

What is Freemasonry?

STUDY OUTLINE No. 7

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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.

The memorial tessera, or metal token, may symbolize much beyond its physical application. In the Ancient Mysteries, when it was common to ascribe to the various planets influences over the various phases of life, the candidates were divested of metals so that the influence of the planet which it represented might not bear an undue influence on the initiate.

Tokens in the form of metallic substances such as rings, coins, and amulets were often broken in two and one part given as a pledge or token. The call upon the charitable inclination of the initiate is the formal design of his being given an opportunity to display it. It should have a deeper significance than the mere relieving of physical want or distress, and should cover wider scope of being helpful to all his fellow creatures in all their sorrows, afflictions and bereavements.

We often find ourselves unable to help others with the material necessities which we would like to give them; but at no time should we ever find ourselves lacking in love and kindness. Charity such as St. Paul defines in 13th Corinthians is not alms giving—it is Love.

"The question of certain things of a metallic kind, the absence of which plays an important part, is a little difficult from any point of view, though several explanations have been given. The better way toward their understanding is to put aside what is conventional and arbitrary—as, for example, the poverty of spirit and the denuded state of those who have not yet been enriched by the secret knowledge of the Royal and Holy Art. It goes deeper than this and represents the ordinary status of the world, when separated from any higher motive—the world spirit, the intrinsic titles of recognition, the material standards. The candidate is now to learn that there is another standard of values, and when he comes again into possession

of the old tokens, he is to realize that their most important use is in the cause of others. You know under what striking circumstances this point is brought home to you."—(A. E. Waite.)

See Symbolical Masonry—Haywood Chapter 21. Destitution.
The Lodge and the Craft, pages 72-76.
The Rite of Destitution, Short Talk Bulletin.

The Northeast Corner.

After receiving the instructions of an Entered Apprentice we must start to work. We begin the Temple of our Character by laying a foundation stone in the Northeast Corner. Every structure depends for its perfection on the care with which the designs are drawn and upon the accuracy of its foundation. The lessons we have learned, if put into practice will make us just and upright Masons, which we symbolize as we represent the foundation stone of our future Masonic character. All the ceremonies are a harmonious symbolization of moral and spiritual development. The ultimate goal is a perfect Character. We have experienced the elementary forms and are now about to use the tools and implements of an apprentice. The success we may attain is alone ours to achieve. Will we always keep our pedestal square with Justice? Will we always stand erect in our moral duties?

The preparation, reception and initiation were all of great importance and need continual rehearsal, but now we are about to practice the lessons and give the world a knowledge of what Freemasonry is by the way Freemasons live. We have consecrated ourselves as a stone in the spiritual temple of humanity.

(See Short Talk Bulletin, The N. E. Corner—Oct., 1927.)

The Twenty-four inch gauge teaches us how to divide our time. Time that is lost can never be regained. How necessary it is for us to realize the value of time and use it so as to best serve the great purpose of life. The Common gavel teaches us to divest our hearts and consciences of the vices and superfluities of life, that we may be living stones in a spiritual building. This is the real purpose of life. This is the only imperishable thing which lives after we leave our tenement of clay. This is the central truth of Freemasonry.

Of what avail would it be for a mechanic to learn the theoretic use of tools and then not use them? Would he

build anything? We, as Freemasons, must use the tools of our profession to build the temple of character. We must keep them in constant use until it is completed. Then and then only will we be entitled to travel and receive wages.

See *The Lodge and the Craft*, page 77.

Symbolical Masonry, chapter 23.

Encyclopedia of Freemasonry—Mackey.

Working-tools	North
Twenty-four inch gauge	Northeast Corner
Gavel	East

Our symbolical initiation has been completed. We are now to be reinvested with the ordinary affairs of physical life. We have symbolically travelled towards the source of Light and Truth, and had our conscience awakened to the possibilities of the highest moral and spiritual attainments, and are now to manifest them in everyday life. For a brief time we left the world of ordinary affairs to learn lessons that are necessary for our development. Now we must take up the ordinary life and put into practice the things we learned. We must learn to subdue our greed, envy, prejudice, selfishness and all our other passions, and improve ourselves in the Masonic work of building an individual character and a collective Brotherhood of Man.

Initiation is a beginning. Mastership is the goal.

See *The Builders. Foundations—The Working Tools*.

Encyclopedia of Freemasonry:

Initiation
Puerility of Freemasonry
Light
Truth
Builder
Apprentice, Entered
Master Mason

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul!
As the swift seasons roll
Leave thy low vaulted past:
Let each new temple, nobler than the last
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
'Till thou at length art free
Leaving thine out-grown shell by life's unresting sea."

"These Temples grew as grows the grass,
Art might obey, but not surpass—
The passive Master lent his hand
To the vast Soul that O'er him planned."