relentless assault on traditional norms and a profound shift in public attitudes. The tectonic plates have moved.”

“Why have we been drawn toward such permissiveness? ... We are hesitant to impose upon ourselves a common moral code because we want our own exemptions.”

“..... In the peaceful pursuits of business, politics, religion, culture, and education, we can strive to understand and to pass on to our children the common principles and common virtues that make us essentially American. We can also introduce the next generation to ancient concepts of honor, which have been cheapened for so long.”

“..... Does honor have a future? Like all things human, it is always open to question. After the Constitutional Convention in 1787, a lady reportedly asked Benjamin Franklin, ‘Well, Doctor, what have we got – a republic or a monarchy?’ Franklin replied, ‘A republic, if you can keep it.’”

“And so honor has a future, if we can keep it. And we can keep it only if we continue to esteem it, value those who display it and refuse to laugh at it.”

Your Responsibilities

If you are a Mason you will not find your responsibilities and privileges set forth in a list, clearly stated and numbered. They are scattered, and vary according to the individual. One responsibility is to live and act consistently with what you agreed to in your obligation. By it, you committed yourself to a rewarding expenditure of time and involvement. Your rights as a member within the lodge are specified in the Constitution and By-laws. You will be told your duties as they relate to the support and operation of your lodge.

Nor will you find in print what kind of Mason you will turn out to be. You will be advised of what is expected of you, but how expectation is translated into reality depends on you. It is exciting and satisfying to share Masonic ideals through daily activities.

Think about your responsibilities. Remember, you are not a member of a secret society. A secret society does not disclose its motives, the names of its members, or the time and place of its meetings. Masonry's "secret" inheritance from the past is ceremonial. Masonry is not a religious society, but only those who profess a belief in a Supreme Being can be members. Masonry is not a substitute for any form of religion or any religious observance. However, active Masons, those who are not actually clergymen, usually are active religious laymen. Only those who are religious can fully appreciate the full meaning of universal brotherhood under the fatherhood of God. The precise form of a man's belief is his own business.

No one is invited to become a Mason. Every man who enters the lodge does so of his own free will and accord, not at the urging of another. Every Mason has asked to be admitted and has been accepted by the ballot of his brethren. Masonry is composed of men of good will, of good character and of good reputation, who believe in a Supreme Being and who live in the spirit of universal brotherhood. The mission of Masonry is to help build a better world through the process of building better men to live in it. Man is continually examining his goals and his values in relation to the changing world of which he is a part. The principles of Masonry are proven and tested. The Mason's task is to apply them in such a way as to assure the survival of mankind and the continued vitality of the world

Your Responsibility?

To keep the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied and to be the best man and Mason that you can possibly be!

Test
Questions

....And Then
There Was Light!

(Some possible answers appear in Appendix A)

Test Questions

1. Who are Masons?
2. What is the definition of modern Freemasonry?
3. What does the 24-inch gauge remind a Mason to do?
4. To what use does a Mason put the square? _____ the compasses?
5. To what use does the speculative mason put the gavel?
6. How does Freemasonry help a man to become a better man?
7. What is a Lodge?
8. What is the name of the local Lodge Officer responsible for presenting five-to-ten minute programs in Lodge to teach Freemasonry?
9. How does a man develop his character?
10. What is a symbol?
11. What is an allegory?
12. Which Presidents of the United States of America were Grand Masters in their lifetimes?
13. Name several Masons who were among the Patriots in the struggle for independence.
14. Does honor have a future?
15. What is the mission of Freemasonry?
16. What is your primary responsibility as a Freemason?
17. Explain the difference between a "secret society" and a "society with secrets".

Topics for
Further Study

....And Then There Was Light

Masonic Education is continuous. One learns by asking questions and seeking answers. There are some 60,000 books on Freemasonry. Every Lodge is encouraged to maintain a library of Masonic books for use by its members and to give books on Masonry to the public library. For the latter purpose, the Masonic Foundation of Michigan provides matching monies up to \$75 per year.

In addition, the Grand Lodge of Michigan maintains a research library in the Masonic Temple, 233 E. Fulton St., Grand Rapids, MI.

You are encouraged to make use of these libraries and to use the lending library of the Grand Lodge of Iowa located at Cedar Rapids, IA (see address in Chapter XIX).

The best advice that we can give you is to “follow your nose.” Think of some topic of interest to you and pursue it. Then share your findings with your fellow Masons in open lodge – just ask the Master for a convenient time for you to do this. The following page lists a few topics connected with this chapter in the hopes that they may stimulate you to expand upon them and to research the answers for yourself.

A good place to start researching any topic is a Masonic encyclopedia – Coil’s (see Chapter XIX) is a good one.

Some Possible Topics of Interest

1. Where do you find the rule against solicitation?
2. Where does one find the Declaration of Principles of the Grand Lodge of Michigan and what are they?
3. Why do we call a Masonic lodge a “Blue Lodge”?
4. Freemasons started the first public schools in Europe and in the United States. Who were these men and where were these first schools?
5. Freemasons were responsible for starting several of our public colleges and universities. Who were these men and what are the names of several of these universities that are currently extant?
6. Benjamin Franklin was the Master of a lodge in Paris to which many of the French nobility belonged. What was the name of that lodge and does it still exist today?
7. Where and when did George Washington receive his degrees in Freemasonry? At what stage in his career?
8. How was George Washington clothed in the lodge room when he received those degrees?

