

What is Freemasonry?

STUDY OUTLINE No. 2

By
SILAS H. SHEPHERD
P. M. Hartland Lodge No. 122,
F. and A. M.

Published by
Wisconsin Grand Lodge Committee
on Masonic Research

Silas H. Shepherd, George C. Nuesse, George B. Goodwin
and Fred W. Russell

Pamphlet No. 31
October 20, 1927

What is Freemasonry?

NOTE—Let us not attempt to define Freemasonry definitely or completely, because Freemasonry comprehends such a vast field of speculation that the best any of us can hope is a continually improving conception of Masonry. The object of this outline is to develop thought and discussion, and it is the desire of the committee to have suggestions or criticisms brought to their attention.

Introduction

It is our intention to give outlines for study and discussion, beginning with the first step that a candidate makes. These can only be helpful as they are filled in with supplementary information of an esoteric nature. We trust that the well-informed brethren in your Lodge will furnish the esoteric explanations which these outlines suggest.

Frequent reference to Mackey's Encyclopedia, Haywood's Symbolical Masonry, Street's Symbolism of the Three Degrees, MacBride's Speculative Masonry, and Newton's The Builders will be necessary. Wilmhurst's The Meaning of Masonry gives the deeper spiritual significance, and reference to our Selected List of Masonic Literature should be made frequently, as it contains descriptive matter regarding many sources of information. The various pamphlets of our committee which have been sent to your Lodge may be used to advantage.

The brethren will find an unlimited field open to them, both in the analytic study of the forms and ceremonies, and in the literature of the Craft. To such as desire it we will be glad to make additional suggestions.

Application

A man who had attained considerable success in intellectual proficiency once remarked that it had taken him ten years to unlearn the errors he had learned in early life. It is very evident that all of us are subject to this pitfall. Many men make application for the degrees of Freemasonry without any adequate conception of the importance of the step; and some even come into the Fraternity with positively erroneous conceptions. The sooner the candidate is properly prepared by altruistic motives, the sooner he will benefit both himself and the Fraternity. In some Lodges the candidate has an interview with the ranking officers or a committee of well-informed brethren appointed for that purpose in which he is given a fairly comprehensive knowledge of the seriousness of the step he desires to take. All this is in addition to the customary investigation. The application form would be sufficient if the applicant gave it the very careful thought that it should have.

If a friend expresses a desire to petition the Lodge the question, "Why do you desire to join the Fraternity?" is perfectly in order and proper. If his ideas are vague or erroneous, there is an opportunity to correct them without any violation of propriety. We should never initiate any candidate who has a gross misconception of Masonry and may be either disappointed or indifferent. If judiciously informed of the high ideals and objects of Freemasonry he is started right.

Qualifications

Free-will. One of the most firmly established usages of the Fraternity prohibits solicitation. Haywood says, "Solicitation is a wrong to a petitioner because at the door of the Lodge, when he for the first time presents himself there, he must solemnly swear that he has not been solicited; but if he has been solicited, how is he truthfully to make such a solemn declaration? See in what an embarrassment the man's

own friends have placed him?" (Read chapter on petition for membership in "Symbolic Masonry" by Haywood.)

Uninfluenced by mercenary motives. The idea that Freemasonry may help his business or promote his ambitions in his vocation is always to be guarded against.

Moral

The principle that because a man never did anything reprehensible is not sufficient moral qualification. The material of which it is possible to build Masonic character must have positive qualities of moral character. The moral law is obeyed by choice, the civil law only restrains those who do not choose to obey it.

Physical

Only men of legal age and bodily conformation are eligible to Freemasonry.

Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction requires his residence in the Grand Jurisdiction and in the jurisdiction of the Lodge the Constitutional time; and no other Lodge has jurisdiction over him.

Religious

Belief in God is the most important qualification. All the symbolism and philosophy of Freemasonry are based on man's moral and spiritual development. We are pledged to the search for more light and knowledge of the moral and spiritual laws which govern the Universe, and to have reverence for the Grand Architect of the Universe. The ritual and symbolism must ever remain meaningless to all who do not endeavor to use it as a method of building a Temple of Character—a house not made with hands. (See Macbride's *Speculative Masonry*—chapter five—"The Temple, or Con-

summation of the Mission.) (Mackey's Encyclopedia—"Religion of Masonry"; "Landmarks 19, 20 and 21".) Shepherd's "The Landmarks", page 17, "Concerning God and Religion".)

A very comprehensive chapter on "The Qualifications of Candidates" is contained in Mackey's "Jurisprudence of Freemasonry".

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of Haywood's "Symbolical Masonry" give much that applies to the petition, investigation and ballot.

Preparation

What a significant word is preparation! Is there anything properly done without proper preparation? Is the candidate for Freemasonry properly prepared? Where should he be first prepared? Of what does his preparation consist? It is certain that every Masonic form and ceremony has a purpose in perfect harmony with the ultimate completion of a Temple. That Temple symbolizes both our individual temple and the Temple of Human Brotherhood. In this important work we are about to undertake, we must first have the proper motive. Our heart must be touched with love of the good, the true and the beautiful, and impel our mind to formulate and our will to force the laws which produce harmony. Harmony is the first great law of Nature. When we declared that we were prompted to solicit the privileges of Freemasonry by a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution, a desire for knowledge and a sincere wish to be serviceable to our fellow-creatures, our real preparation began. It is the foundation on which we build thoughts and execute actions. After this preparation symbolic forms helped us to formulate definite thoughts regarding the details of future work to carry out our expressed purpose.

The symbolic preparation in the ritual can only be explained orally and is of vital importance. Such chapters of Haywood's Symbolical Masonry as "The Hoodwink" and "The Cable Tow" and Mackey's Symbolism of Freemasonry

on "Ritualistic Symbolism" and the "Rite of Discalceation" and understanding that these forms and ceremonies symbolize an internal initiation which must be comprehended.

The little Masonic Library, volume 19, contains a chapter on preparation which is helpful.

The real preparation consists of stirring the higher emotions, cultivating the knowledge of moral philosophy and using the will power effectively. We divest ourselves of the physical nature and leave it outside the holy of holies. The character or real man, the man that has illimitable potentialities, is prepared for loftier heights of attainment.

Initiation

Initiate is defined "To introduce by a first act; originate; begin." Initiation was a term used by the Romans to designate admission into their sacred rites. (See Mackey's Encyclopedia—article "Initiation".)

Initiation is the term used for the admission into the rites and ceremonies of the Entered Apprentice Degree; but its more important significance ought to be seriously considered. Forms and ceremonies of themselves are vain and useless. It is only as they teach useful knowledge and promote the thing for which they were intended that they have value. Types, emblems and allegories are interesting and beautiful, but their purpose in Freemasonry is to teach wise and serious truths. Only the worthy and qualified candidate can ever receive any real initiation. He may go through forms and ceremonies, but without the necessary motives and attitude these are very far short of real initiation.

The ritual of the several degrees is one of the most efficient methods of teaching basic moral and spiritual truths. The truth it contains is infinite. No man has ever fathomed its depth or scaled its heights. To the true initiate it is a real beginning of an unceasing search for more light. It opens new visions. It inspires greater efforts to attain higher

ideals. The passion of yesterday has been subdued, but there are still others to conquer tomorrow. The real initiate gets a clearer perspective of his relationship in the universe and realizes a closer kinship to humanity.

Let us not consider that this initiation must necessarily be simultaneous with the formal ceremony. In most cases it is not; but it often develops as the initiate gradually comprehends the real significance of these forms and ceremonies and realizes their "hidden mysteries".

(Additional references are taken from the latest edition of Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry).

OUTLINE II

1. What the Candidate may first know to advantage:

Article	Page	Article	Page
Accepted	10	Ethics of Freemasonry.....	252
Antiquity of Freemasonry.....	66	Free Born.....	281
Apprentice, Entered.....	70	Free and Accepted.....	281
Blue	108	Freemason	282
Definition of Freemasonry.....	202	Origin of Freemasonry.....	538
Deformity	202	Symbol	751
Entered	246	Symbolism, Science of.....	754

2. Why the Candidate is not solicited for membership:

Accord	12	Petition for Initiation.....	559
Free	280	Proselytism	593
Free Will and Accord.....	284	Recommendation	611

3. How is the Candidate received and instructed:

Apron	72	Hoodwink	336
Ask, Seek, Knock.....	82	Hope	337
Bible	104	Justice	374
Beauty	101	Jewels	369
Brotherly Love	121	Lectures	630
Charity	143	Left Side.....	433
Chalk, Charcoal, Clay.....	141	Light	446
Clothed	156	Lodge	449
Covering of a Lodge.....	183	North	518
Faith	260	North-east Corner.....	519
Fortitude	270	Oath	522
Furniture of a Lodge.....	286	Ornaments of a Lodge.....	539
Gavel	290	Obligation	525