

## YOUR EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE

It is with extreme pleasure that your Grand Council's Educational Committee takes pride in providing on this Website, articles of educational value for Masons of our generation, especially Royal & Select Masters of the Cryptic Rite. We hold close to our Cryptic Rite the understanding of the "Circle of Perfection." The knowledge that comes to us as we proceed from the degrees of the Symbolic Lodge through the Capitular degrees and finally to the Cryptic degrees, we say, completes our understanding of what it means to be a Master Mason. But, our educational journey does not stop when we have completed all the degrees in the Symbolic Lodge, in the Royal Arch Chapter or in our Cryptic Councils.

Therefore, our reason, to provide educational articles in this medium. It is our hope to continue to stimulate Masonic knowledge or at least to re-activate the Masonic spirit and wealth in each of us for the good of the craft. Our first article that appears below starts us all on that journey. A journey we hope which will provide growth for all of our lives.

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### **"How Masonry Talks To Men"**

Why do men join fraternities? Why did you become a Mason when you did? When you petitioned a Lodge for membership you gave certain reasons why you wished to join the Order, but the philosopher, the student of human motives and thought, looks for the deeper and more fundamental reasons than this. Reasons that the petitioner himself probably is not aware of, but that somewhere down in his unconscious self is playing a very big part in his decision.

You and I are familiar with certain superficial motives. We know of men who went into a Lodge because their fathers or brothers were members. Or because in their community it was the proper thing to do. Or they liked the kind of men who they observed, became Masons. Or they thought it was a way to prestige and status. Or out of curiosity. Any number of such impulses may be observed. But the Fraternity was not called into existence by any such set of reasons, nor does it continue to exist on them. You and I joined out of deep-lying motives that are inherent in the very relations, which we hold to the world about us.

Perhaps we can address this issue better by going back a moment to the time when men first began to form themselves into groups around esoteric bodies of work. In those early times certain very definite motives led men thus to unite themselves in secret associations, and I think we shall find those motives to lie in a desire for self-protection and security. Society as usually organized afforded little enough security to men and women; the common people were pretty much at the whim of whatever ruler might be in power. Religious cults whose beliefs and practices might be at variance with the existing order were usually obliged to meet in secret places, and naturally established certain signs and words that would enable one member to know another in the darkness as well as in the light.

With this picture in mind it is but a logical step to the association in secret groups of workers in a given craft. The prosperity and security of these men and their families would depend upon keeping secret certain mysteries of their trade, while their ability to exert influences would be enhanced by virtue of their collective strength. Very much like our present day workers' unions.

This was undoubtedly the dominant motive in the establishment of early operative Masonic Lodges. In their sole possession of the secrets of geometry lay the key to the unusual position of eminence which operative Master Masons held during long centuries. The wages of a Master Mason was a very living thing to these early brethren, and in this matter of earning power they were in a highly favored situation. So long as they could keep their secrets inviolate they would retain this position – and they did retain it, until the Renaissance in Europe made the knowledge of higher mathematics and the like public property.

Security in that ancient sense does not figure today in a man's motive for becoming a Mason. The phrase, "Master's wages," has, however, taken on new and more beautiful meanings: every man who has been vitally touched by Masonry must feel that within the walls of the Lodge he has been the beneficiary of certain very definite spiritual values that depend for their effectiveness to no very small degree upon the secrecy of the work. Every such man senses that to remove the Tiler from the door would be to destroy the power of the Lodge to exert its beneficent influences.

And while the old values of security and perpetuation of craft secrets have been sublimated in new spiritual and humanitarian ideals, the old symbols have remained and taken on new beauty. The entire list of Craft symbols have come down to us from time immemorial, yet for the greater part they have been divested of their original crude allusions and become symbols by which we express our aspirations and longings toward those ideals that are bound up in the Mason's credo.

It is unfortunate that the whole question of symbols and symbolization is not better understood by members of the Craft. We are too prone to take the symbols of our ritual as a matter of course, as uniting with the beautiful language of the ritual to form a solemn and impressive body of work that holds us under its spell **as we observe its** rendering in Lodge, Chapter, or Council, and stopping there.

The fact of the matter is that symbols are involved in practically every act of our daily lives, especially in our intercourse with others. We are the inheritors of a wealth of imagery that takes the hard edge off ways of living that otherwise might be very deadly in their monotony. No Mason can look upon one of our most impressive symbols, the circle, without a feeling of gratitude to that ancient who, pondering upon the eternity of existence, turned in his mind to the circle, which he had observed had neither beginning nor end, and so enriched our Masonic thought with a new and precious symbol. The process of symbolizing our every-day experiences still persists, even though the world has left, we like to think, its childhood.

It is in our every-day language that symbolism comes closet to home. Often in the history of word symbols, the original idea becomes transformed and enriched with the passage of time. An interesting example of this is the English word "fraternity."

In “fraternity” perhaps is to be found the word symbol, which to the Mason embraces the highest dreams and ideals of the Craft. Among the earliest people the word is merely a symbol for the brother-to-brother relation. With the passing of time, the symbolism of the word became enriched as this beautiful relation came to be idealized into a relation that should and could exist between members and friends. During the middle ages Europe the title “Fra,” meant one who lived in a community, the members of which were bound together by the bonds of fraternal interests and devotion.

Thus we may go through the entire literature and ritual of the Craft and at every turn find ourselves confronted with an amazing wealth of symbolical meaning. Not a word but, to the one who seeks, offers a wealth of beauty and wisdom. Every man, especially the Mason, should discover as early as possible that he is using symbols every time he speaks – for then he will be more careful of the words which he selects, choosing those which are richest in meaning and color and feeling, and beautiful as well.

And becoming aware of this fact, one will feel more at home with the other symbols that play so important a part in his life. The symbols which he sees operating in the ritual at Lodge, Chapter or Council will come a little closer home to him. They will partake less of the nature of something dragged in, mere ornaments to the work, but will strike him as something that is vital and full of significance as the words which he uses in order to get through the day’s work.

In setting out, I asked the question, “Why do men join Fraternities?” I am not certain that right here in this very business of symbols could not be found the ultimate reason. If in contemplating such a step I have no reason to seek physical security, at least I am certain that here, in the body of the Lodge of my “brothers”, or in the Chapter or Council, of my “companions,” I will be most certain to find upheld and safeguarded against loss, those principles of Fraternalism, mutual helpfulness, community of interests and ideals. Here I can talk and be sure of my symbolisms being understood; I will listen, understanding the symbolism that is moving my brother or companion to express himself to me.

This is precisely what should appear in our Lodges, Chapters and Councils when the entire body of symbols, the purely ritualistic and the words which we use when speaking to our fellow man, makes us truly “Fras.”

In closing, I share with you this piece of poetry, by George B. Staff to highlight the thought behind this article:

**“Within the Lodge”**

*To serve for the joy of the serving,  
To aid every brother in need;  
To strike at the wrong without swerving,  
And fight for the truth of its creed.  
To counsel of others give heed;  
While striving, through stumbling and  
groping,  
To translate its thought into deed!*

*To seek for the truth that in giving,  
The heart is made richer four-fold;  
That life is made fairer in living  
The lessons its members are told.  
To look on each one as a brother;  
Be true to each trust we may hold;  
Here we find in the love of each other  
Rewards that are rarer than gold!*

**Respectfully submitted,  
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Chairman of the Educational Committee**

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