

This information may be freely given to Masons, however the following recognition is requested. The information contained in this educational paper was taken from the books: ³Five minute talks on Freemasonry² by Elbert Bede Coil¹'s Masonic Encyclopedia Mackey¹'s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry It was compiled and edited by Bro. Barry D. Thom P.M., Lodge Mackay #1129. (Time 10 mins.) Explanations of the E.A. Degree

Mysteries and privileges...

At the beginning of the degree we hear these words. Mystery to me means something that cannot be explained. In masonry this word mystery has a somewhat different meaning and to understand it we will first look at its origin. The word comes from the French language and is spelled ³m e s t i e r e² which translated means an art or craft. The word was adopted and corrupted by the Saxons into what we now know and pronounce as ³mystery.² In the middle ages any work of skill, was in the common man's language, a mystery and of course each trade had its secrets. They were matters of craft theory and never recorded in books.

The Cable Tow

How many of us have given serious consideration to the significance of the cable tow used in Freemasonry? It has both physical and spiritual symbolism. Its origin and definition are uncertain and the word probably comes from either a Hebrew or German word meaning "a pledge of the body." This definition becomes more significant as one obligation follows another. An intriguing definition of the Cable tow is given by Carl Claudy in his introduction to Freemasonry and I quote: "It is symbolic of the life cord by which the embryo receives life from the mother. It is the Masonic cord by which the Masonic infant is attached to his Mother Lodge. As soon as the infant is born the physical cord is severed, but never the knife was ground which cut the spiritual cord which ties a man to his mother."² To a sailor the cable tow had a measurement of length which was 600 ft. This length has no relationship to Masonry. In our ritual we hear the phrase ³a cable's length from the shore,² such allusions are symbolic of the binding covenant into which the mason has entered. In the early 1700's every brother was expected to attend his lodge if within the length of his cable tow. This distance was set at three miles which was all he was expected to walk. "In Masonry the physical restraint of the cable tow indicates that the candidate is in submission to the Master. In early Roman times citizens appeared before their monarchs with a rope around their neck to indicate their loyalty to him. The cable tow is removed from the candidate as soon as he assumes the spiritual bond of the obligation. However, never the means has been made by which to cut the obligation which binds a man spiritually to his Mother Lodge and to the Craft. Expulsion does not relieve the Mason from his obligation; if the Brother is unaffiliated it does not dissolve the tie; demitting and joining another Lodge can not make the new Lodge his Mother Lodge. The Fellowcraft invisibly wears the Cable tow so that it may be an aid to his journey; an urge to action, a strengthening for the Masonic life to come. He also learns that the cable tow is more than a rope; it is at once a tie and a measurement. In the Master Mason degree the candidate pledges himself as fully as it is possible for him to do so. So what then is the length of a cable tow? Who can define the length of a Spiritual tie? Physically it translates into ³if within reasonable possibility.² Each Brother must decide for himself the length of his cable tow.

The Heling sign

Hele comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning ³to cover and conceal.² Farmers and country people used this word concerning the ³heling² or covering of plants or putting a roof on their house. In the 1500's a book was ³heled² when it was bound by two covers. The Northeast Corner Those of us who have given any study to Freemasonry, and even those who have merely heard the ritual many times, know that Geometry and Astronomy play an important part in our rituals. What we may not know is that a great part of our Symbolism, which requires the sciences for its interpretation, is based upon beliefs that existed long before the full development of these sciences occurred. The Northeast Corner is an example. Its symbolism was ancient even at the time of the building of King Solomon's Temple. As the Lodge is symbolic of the world as pictured in ancient times, when it was believed to be an oblong square, so our Northeast Corner is symbolic of the northeast corner of that world as anciently mapped. North, Masonically speaking is called the place of darkness. It is a portion of the old sun worship which believed the east was the place of the sun's daily birth while the north its annual death resulting in winter and long dark nights. The north side of King Solomon's Temple was mainly used for the stabling and slaughtering of animals. The youngest Entered Apprentice in the Northeast Corner stands near the Worshipful Master, who symbolizes the sun in the east, whence comes the light. In some of the primitive religions the northeast corner was the seat of Deity and became a symbol of sanctity and virtue. Freemasonry retains that symbolism for its Northeast Corner when the Master informs the youngest Entered Apprentice: "You will now take your seat to the right of the Wor. Master and to the left of all Brethren present."² In Operative Freemasonry the first stone was laid in the Northeast Corner, and thereon was erected a temple or other edifice. The Entered Apprentice should use the lessons and the teachings of the Northeast Corner whereon to erect his temple, which should be of spiritual value. The youngest Entered Apprentice in the Northeast Corner stands symbolically midway between darkness in the North and light in the East. It is his part to determine whether he will move backward toward darkness or forward to the light. J.W. Lecture At the beginning of this lecture we hear that the philosophers communicated their secrets to priests and magi alone... Magi is the plural of magus and signifies, august, reverent, or learned, in the early language of Babylon. Under the Persians the Magi were the custodians of learning and of all things sacred.

The Alter

The history of the alter appears early in the Bible and at some point branched out into two types. One for incense burning and the other for sacrifices, especially burned animal sacrifices. The latter for obvious reasons were always placed outside and in front of the temple. Covenants made and vows taken at the alter were especially binding. The alter was also a place of refuge for a slave or criminal who managed to flee there and grasp the horns of the alter. They were considered to have placed themselves under the protection of the Deity to whom the alter was erected to. They were not actual horns but were the four raised corners which helped keep the animal carcass in place. In all the religions of antiquity the priests and people would circumvent the alter in the same direction as the sun travels, that is clockwise. While doing this, hymns of worship would be sung. It doesn't appear that an alter was used in a lodge of operative Masons.

In the beginning speculative Masons didn't use one either. So when did they first appear? Around the middle of the 1700's some lodges chose to install one. It was not placed in the centre of the lodge room but was part of the Master's pedestal. Even today it is still found in that location in lodges under the English constitution.

A.F.& A.M. v.s. F.& A.M

Why do some Grand Lodges use A.F.& A.M. while others use F.& A.M.? Lodges and Grand Lodges whose charters' roots derive from the United Grand Lodge of Ancient Freemasons of England, The Grand Lodge of Ireland or the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland use the expression, A.F. & A.M. Those Grand Lodges that don't use the appellation "Ancient", claim descent from the Premiere Grand Lodge of England".(F. & A.M.) This Grand Lodge was constituted from four lodges on June 24, 1717 and later was designated "the Moderns". The "Moderns" and "Ancients" united in November 25, 1813 to form the United Grand Lodge of Ancient Freemasons of England. This division is not universal as some Grand Lodges simply chose one or other title for reasons of their own. Next question. Some Masonic rings do not have the G in the centre of the square and compasses. Rings, etc in the English Constitution do not have the letter 'G' in the centre. However, the Masonic suppliers sell them with or without, so Brethren may be seen wearing either. Our Scottish Constitution Brethren have the 'G' in the centre.