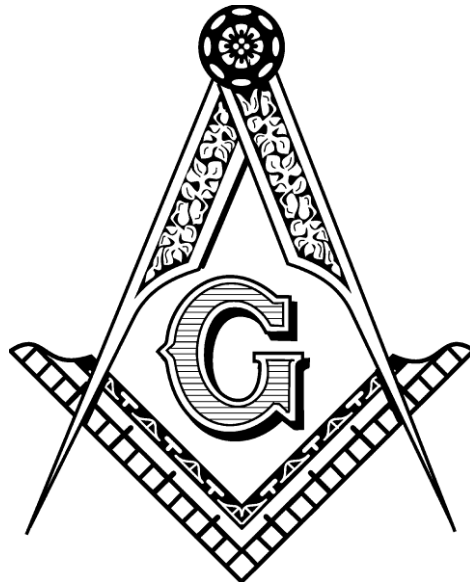


# Booklet No. 1

## Orientation -- Pre-Initiation

To be used by the lodges in advancing the  
Lodge System of Masonic Education



Prepared for the  
Grand Lodge of Mississippi F & AM  
By the  
Committee on Masonic Education  
For the use of the Subordinate Lodges  
and their Members

## **FOREWORD**

This is the first of four booklets to be used by the Lodge Committee for Candidate instruction in The Lodge System of Masonic Education. The Educational Committee of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi has updated its findings in a method that is without doubt the best that has yet been devised.

This is the Lodge System of Masonic Education. It is simple, practicable, and employed under the immediate authority and direction of the local Lodge. As presented, it works at the point where Masonic Education is most needed and best appreciated; namely, with the Candidate himself, and the results, if the method is used consistently, will almost automatically guarantee themselves. We recommend it unreservedly to every local Lodge.

## **A SHORT HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY**

### **Subject No. 1 — Meeting No. 1**

My Friend: In the book of human history Freemasonry has a chapter of its own. When you become a member of a Symbolic Lodge, it is a chapter you will wish to read, as much for its own fascination as for the light it will throw upon your path as a Mason. Tonight I shall tell you a little bit about that story; not for the sake of history as such, but to enable you to understand better the three steps of Initiation which lie before you.

Men in all ages and in all lands have had secret societies; have made use of ceremonies of Initiation, employed symbols, emblems and means of recognition.

When Freemasonry came into existence, nobody knows how many centuries ago, it inherited much from such societies, certain of their rites and a number of their symbols. Along your path of Initiation you will encounter them; their unspeakable antiquity makes them more holy in our eyes.

Among the oldest of existing written records of our Craft is a manuscript written by some unknown Brother in England, about 1390. That was over six centuries ago! But the document itself shows that even then Freemasonry was already very old.

At the time this document was written all Freemasons were Operatives; that is, they were workers engaged on buildings. Such a builder was then called a “Mason.” There were many kinds of Mason, but the evidence indicates that those who were called “Freemasons” were those builders of a superior type who designed, supervised, and erected the great cathedrals and other marvelous structures in the Gothic style of architecture.

Those Operative Freemasons, as I have just said, designed such buildings as a whole and in each detail; dressed the stone from the quarries; laid it in the walls; set up arches, pillars, columns, and buttresses; laid the floor and built the roof; carved out the decorations, made and fitted the stained-glass windows into place, and produced the sculptures.

Their work was difficult to execute; called for a high degree of skill and genius; and required of them a great deal of knowledge of mechanics and geometry as well as of Stone Masonry. They were the great artists of the Middle Ages.

Training men for such work called for a long period of apprenticeship. Boys sound in body, keen in mind, and of good reputation were taken at the age of ten or twelve and apprenticed to some Master Mason for a number of years, usually seven; this Master Mason was a boy's father in Freemasonry, his tutor, his mentor, his guide; who taught him both the theories and the practices of the Craft.

At the end of his apprenticeship the youth was required to submit to exacting tests of his proficiency before being accepted into full membership in the Craft.

Where a number of Freemasons worked together on a building over a period of years they organized a Lodge, which might meet in a temporary building or in one of the rooms of the incomplete structure.

Such a Lodge was governed by a Worshipful Master assisted by Wardens; it had a Secretary to keep its books, a Treasurer to keep and to dispense relief to the members in accident, sickness, or distress and to windows and orphans of Master Masons; it met in regular Communication, divided its members into grades, admitted its members by Initiation — in short, it was in all essentials what a Masonic Lodge is today.

The young beginner in learning the builder's art was called an Apprentice; after he had served for a sufficient time to give evidence of his fitness, his name was entered in the Lodge's books, after which he was called an Entered Apprentice. At the end of his seven or so years of apprenticeship he was called into open Lodge, his conduct was reported, and he was then set to prove his skill by producing what was called a "Master's piece."

Until this time he had been on probation. If he passed his test satisfactorily he was made a full member of the Craft. In the sense that he now stood on an equality of duty, rights, and privileges with all others he was called Fellow of the Craft — the word "fellow" meaning full membership; in the sense that he had now mastered the theories, rules, secrets, and tools of his trade he was called a Master Mason.

Completing their work in one community these Freemasons would move to another, setting up their Lodges wherever they met. Other types of Masons were compelled by law to live and work in the same community year in and year out, and under local restrictions. A number of our historians believe it may have been because they were free of such restriction that the Gothic builders were called "Freemasons."

Such was the Fraternity in its Operative period; and as such it flourished for generations. Then came a great change in its fortunes. Euclid's geometry was rediscovered and

published, thereby giving to the public many of the Mason's old trade secrets. The Reformation came and with it the Gothic style of architecture began to die out. Social conditions underwent a revolution, laws were changed; all these, and other factors, brought about a decline in the Craft. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Freemasons became so few in number that only a small Lodge here and there clung to a precarious existence.

Owing to these conditions the Freemasons, to recruit their numbers, adopted a new practice; they began to accept non-Operative members. In the old days only an Operative Mason in the literal sense could become a member; but during the two centuries I have just mentioned — our historians called them the “Transition Period” — gentlemen with no intention to become builders, and out of curiosity, for social reason, or from interest in the Craft's ancient customs, were received. And because they were thus accepted they were called “Accepted Masons.” At first there were few of these, but as time passed their number increased, until by the early part of the eighteenth century they out-numbered the Operatives in both number and influence.

As result of this the Craft took a step that was destined to revolutionize it and to set it on a new path of power and magnitude. On St. John the Baptist's Day, June 24, 1717, four or more old Lodges of London and Westminster met in London and organized a Grand Lodge, and on the same day selected as their first Grand Master, Anthony Sayer.

Within a few years of that date the Craft had transformed itself from an Operative Body into a Speculative Fraternity (by “Speculative” is meant Masonry in a moral, or symbolical sense), reorganized the old two Degrees into three Degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason; collected and collated the old Masonic manuscripts, produced the Book of Constitutions, and was chartering Speculative or Symbolic Lodges in many countries, including our own, to take care of the Fraternity's membership, which began rapidly to increase shortly after the organization of the Grand Lodge.

All this was the beginning of organized Speculative Freemasonry as we now know it.

In 1751, a second Grand Lodge was organized in England; prior to that Grand Lodges had been set up in Scotland, Ireland, and on the Continent. Early American lodges, of which the earliest known was organized at Philadelphia in 1730, were placed under the charge of Provincial Grand Lodges, which were ruled by Provincial Grand Masters appointed by Grand Lodges in England, Scotland, or Ireland.

As one of the results of the successful termination of the War of the Revolution, American Grand Lodges became sovereign and independent.

As the years passed a Grand Lodge was organized in each State, becoming sovereign as to Masonic affairs within the boundaries of that State, and entirely free from outside control or domination. Today we have in the United States fifty-two Grand Lodges which includes Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

Speculative Freemasonry did not spring full formed out of nothing in 1717, but came as a gradual development out of Operative Masonry. Through an unbroken line we can trace our lineage back to those builders of the early Middle Ages; we are Masons, too, except that where they erected buildings we try to build manhood; their tools we have transformed into emblems of moral and spiritual laws and forces; their practices and secrets we have embodied in the royal Art of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth; their Rituals; mellowed, enriched, and made more beautiful with the passing of time; we employ in the Entering, Passing, and Raising of our Candidates. All that was living and permanent in their Craft we have preserved and we use it in behalf of goodwill, kindness, charity, and Brotherhood among men. Such is our heritage, my friend, and as you enter into it you will discover it, inexhaustible in interest, life-long in appeal, a power in your life to enrich, to ennoble and to inspire.

## **THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS**

### **Subject No. 2 — Meeting No. 1**

My Friend: Before the development of modern surveying and of the system of recording the position, shape, and size of a piece of land by public authorities, how to establish the permanent boundaries of a farm, field, lot, or other parcel of ground was a difficult and often perplexing problem. Almost the only method men could devise was to fix upon some feature, such as a hill, stream, rock, or even a tree, and to draw a line from it to some other such feature, and so on, thus establishing the limits beyond which a man's property could not, or should not go. These more or less permanent markers were called Landmarks - a word which explains itself. And it is easy to understand why the destruction or removal of a Landmark was deemed so serious and offense; it meant robbing a man of his property - therefore the ancient saying, "Remove not a neighbor's Landmark." Freemasonry has honored this term as a name for one of the most important of all its basic laws, namely, that there are in the Craft certain principles, practices,

traditions, and usages of laws which cannot be changed by any Mason, local Lodge, or Grand Lodge. It is this we mean when we speak of “The Ancient Landmarks,” a phrase you will hear often during your Masonic career. Let us see if we can understand that phrase, at least in its larger meaning.

Freemasonry has an identity, a character of its own. Some things in it can be abolished, changed, or modified, without destroying that identity - that is, after the change is made Freemasonry continues to be what it was before. But there are changes which, if they were made, would destroy Freemasonry itself - that is, it would cease to have its own identity and would become something else.

Let me give you a simple illustration. Here is a glass of water. We can divide that water into smaller and smaller portions, until at last we reach the molecule, but all the time it will continue to be water; if, however, and not stopping there, we next divide the molecule we shall no longer have water but a gas, either hydrogen or oxygen. There is a point beyond which the fluid cannot be changed without losing its identity.

This is a picture of the idea of the Landmarks. They signify those things in Masonry which are essential to its identity. To do away with them is to do away with Masonry. Let us, therefore, in a rough way, define the doctrine of Landmarks as follows: “Whatever is found necessary to maintain the identity and secure the perpetuity of Freemasonry has the power of a Landmark.”

You now see why even a Grand Lodge, or the Fraternity itself as a whole, cannot change these Landmarks! If a Grand Lodge were to change them it would destroy itself because there would no longer be any Masonry left and there cannot be a Grand Lodge of Masonry if there be no Masonry.

The Ancient Landmarks are found in and based on the fundamental principles of Freemasonry, hence it is impossible to make up a list of the Landmarks, but there are a few examples at hand which will help make the meaning clear. I shall call your attention to a number of specimens of these reminding you as I do that they are specimens only and not intended to be exhaustive.

Freemasonry began six or seven hundred years ago with the Operative Masons of Europe and Britain.

Many of their arts, practices, customs, symbols, and emblems became permanently embodied in the very nature of Masonry. If all that we inherited from Operative Masonry

could be abolished, not only would it destroy our connections with our own history but at the same time would change our Fraternity out of all recognition. Here is something with the power of a Landmark.

Many things in Masonry are kept secret from the outside world, being deemed sacred to its own membership. This secrecy is not a theatrical pose to gratify a desire for mystification, but is so essential to the very nature of the Craft that we could not even conceive of Masonry without it. Gone would be the Ritual, Initiation, the Obligations, the modes of recognition, and all that home-like privacy which makes Masonic life so delightful. Secrecy therefore has the power of a Landmark.

Ever since it began Masonry has admitted adult men only to membership. A boy under age could not be held accountable to his Obligations; and if women were admitted it would call for such a recasting of our system from top to bottom that little of it would remain standing.

Each petitioner is required to possess certain qualifications, must be well recommended, of good character, free born, of mature age; if these qualifications were removed, men of every sort would flock in, men not physically, mentally, or morally capable of living the Masonic life; the result would be no Masonry to live.

But it is not sufficient for a petitioner to be well qualified in order to gain admittance to our mysteries; he must also pass through the Rites of Initiation. This also has been an integral part of our Fraternity from the very beginning, and is so vital to it that the whole system presupposes it throughout. Eliminate Initiation and it is possible that some kind of society would remain, but it would not be the society of Freemasonry.

Another equally essential factor is the secret, unanimous Ballot; since it is the principal purpose of the Craft to bring men together into brotherly relations; it is necessary that such Candidates as are admitted shall not disturb harmony among the members; the Ballot is so carefully designed to guard against this that if a single member is convinced that a given petitioner will be a disturbing influence his one vote has the power to exclude.

The Ritual embraces the Work, Lectures, and Ceremonies made use of in the teaching of the principles, morals, and purposes of Masonry. Symbols, emblems, and allegories are freely employed to emphasize and dramatize these teachings. Perhaps no other of the Craft's "permanent markers" exceeds the Ritual in the essentialness of its basic identity.



The sovereignty of Grand Lodge, the corresponding sovereignty of the local Lodge, within its own jurisdiction, and the sovereignty of the unwritten law are a similar necessity; for without such sovereignty anarchy would ensue, and the Fraternity would be battered to pieces by the discordant forces generated within it.

Every Mason must have respect for and obedience to the civil law; no Mason may engage in broils or rebellions; no political discussion can be brought into our assemblies. Were this abolished our organization would be taken captive by some political or social party and would perish at the first radical turnover of political power; and while it lasted it would be the servant of some power outside itself without the ability to regulate and control its own existence.

To the same effect is the ancient law forbidding that a Candidate or Brother shall be questioned as to his peculiar mode of religious faith and also that no sectarian matters shall intrude within a Lodge.

Just as it would mean the ultimate destruction of Freemasonry if it were to make itself over into the hands of a political party, so would it mean its death sooner or later to surrender itself to a particular church or religious doctrine.

My last example might be described as the crowning Landmark of all. Belief in God, with the Altar at the center of the Lodge, and having the Holy Book of Law open upon it, belief in Immortality, and belief in prayer - here is the religious basis of Freemasonry, and when I used the word "basis" I mean it in its most literal sense. If this spiritual life were destroyed, our Fraternity would degenerate into a mere social club, a thing at the opposite pole from what it now is.

As I stated in the beginning, my friend, these are but a few examples of those characters which belong inalienably to Freemasonry as such. I have given you this explanation of the principle of the Landmarks through a series of examples for one purpose. When I state that purpose I shall have concluded.

You are not yet a Mason. If you have the good fortune to become a member of a Lodge, and if thereafter you progress in Masonic knowledge and experience, as we trust you will, you will then win an understanding of this subject in a more technical manner, and you will have the advantage of seeing it from the inside instead of from the outside.

But at your present stage the subject is of the utmost importance to you, and that for this reason: it makes plain to you that Freemasonry is clearly conscious of what belongs to its

own proper nature; against every possible influence it guards and cherishes that nature continually; the petitioner who comes into its membership must accept it as he finds it or not at all; there is no way to change Freemasonry to suit the tastes, foibles, prejudices, or opinions of the Candidate; it is the Candidate who must change himself to conform to Freemasonry.

To become a Mason; therefore, you must stand ready with all sincerity to give wholehearted assent to its teachings and principles, obedience to its laws and regulations, and observance to its Ancient Landmarks.

## **THE TENETS:**

### **Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love**

#### **Subject No. 3 — Meeting No. 1**

My Friend: The principal, or chief, Tenets of Freemasonry are, Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love. It is necessary not to overlook “principal,” for it signifies that while it is on these three teachings that our Fraternity lays the greatest emphasis, yet there are other teachings of almost equal importance, and in any discussion of our subject those others must not be lost.

By a “Tenet” is meant some teaching so obviously true, so universally accepted, that we believe it without question and always take it for granted. Examples of such teachings are found everywhere around us. Good health is better than illness; a truthful man is more dependable than a liar; it is better to save money than to waste it; an industrious man is more useful than an idle one; a wise man is a more able counselor than a foolish one; education is to be preferred to ignorance. These are but a few of the countless examples of teaching that no intelligent man can possibly call into question.

Everyone takes them for granted. They are Tenets. When we turn to the Principal Tenets of our own Fraternity we are immediately struck by an interesting fact: Freemasonry considers Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love to be teachings of this kind! It holds them to be true in a sense that no man can question them; they are obvious, self proving, axiomatic.

I wonder if you have always considered them to be so? Is it not a common thing for men to consider Brotherly Love, for example, to be such a thing that, while it might be highly

desirable, it is not, practicable, and is therefore nothing but a floating vision to be dreamed of but never possessed? It is challenging for Freemasonry to call such things “Tenets,” for it means that they are not only true, but plainly and obviously and necessarily true. Unless you can grasp this fact, unless you can see for yourself that the teachings of Freemasonry are realities, self evident realities, and not visionary ideals, you will never be able to understand Masonic teachings. For Freemasonry does not tell us that Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love ought to be true, that it would be better for us all if they were true - it tells us that they are true. They are tremendous realities in human life, and it is as impossible to question their existence as it is to question the existence of the ground under our feet, or the sun over our heads. The question is not whether we shall believe in them or not, for we cannot help but believe in them; the question is, “What are we going to do about them?”

Let us now reflect a moment upon the Principal Tenets, beginning with Friendship. Someone has said that Masonry teaches how to make friends by teaching how to be a friend. Man, being the social creature that he is, cannot find happiness by himself and therefore seeks it in the companionship of others. Unfortunately, the right kind of happiness is not always sought, for what is happiness to one individual may be something entirely different to another. While Masonry claims no monopoly on good men, it is a fact that you are coming into it of your own free will, and it is also true that ample investigation has been made among those who know you well as to your character and standing. Therefore, the very fact that you have been accepted and are present here tonight is evidence that our Lodge believes that the friendships of Masonry will appeal to you and that the friendly spirit you have to offer will be acceptable to it. Sincerity, loyalty, tolerance, sympathy, belief, devotedness, tenderness, unselfishness - even sacrifice, are some of the ingredients of true Friendship. Masonry teaches all these virtues, and points ever to the fact that true Friendship, the kind of Friendship that abides, the kind of Friendship that can sweeten our relations with those about us, is always a mutual relationship. Morals, good morals, are those accepted standards of behavior by which any action is measured to determine its fitness for practice.

Morality, by the same token, is the exercise of those accepted standards. With these definitions it becomes clear that Morality is the use of good morals in our daily lives. Morality is not a matter of fear or guilt. The man who acts always within the moral law, or within the bounds of propriety, solely because he fears to act otherwise may be fooling himself and seldom others. Thus such a man becomes a kind of dual personality - one side of him wishing to act properly as a matter of principle, the other side restrained from

immorality only by fear. It is a moral code that makes for morality, and conduct which establishes it.

There is no such thing as Masonic Morality, as indicating a separate or exclusive code of conduct. Masonry offers no set of specific morals nor does any particular moral originate in it. Masonry teaches the practice of all good morals, leaving the interpretation of right and wrong to the individual conscience. That Masonry abides deeply in the practice of Morality will be evident to you as you progress through its degrees.

What is Brotherly Love? Manifestly, it means that we place on another man the highest possible valuation as a friend, a companion, an associate, a neighbor, a fellow. Merely to be with him, merely to spend hours in his company, to have the privilege of working at his side, is all we ask. We do not ask that from our relationship we shall make money, or further our business interests, or achieve some other form of selfish gain. Our relationship with such a one is its own excuse for being, its own justification, and its own reward. All of us know that this Brotherly Love is one of the supreme goods without which life is a lonely, unhappy, ugly kind of thing. This is not a hope of a dream, but a fact - as real as day and night, or as the law of gravity. Freemasonry builds on that fact, takes it for granted, provides opportunities for us to have such fellowship, encourages us to understand and to practice it, and to make it one of the laws of our existence; it is, in short, and in literal truth, one of its Principal Tenets.

As I said in the beginning, Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love are the Principal Tenets of Masonry. There are other Tenets, also, teachings of a truth and necessity so obvious that argument is never necessary to sustain them. We urge you to ponder the teachings of the Craft as you progress from Degree to Degree with this in mind. You may not find that any of them are novel, or exciting. Novelty, however, while it may at times have its own interest, is not to be compared in value with the knowledge that the truths on which Freemasonry is founded are eternal; they are never new, neither are they ever old; time cannot wither nor custom stale their infinite variety, the freshness of Immortality is on them because they never die, in them is a ceaseless inspiration and an inexhaustible appeal. They are Tenets of Freemasonry because always and everywhere they have been Tenets of human life.

## THE QUALIFICATIONS

### Subject No. 4 — Meeting No. 1

My Friend: Inasmuch as the Ballot Box decided once and for all that you possessed the qualifications required of a petitioner you may question the need of your giving any further heed to this subject. The reply to your question is that it is only in part that the qualifications exist merely as a test of a petitioner's fitness to become a Mason; in a larger and more important sense they determine also a man's fitness to remain a Mason after he has been elected to membership. They are the qualifications of a Mason, not merely of a man who desires to become a Mason, they always remain in force, at least most of them do, and therefore we have not outgrown them when we have passed the ordeal of the Ballot.

The word "qualifications" defines itself. It derives from a Latin term meaning "value." The Anglo-Saxon term for the same idea was "worth," from which we have "worthful" and "worshipful."

By a petitioner's qualifications is consequently meant what value or worth he may possess to fit him for a place in the fellowship of Masons. These values are of two kinds, internal and external. The internal qualifications divide themselves also under two main headings. One of these is that a petitioner must come of "his own free will and accord." That is, he must come unsolicited, and not in deference to any pressure due to ulterior motives of any kind; the necessary corollary of this - and here already we observe how the qualifications may remain in force throughout a Mason's career - is that no Mason shall solicit a man to petition for membership.

The other internal qualification is that a petitioner shall come "uninfluenced by mercenary motives." What this means is obvious: he is not to expect that in the Fraternity he will find business, professional, or financial gain for himself, and by the same token no Brother already in membership has any right to solicit such favors from him. Both of these qualifications are described as "internal" because they have to do with motives, and only a man himself can know what his motives are.

The eternal qualifications may, for sake of convenience, be divided under several headings:

1. The Physical. A petitioner must not be a woman, a child, or a eunuch. This is one of the Ancient Landmarks of the Craft. He must also be of lawful age, which in our own

usage is eighteen years of age, because no person can undertake all Masonic Obligations except he has reached the years of discretion and is legally responsible for his acts. This rules out “a young man under age;” it also rules out “an old man in his dotage,” for in the latter case dotage means the loss of those powers by which a man is able to recognize and discharge his responsibilities.

2. The Mental. The mental qualifications are not expressly defined, though we and a number of Grand Lodges go so far as to demand that a petitioner shall be able to read and write. But they are clearly implied, and as such are as binding as though explicitly expressed. Much is taught a Mason; much is demanded of him; it is impossible for him to understand such teachings, or to meet the demands, unless he possesses at least average intellectual abilities.

3. Civil Qualifications. By these are meant all that have to do with citizenship and with a man’s life as a neighbor, as a member of his community. Under this heading it is required that he be a free man. This means that he is in the true sense his own master, free to discharge his Masonic duties without interference from outside. Also, it is required that he be “under the tongue of good report,” that is, he must possess a sound reputation among those who know him best. Of even greater importance is it that he be good citizen, one who obeys the law, who is obedient, as the Old Charges express it, “to the Civil Magistrates,” and who keeps himself from embroilment in rebellion and mobs in defiance of the claims of public order.

4. Moral and Religious. It is an Ancient Landmark that a Mason must be “a good and true man,” a man “of honor and honesty,” who governs himself by the Compasses, tries himself by the Square and tests himself by the Plumb. So demanding is the Fraternity’s moral requirement that to think of a Mason as not devoted to integrity and rectitude of character is a contradiction in terms. In religion it is required of a petitioner that he believes in God, in Immortality, and that he use the Holy Bible as a rule and guide to his faith, at the same time it is required that he practice tolerance, that he shall not be questioned as to the peculiar form or mode of his faith and shall not question his Brethren.

There are qualifications of another kind, such as those governing residence of petitioners and those that required a member to pay his own share of the dues and taxes lawfully levied upon him, but it is those internal and external qualifications which I have described that give us in the true sense of the word the qualifications demanded of every petitioner and member.

In conclusion, I ask you to observe carefully one all-important point. In this list of qualifications we have a portrait of the Mason drawn by the Fraternity itself, and that portrait is official. How necessary it is to you to grasp this fact in your endeavor to arrive at a true understanding of Freemasonry, it would be impossible for me to exaggerate.

A Mason must be a man of such bodily equipment as will enable him to satisfy the demands of the work; of mental competency; of years of responsibility and discretion; of sound character and reputation; a good citizen; a man of well founded religious faith; his own master, free from external control; devoted to the claims of Brotherhood; acceptable to the membership of the Craft.

Who may be Mason? Men who satisfy the requirements of that description.

What is Freemasonry? A fellowship of such men devoted to the ideals of such manhood.

What are the ideals and teachings of Freemasonry? All such truths, ideals, and realities that describe interpret, uphold, satisfy and foster such manhood.

What is the purpose of Freemasonry? To find such men, from this, with clearness beyond possibility of misunderstanding, how the qualifications stand at the center of the Craft, expressing its standards, describing who may be Masons in reality and setting before us the goal of all Masonic endeavor. It is not sufficient that a man shall possess each qualification for the mere purpose of petitioning for membership; they are required of us all, all of the time, so long as we shall remain in the Craft.

## **FREEMASONRY'S ATTITUDE TOWARD POLITICS AND RELIGION**

### **Subject No. 5 — Meeting No. 1**

My Friend: One of the most important of all our Landmarks is that which forbids us to participate, as Masons, in any form of religious or political sectarianism. We cannot question a Candidate as to his peculiar beliefs in religion or politics; we cannot take any kind of public action with regard to them in the name of the Craft. A Candidate must pledge himself to a belief in God and to a belief in Immortality, and he must reverence the Holy Bible as a rule and guide for his life. The Doctrinal interpretation he may place on these beliefs must, however, be left entirely to him.

So also he must pledge himself to good citizenship, but his choice of a political party through which he works for the realization of his ideal of citizenship must be left entirely to him.

The Fraternity's attitude toward all such sectarianism is more than a negative one. It goes further than merely to say "Hands off." It is rather a positive one, for it definitely prohibits all Masons from sectarian controversies in all forms. Such controversies are un-Masonic - that is, they are an outright violation of written Masonic law, and subject a member to severe discipline.

It is not difficult to understand the reason for this Landmark. Freemasonry exists for the sake of, is dedicated and devoted to, the life of Brotherhood. Brotherhood means that many of us, men drawn from all walks of life, with a great variety of racial characteristics and religious and political opinions, are brought together, and kept together, in a relationship of friendship, harmony, and goodwill. To maintain that harmony it is necessary that whatever passions and prejudices might divide us into opposing groups, feuds, schisms, or conflicting cliques, must be kept out. It is notorious that nothing is more likely to divide and alienate men than religious and political sectarianism.

For this reason sectarianism is prohibited because the needs and the welfare of Brotherhood demand it.

Freemasonry thus prohibits sectarianism within its own membership. But what, you may now wish to ask, is its attitude toward that sectarianism in the outside world which leads men to make war on Freemasonry itself? What is a Mason to do in response to attacks from outside? This question is a pertinent one. During its whole history the Fraternity has been subject to attacks from without. In our country a hundred years ago a coalition of certain churches with a national political party undertook to stamp Masonry out of existence. One of the great churches of the world still maintains that same attitude toward it. And within the last few years great governments have outlawed it by governmental action. In all probability our Craft will always have such enmities to deal with, as does every other organization. Our attitude toward such attacks is to ignore them. We do not fight back. We take the position that if some man (or group of men) disagrees with the teachings of Freemasonry; that is his own private affair and does not concern us. We do nothing to invite, or to warrant such attacks, therefore they are no affairs of ours. Our faith in the truth and right of Freemasonry is so well founded that we are certain it needs to do nothing except go on being itself in order to silence sooner or later any charges that may be made against it by any kind of enemies.



This sums up what we may describe as Freemasonry's negative attitude toward religious and political sectarianism, but it also has a positive attitude toward religion and politics, and it is to this that we next turn your attention.

The positive attitude in its most general sense takes the form of the great Masonic ideal of toleration.

Tolerance has always been one of the main teachings of our Order. What do we mean by tolerance? We do not mean that one belief is as true as another; or as valuable as another, we do not advocate general indifferences to all beliefs; nor do we hold that all difference of opinion should be melted down into a drab gray of compromise. As believers in toleration we take the opposite position; we believe that one belief is truer than another, that one opinion is better grounded than another; and we want the truth to prevail. But we know that the truth can never emerge unless each man is left free to see the facts for himself, to think for himself, to speak for himself, to confront life's realities for himself. Let each human mind have a fair deal; let it be left free to observe the world for itself. This, we believe, is the one way in which the truth about any of the great subjects of human life will ever be found. Tolerance, therefore, is a positive and constructive thing; it encourages each man to think for himself, because not otherwise shall men learn in the long run to think the same things. In all our assemblies we try to deal with one another, in so far as religious and political opinions may be concerned, in this spirit of fair play; we may disagree, but we try not to be disagreeable.

But Freemasonry's attitude is even more definite than this. First, as regards religion. I said above that Freemasonry is dedicated to, and devoted to, Brotherhood. But this Brotherhood rests on a basis of religion. Every Mason must believe in God and in the immortality of the soul. The Bible must be open on every Lodge Altar. A Candidate takes his Obligations upon his knees. Before engaging in any important undertaking a Mason seeks aid and guidance through prayer from the Sovereign Grand Architect of the Universe. This is religious, but it is not a religion. It is faith - but it is not a faith confined to any one creed. It is worship but it is not a worship chained to any one Altar. In the great words of the First Book of Constitutions it is the religion "in which all good men agree." It is the ground which underlies all religions, all churches, all creeds, and all sects. Once Masons stand together on that ground they may afterwards proceed to build for themselves this church or that, may incline to one doctrinal interpretation or another; the Fraternity does not interfere with them in so doing, but it insists that whatever be their private opinions they shall stand on that ground.

Second, as regards politics. Politics means the discussion and determination of matters of public policy. Shall a government maintain a large army and navy or a small one? Shall it charge a tariff on goods shipped into it from abroad? Shall it have a strong central government, or a weak one? Shall it allow freedom of thought and speech, or not? Shall it grant religious freedom, or shall it set up a state church and compel all citizens to belong to it? How shall it impose and collect its taxes?

Each question of this kind is a question of national policy, and therefore of politics, consequently matters of politics are of the utmost importance and concern to any nation. Every citizen, if he is a good citizen, will bring to bear on such questions his best judgment and will do whatever his duty demands toward putting into effect such policies as are determined on. This is good citizenship and Masonry demands of every member that he be a good citizen. Just as we saw that the religion of Masonry is that common ground which underlies all religious parties, so is this good citizenship the common ground under all political parties. A Mason may adhere to this political party or to that, may hold one opinion about the tariff or another, may believe in a large navy or a small one; nobody can interfere with him in so doing; but whatever be his party or his opinion, he must be a good citizen - law-abiding faithful to the nation, loyal to the civil powers, as quick to do his public duties as to do his private duties.

To sum up: As a Mason you will never introduce into the Craft any controversial sectarian question; you will pay no heed to those from without who may attack the Fraternity; You will adhere to that religion in which all good men agree, and in your life as a member of the state of Mississippi, and a citizen of the United States, you will be loyal to the demands of good citizenship.