
WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

By Wor. Brother J. R. Stewart

“Know Thyself” was the injunction inscribed over the Portals of Ancient Temples of Initiation. Freemasonry is designed to teach such self-knowledge.

Does it not proclaim the fact that there is a higher path of life than that we normally tread, and when we tire of the everyday world, and its pleasures, we are forced to turn back upon ourselves to seek the door of a world within? Is not the primary aim and intent of Freemasonry to chart the way and lead us to light?

Our degrees have been framed with the express purpose to lead us into that higher path where the secrets and mysteries of our being are to be learned. However, no matter how well the various degrees and our other ceremonial work is conducted they do not give us the complete answer. Anyone may understand the simpler meaning of our symbols, but do they understand the inward, intellectual and spiritual side of our ceremonials and symbols. In the final analysis, no Brother can communicate the deeper and vital things to another. Each must discover and learn for himself. As in every other worth-while activity, the individual benefits in exactly the same ratio as the effort expended.

In the Entered Apprentice Degree, we are told that the admission of a Candidate is “an emblematical representation of the entrance of all men upon the mortal existence.” The Candidate is repeating symbolically the incident of his entrance into the world, which he entered as a blind and helpless babe, and through which, with many trials and tribulations, he may at length arrive, purified and chastened by experience to larger life in the eternal East. This degree is essentially the degree of self-discipline and preparation.

After the period of preparation, comes reflection, contemplation and enlightenment, the subjects of the Fellow Craft Degree.

“By that last and greatest trial” exemplified in the Master Mason Degree, the Candidate has symbolically passed through a striking change—he has been re-born, or a regeneration of his whole nature has taken place.

In brief, the lessons from the three degrees show clearly that the Candidate is being led from his old to a new quality of life. He enters our portals as a natural man, and by means of self-discipline and the lessons learned, becomes a regenerated man.

The real purpose of Freemasonry, apart from the social and charitable objects, is the development of our spiritual natures so that we may in some degree attain to those high ideals set out for our guidance in the V.S.L.

It must be evident to every Brother that progress can only be secured by research and study.

The true Freemason is an earnest seeker after knowledge, and knows full well that such knowledge may only be gained by contemplation and study. The true Freemason will co-operate with his Brethren to the end that Masonic knowledge may be diffused over a greater area and the Craft continue its march onward and upward.
