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GRAND LODGE

South Australia and the Northern Territory Inc



2nd Degree Education

Information for the Fellow Craft

THE SECOND OR FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE

THE DEGREE'S ORIGIN AND DERIVATION OF ITS NAME

The word 'fellow' came from the Old Norse word (Oxford Vol I:367) felage, meaning fee lay, or laying down money, eg, in a joint venture.

Written about 1389 the Regius Poem speaks of a Mason as a 'fellow'. Many of the Old Charges which followed over the centuries included the words 'Masters and Fellows', where 'Master' means the Master Mason in charge. But the Master was still a Fellow.

In general a Fellow at that time was a member of a fraternity, such as a guild. The Fellows (Jones:p 294) laid down their money to support a joint venture. Such guilds and other bodies were often known as fellowships, a term which still applies to Freemasonry.

The first grade of an operative craftsman was referred to as 'apprentice'. When an apprentice had proved worthy of acceptance into the trade his name was entered in the lodge's roll. For his labour he received only lodging, board and clothing. He was bound to his employer or master for the period of his apprenticeship, usually seven years. At the end of his term he was released from his bond and, if judged worthy, made a Fellow. An equal. He was thus a qualified Mason. On major building projects he was responsible to the master builder in charge.

From a reading of the term 'fellow' in the Oxford Dictionary (Vol 1:737), in our case an older meaning translates as follows. A fellow was a member of a company or lodge that, with their master, constituted a company, association or college. The latter term, in one of its older meanings (Oxford Vol I:367), was an organised group of people performing a certain common function, possessing special rights and privileges, and gaining remuneration. In Freemasonry's case - a Lodge of Masons.

The English operative Masons' monopoly was eventually broken, mainly by the 1666 Great Fire of London, when foreigners flooded in to help rebuild the city. It became a more and more 'speculative' science, with membership no longer restricted to operative stonemasons.

As Fellow was the highest grade an operative Mason could attain it was carried on by the speculative Freemasons with their second and highest degree. The Freemason Elias Ashmole in 1682 wrote of himself as the 'senior fellow' present at a gathering of Freemasons at the London Company of Masons. This remained so (Jones:235) after the formation of the first Grand Lodge in 1717, with a lodge master and all Grand Lodge ranks, including Grand Master, being Fellows.

The first Grand Lodge Constitutions, of 1723, were written by a Scotsman Dr Anderson, who used the terms Fellow, Craftsman and a new term, Fellow Craft. These all meant (Jones:294) the same thing – Fellow, someone who had passed the Second Degree. Anderson got the term 'Fellow Craft' from his lodge in Scotland, where it was in general use. It had been long used in Scotland, where the Shaw Statutes of 1598 and 1599, which regulated the mason craft of the country, used the term 'Fellow of Craft'. It meant a fellow, or an equal member of a skilled craft or companionship.

Although the English had probably heard the term before, almost certainly in the North, Anderson had officially introduced the name 'Fellow Craft' into English Freemasonry. It soon took hold. A definition of a Fellow Craft is a Freemason whom, having served his apprenticeship and qualified, and having passed to the Second or Fellow Craft Degree, has become a Fellow, that is, a Mason of equal rank with his fellows.

References:

Onions, CT, Ed: The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, Vol I, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1975.

Jones, Bernard: Freemason's Guide and Compendium, Harrap, London, 1950.

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE RITUAL OF THE SECOND OR FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE

Introduction

As do other degrees, this teaching degree has its own completeness, importance and purpose of its own. It encompasses and reinforces those tenets and virtues introduced in the First Degree. These are to do with God, Freemasonry, self, others and Eternity.

The Second Degree's Particular Concerns

After the self-discipline asked for by the First Degree the Second Degree provides a course of personal development. The particular concerns of this Degree (Wilmshurst:37) are contemplation and enlightenment.

By the presentation of tenets and virtues the candidate is again asked to live a moral life, and further emphasis is placed on extending its benefits to others. It probably requires from at least some of us a deal of thought and effort to put some of these qualities into practice. It needs input from one's emotional, mental, intellectual and intangible or spiritual faculties.

Carrying out the broad band of the Second Degree's exhortations helps a candidate to advance in the use of his 'interior' faculties (Wilmshurst:37). This requires him to have a good idea of the hidden mysteries of his inner nature. The products of such efforts are linked with Freemasonry's aim of bringing him closer to The Great Architect Of The Universe.

Reference:

Wilmshurst, WL: The Meaning of Masonry, Rider, London, 1922.

SYMBOLS AND ALLEGORIES OF THE SECOND DEGREE

The Second Degree is emblematic of the candidate passing from youth to manhood. In manhood a man must labour. Mackey (64) points out that the candidate by "... the exercise of diligence and industry, that by the faithful performance of his task he may, in due time, be entitled to the wages for which he has wrought." But a man also has more exalted tasks. Mackey expresses them as: "... it is his duty, and it should be his pleasure, to direct the vigor and energy of his manhood to the cultivation of his reasoning faculties and the improvement of his intellectual powers."

Important symbols and allegories include those of the Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Working Tools, the Tracing Board's Winding Staircase and the Middle Chamber.

The Liberal Arts and Sciences

Once the three basic needs – food, shelter and clothing – are met, the individual needs safety, belongingness, love and self-esteem. Beyond these survival and social basics, he needs to *know* and to *understand*. To achieve this requires literacy, numeracy, history, science and similar subjects. These raise him above the level of the unfortunate illiterate. Such advanced factors are obtained through education. Education beyond school basics is a matter that an individual can neglect or take up – it's a matter of self-will. It is not a matter of becoming well versed in each of the Liberal Arts and Sciences but of gaining some grounding in them, some understanding. They represent some of the life-improving measures a man can achieve.

Today we can substitute the old list for a secondary education and/or a self-taught selection of any theme thought to be of value or interest and which extends the mind. Books, journals and magazines abound, night and weekend courses are available, and there are CDs, videos, DVDs and the Internet. Well-chosen television programs, also, will provide much.

Through the tenets and virtues imbued in him by the Craft, then, a Freemason proceeds to investigate the Liberal Arts and Sciences. Through their study, even though at a basic level, his teaching capabilities and effectiveness increase. And he should extend results of his learnings to others. Apart from his natural feelings of self-achievement and betterment he should also at times be aware that his desire to help others may also help himself achieve the

Masonic system's ultimate goal for him, a place in a heavenly ethereal mansion.

The Liberal Arts and Sciences begin with grammar, that is, knowing the rules of speech and writing, which is the basis of all meaningful communication. To be effective a person's first need is the ability effective communication. The list finalises with Astronomy, the science of the universe, which Freemasons represent as the starry heavens they hope to reach.

By his efforts then, to keep looking into the Liberal Arts and Sciences a Mason makes for himself an opportunity to advance in insight, judgment and understanding. This will benefit himself and, if only in slender ways, others.

The Working Tools

Originally used by operative Masons each of the Working Tools illustrates or is symbolic of a tenet or virtue of speculative Masonry.

At the beginning of their explanation the candidate is informed that 'it is the moral to be derived from the contemplation of these tools to which I would direct your attention.'

The square sets the scene. It teaches us to regulate our lives and actions according to the Masonic line and rule, and to so harmonize our conduct in this life as to render us acceptable to that Divine Being from whom all goodness springs, and from whom we must give an account of our actions. That is, to live decently and properly.

The level and the plumb rule complete the scene. The morals derived from these are to do with self-regulation, basic equality, truth, justice and uprightness – all virtues which are good to hear – although not from perfect paragons, but rather from familiar men, fellow Freemasons.

The address is beautifully summed up. "To steer the bark of this life over the seas of passion without quitting the helm of rectitude, is the highest perfection to which human nature can attain; and as the builder raises his column by the level and perpendicular, so ought every Freemason to conduct himself towards this world; to observe a due medium between avarice and profusion, to hold the scales of justice with equal poise, to make his passions and prejudices coincide with the just line of his conduct, and in all his pursuits to have eternity in view."

The Tracing Board

The Lecture on the Tracing Board contains several allegories. One is found in the battle between the Ephraimites, who were a turbulent lot, and the Gileadites, who followed the laws of Jehovah, these being commanded by the great general Jephtha. The Ephraimites represent the force of evil and the Gileadites represent those who strive for good and God. Freemasonry represents the Gileadites. It strives for the laws and morals of The Great Architect Of The Universe, and as such He is seen as Freemasonry's commander.

The Winding Staircase

After giving the password the craftsmen ascend the Winding Staircase to the Middle Chamber. The Winding Stair's symbolism can be interpreted at various levels. At the surface the steps taken represent a candidate's actual and progressive steps. Next his educational steps. Then Freemasonry's ascending ranks and responsibilities.

Roberts (p 54) writes that the Winding Stair symbolises the courage of man as he climbs his stairway to his destiny. This stairway isn't straight but winds, and as he can't see around the bends he's never sure what lies ahead.

Haywood (226,7) says that the Winding Stairs represent the toil and labour of intellectual cultivation and study, which is a preliminary step to divine truth. Wilmshurst (40) finds the same, more elaborately (if lengthily) writing, "Upon self scrutiny, too, *i.e.*, upon entering into that "pathway" of contemplation which like a Winding Staircase leads him inwards to the Holy of Holies within himself he realises that difficulties and obstacles placed in his way are used by the Eternal Wisdom as a necessary means of developing the latent and potential good within Him."

Case (45) calls attention to the connection of winding to the important message which urges us to search for the 'hidden mysteries of nature and science'. He notes that Masonry tells us that through the science of geometry we are 'enabled to trace Nature through her various windings to her most concealed recess'. The winding direction is inward; by beginning this course we are on our way to finding those hidden mysteries.

The Middle Chamber

Gaining the Winding Stairway's top the Masons arrived at the door of the Temple's Middle Chamber. Having given proofs they entered the room and there received their wages.

The giving of proofs represents the password needed to enter the Middle Chamber, which represents a Lodge Room. The Tracing Board within shows that it is in a Fellow Craft mode; this is the middle or Second Degree. The ritual's Middle Chamber, then, is a Fellow Craft Lodge Room.

The attention of Masons in the Middle Chamber was drawn to the letter G, denoting God, or more correctly, The Grand Geometrician of the Universe. Recall that the Second Degree was once also the top or last degree, which demonstrates the persistence of Masonic symbols – the Temple's Middle Chamber was the closest anyone could get to God, except the High Priest, and he but once a year.

In the Middle Chamber the Freemason receives his wages or reward, which is being closer to The Great Architect. However, with today's ritual he has a further degree to go, the Master Mason or Third Degree.

The Letter G

As noted, the letter G is a most prominent symbol. Its "...primary symbolism (Case:8), 'relates to Geometry for which word it is the initial, while its Greek counterpart, *gamma*, is the initial of the Greek name of the same science.'"

Geometry is regarded as the basis of operative Masonry. To speculative Masons geometry symbolizes the unchanging natural laws which govern the universe. Because G stands for geometry this makes G a symbolic summary (Case:2) of 'the entire Masonic system'.

Further, Haywood (340) points out that the letter G is a substitute letter for "...the Hebrew letter yod, which is an initial of the ineffable name. As such, it is a symbol of the life-giving and life-sustaining power of God."

Finally, the Tracing Board lecture drums in that the letter G stands for 'God The Grand Geometrician Of The Universe'. So, being closer to Him is why it was placed in the Temple's Middle Chamber and why it is now hanging from Masonic meeting room ceilings.

The Freemason as a Citizen

Freemasonry has much to say about life in all its aspects, including the standards of social behaviour expected of Freemasons.

Among the points so far made to candidates about citizenship are –

1. Make use of your abilities, including for others.
2. Do what you can to maintain peace in the community in which you are involved.
3. Always work within the laws of the land.
4. Be loyal to your own country.
5. Respect the rights of others.
6. Practise good neighbourliness.
7. Remember that the idea of a 'Neighbour' extends to all the people you meet.
8. Remember the golden rule – "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."
9. Make use of your abilities.
10. Be charitable in your dealings with others; not only in giving but also accepting them.
11. Follow the teachings of the Second Degree's three working tools.
 - (1) The square: care in what we do in our life and actions.
 - (2) The level: all are equally entitled to our regard.
 - (3) The plumb rule: be just and true in our doings.
12. As a citizen of the world be exemplary in the discharge of your civil duties.

Together these charges set an excellent pattern for a good life.

The world judges Freemasonry by each Freemason, so see that your whole life sets a good example. By doing so you reap many benefits. You also avoid many harms, these to yourself, to others, and to Freemasonry. By living a decent life criticism cannot be made of the Order because of you. Remember that when you were invested with an apron you were exhorted to "...never disgrace that badge, for rest assured it will never disgrace you."

Freemasonry takes a neutral position regarding party politics and partisan government. Your views on politics are your own and are not discussed in Masonic meetings.

Manhood

The allegorical interpretation of the Entered Apprentice Degree is that having advanced from youth (the First Degree) the Second Degree represents a man in the prime of his life.

There are those who when young refuse to look to the future and will not submit to an apprenticeship, seen as long and arduous. When these individuals reach adulthood, with all its tasks and responsibilities, they are without training and useful knowledge. They trust to luck; the belief, however, that the good things of life come by chance to the fortunate is a false one. The satisfying values of life – of the body, of the mind, of the conscience and of the soul – cannot be won like a lottery. They have to be acquired by effort.

The Entered Apprentice has the chance to learn and experience much that involves his and other's lives. What he gains enables him to represent a man in his prime, strong and resourceful. As did his operative predecessors, he is a man proficient enough to bear the heat and burden of the day,

By his skills and knowledge the man in his middle years carries great responsibilities. His labors underpin his family, his community and his state. In the case of a Freemason this is one of the areas in which he is particularly instructed and encouraged.

Summary of the Second Degree's Message

The Second Degree places before us standards expected of Freemasons. It gives further attention to principles, tenets and virtues first given in the First Degree. These are to do with God, eternity, others and yourself. In many cases these are reinforced by showing different aspects of these tenets and morals; this demonstrates their importance.

The Second Degree asks us to 'extend our researches into the hidden mysteries of nature and science'. By doing so we will achieve a greater appreciation of life, in the forms of –

- Brotherhood, from the lodge to the world.
- Personal development.
- The human quest for The Great Architect Of The Universe.

Important elements of the Degree include –

- Faith – leading a moral life.
- Citizenship – the value of community service.
- The arts – an appreciation of matters like art, music, drama, good speech and similar.
- The sciences – an understanding of the world and universe around us.

Such are some of the significant teachings and meanings of the Second Degree. Its symbols and allegories further illustrate how Freemasonry's training and teaching can and should be an influence upon our lives.

Overall, the Second Degree continues the instruction of the First Degree by making clearer The Great Architect Of The Universe's expectations of our lives, and their contribution to our life's ultimate purpose, where in all pursuits we ought 'to have eternity in view'.

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