

A BASIC MASONIC EDUCATION COURSE THE FELLOWCRAFT

THE FELLOWCRAFT DEGREE

BASIC TEACHINGS OF THE SECOND DEGREE



In one sense the Fellowcraft Degree symbolizes the stage of adulthood and responsibility during a man's life on earth. In this stage, his task is to acquire knowledge and apply it to the building of his character and improving the society in which he lives. As the father of our Masonic lectures, William Preston saw Masonry as a means to educate men in the liberal arts and sciences. A Fellowcraft Mason is urged to advance his education in these fields during the ritual of this Degree.

Some view the three grade system of Blue Lodge Masonry as representing a progressive teaching directed toward perfecting human nature. It is a simple and straightforward view of human nature divided into three parts: body, mind and soul. Each Degree addresses and instructs one part. The First Degree encompasses the body and our faculties of action in the world. The four cardinal virtues are extolled as the proper guides to our action in the world that we may perfect our relation to it. The Second Degree addresses the mind and its faculties. We are instructed in the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences which were formulated hundreds of years ago in order to develop and perfect the mental nature. The intention was to prepare the mind for spiritual truths. The Third Degree confers the central Mystery of Freemasonry; that is, how the soul may be brought to its perfection. If we accept the view of Masonry's purpose given above, then it is obvious that the Fellowcraft Degree encompasses much more than just gaining a broad-based education. The teachings of this Degree are extremely profound and surprisingly exact.

SYMBOLISM OF THE DEGREE

The symbolism of the Entered Apprentice Degree emphasized beginnings, spiritual birth, the first steps and youth, orientation to the Light, which are all consistent with a rite

of induction into the Fraternity. The Second Degree of Fellowcraft symbolizes the methods of developing and progressing in the Craft; and, in a sense, the emergence into spiritual manhood. Therefore we find symbols of advancement, passage, instruction and elevation throughout this Degree. We find symbolism of taking the next step and a new way of approaching the East. What was considered in the last Degree to be our weaker nature has now been squared and elevated. While keeping

our fidelity to the Three Great Lights, we deepen our connection with the Fraternity and take on new commitments. Our Working Tools are now testing instruments. With them we try, square and prove. With them we learn to develop the faculty of judgment: what is valuable, what is true, what is real. The central motif of this Degree being one of advancement, we are presented with the symbol of the Winding Staircase consisting of so many steps and leading to the Middle Chamber of the Temple. Staircases, ladders, extended vertical ropes, and mountains are all symbols of ascending to new heights. Gaining entrance to a new place symbolizes a distinct advancement in our work as Freemasons. Attaining this level gives us access to certain benefits that we were not entitled to before. These benefits are symbolized by Corn, Wine, and Oil. There are other things granted here as well. We become invested with the ability to hear the teachings of our Fraternity and keep them close to our heart. Finally, we are reminded of our central focus in the symbolism of the letter "G" and the humility it should inspire.

DULY AND TRULY PREPARED

At the outset of this Degree, it should be clear to the candidate that although much of it seems familiar, it is also very different, and some is an interesting story by the Roman poet Virgil in his epic *The Aeneid* that is highly

suggestive. In Book IV he writes about Queen Dido who, performs various rites in preparation of that supreme moment and finally: "Dido herself with consecrated grain in her pure hands, as she went near the altars, freed one foot from sandal straps, let fall her dress ungirdled, and, now sworn to death, called on the gods and stars that knew her fate." It is also noteworthy that she was supposed to be of Tyrian origin. There is a Byzantine painting known as "Our Lady of Perpetual Help," which pictures the divine child in his mothers' arms. Angels are shown at either side with implements of the Crucifixion. The child is turning towards an angel, and one of his shoes is falling off.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A FELLOW-CRAFT

In addition to the rights you acquired as an Entered Apprentice Mason, you have the right to sit in a Lodge when opened in the Fellowcraft Degree, when accompanied by a Master Mason who has sat in Lodge with you. You may visit another Lodge opened in the Fellowcraft Degree. You have the right to be instructed and examined. If found proficient, you may request advancement to the next degree. The responsibilities are found in part in the Obligation, and you should review these along with the Obligation of the Entered Apprentice. Finally, you are reminded that you are to acquire the special knowledge introduced in this Degree and seek to apply that knowledge to your duties in life so you can occupy your place in society with satisfaction and honor.

THE WORKING TOOLS

THE SQUARE

The Square is the symbol of morality, truthfulness and honesty. The direction of the two sides of the Square form an angle of 90°, or a right direction), until we meet again.

THE LEVEL

The Level is a symbol of equality. We do not mean equality in wealth, social distinction, civic office, or service to mankind; but, rather, also symbolizes the passage of time.

THE PLUMB

The Plumb is a symbol of uprightness of conduct. In Freemasonry, it is associated with the plumb line which the Lord promised Amos he giving another man his due.

OTHER IMPORTANT SYMBOLS

THE PILLARS ON THE PORCH

Two pillars were placed at the entrance to King Solomon's

Temple, which are symbolically represented within every Masonic Lodge. These pillars are symbols of strength and establishment - and by implication, power and control. One must remember that power and control are placed before you, so you might realize that power without control is anarchy, or that control without power is futility. Man must have both if his life is to be successful. The construction of dual pillars, obelisks, sphinxes and so on was not uncommon in the ancient Near East. It is not known what their exact symbolism was. Speculation ranges from their signifying duality (that duality or polarity are twin forces throughout Creation), guardianship of the temple, symbolic gateways, to the idea of being a connection between heaven and earth. Some researchers have thought that the two pillars before Solomon's Temple represented the Pillar of Cloud and the Pillar of Fire which led the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land. It was their guide in the light as well as in the dark. The globes on the columns are said to be the celestial and terrestrial spheres representing heaven and earth. The two pillars also correspond to the Three Great Supports of Masonry. The columns of Wisdom and Strength are emblematically represented by the pillars in the South and North, respectively. The candidate, as he is brought into the Lodge, comes to represent the third column of Beauty or Balance.

THE WINDING STAIRCASE

As we mentioned before, the Winding Staircase is a symbol of ascension. It is described as consisting of three, five, and seven steps. further research and insight. The significance of the number three has already been mentioned. We have the three Degrees, the Three Great Lights, the three Columns, the three Officers, the Three Grand Masters and the three Principle Tenets of Freemasonry. What we want to emphasize here is the Three Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope, and Charity. These virtues were considered a ladder to heaven, another symbol of ascent. The Four Cardinal Virtues presented in the First Degree compliment these in the sense that the Four are symbolically horizontal (basically dealing with our actions here on earth) while the Three are symbolically vertical (referring to our method of ascent to further light). Our Aprons are composite examples of the Three and the Four making Seven. The Five Steps are also explained in some detail. A few points for further consideration concern the symbolism of the number five. The geometrical symbol of five is, of course, the pentagram. The emblem of Pythagoras' fraternity was the five-pointed star. At each point of the star was a Greek letter which all together spelled a Greek word meaning "health" (ugitha). The pentagram is a symbol of the Microcosm, that is, Man. Cathedral School of Chartres in 12th Century France. The interesting work that came together here was the union of the Liberal Arts was entitled to the designation of architect.

ADMISSION TO THE MIDDLE CHAMBER

The passage from the Outer Porch to the Middle Chamber represents a definite step in the journey to enlightenment.

The wages

THE WAGES OF A FELLOWCRAFT

Corn, Wine, and Oil are symbolic wages earned by the Fellowcraft Mason who arrives at the Middle Chamber. These symbolize wealth in

THE MASONIC LETTER "G"

Why the letter "G" is so prominently displayed in Masonic lodges is an enigma to Masonic historians. Like the sphinx before the pyramids, it throughout the Masonic world and there are Masonic scholars who feel it should be removed. The reason that it is so displayed is plainly given to the candidate in this Degree. We are told that it is the initial of Geometry as well as the initial of the name of the Supreme Being. From the time of the "Old Charges" and manuscripts up to the present, the synonymous nature of Geometry and Masonry is clearly stated. It is also obvious that "G" is the initial of God. This alone may be sufficient reason for its presence. There are other considerations that the Masonic student might want to take into account. The immediate question for some may be why is Geometry given such exalted status? One might also observe that the word "God" is not a name per se, but is a category of being – like "human being". The name of the Supreme Being depends on what tradition a person follows, and it would not be incorrect to say that the True Name of the Supreme Being cannot be known. Obviously, then, the letter "G" does not refer to the common usage of that term. These two issues have given rise to much speculation regarding the focus given to this one letter of the alphabet. We will offer a few of these speculations for your benefit. The ancient languages of Phoenician, Hebrew and Greek all placed the "G" in the third place. In Hebrew, the order is aleph, beth, gimel. In Greek, the order is alpha, beta, gamma and so on. The Phoenician/Hebrew letter gimel means camel. There is an interesting passage in the Gospel of St. Matthew regarding our patron John the Baptist: "And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins." (Matt 3:4) In both Hebrew and Greek, each letter is assigned a numerical value as well as a phonetic one, so that "G" is equivalent to the number "3" in both languages. The Greek letter gamma looks like an upside down "L". It is two perpendicular lines forming the angle of a square. Gamma is also associated with Dionysus and resurrection. generalizations were derived, presumably, from their experience in field Elements of Geometr lines, angles, and figures, which he called postulates. Euclid uses only

the gematri about 200 CE in the Bariatha of R. Eliezer ben R. Jose, the Galiean, which is a collection of 32 rabbinical rules. Gematria is listed within this treatise as a rabbinical method of biblical exegesis. As already mentioned, the Hebrew word for "heaven" (ha-shamayim) has the same gematria value as the word for "soul" (neshamah); that is, 395, derived by adding up Another example of gematria can be found by comparing the Hebrew words for "love" (ahebah) and "unity" (echad), both of which add have been found to contain hidden gematria in Latin and Arabic, as well. From the practice of gematria have arisen extremely interesting techniques, which reveal a type of spiritual Geometry hidden within the Scriptures.

NUMBER, ORDER, SYMMETRY AND PROPORTION

The great teachings of this Degree revolve around the importance of the Masonic study of number, order, symmetry and proportion. The Masonic use of the term Geometry includes all of these. Nature is the true temple of the Deity. If this is so, then cosmic and natural laws are like the Trestleboard. These laws are discovered in the practice of the Seven Arts (they were called liberal arts because their practice liberated the mind). The ancient philosophers considered Geometry to have the power to lead the mind from the world of appearances to the contemplation of the divine order. Further study would most certainly include a detailed study of Pythagorean number philosophy, the Golden Mean, Plato's work, the Neoplatonists, and Qabalistic gematria.

http://www.claytonwright.com/masonic_pages/Shared/Education/BMEC/BMEC_Fellowcraft.html



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of The Fellowcraft Degree*

The Roscoe O. Bonisteel Masonic Library is organized to

- 1) acquire and maintain books, documents, artifacts and other forms of information related to Freemasonry;**
 - 2) make those materials and information available to the general public; and**
 - 3) use those materials and information to develop educational programs related to Freemasonry.**
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- 1) The library provides Blue Lodges with support and resources for their Intender Program.**
- 2) The library organizes Blue Lodge tours of architecturally significant Masonic structures.**
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