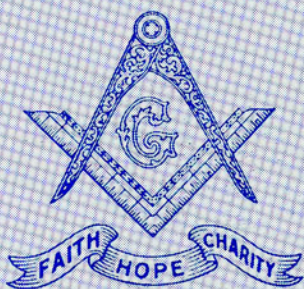


FREEMASONRY



WHAT IS IT?

FREEMASONRY – WHAT IS IT?

Freemasonry means many things to many people. This is true not only of the person who is not a Mason, but applies as well to Masons themselves. Some of those who have been members of the Masonic Craft for many years are afraid to mention even the things which almost everyone knows about the fraternity. Others among us are convinced that Freemasonry is a secret society and that they, as members, are forbidden to talk about it to others whom they do not know to be Masons. Most of this is far from the truth and a word of explanation concerning this Fraternal organization may not be amiss.

Freemasonry is a Fraternity

Freemasonry is the oldest, and by far, the largest fraternal order in the world. Its Lodges stretch around the globe and, it might well be said that the sun never sets upon the Masonic Lodge. Fraternity means an association of brothers and that is exactly what Freemasonry is – a society of friends and brothers. It is not a benefit society in the sense that one becomes a member of it because of benefits which he may receive. It is not an eleemosynary institution, founded to collect and disburse charity or founded on the giving of alms.

It is not a secret society in that its Temples are openly marked and almost everyone in the community knows where they are located. Many of the Lodges have individual bulletins which carry the names of the officers and of members. Thus it is, in the strictest sense of the word, a society with secrets and these are limited to its obligation, its modes of recognition, such as pass-words and grips, etc. and certain parts of its ritual.

It is religious in character, but it is not a religion. It is founded upon the basic principle of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, and everyone who comes into its Lodges must express a belief in God. No one is asked to express a particular belief about God, for this is the privilege of each individual and is not infringed by our Fraternity.

Freemasonry practices a selective charity, founded on the principles of brotherly need which is not applicable in all cases that have a surface likeness. No member has a specific claim upon the society for its charity, for this is not a right acquired by becoming a member of the society; rather, it is a privilege.

Freemasonry, The Teacher

One of Freemasonry's objectives is the making of better men. This it endeavors to do by teaching. It aims to inculcate in the minds of those who become members those virtues which are recognized as prerequisites for a better life. Its teachings include brotherhood, morality, justice, tolerance, citizenship, education and freedom of ideas, of religious choice, of expression.

The worth of the individual in society is another of its prime objectives, but it believes that this worth is only achieved by the recognition of the corresponding responsibility which must accompany each privilege the individual enjoys. Upon this premise, rights may be exercised properly only as long as they do not infringe those belonging to one's neighbor. This principle finds its highest expression in the term "brotherly love" which teaches us to regard the whole human race as one common family, who is sent into the world to aid, support and protect each other.

Freemasonry's Organization

Just as the individual is the foundation of our Society of Friends and Brothers, so is the Masonic Lodge the fundamental organization of it. This basic unit of organization is sometimes called the "Blue Lodge," sometimes, the Craft Lodge, but it always operates under standards prescribed by a Grand Lodge. There is no higher Masonic authority than a Grand Lodge, and each Grand Lodge is the sovereign authority within the State or Country over which it claims jurisdiction. The Grand Lodge, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Colorado is the supreme governing authority over every Lodge in Colorado. Its chief officer has the title of Grand Master of Masons of Colorado whose votes are cast by their duly elected representatives. He acts for all of the Masons collectively who live within the State and are members of its Lodges.

The Officers of the individual Lodge are the Worshipful Master (the term worshipful being used after the old English manner, meaning respected): the Senior and Junior Wardens. The term warden means "watcher" or supervisor, taken from the old English term as used by the stonemason of the eighteenth century. In addition, the Lodge has a Treasurer and Secretary as well as two Deacons. Both of the latter are messengers who carry messages at the direction of the Master or the Senior Warden to others about the

Lodge, as the occasion may require. These two brethren also see to the accommodation of visitors when the Lodge is assembled. There are also Stewards, who see to the preparation of food, its service, and perform other duties. There is a Chaplain, charged with offering prayers. The officer without the door is the Tiler or Tyler, who guards the Lodge from intrusion.

Freemasonry's Membership

Membership, because it is a fraternity, is limited to men. He who would become a member must meet certain recognized requirements – high standards of character and reputation. It does not require that its members subscribe to any particular creed, or belong to any particular church. Church membership does not keep one out of or secure him admission into any Masonic Lodge. The profession of a belief in God and in a future life are the sole religious requirements.

No one is excluded because of his membership in a particular church. There are, however, a few denominations which do not allow their members to become Masons. In some instances the mistaken impression has gone abroad that Freemasonry refuses admission to those who are members of certain denominations. It is the church rather than Freemasonry, that denies them membership.

How Does One Become a Freemason?

Many men do not understand the process of acquiring membership in a Masonic Lodge. No one is ever coerced to become a Mason or to join a Masonic Lodge. Though all morally good men would be welcome in any Masonic Lodge, the man himself must decide whether or not to become a member. Once he has done so, the requested Mason will secure an application blank, called by our Lodges a petition, and he has taken the first step. He must have two Masons who know him sign his petition, vouching for his character and qualifications. He must also receive the unanimous ballot of the members of the Lodge to which he applies for the degrees, who are present when his petition is voted on. Having passed this ballot, the candidate receives the first of the three degrees which make up the symbolic or Craft Lodge. This is designated The Degree of Entered Apprentice. The second is designated The Degree of Fellow Craft and the third as The Degree of Master Mason. Each Degree is a separate entity and one is always an Entered Apprentice when he sits in a Lodge on the

First Degree of Masonry, no matter what his Masonic status may be. Each of these degrees has certain rights and privileges but all of the rights and privileges are attained only after the candidate has received the Degree of Master Mason. After he has received each of the degrees, the candidate must commit to memory a portion of the degree received. He must be examined in open Lodge and prove his right to be advanced thereby. This serves a useful purpose, for it assures the Fraternity that each will know himself to be a Mason and be able to recognize others as members of the Craft by their manner of speaking. He will be enabled by such knowledge to visit other Lodges where he is not known and must be examined to prove his right to be admitted.

Freemasonry's Origin

Freemasonry is ancient, having existed in some form for so long that many serious students have differed as to the time and place of its origin. There is evidence of a basic type of craft association which antedates the Christian era. It survived various transitions which took place during the Middle Ages. It was during this period that the word "Free" was prefixed to the word Mason, because these builders were one of the few classes of persons allowed to travel from country to country and to practice the builder's art wherever they went. It was these companies of Masons who constructed the beautiful cathedrals and other stately structures which dot the plains of Europe and the English countryside. These men differed in the main from others of the working crafts because they, possessing knowledge and skills not found elsewhere, were free men rather than bond servants.

Until about the Sixteenth Century Masons were strictly an operative craft, bound together by the close ties found in the constructive craft guilds of the day. Early in the Seventeenth Century, men of prominence were admitted, not as craftsmen, for they were not skilled in the builders art, but rather as patrons. Gradually these men came to be known as "accepted" Masons. Thus, by the time the Seventeenth Century came to its end these accepted or speculative Masons were predominant in many of the older Lodges of Freemasons. Today the Masonic Lodge is termed Speculative because its emphasis is on the moral philosophy which is its foundation, rather than the operative art of the Sixteenth and earlier centuries. The tools of the stonemason are used to symbolize

moral virtues rather than to build cathedrals.

The Grand Lodge System

On June 24, 1717, this being St. John the Baptist Day, the members of four old Lodges in London, England, met together in Grand Assembly to form the Grand Lodge of England. That this was a speculative Lodge is evidenced by the election of one styled "Anthony Sayer, gentleman," as Grand Master. All modern Freemasonry traces its beginning under the Grand Lodge system of government to this Grand Lodge.

Freemasonry came to America about the third decade of the Eighteenth Century when Lodges were established in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia. American Freemasons can take pride in the part which the members of this Fraternity played in the history of our country. Many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence were Masons and the same statement is true of those who signed the Constitution of the United States. Famous men such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, Lafayette, James Monroe and many others whose names awaken memories of the founding of our country. Since our country's beginning fourteen of its Presidents have been Masons.

Masons have also won laurels in other fields of endeavor and we find them prominent in government, in science, in sports, in entertainment, and finally in man's newest field, that of space exploration with Wally Schirra, Gordon Cooper, Virgil Grissom and the second man to set foot on the moon - "Buz" Aldrin, all bound by the mystic tie of Freemasonry.

Freemasonry - What Is It?

It has a different connotation in different situations. Someone has written that Freemasonry is honesty in business; that it is fairness in work; courtesy in society; compassion for the sick and unfortunate; forgiveness for the penitent; love for our fellow man and reverence for God.

Yes, it is all of these, but is more, for Freemasonry is a philosophy to live by, the shadow of a mighty rock in a weary land.