

Quest Book # 5

Upon Becoming a Master Mason

Now that you have received the three degrees of Freemasonry you have undoubtedly felt for yourself something of the unique fascination that Masonry has for its members. Whence comes this power, which binds a man to Masonry forever?

Is it because of its close association with religion, a belief in Deity, a hope for immortality? Partly, because each of us believes in the existence of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, reveres the teachings of religion, and cherishes the hope of a life after death.

While it is true that you have now received the third and final degree, you have by no means finished your Masonic education; on the contrary, you have only completed your entrance into Masonry. Your Quest for Light still continues from a new vantage point. You now actually stand on the threshold of a new and (if we have successfully performed our part in your passage through the degrees) a potentially important experience, which should mature into a life relationship rich in its values. This, we truly hope, will be evidenced by your own loyalty to the craft and your labors in its interest.

As a Master Mason, you now know why this degree is referred to as "Sublime." The deeply moving allegory in which you took a principal part is one of the simplest stories ever recorded by man, and yet it is quite inexhaustible in its profound teachings. It seems almost magical in its ability to seize upon the emotions and thus make doubly impressive the drama of life, death, and immortality, which it unfolds. No man who receives the Master Mason Degree ever forgets it.

Yet this degree, like the two, which preceded it presents its many lessons rapidly, and at times almost casually, as if in passing. For the scope of Freemasonry is so great that the teachings of each degree could not be fully expounded or comprehended in many, many evenings. In fact, a number of Masonic authorities have devoted much of their adult lives to the study of Masonry – and have felt that such a lifetime afforded them only a beginning in their work.

You might logically ask, "If Masonry is so complex, how then can I possibly acquire enough knowledge of it to appreciate it or to understand it?"

It is true that Masonry is exceedingly complex when looked at through the eyes of the Masonic student. It seems to stretch away on all sides like a vast and unknown continent. As each path is explored it leads to a new vista, which previously had been seen only dimly or not at all – and beyond it lies another and another and another . . .

Masonry's Teachings

But in its more obvious aspects Masonry is not this complicated. It has certain messages to impart, and they can be perceived and understood by anyone who will seek them. In this light then, let us look at the Master Mason degree. While in the limited space of this booklet only

a few points can be touched on, it is the sincere hope of your brethren that you will feel the desire to delve far more deeply into them on your own, and, of course, with the willing help of your Counselor.

Your introduction to the solemn beauty of this degree began immediately after you entered the Lodge: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth . . ." The stately words and measured cadence of the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes form a perfect prelude to all that follows in the Master Mason degree. To quote from Carl H. Claudy's "Introduction to Free Masonry," a book which every Mason should have in his library.

Read it how you will, the majesty and the awe-inspiring poetry rings here the solemn warning with a shake of the head and a shiver up the back. . . Remember now thy Creator . . . now, before the fearsome storms of life or the decay of old age is upon you; wait not until 'fears are in the way' to cry for help to the Almighty. Delay not until toothless, sightless, white-haired age asks for help from on high because there is no help left on earth! Remember now thy Creator while limbs are strong, and desire ardent, while life pulses strong, and the world is all before . . . Remember now thy Creator, in the days of thy youth . . . then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Hiram Abif

The Legend of Hiram Abif is the focal point around which the entire degree centers. While this particular story is found in Speculative Masonry alone, it has its counterpart in some form or another in the legends and folklore of practically all peoples of the world. Always they take a similar form: death by treachery, a search and discovery, resurrection, and reward.

A typical example is this: In the Ancient Mysteries of Egypt we find the story of Osiris, who was slain by his perfidious brother. His body was found by his wife, Isis, after a long search, and he was resurrected and rewarded by being made a demigod in the afterworld.

There are some who believe that the legend of Hiram Abif has been passed down in successive steps from time immemorial. There is no evidence to prove that this is so. Most authorities agree that the legend was the invention of those active in Speculative Masonry in its very early days, and who may have based it in part on some of the Ancient Mysteries of old.

In any event, the greatness of the Hiram Legend as drama is attested in these words of the great actor, Edwin Booth: "In all my research and study, in all my close acquaintance with the masterpieces of Shakespeare, in my earnest determination to make those plays appear real on the mimetic stage, I have never, and nowhere, met tragedy so real, so sublime, so magnificent as the Legend of Hiram. It is substance without shadow – the manifest destiny of life which requires no picture and scarcely a word to make a lasting impression upon all who can understand. To be a Worshipful Master and to throw my whole soul into that work, with the candidate for my audience and the Lodge for my stage, would be a greater personal distinction than to receive the plaudits of people in the theatres of the World."

The body was dead – its substance putrefied. Hiram Abif was gone, to be seen no more in the temple. But the thoughts of his brethren, as they resorted to prayer in their extremity, were uplifted to a realization of life as everlasting, never-ending, despite the evidence of the senses. Hiram, raised to the perpendicular, typifies that eternal life.

The Lost Word

The Lost Word is another potent symbol of the Master Mason Degree, and it, too, has its background history among many peoples of antiquity. The ancient Hebrews, in particular, attached great importance to a missing word of Ineffable Power . . . the sacred name of Deity. The fact that it became lost arose through the awe they felt and the fear they had of pronouncing the Holy Name except in prayer. This custom became even more strict, and they restricted its use entirely to the priesthood. Finally they made the use of the name of Deity the sole privilege of the high priest, and even he could pronounce it only on the Day of Atonement, when alone within the sanctum sanctorum, or Holy of Holies. Eventually the name's pronunciation was forgotten by all but the succession of high priests. Some untimely accident may have taken the life of the last such to receive it before he could communicate the word to another, and thus it passed entirely from the knowledge of the Hebrew people. To us the Lost Word is but another term for the all embracing Truth that is God, in which man "lives, moves, and has his being." The Truth, too, about man and his relation, both to God and to his brother man; the Truth, in the finding of which discord of every name and nature shall disappear, and man shall be found in God's image and likeness. Though never in this life may we behold this Truth in its infinite perfection, our tireless search may from time to time be rewarded by a fleeting glimpse, as when a mist momentarily swirls away, strengthening and sustaining us as we strive toward the erection of that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, which some day we shall surely achieve. It is well that in Masonry, as in life, the Word is not yet found, our vision not yet perfect: the goal is yet to be attained. 'Twould not be well were all within our easy grasp.

Space here will not permit examining each of the many symbols in the Master Mason Degree. Reference to Mackey's Encyclopedia will reveal the meanings of the trowel, the pot of incense, the beehive, the Book of Constitutions guarded by the Tyler's sword, the sword pointing to the naked heart, the anchor and the ark, the forty-seventh problem of Euclid, the hourglass, the scythe, the setting maul, spade and coffin, and, especially the sprig of acacia. The moments you spend in contemplation of these inspiring symbols will reward you richly by a deeper and better understanding of your relationship to God and your fellow man. This degree presents you, in addition to the working tools you already possess, with the Trowel. With it you were taught to spread the cement of brotherly, love and affection.

We promised you that a further significance of the cable tow would be revealed to you. In your obligation as a Master Mason, you will remember, you promised to do certain things, "if within the length of my cable tow." This has been interpreted to mean, "if, under the existing circumstances, they lie within my highest sense of personal responsibility." Illness, for example, or absence from the city, might preclude your obedience.

Your Obligations and Duties

Now that you are a Master Mason you have greater rights and privileges, and also greater responsibilities.

A Mason is obliged to abide by the Constitution, laws, and edicts of the Grand Lodge of his jurisdiction, and by the bylaws of his particular Lodge. Also he must maintain and support the Landmarks and "ancient usages and customs of the Fraternity." A Mason is subject to the laws of the jurisdiction in which he may be at the moment, and also to the laws of his home jurisdiction. For instance, a Minnesota Mason who commits a Masonic offense while in California may be held responsible by either or both jurisdictions.

A Masonic offense is defined as, "Any act unbecoming a good man and true." Upon being brought to trial and found guilty, the offender may be punished in any one of four ways: by reprimand; by definite suspension; by indefinite suspension; or by expulsion, which constitutes "Masonic Death." One so convicted has the right of appeal to the Grand Lodge, whose decision in all cases is final.

Among your duties as a Master Mason are strict compliance with your obligation; loyalty to your Lodge and the Fraternity; paying your dues promptly; obedience to the laws, written and unwritten, of Freemasonry, and always to maintain your affiliation with a lodge – that is, to remain a member in good standing.

Your Rights and Privileges

Among your many rights and privileges are these: the privilege of visiting other lodges; the privilege of being vouched for; the right to ask for Masonic relief; the privilege of demitting and affiliating with a different Lodge; the right to trial by your peers should you transgress the laws of Masonry; the right of appeal if found guilty of Masonic misconduct; the right of Masonic burial; the right to appear in public Masonic processions; the right to join in the discussions in your Lodge, to vote, and to hold office; the right and privilege of giving Masonic service; the right to be taught all that Masonry includes, and to enjoy all the privileges it offers to the spirit, the mind, and the heart.

It is also your privilege to recommend a man for Masonry, but once more you are cautioned not to recommend him unless you are satisfied that he will conform to the principles of our Fraternity and be a credit to the Craft.

A Mason's Responsibilities

The most valuable contribution of Freemasonry to the world is to be found in the lives of its individual members. If Masonic ideals are eventually to reach the legislative halls of our country, the houses of commerce and trade, and the shops of industry, they must be carried there by individual Masons; and whatever good Masonry may accomplish in the world will be the sum of the worth of its individual members. Look not at a brother's failure to live up to our high ideals – *look well to thyself!*

True Faithfulness

A Mason has carried out his responsibilities of citizenship when he has kept faith with

his fellow men, with himself, and with his God; in his hand a sword for destroying evil; in his heart the gladness of song; in his mind the purest and noblest thoughts that warm the breast and elevate the soul. When he has shown the world that he is a man of honor and reputation, preferring his duty and the dignity and honor of his country to any degree of popularity and personal advantage. When, by his exemplary character, both in public and private life, he has convinced mankind of the goodness of our gentle Craft.

The Brother who carries his Masonry into the outer world and expresses its tenets in his daily life, is the man who will be most useful in promoting effectively the great ideals we cherish.

Daily Living

Every man is designed by Providence to promote the good of others, not within the narrow confines of a restricted policy, but in the broadest sense of charitable consideration for the common good of humanity – and every Freemason should feel his sense of personal responsibility. We live in a wonderful country, with unlimited possibilities, and there is for each of us more to do than simply to live. We must study and work, not for ourselves alone, but for others as well: having in mind the progress of our own country and the peace, prosperity and happiness of all mankind. With the atmosphere of truth and sincerity that pervades our Fraternity, Freemasonry can do much to make America a happier and better land in which to live.

Brotherly Love In Action

Freemasonry always has been actuated by a spirit of Brotherly Love. It has succored the helpless, aided the unfortunate, and given assistance of a broad and practical character to all classes and creeds. It promotes a genuine disposition of unselfishness, and elevates the standard of moral conduct by broad culture and wider mental outlook.

Community Factors

Its influence should be of inestimable value to the public life of the State, and it should be the highest aim of a Masonic Lodge to so develop men that they may go out into the community and become a living force in the active arena of public life. The field is so wide that every Brother can find something useful to do. There should be no drones and no unemployed in the ranks of Masonry, for it comprises a body of carefully selected citizens whose individual and collective efforts should accomplish something useful in every walk of life, and for the common good.

A prudent exercise of Masonic privileges within the Lodge enables men to become more useful members of society; and the closer they get to the great public heart the better Masons they become. The wider their service to the public performed by members of each Lodge, and the closer their adherence to the tenets of the Fraternity, the more respected they will be for their unselfish devotion to humanity, both among members of the Craft and by their fellow citizens.

High Idealism

Since loyalty to the State means loyalty to the whole body of society, this means no mere lip service. It implies real help in the efforts of the State to improve the life of every citizen. And that life is best improved not merely by material gain, but by the maintenance and spread of high ideals, such as the better understanding and safeguarding of liberty and justice (neither of which can exist without laws), and of one's duty to his neighbor where the law does not compel. No countenance should be given to any public or private act which, however remotely, may affect injuriously the peace or good order of society.

Self Improvement

Seek to improve every intellectual gift of nature – however richly nature may have endowed you—with every attention diligence can bestow, and every resource that art can suggest. Keep your mental and bodily powers up to the highest possible standard, conserve your energies, guard your health, and devote yourself to such pursuits as will enable you to be useful to your fellow citizens and a real help in the State in which you live.

Alertness

There are dangerous ideologies in our midst – liberty and freedom always have had their enemies – and adversaries appear in various forms and under various names, sometimes even in the name of that liberty which they seek to destroy. A wise and prudent Mason should weigh well every proposition made, and with calm and serene judgment counteract and oppose every effort that has for its ultimate object the overthrow of that which we labor to preserve.

True Citizenship

There is no middle course. We cannot be sincere Masons unless we are true to the government and the Constitution. Law and order must be our watch-words. We should stand like a stone wall for our established customs and institutions, and maintain the well tried system of government which has been handed down to us by our forefathers and which is founded upon the eternal principles of right and justice. At the same time, we should conform only to that which *is good and sound*. We should not hesitate to express our convictions.

If we are to keep the privileges of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, we must accept the responsibility of supporting them by our daily deeds.

A True Mason

Joseph Fort Newton ends his great book, *The Builders*, with a paragraph that has gone around the world. It has been translated into many tongues: "When is a man a Mason? When he can look out over the rivers, the hills, and the far horizon with a profound sense of his own littleness in the vast scheme of things, and yet have faith, hope, and courage

which is the root of every virtue. When he knows that down in his heart every man is as noble, as vile, as divine, as diabolic, and as lonely as himself, and seeks to know, to forgive, and to love his fellowman. When he knows how to sympathize with men in their sorrows, yea, even in their sins knowing that each man fights a hard fight against many odds. When he has learned how to make friends and to keep them, and above all how to keep friends with himself. When he loves flowers, can hunt the birds without a gun, and feels the thrill of an old forgotten joy when he hears the laugh of a little child. When he can be happy and high-minded amid the meaner drudgeries of life. When star-crowned trees, and the glint of sunlight on flowing waters, subdue him like the thought of one much loved and long dead. When no voice of distress reaches his ears in vain, and no hand seeks his aid without response. When he finds good in every faith that helps any man to lay hold of divine things and sees majestic meanings in life whatever the name of that faith may be. When he can look into a wayside puddle and see something beyond mud, and into the face of the most forlorn fellow mortal and see something beyond sin. When he knows how to pray, how to live, how to hope. When he has kept faith with himself, with his fellow man, with his God; in his hand a sword for evil, in his heart a bit of song – glad to live, but not afraid to die! Such a man has found the only real secret of Masonry, and the one which it is trying to give to all the world."

Masonic Books

It is urged that you learn more through study about this great Fraternity of which you are now a member. Literally thousands of books are available on Masonry. The following short list is given here as recommended reading for the new Master Mason:

A Pilgrim's Path by John Robinson
The Builders by Joseph Fort Newton.
Introduction to Freemasonry by H. L. Haywood.
Masonic Symbolism by Charles Clyde Hunt.
The Newly Made Mason by H. L. Haywood.
More About Masonry by H. L. Haywood.
A History of Freemasonry by H. L. Haywood and James E. Craig.
Symbolical Masonry by H. L. Haywood.
Short Talks on Masonry by Joseph Fort Newton.
The Old Guilds of England by Frederick Armitage.
The Religion of Masonry by Joseph Fort Newton.
Freemasonry and Roman Catholicism by H. L. Haywood.
Famous Masons and Masonic Presidents by H. L. Haywood.
Famous Masons by James Alexander Bell.
Old Tiler Talks by Carl H. Claudy.
The Great Teachings of Masonry by H. L. Haywood.
Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies by J. Hugo Tatsch.
Symbolism of the Three Degrees by Oliver Day Street.
The Beginnings of Freemasonry in America by Melvin M. Johnson.
The Concise History of Freemasonry by Robert Freke Gould.
Lectures on Masonic Jurisprudence by Roscoe Pound.
Well-Springs of American Freemasonry by H. L. Haywood.

George Washington, Freemason by Wm. Moseley Brown.
The Freemasons by Eugene Lennhoff.
Freemasonry and the American Indian by William R. Denslow.
Facts for Freemasons by Harold Van Buren Voorhis.

The Grand Lodge of Minnesota maintains a Masonic Book Store at its office, located at 200 East Plato Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55107. Some of these titles, The Minnesota Masonic Code, and many other titles are available for purchase there during office hours or during special events. Phone 651-222-6051 or 800-245-6050 for additional information.

Many of these may be borrowed from the Iowa Masonic Library, Box 279, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 52406-0279, without charge, save for the return postage. This is one of the great Masonic libraries of the world. Phone 319-365-1438 for additional information.

Short Talk Bulletins on Masonic subjects are published monthly by the Masonic Service Association, 8120 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910-4785. They are always interesting, they cost only \$6.00 a year, and we recommend them highly. Phone 301-588-4010 for additional information.