

Fellow Craft Handbook

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Introduction

The Fellow Craft degree embodies a great deal of knowledge and wisdom, and its symbols and lessons can take a lifetime to penetrate. This handbook should be studied carefully, as it outlines many of the things associated with this degree in order to help each Mason better understand it.

There are various ways that the meaning of the Fellow Craft degree and its place between the first and third degrees of Masonry have been explained. In one sense, the Fellow Craft degree symbolizes the stage of adulthood and responsibility during a man's life on earth, following youth and preceding old age. In this stage, the man's 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 in order to better mankind. A Fellow Craft Mason is urged to advance his education in these fields during the ritual of this degree.

Some view the three-degree system of Ancient Craft Masonry as representing a progressive teaching directed toward perfecting human nature. It is a view of human nature divided into the three parts of body, mind, and soul. In this view, each degree addresses and instructs one part. The first degree encompasses the body and the faculties of action. The four cardinal virtues are extolled as the proper guides to action in the world that we may perfect our relation to it. The second degree addresses the mind and its faculties. The candidate is instructed in the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, which were formulated hundreds of years ago in order to develop and perfect the mental nature in preparation for comprehending spiritual truth. The third degree confers the central mystery of Freemasonry, relating to the soul.

The Fellow Craft Degree

SYMBOLISM OF THE DEGREE

The symbolism of the Entered Apprentice degree emphasizes beginnings, spiritual birth, the first steps, youth, and orientation to the Light, which are all consistent with an initiation into the fraternity. The second degree of Fellow Craft symbolizes the methods of developing and progressing in the Craft and, in a sense, the emergence into spiritual manhood and maturity. 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 applicable. With them we try, square, and prove. With them we learn to develop the faculty of judgement: 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 aspects even seem to be in opposition to the previous degree. There are certain avenues of further exploration that should be brought out here. We are usually given an explanation for most parts of the ritual in the various lectures. Some seem to allude to deeper interpretations. As we study the mysteries of Freemasonry, certain things should be kept in mind. For example, the number three keeps emerging in the rituals in one way or another. Geometrically, three is the triangle. And, in fact, there are three kinds of triangles: the equilateral triangle (all three sides equal), the isosceles triangle (two sides equal), and the scalene triangle (no sides equal).

Many of the mythological gods or heroes that were smiths or **artificers** for the gods were lame, for example, the Roman god Vulcan and the Greek god Hephaestus. Vulcan was crippled as a result of being thrown down to earth. He is usually depicted with tools, as he is a patron of craftsmen. Scalene in one sense means unequal and used in another way means limping. The most celebrated scalene triangle is, of course, the 3-4-5 right triangle, which is of special concern to Freemasons. This is explored more in the Master Mason degree.

THE PREPARATION

The changes in dress from an Entered Apprentice Mason to a Fellow Craft Mason have been explained in the ceremony. Gaining admission is similar to the first degree, with the addition of a pass, which is given for him by his conductor. We are trying to teach that the knowledge and energy are freely given toward gaining the privileges of Freemasonry, and that by the aid of others, we are able to advance.

THE JEWELS

The attentive ear, the instructive tongue, and the faithful breast remind the craftsman that the time-honored method of instruction is by word of mouth. These jewels should signify the necessity to learn and use good Masonic instruction, and develop a devotion to the teachings of the Craft.

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 angle, so called because this is the angle which stones must have if they are to be used to build a stable and upright wall. It symbolizes accuracy, not even varying by a single degree. When we part upon the square, we go in different directions, but in full knowledge that our courses in life will be going according to the angle of the square (which means in the right direction), until we meet again.

THE LEVEL

The level is a symbol of equality. Each person is endowed with a worth and dignity which is spiritual, and should not be subject to man-made distinctions. Masonry recognizes that one man may have greater potential in life, service, or reward than another; but it is also believed that any man can aspire to any height, no matter how great. Thus, the level dignifies labor and the man who performs it. The level 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 would set in the midst of His people, Israel, symbolizing God's standard of Divine righteousness. When the plumb line is thought of in this way, it becomes a symbol of an upright life and of the conscience by which each person must live. This idea is closely tied to the concept of justice.

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 and polarity are twin forces throughout Creation), guardianship of the temple, or 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 Water 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. These pillars were designed and cast by Hiram, a widow's son from the tribe of Naphtali (I Kings 7:13–14). 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, and the candidate, as he is brought into the lodge, comes to represent the third column of beauty, or balance.

THE WINDING STAIRCASE

The Winding Staircase is a symbol of ascension. It is described as consisting of three, five, and seven steps. The number of steps has changed over the years in different Masonic systems and rites. Sometimes there were only five and sometimes there were seven. Preston listed 36, dividing them into one, three, five, seven, nine, and eleven. The Hemming lectures listed the number at 25. American Masonry has generally stayed with 15. While much of the symbolism of the Winding Staircase is explained in the ritual itself, there are some interesting points worthy of discussion.

THREE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

It should be clear that the number three is highly significant in Freemasonry. There are three degrees, Three Great Lights, three columns, three Grand Masters, three Principal Tenets of Freemasonry, and 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 complement 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 ascent to further Light). Masonic aprons are composite examples of the three and the four making seven.

FIVE ORDERS OF ARCHITECTURE

The Five Orders of Architecture are **Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite**. The Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian were the original orders of architecture designed by the Greeks. It may be worth studying which order of architecture was likely to be used for certain temples. For example, the Parthenon on the Acropolis dedicated to Athena is Doric, as is her temple at Delphi. The Ephesian temple of Diana, a moon goddess, is Ionic.

The geometrical symbol of five is 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*). In Masonic rites practiced in continental Europe, the Fellow Craft takes a journey through five points of a pentagram instead of up a Winding Staircase.

SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCES

The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences are grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Geometry is likely of greatest significance to Freemasons because it is the basis upon which the superstructure of Masonic symbolism is erected.

The Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences were formulated as early as C.E. 330. The Christian scholars adopted them soon afterwards and they flowered at the Neo-Platonic School at Chartres in 12th-century France. The study of these principles was considered a means to the knowledge of God and was expressed in the construction of the Cathedral of Chartres and many others in medieval period Europe. The first sculpted representations of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences adorned the western door of the Cathedral of Chartres.

The masters of Chartres taught that the proper study of the Seven Liberal Arts guided the intellect to approach the hidden Light behind the world. The invisible underlying structure of reality and the truth could be apprehended in this way. In the mid-13th century it was also only after the humble Mason had mastered the Seven Liberal Arts that he became entitled to the designation of architect.

ADMISSION TO THE MIDDLE CHAMBER

In ancient Graeco-Roman Mystery Schools, the initiate was guided by the *Psychopompos*, or “conductor of the soul.” The *Psychopompos* would usually meet the candidate at the entrance to the temple or cave where the rites would be performed and guide him through as needed. This title originated in mythology with an epithet for Hermes, as conductor of deceased souls to Hades. One of our oldest manuscripts, the *Cooke Manuscript* (circa 1450), referred to Hermes as the principal patron of the Craft. In Freemasonry, the role of the *Psychopompos* is fulfilled by the Senior Deacon.

In the Fellow Craft degree, the Senior Deacon leads the candidate up the Winding Staircase, showing him firsthand the path by which the lower passions are transcended. Once the candidate has symbolically mastered his intellectual faculties, represented by the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences, he arrives at the Middle Chamber of the temple, finally prepared to move from the outer to the inner, from the circumference to his own inner spiritual center, his heart.

The passage from the Outer Porch to the Middle Chamber represents the development of one’s intellectual faculties through the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences in the material world as a means of advancing toward the spiritual world. Once the intellectual faculties have been sufficiently mastered, it is then necessary to move beyond them into the Middle Chamber.

THE WAGES OF A FELLOW CRAFT

Corn, wine, and oil are symbolic wages earned by the Fellow Craft Mason who arrives at the Middle Chamber. These symbolize mental and spiritual wealth. Corn represents nourishment and the sustenance of life. It is also a symbol of plenty, and refers to the opportunity for doing good, working for the community, and performing service to mankind. The corn referred to in this degree is actually what we call wheat. Wine is symbolic of refreshment, health, spirituality, and peace. Oil represents joy, gladness, and happiness. Taken together, corn, wine, and oil represent the rewards of living a good life. The actual “wages” are the intangible but no less real compensation for a faithful and intelligent use of the working tools, fidelity to your Obligations, and unflagging interest in and study of the structure, purpose, and possibilities of the fraternity. Such wages may be defined in terms of a deeper understanding of brotherhood, a clearer conception of ethical living, a broader toleration, and a more resolute will to think justly, independently, and honestly. Corn, or grain, has also represented the concept of resurrection. Wine has symbolized mystical attainments, Divine intoxication, and ecstasy. Oil is one of the elements of consecration, as perfumed oil was, and in many traditions still is, used to anoint.

THE MASONIC LETTER “G”

In the Fellow Craft degree the candidate is informed that the letter “G” 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 the word God in the English language.

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. 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* was also associated with Dionysus and resurrection.

The importance of geometry to a full understanding of Freemasonry becomes apparent to the candidate as he progresses through the degrees. He is unequivocally informed that geometry is the basis, or foundation, of Masonry. It is thought that the Egyptians became skilled at surveying because the annual flooding of the Nile obliterated boundary markers in their fields. They had to set out and calculate new boundaries each year. The Greeks named this skill geometry, or “earth measurement.” The Greeks, it is thought, made the advancement of using deductive logic to expand the knowledge into a theoretical science, and Pythagoras is credited with this achievement. As these developments set the groundwork for much of the approach of the sciences, some consider geometry to be the first science.

Pythagoras and his Order, and later, Plato and his Academy, raised geometry to a sacred science of discovering the nature of reality and through it the Deity. We have such statements from Plato as: “Geometry rightly treated is the knowledge of the eternal.” And also: “Geometry must ever tend to draw the soul towards the truth.” Later, Euclid systemically presented all the knowledge of geometry in his work *Elements of Geometry*, beginning with five unproved principles about lines, angles, and figures, which he called postulates. Euclid uses only the compass and straight edge for all the drawings, proofs, and solutions.

There are some Masonic researchers who think that the letter “G” represents a little-known system of philosophical letter-number interpretation known as **Gematria**. One of the earliest known references to this method is found about C.E. 200 in the *Bariatha* of R. Eliezer ben R. Jose, the Galilean, 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 and Greek alphabets were also used as numbers. Therefore, every Hebrew word and every Greek word is the sum of the value of the individual letters. Exploring this technique of letter-number substitution, one looks for words, names, and phrases that add up to like values. Like values are thought to have meaningful relationships. For example, the Hebrew word for “heaven” (*h-shamayim*) has the same numerical value as the word for “soul” (*neshamah*), that is, 395, derived by adding up each letter to arrive at a total. The Kabbalist would say this reflects an important relationship between the soul and heaven.

Another example of Gematria can be found by comparing the Hebrew words for “love” (*ahebah*) and “unity” (*echad*), both of which add up to 13. Combining the values of these two words gives us 26, the number of the Hebrew word rendered in English as Jehovah or Yahweh, the principal name of God. This is a clear intimation that the nature of God can be understood as love and unity. This exegetical technique can be used with both the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Christian Scriptures. There are other texts as well that have been found to contain hidden Gematria in Latin and Arabic. The practice of Gematria has given rise to interesting techniques which purport to reveal a type of spiritual geometry hidden within the Scriptures.

NUMBER, ORDER, SYMMETRY, AND PROPORTION

The great teachings of the Fellow Craft 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. 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. It was also believed that the Seven Liberal Arts had the power to liberate the mind from material attachment. Further study for the Masonic student would most certainly include a detailed study of Pythagorean number philosophy, the Golden Mean, Plato’s work, the Neo-Platonists, and Kabbalistic Gematria.

Duties and Rights 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 Fellow Craft degree, when accompanied by a Master Mason who has sat in lodge with you. You may visit another lodge opened in the Fellow Craft 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.

Proficiency and Advancement

Prior to advancement to the Master Mason degree, every Mason in California must be able to answer certain questions and reach a required level of proficiency in the work of the Fellow Craft degree. The proficiency requirements should be explained in detail by the members of the lodge.

The questions may be answered in written form, though it is highly encouraged to read the answers in open lodge in the form of a brief presentation.

- I. What are the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences? Please explain the origins of this concept and how you think their study is meant to be applied in life.
- II. What is the symbolism of the candidate's journey up the Winding Staircase and into the Middle Chamber? Please explain what you think it is meant to teach you as a Freemason.
- III. What do you view as the most important lessons in experiencing the Fellow Craft degree? Please explain how the experience affected you and what you gained from it.

Recommended Reading

Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia

By Douglas Smith (Northern Illinois University Press 1999)

ISBN 087580246X

Masonic Letter G

By Paul F. Case (Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Company 1988)

ISBN 0880530669

The First Freemasons: Scotland's Early Lodges and Their Members

By David Stevenson (Geo. Stewart & Co. Ltd., Edinburgh 2001)

ISBN 902324659

Freemasonry: A Journey Through Ritual and Symbol

W. Kirk MacNulty (Thames & Hudson 1991)

ISBN 0500810370

Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730–1840

By Stephen C. Bullock (University of North Carolina Press 1998)

ISBN 080784750X

Glossary

Admonish - to caution, advise, or counsel against; to express warning or disapproval; to give friendly, earnest advice and encouragement.

Artificer - a skilled or artistic worker or craftsman; one who makes beautiful objects.

Beneficent - doing or producing good.

Bourne - boundaries; limits.

Brazen - made of brass.

Candor - freedom from bias, prejudice, or malice; fairness; impartiality.

Capital - the uppermost part of a column.

Chapiter - an alternate, and earlier, form of the word capital.

Column - a supporting pillar consisting of a base, a cylindrical shaft, and a capital.

Composite - one of the Five Orders of Architecture developed late in the Roman period as an enriched version of the Corinthian that combines the Corinthian and Ionic styles.

Conflagration - fire, especially a large, disastrous fire.

Contemplate - to look at attentively and thoughtfully; to consider carefully.

Contrive - to devise; to plan; to invent or build in an artistic or ingenious manner.

Corinthian - one of the three classical (Greek) orders of architecture—the most ornamented of the three. Originated in the city of Corinth in Greece.

Cubit - an ancient unit of linear measure, approximately 18 inches in today's measure.

Depressed - underneath; lower than its surroundings.

Discerning - showing insight and understanding; excellent judgment.

Dispersed - scattered; spread widely.

Diurnal - recurring every day; having a daily cycle.

Doric - one of the three classical (Greek) orders of architecture—the oldest and simplest of the three, originated in an area of ancient Greece known as Doris.

Edifice - a building, especially one of imposing appearance or size.

Ephraimites - members of one of the 12 tribes of Israel, descended from Ephraim, one of the sons of Jacob.

Gematria - A system of letter-number substitution used for philosophical interpretation, most commonly associated with traditional Jewish mysticism known as Kabbala and ancient Greek divination and occultism. It originated in the ancient world when many cultures used letters of their alphabets to represent numbers. The advent of the Arabic numeral system made this practice obsolete for practical purposes. The mystical interpretation of words and names, however, became known as Gematria and survived in various esoteric traditions.

Homage - respect or reverence paid or rendered; expression of high regard.

Injunction - an order or requirement placed upon someone by a superior.

Inundation - to overflow with water; a flood.

Ionic - one of the three classical (Greek) orders of architecture, originated in an area of ancient Greece known as Ionia.

Judicious - having, exercising, or characterized by sound judgment; discrete; wise.

Naphtali - one of the sons of Jacob, brother of Joseph, and a founder of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Novitiate - a beginner; a novice.

Palliate - to try to conceal the seriousness of an offense by excuses and apologies; to moderate the intensity of; to reduce the seriousness of; to relieve or lessen without curing.

Pilaster - an upright architectural member that is rectangular in plan and is structurally a pier, but is architecturally treated as a column; it usually projects a third of its width or less from the wall.

Pommel - a ball or knob.

Reprehend - to voice disapproval of; to express an attitude of unhappiness and disgust.

Salutary - producing a beneficial effect; remedial; promoting health; curative; wholesome.

Severally - one at a time; each by itself; separately; independently.

Summons - a written notice issued for an especially important meeting of a lodge; the written notice or requirement by authority to appear at a place named.

Superfice - a geometrical object which is of two dimensions and exists in a single plane.

Superstructure - anything based on, or rising from, some foundation or basis; an entity, concept, or complex based on a more fundamental one.

Tuscan - one of the Five Orders of Architecture, originated in Tuscany, an area of southern Italy.

Undiscovered Country Whose Bourne No Traveler Returns - that which lies beyond death; the afterlife. From Shakespeare, Hamlet: Act III, Scene 1.

Vicissitudes - the successive, alternating, or changing phases or conditions of life or fortune; ups and downs; the difficulties of life; difficulties or hardships which are part of a way of life or career.