



A Further Look at Freemasonry

A Publication of The United Grand Lodge of Queensland

AN INTRODUCTION TO FREEMASONRY

You have decided to join Freemasonry and we extend a welcome to you. You come perhaps with expectations; with questions; and with a need to fully comprehend the concept of Freemasonry.

This booklet follows on from *A Basic Look at Freemasonry* and is part of a series that will be given to you as you progress through Freemasonry.

Please read these booklets as you receive them. Their contents have been composed so that you may obtain an understanding of Freemasonry. If you have any queries, your sponsors or any member of the Lodge, are the best people to contact. It is hoped that your membership of Freemasonry will be long, useful to yourself and the Order, and personally enjoyable.

Freemasonry is many things to many people. Some Freemasons spend many years studying different aspects of Freemasonry: others obtain satisfaction from the more social side of the organisation, whilst others find their niche in the administrative side of the Fraternity. None make a member more worthy than any other.

As you have expressed a desire to join Freemasonry, you must have some notion of its aims and objectives. Your proposers have perhaps told you something about the principles and ideals of Freemasonry. The following elaborates some further aspects of Freemasonry which make it different from other organisations. The Lodge which you are joining is part of a world-wide organisation, and in nearly every city and major town of this state, you will find one or more Masonic Lodges.

Each state/country has its own Grand Lodge, with subordinate Lodges, and there are over 100 such Grand Lodges throughout the world. When you become a member of the craft of Freemasonry, it will be your privilege to visit any one of them.

The application form has now been completed and along with your references will be submitted to the Lodge via a Committee of Enquiry. A ballot for your admission will be conducted by the members of the Lodge in the near future.

Following a favourable ballot (and therefore your acceptance by the Lodge members), a meeting date of the Lodge will be selected, at which you will be received into membership, in an impressive and dignified ceremony, which is called **Initiation**.

THE ORIGINS OF FREEMASONRY

OPERATIVE MASONRY:

One of the oldest Masonic documents is the Regius Manuscript written about 1390 A.D. At this time all masons were operatives, that is, they were workers engaged in constructing important buildings in stone. There were many kinds of mason such as **hewers**, **layers**, and **setters**, but evidence indicates that those who were called **Freemasons** were builders of a superior type.

It was these freemasons who, under the control of a **Master Mason**, supervised and erected the great cathedrals and other marvellous structures in the Gothic style of architecture throughout Europe and Britain in the Middle Ages. The operative masons not only cut and dressed the stones in the quarries, but constructed the walls, set the pillars and arches, laid the floors, and carved the decoration. They were also responsible for

the beautiful artwork and the creation of the sculptures. The Freemasons were the artists of their age, and were organisers of labour on a grand scale. Many of their great Gothic works survive to this day.

The hierarchy of the trades or crafts was very strict. In medieval times, masonry was one of the highest skilled trades available. Its training took many years to complete, and its skills were jealously guarded by its members. To join this exclusive band, a boy, sound in body, keen of mind, and of good reputation, was accepted at an age between ten and fifteen years and apprenticed to a skilled mason for a period of seven to ten years.

The mason taught the apprentice both the theory and practice of the craft. After the boy had served a probationary period, and shown evidence of his fitness, his name was entered into the books of the Lodge, after which he was generally called an **Entered Apprentice**. He received a thorough grounding in moral duties, in the practice of charity, and in his duties toward his master and his fellow employees.

At the end of his apprenticeship, the youth was required to submit to an exacting test of his proficiency, including his work skills and his responsibilities.

His conduct was reported upon, and he was finally set to prove his skills by producing a special example, sometimes called a **master's piece**.

Having successfully passed these tests, he then stood as an equal in duties, rights and privileges with the other masons, and was called a **Fellow of the Craft**. To all intents, he had now mastered the theories, practices, strict rules of conduct, and the secrets and tools of his trade.

When a number of Freemasons worked together on one of the great buildings of the Middle Ages they organised themselves into a **Lodge** to enable them to properly control and organise the work to be accomplished. This lodge was governed by an expert mason, called the **Master Mason**. On larger structures, he would be assisted by others, called **Wardens**.

The lodge would have its equivalent of a secretary to keep the books, and a treasurer to keep and disburse the lodge funds. It also had a charity chest, containing monies contributed by the masons to dispense relief to members in sickness, accident or distress, and to assist widows and orphans of deceased members suffering difficult times. For this reason in Speculative Masonry, the treasurer is ranked above the secretary.

NON-OPERATIVE OR ACCEPTED & SPECULATIVE MASON

The operative period of the masonic fraternity flourished from the 11th to the 15th centuries. The 16th century saw the rise of the Reformation in Europe, and the Gothic style of architecture became less prevalent. Social conditions and laws altered considerably.

These factors, coupled with the Great Plague, and the Great Fire of London, and the introduction of the use of bricks instead of stone, brought about a decline in operative masonry. This decline was so great, that by the late 17th century, freemasons became so few, that only a small number of lodges remained. During this period, referred to by Masonic historians as the Transition Period, a number of important citizens commenced to take an active interest in the ancient customs of the craft, and, although not operative masons, were admitted into lodges. Because of these circumstances, they were called **accepted** masons. At first, the number of accepted Masons was small. However, by the early part of the 18th century, they outnumbered the operatives, and exerted a great deal of influence on the expansion of Freemasonry, and on its principles of fellowship, and charitable pursuits.

THE GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND:

On St. John the Baptist's Day, 24 June, 1717, four old Lodges in London and Westminster met, and organised a governing body, called a Grand Lodge. This first Grand Lodge gradually took control of all the Lodges meeting in England.

The word **speculative** now became linked with the word **accepted; speculative** meaning masonry in a symbolic sense. The two original grades of masonry were organised into three degrees:

- the Entered Apprentice;
- the Fellow Craft; and
- the Master Mason.

In 1723, the Grand Lodge approved a constitution, and was soon chartering Lodges, not only in England, but in the expanding colonies, and other overseas countries.

GROWTH BEYOND ENGLAND:

By the middle of the 18th century, Grand Lodges had been formed in Ireland, Scotland, and on the continents of Europe and America. Early in the 19th century there were, in New South Wales, Lodges operating under the authority of the Grand Lodges of England, Ireland and Scotland. The first Lodge in Queensland was North Australian Lodge. It was chartered by the Grand Lodge of England in 1859 - the year of separation of the colony from New South Wales. The United Grand Lodge of Queensland (UGLQ) was formed in 1921.

THE LANDMARKS

In early times, prior to the development of modern surveying techniques, and the recording of the position, shape and size, of land areas, it was very difficult to establish the permanent boundaries of a farm, estate, or other piece of land. Almost the only known way was to fix upon some prominent feature, such as a hill, a stream, a rock, or even a tree, and draw a line from it to some other feature, and thus establish the limits beyond which a man's property could not, or should not, go. Later, more or less permanent stone markers, with identifying marks cut into them, were set up. Their self-explanatory name was **Landmarks**.

Throughout history, we see evidence that the destruction or removal of landmarks, was considered a serious offence, as without them, there was no means of measuring the encroachment by one person on the property of another.

In the Craft of Freemasonry there are certain principles, practices, traditions, usages and laws, which are considered to be significant to the essential identity and nature of Freemasonry.

These things, which are spoken of as the **Ancient Charges, Regulations and Landmarks of the Order** cannot be changed by any Freemason, Lodge, or even a Grand Lodge.

Although the Ancient Charges and Regulations are finite and are set out in the Book of Constitutions, it would be well nigh impossible to accurately define those things that constitute the **Ancient Landmarks**. However, the following are some examples of the things Freemasons see them to be - the things which make Freemasonry different from other organisations.

BELIEF IN A SUPREME BEING:

An important feature of a Lodge Room, is a pedestal upon which is an open Volume of the Sacred Law. As Freemasonry holds the concept of the **Brotherhood of Man, under the Fatherhood of God**, belief in a Supreme Being is a fundamental requirement of Freemasonry. If this spiritual belief were removed, Freemasonry would degenerate, and cease to exist. **A Belief in a Supreme Being** is therefore accepted as being a Landmark in Freemasonry.

RESPECT FOR THE CIVIL LAW:

Freemasons are good citizens, and may not engage in riots or rebellion. Political discussion is not allowed in Masonic assemblies, in order to avoid controversy, and to preserve harmony.

SECRECY:

Freemasonry is not a secret society, our Lodges are well signposted in our communities and our members proudly wear the square and compasses logo. However, there are certain confidences revealed in our ceremonies which are considered private to ourselves, and which we do not share with the outside world. These confidences relate only to certain parts of our ceremonial, and the means of recognition between Masons. These confidences stem from the operative mason's desire, in times past, to protect their reputation for sound work and good conduct, thus ensuring that their work continued at the highest standard.

SOUND QUALIFICATIONS:

Each candidate for Freemasonry must be well recommended, of good character, and of mature age. These qualifications are required so that we may be assured that a candidate will be capable of living a Masonic life, in all its aspects.

THE TENETS OF FREEMASONRY

The principal tenets of Freemasonry are Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love.

FRIENDSHIP:

Man is a social creature and, usually, cannot find happiness by himself. So he seeks the companionship of others of like mind. The fact that you have been accepted by the Lodge, is evidence that the Lodge believes that the friendship of Freemasonry will appeal to you, and that your friendly spirit will be acceptable to it. Sincerity, loyalty, tolerance, sympathy, interest, devotedness, and unselfishness, are some of the ingredients of true friendship.

MORALITY:

Good morals are the accepted standards of behaviour, by which any action is measured. There is no such thing as a Masonic morality. This would indicate a separate or exclusive code of conduct practised by Masons alone. Our standards are those contained in the Volume of the Sacred Law. Adherence to those goodly principles is strongly developed amongst Freemasons.

BROTHERLY LOVE:

This tenet can be described as impartial friendship, and shows mutual respect and understanding between men.

Each respects the other as a friend, a companion, an associate, and a neighbour. To work with that person is one of life's pleasures. Freemasonry builds on brotherhood, and provides opportunities to share true fellowship. It encourages us to practise brotherly love, and to make it part of our existence.

These then, are the principal tenets or foundations of Freemasonry. As you progress through Freemasonry, and consider the teachings of the Craft, you will find that the truths on which it is founded, are not only sound, but eternal.

REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The members of the Lodge, having accepted you at ballot, show that they consider you possess the qualifications required to become a Freemason. Unless by your own actions you prove that you are no longer so qualified, your fitness to become and remain a Freemason cannot be challenged.

A petitioner must come to the decision of seeking to become a Freemason of his own free will. No Freemason should apply pressure upon any man to petition for membership. A petitioner must come

uninfluenced by mercenary motives. This means, that he should not expect, that in the Fraternity, he will find business, professional or financial gain for himself, nor will any Brother seek such favours from him.

He must be a male of mature age. In Queensland this is 18 years.

A petitioner should be able to fully understand the teachings of Freemasonry, and to meet the demands placed on him by membership. He should be a good and peaceable citizen, one who obeys the law, and does not act against the standards of public order.

A Freemason must be a good and true man and strictly obey the moral law.

It is required that a candidate states openly, that he believes in a Supreme Being and that he uses the Volume of the Sacred Law as a rule and guide to his faith.

A member is required to pay his Lodge subscriptions regularly, and be prepared to adhere to the rules of both his own Lodge, and the Grand Lodge.

These qualifications define a prospective Freemason as a man whose mental and physical attributes enable him to satisfy the demands of membership of the Fraternity. He should be mentally alert, and have a sense of responsibility and discretion. He must be of sound character and reputation, and possess the qualities of good citizenship. He must be free of adverse external influences, and be devoted to the ideals of Brotherhood.

FREEMASONRY'S ATTITUDE TO RELIGION AND POLITICS

Freemasonry is an ancient and honourable institution, dedicated to playing its part in maintaining acceptable standards in the community. It is based on the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man. Freemasonry is not, nor has ever been, a religion. The particular religion of a member is of no concern to Freemasonry, but at every Lodge meeting, an open Volume of the Sacred Law is displayed.

In some countries, India and Malaysia for example, where there are Masons of several different religions in a Lodge, many Volumes of the Sacred law are so displayed.

Although in Australia, only an open Holy Bible is normally displayed, a candidate who is not a Christian may be obligated on the sacred volume of his own religion.

The choice of a political party, for which a member votes, is left entirely to him, and no discussion on this matter is allowed in the Lodge room.

One of the great ideals of Freemasonry is tolerance. The Fraternity draws men from all walks of life, having a great variety of racial characteristics, and religions and political opinions. Within its ranks, they unite in a spirit of friendship, harmony and goodwill. To maintain this harmony it is essential that the passions and prejudices, which sometimes divide men, must be kept in check within the Masonic environment. Nothing divides and alienates men more than religious and political debate.

CONCLUSION

If you cannot accept the principles outlined in this booklet, you would be well advised to withdraw your acceptance of nomination now, rather than disappoint us, and far more importantly yourself by continuing with something to which you cannot, in conscience, make a commitment.



FREEMASONS
Queensland

Issued 2007