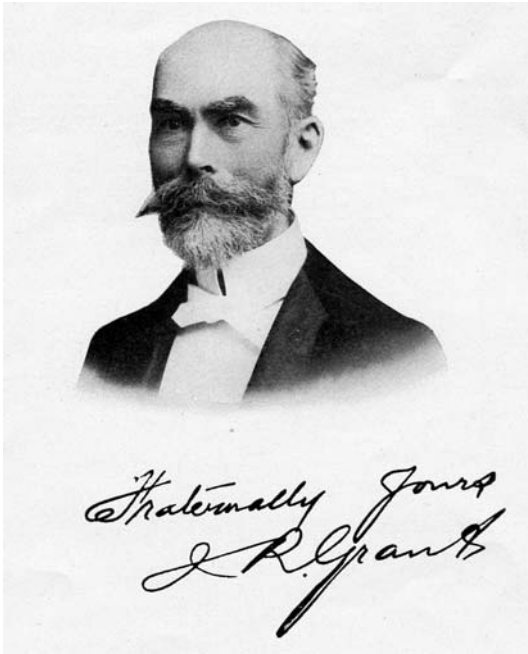


What Is Masonry?
PREPARED BY
RIGHT WORSHIPFUL BRO. JOHN R. GRANT OF WINNIPEG
"Ad gloriam Grandis Architecti Universi"

PREFACE



To My Brethren

A desire has been expressed that this paper be published for the use of the Brethren.

It is arranged in two separate series, each supposed to be complete in itself, viz.,

1. What is Masonry?
2. Degrees 1, 2, 3 Symbolic Masonry.

It does not purport to be in any sense Ritualistic. I have confined myself strictly to what I conceive to be the teachings of Masonry as exemplified in our ceremonial. "What is Masonry?" is not claimed to be original, merely the assembling of various sources of information, the rest of the paper is my own arrangement and suggestion.

and is the result of my Masonic observation and experience for over a quarter of a century. I found it hard and almost impossible to avoid the use of some expressions so common in our system and where a word or phrase expressed the thought I desired. I used it at the risk of repeating words already familiar to every well informed Mason.

If you can approve my understanding of Masonic teaching and can receive and adopt my feeble efforts at its interpretation. in the spirit with which I tender them I shall feel fully rewarded.

J. R. GRANT
Winnipeg, October, 1910.

What Is Masonry?

MASONRY is a union of all unions, an association of men bound together in their struggle to attain all that is noble, who desire only what is true and beautiful, who love and practice virtue for its own sake, that is Freemasonry.

Masonry is committed to the cause of humanity that it may excite in man noble aspirations, to develop in him practical charity and to make him keep in subjection rude and impure passions.

Masonry is a system of ethics based upon axiomatic propositions and illustrated by dramatic representation. The existence of divinity, the human soul and the brotherhood of man are held as facts in relation to the basis of human conduct and he who does not recognize these is considered ineligible as a candidate for Masonry.

Many theories have been advanced to show the relation of Masonry to the ancient mysteries. Does it inherit its springs of action from the patriarchal mode of worship established by God Himself? These truths revealed by Divinity came at length to be doubted or rejected through the imperfection of human reason and though the visible symbols were retained in the mysteries of the pagan world their true interpretation was lost.

Or did Freemasonry start with the building of King Solomon's Temple and the guard of secrecy introduced to preserve it from pollution? Or does it derive its origin through the intervention of the Crusaders and their orders of Chivalry? Or does Masonry antedate Christianity and the Middle Ages, and can the secret societies of that early period be traced to Freemasonry or will we cease to look for its origin in the mysteries of Mythras or the Chivalric orders of the Crusaders, or even at the building of King Solomon's Temple, but seek for its origin and descent in that coincidence of human thought that beginning to recognize and teach the reality of a future life yield to the proneness of the human mind and endeavor to clothe this belief in symbolic dress? Or will we slightly vary from, and adopting one of the qualities of the compass expand these several theories and begin with the basic thought that the fundamental principle of Freemasonry is a belief in God? If so, then we trace a Divine Providence directing the destiny of Man, whether in the spiritual or in the secular domain from the creation of the World, that a most potent influence for good has been achieved by legendary history taking on the form of fraternity, thus following in temporal matters the guidance of the Divine government in the spiritual affairs of the universe.

The changes which have taken place since the creation of the world no matter how we reckon time have all been under the guidance and direction of a Divine dispensation working out for humanity its noblest attainments and this great force is given fitting recognition in the expression "The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man." Does it not therefore appear that in some form or other the spirit of fraternity has always existed?

If this is true may we not claim that Freemasonry in spirit at least was co-incident with the birth of time and that during the lapse of the ages the transitory mind of man has finally evolved fraternity as we know it, ever changing indeed but following the Divine impulse, the ancient mysteries were ever the aids to progress and civilization and the sources of moral life and in recognition of the truth of that, we have translated many of these customs into our modern civilization.

I. - ENTERED APPRENTICE

The first degree in Masonry, symbolized by the Rough Ashlar, presents to you man in a state of nature, rude and uncultivated, with no other resources than those with which nature has endowed him.

The candidate as he appears is in a condition of subjection, a creature possessing passions that rule over him and thus symbolizes the great masses of the people without organization, ignorant and superstitious, yet possessing qualities, which if properly developed make them fit to adorn the Temple of Memphis, each step in moral development producing an instinctive longing for light.

Declaring that he wishes to join the craft for no selfish purpose the applicant approaches the portals of Masonry and is there received; he has declared his belief in a Supreme Being, the Great Architect of the Universe and an all-compassionate Father, who has revealed His will to man. He has accepted the obligations required of him and now stands in the Lodge as a man, in the true Roman sense As A MAN, Masonry prescribing no creed other than a belief in that Supreme Being who is infinite in His loving kindness.

A claim is made upon the candidate on behalf of that greatest of all virtues, "that envieth not, but suffereth long and is kind." How easy it is to give of one's abundance, but poor and penniless poverty is stirred by that pathetic appeal for aid, and the candidate receives his first great lesson on the selfishness of living for one's self and the claims of sweet charity are impressed. The great benefits of Masonry fall to those who do the most for it. What Masonry will do for you rests entirely with yourself. Becoming a Mason is not sufficient, you must be one for all time. Then will Masonry reach out its arms to you, smooth away the rough places, lift you toward the summit of the high mountains and crown your life with glory.

II. - FELLOW CRAFT

As a Craftsman you are encouraged to widen your range of vision by the acquirement of knowledge, that knowledge that can alone make man master over himself. You are taught the value of association and that a union of sympathies is the bond of affiliation that will ultimately lead to Freedom. So Masonry teaches men that the forces of nature are the power of God made manifest, that every genuine Freemason is an apostle of the truth, that there is nobility in labor, that by prudence, fortitude, temperance and justice, and not by rashness, they can become truly free.

Architecture in Masonry in this degree is the voice of nature speaking to the Mason in the language of Art. As we cultivate a study of Masonry its objects become extended as our knowledge of it increases, new lights burst forth from its inmost recesses unobserved by the careless or indifferent craftsman, but which to the inquiring and reflective Mason burn with a dazzling radiance. It is in this degree the candidate first receives any other than moral instruction, while everywhere principle is emphasized as against popularity, otherwise there would be no place in Masonry for the story of the slaying of the forty and two thousand Ephraimites at the crossing of the Jordan.

III - MASTER MASON

In the Master's Degree in addition to what you have already been taught as to your duty to your fellow, and your proper relation to life, and to "remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth," your mind is being prepared for that last great change that must sooner or later come to us all; the dignity of labor is again taught us here, and that the right to liberty in thought and action is the heritage of freedom, while through that light which is a direct result of Masonic teaching, man may be made fit for his place in the temple of character and society, as typified by the perfect Ashlar, that labor is the lot of man, and that the soul is immortal is taught by an impressive symbolism and ceremony and that nothing but ignorance and spiritual bondage can enslave it. You were instructed in the duties of obedience to the law, fidelity to your brethren and charity to all, and that the perfect Ashlar or Cubical Stone as well as the working tools represent all the influences and forces under man's control and marks a new and better era amongst the people. It is a symbol of that perfection to which all our teachings point, where rule and the law of love governs with the inevitable result that harmony and equilibrium may now sit enthroned, where formerly discord and rebellion were the forces represented by despotism, intolerance and ignorance. The Volume of the Sacred Law was placed before You as the guide of all your actions, you were taught that all virtuous men may hope with confidence for a resurrection to a new and better life, that in the presence of death all rank and privilege; disappear, and that only by intelligent and unselfish application of the principles exemplified in this degree can we hope to become the almoners of God's bounty to our fellowmen, and to see in the death and resurrection of the widow's son the image of the Son of God who died and was raised again. And he alone is a Master Mason who searches into the hidden truths that lie concealed under the commonplace interpretations of the legends and symbols of this degree.

Your relation to your fellow man has been strengthened and widened and with stars over our heads and graves beneath our feet the candidate symbolically goes down into the dark bosom of the waters, all nature laments and we share the common sorrow and in Khurum rising from the grave we have a symbol of perfect freedom of intellect and conscience, from prejudice, vice and error, both spiritual and temporal, and this degree gives an interpretation of the means used for its accomplishment through the logic of symbolism, and in Him we have also a vision of the whole human race rising victorious from the grave and now redeemed, the true and living image of Him through faith in whom we may be redeemed from our iniquities and admitted to the liberty of the Sons of God.