

Quest Book # 4

More Light For a Fellowcraft

The Mason who has just received his Fellowcraft degree finds himself bewildered at the emphasis on the globes, the five human senses, and the seven liberal arts and sciences. In our modern ritual they are symbols, as will be explained later. Originally they served another purpose.

The Middle Chamber Lecture

We owe the form of the Fellowcraft degree to a man by the name of William Preston, who lived in England during the early days of speculative Masonry. Preston did not like the fact that the lectures then given in connection with the degrees of Masonry followed no ritualistic pattern, but could assume whatever form the Worshipful Master desired. He set about to write a formal lecture for each degree. After working on them for seven years, he succeeded in having them adopted by the Grand Lodge of England.

Preston believed that one of Masonry's principal duties was to bring light to a candidate by actually educating him; he believed that knowledge was the universal solvent for the problems of the world. In his time there were few opportunities for the average man to acquire formal learning. There were few schools, and not many men could attend them. And so, according to some Masonic authorities, Preston conceived the idea of condensing in the Fellowcraft lecture as many of the elements of a formal education as possible.

The original lecture took up in much detail the five human senses, the terrestrial and celestial globes, and the seven liberal arts and sciences. And in so doing, the lecture did give the average Masonic candidate of Preston's era an insight into certain knowledge which he might never have received otherwise.

To the modern Mason, the formal teachings in the lecture are elementary – so much so, in fact, that when we first hear them we wonder why they were brought in at all. As symbols, however, we find them significant.

"Fellowcraft" is one of a large number of terms with a technical meaning peculiar to Freemasonry. A "craft" is an organization of skilled workmen in some trade or calling: masons, carpenters, painters, etc. A "fellow" means one who holds membership in such a craft, accepting its duties and enjoying its privileges. Since the skilled crafts are no longer organized as they once were, the term is not now used in its original sense.

In Freemasonry the term "Fellowcraft" possesses two separate meanings, one of which we may call the Operative and the other the Speculative.

Operative Masonry

As you have been told, Freemasons in the operative period were skilled workmen engaged in some branch of the building trade. Like other skilled workers, they had an organized craft of their own, the general form of which was called a "Guild." A Lodge was a local, and usually

temporary, organization within the guild. This guild had officers, laws, rules, regulations, and customs which were rigorously binding on all members.

Membership was divided into two grades, the lower of which was composed of Apprentices. Operative Freemasons recruited members from qualified lads of twelve to fifteen years of age. When such a boy proved acceptable to the members, he was required to swear to be teachable and obedient; thereupon he was bound over to some senior Mason for instruction. If he proved worthy, his name was formally entered in the books of the Lodge, thereby giving him his title of Entered Apprentice. For seven years, as a rule, this boy lived with his master, gave him implicit obedience in all things, and toiled much without other recompense than board, lodging, and clothing. In the Lodge life he held a place equally subordinate because he could not attend a Lodge of Fellowcrafts. During his long apprenticeship he was really a bond servant with many duties, few rights, and little freedom.

Passed To A Fellowcraft

At the end of his apprenticeship he was examined in Lodge. If his record was good; if he could prove his proficiency under test, and the members voted in his favor, he was made a full member of the Craft, with the same duties, rights, and privileges as all others. He was called a "Fellow of the Craft." In the early days of Speculative Masonry, there were only two degrees—that of Entered Apprentice, and of Fellowcraft, or Master Mason, the latter designations apparently being used interchangeably.

Speculative Masonry

Such was the operative meaning of Fellowcraft. Now that the organization is no longer operative the term possesses a very different meaning. Nevertheless, it is still used in its original sense in certain parts of the ritual and, of course, it is frequently encountered in the histories of the fraternity. Operative Freemasonry began to decline at about the time of the Protestant Reformation In the Sixteenth Century, when Lodges became few in number and small in membership. A few of these in England began to admit men with no intention of practicing Operative Masonry, men who were attracted by the Craft's antiquity and for social reasons. These were called Speculative Masons. At the beginning of the Eighteenth Century these Speculatives so increased in numbers that they gained control, and during the first quarter of that century completely transformed the Craft into the Speculative fraternity as we now have it.

The Three Degrees

Although the society adhered as closely as possible to the old customs, some radical changes were made to fit it for its new purposes. One of the most important of these was to abandon the old rule of dividing the members into two grades, or degrees, and to adopt the new rule of dividing them into three. The second grade became known as the Fellowcraft Degree, and eventually the third became the Master Mason Degree.

The term Fellowcraft is now used as the name of the Second Degree. It refers to the ritualistic ceremonies and other contents of that degree, to a member of it, and to a lodge when opened on it. You are a Fellowcraft. You have passed through its ceremonies, assumed its

obligations, are registered as such in the books of the Lodge. You can sit in either a Lodge of Apprentices or of Fellowcrafts, but not of Master Masons. Your duties are to do and to be all that the teachings of the degree require.

As you were told in previously, remember that each degree gives you a certain part of Masonry's teachings, and each is just as vital a part as another – they are not stepping stones.

Interpretation of the Ritual of the Second Degree

You are now a Fellowcraft Mason. You have now found in the Ritual and lectures of this degree a further revelation of Masonry's character and purpose. The first degree made its principal appeal to the conscience. The second addresses itself primarily to the intellect. It emphasizes the philosophy of Masonry, its great teachings, and its profound concern for education, enlightenment, and culture.

Our purpose in this booklet is to try to explain some of the meanings of the degree; only a part, of course, as it would require many volumes to explain them in full. Many great ideas are embodied in this degree, which if you understand them, will lead you forward to attending steps of wisdom. One of these ideas is that of adulthood.

A Man in His Prime

The Entered Apprentice represents youth standing at the portals of life, his eyes on the rising sun. The Master Mason is the man of years, already on the farther slope of the hill with the setting sun in his eyes. The Fellowcraft is a man in the prime of life – experienced, strong, resourceful, able to bear the heat and burden of the day.

The man in his middle years carries maximum responsibilities. It is he upon whom a family depends for support. He is the Atlas on whose shoulders rest the burdens of business. By his skill and experience the arts are sustained. To his keeping are entrusted the destinies of state. It is said that in the building of his Temple, King Solomon employed eighty thousand Fellowcrafts or hewers on the mountains and in the quarries. The description is suggestive, for it is by men in the Fellowcraft period that the hewing is done on the mountains or in the quarries of life.

The Fellowcraft walks in the full, uncolored light of noon. Everything stands starkly before him in its most uncompromising reality. If he were elated by boyish illusions of the ease of life and the sufficiency of his strength a little while ago, those illusions have now vanished in the heat of the day. After a few more years he will become mellow and resigned. But at high noon, this time has not yet come. It is for him to bend his back and bear the load.

The working tools of a Fellowcraft are the Plumb, Square, and Level. Their significance is explained in the ritual. We are to walk uprightly before God and man, squaring our actions by the Square of virtue, remembering that we are traveling upon the Level of time to that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns.

What does the Second Degree say to the Fellowcraft, whether in Masonry or in the world at large? The answer brings us to a second great idea, namely, that the Fellowcraft must so

equip himself that he will prove equal to the tasks, which will be laid upon him. What is that equipment? The degree gives us at least three answers:

Experience

The first is that the Fellowcraft must gain experience from contact with the realities of life. You will recall what was stated about the five senses. Needless to say, that portion of the Middle Chamber Lecture is not intended as a disquisition on either physiology or psychology. It is symbolic, and represents what man learns through seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling – in short, immediate experience. A man garners such experience only with the passage of time. Each day he comes in contact with facts. What he learns one day must be added to the next, and so on from year to year, until at last through his senses, he comes to understand the world in which he lives, how to deal with it, how to master it.

Education

The second answer is the necessity of education. An individual's possible experience is limited. Could we learn of life only that which comes by our senses, we would indeed be poorly equipped to deal with its complexities and responsibilities! To our store of hard-won experience we add the experience of others. We extend our own by the information of countless men brought to us through many channels. Our own knowledge must be supplemented by the knowledge of mankind. In this manner we obtain what is sometimes called vicarious experience.

In the days when Masons were actual builders of great and costly structures, the Apprentice was a mere boy, ten to fifteen years of age, scarcely knowing one tool from another, ignorant of the secrets and arts of the builders. Yet, after seven years he was able to produce his "Master's piece" and perform any task to which the Master might appoint him. How was this miracle accomplished? Not by his unaided efforts, but by the wise and patient guidance of accomplished Masons, and their imparting to him what they had been years in acquiring.

Such is education, symbolized in the Second Degree by the Liberal Arts and Sciences. Perhaps you were somewhat nonplussed to hear what was said about Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music, and Astronomy. Perhaps you wondered what such schoolroom topics had to do with Masonry. Now you begin to see the connection. The explanation of these subjects was not intended as an academic lecture. Like so much else in the degree, these matters are symbols, signifying all that is meant by education – our training by others in skill and knowledge to perform or to understand certain tasks.

Wisdom

The third answer suggested here is of more importance than either of the others. It may be expressed by the word Wisdom. A Fellowcraft must be equipped with experience and knowledge, as has been said. Wisdom goes beyond knowledge. The latter gives us awareness of the world at points of immediate contact, and competence for special tasks in the arts, professions, callings, and vocations. But a man's life is not confined to these considerations. He is not by day and night engaged in the same task; life is richer than that! It is compounded of all manner of things: a great variety of experiences; a constant succession of situations; a never-ending list of problems. The highway is crowded with people of varied reactions,

emotions, characteristics, and behavior patterns. The world is infinitely greater than what each of us now sees, hears, or feels; it is far more complex than our daily tasks.

The Middle Chamber

The Middle Chamber, which is so conspicuous in the Second Degree, has many meanings. Among others, it is a symbol of wisdom. By the experience of the five senses, through the knowledge gained of the Liberal Arts and Sciences, the candidate is called to advance, as on Winding Stairs, to that balanced wisdom of life in which the senses, emotions, intellect, character, work, deeds, habits, and the soul of a man are knit together in unity, balance, and poise.

Symbols and Allegories

The Pillars

When you passed the two pillars which greeted you as you began the second section of the degree, it was an act of much significance. For you were told that the two pillars, apart from the way in which their globes illustrate something of the greatness of God and the magnificence of His works, also represent God's promise that He would establish his house forever. And when you passed between these pillars, you symbolically acknowledged your faith in this promise and accepted your part in this covenant between God and man.

Your Wages

You were informed that as a Fellowcraft you were entitled to a Fellowcraft's wages. Corn, wine, and oil are mentioned many times in the Bible – as offerings, as a means of paying a debt, or as a measure of prosperity. Hence this phrase is used Masonically to symbolize the fact that the laborer is worthy of his hire – that as a Fellowcraft bearing the responsibilities and doing the work of a man, you are entitled to a just reward, both physically and spiritually.

Your Jewels

You were also told that you were now considered worthy of the Jewels of a Fellowcraft – the attentive ear, the instructive tongue, and the faithful breast. Here, too, the symbolism refers chiefly to knowledge, for by the ear you receive information and instruction, and by the tongue you pass along your hard earned wisdom to the attentive ear of a brother. And the faithful breast alludes not only to the safekeeping of Masonic secrets, but symbolizes once again the fact that the Fellowcraft is fully capable of bearing the duties of life, and can be trusted to do so.

The Stairway

The most outstanding symbol in the Degree of Fellowcraft is the Flight of Winding Stairs. In the Book of Kings we read: "They went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber." We go up "with winding stairs" into "the Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple." Also we travel up the winding stairs of life and arrive, if we climb steadfastly, at the middle chamber of existence, which is removed from infancy and youth by the steps of knowledge and experience.

There is a symbolism in the fact that the stairway *winds*. The straight stairway requires only physical strength for its ascent. We know its length, for we can see its top, and we can calculate and regulate the speed of our climb accordingly. No element of the spiritual is involved.

The winding stairway, however, is symbolic of life. The goal is not in sight, but we know there is a goal – there has to be. We know not how near nor how far, but we know it is. We can see only a small portion of the way now, but that much we can see, and that far we can go. So we begin the ascent – one step at a time, in the faith that each stage of progress will unfold a new vision, giving us new inspiration, new courage, new strength. Thus faith enlarges our understanding and the scope of our ability until at last we reach a Middle Chamber, or place of light – only to discover that this was not in itself our goal, but merely another starting point, from whose vantage we see a broader vision leading ever onward and upward.

We are taught that we should use the five senses that God has given us to climb the seven steps of the stairway, which we designate as the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences. When we rise by Grammar and Rhetoric, we must consider that they mean not only language, but all methods of communication. The step of Logic means a knowledge not only of all methods of reasoning, but of all reasoning which logicians have accomplished. When we ascend by Arithmetic and Geometry, we must visualize all science. The step denominated Music means not only sweet and harmonious sounds, but all beauty, poetry, art, nature, and loveliness of whatever kind. As for the seventh step of Astronomy, surely it not only suggests the study of the solar system and the stars, but that they symbolize a supreme creative power and wisdom, without which the universe could not exist.

The Letter G

You recall the prominence, which was given the Letter G. It may be considered as having a double interpretation: (1) As being the first letter of our name for that Deity in whose existence all Masons have professed belief. (2) As being the initial of Geometry, regarded as the basic science of Operative Masonry, now symbolizing to Speculative Masons the unchanging natural laws which govern the whole material universe. Together they symbolize God as the great governing intelligence of the universe. This is consistent, as the entire degree makes its appeal to the intellect.

Strong in Body, Soul and Spirit

Let it be said in conclusion that the Fellowcraft represents manhood in its most splendid conception and its greatest responsibility. The days of his disillusionment are past; he faces facts, not fancies. He understands the immensity of the tasks before him and approaches them with the joy of one who is competent and resolved to conquer. His family depends upon him for support. The business world looks to him for judgment and guidance. The community needs his aid and advice in promoting the moral and spiritual welfare of its people. He is a patron of the arts and sciences. He has faith in God and believes that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." He is untiring in his zeal to promote religion, freedom, and justice. There stands the Fellowcraft strong in body, soul, and spirit, and competent to cope with all of life's realities.

Hence, from this discussion you realize the truth as given in the ritual of this degree, that Masonry is a progressive science, and that as we advance in knowledge our obligations to ourselves and to our brethren correspondingly increase.