

## WORD, SYMBOL, and FREEMASONRY

By: Dr. Lee M. Eastburn

Athens, Texas

The symbols of Freemasonry are many and diverse. They pervade every degree, every lesson, every thought. The Initiate is early introduced to the moral aspects of the twenty-four-inch gauge and common gavel. He learns that the initiation itself is formed of many symbolic acts, and undoubtedly he suspects that loftier and deeper meanings reside in the symbolism employed than those meaning which are so readily given in the various explanations.

As the candidate progresses through the degrees, he is exposed to more recondite ideas and symbols, and if he does not now suspect the existence of greater truths or that the moral explanations are not sometimes masks for more sublime revelations, we have indeed failed somewhere along the line to inculcate that aura of mystery or that implication of things unsaid which should excite his curiosity to search for additional light.

Clearly, there are higher meanings in the ineffable mysteries of Masonry, but the real subject of this article is a bit more mundane, an easier subject to deal with, yet one of great importance. The subject is a symbol and the symbol is the word Freemasonry with the spotlight focused on the prefix "free." Yes, words are symbols too and sometimes very powerful symbols. The word "square" might recall to mind the stonemason's square and hence is in effect a symbol of a symbol. One might, however, upon hearing the word "square," mentally jump to the moral aspect of the square which even those outside of the Fraternity equate to the Golden Rule.

More abstract ideas and concepts are also easily represented, but may, like other symbols, have different shades of interpretation. The word "freedom" will have a stronger and more subtle meaning for an immigrant from some oppressed country than it will have for a native of the United States. The word "solidarity" has recently acquired a new significance and importance and now brings to the mind of most of us the members of the Polish union by that name, reminding us of their struggle for their own brand of freedom.

The word "Freemasonry" infers, in one manner or another, all the attributes of the Fraternity---its rites, ceremonies, teachings, precepts, and mysteries, its religious, philosophical, and moral aspects, its brotherhood and its benevolence. It has

another and perhaps greater meaning, a wellspring from which the other attributes gather their strength, and I refer here to its association with freedom, the wellspring of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

It was no accident that Freemasons were active in forming of the United States. Freemasonry has ever been the champion of freedom.

It is difficult for us, in this period of time, to fully appreciate the freedoms which our forbearers have won for us. It behooves us, though, to study well the lessons of history that we may not lose the freedoms we have. Note well where Freemasonry flourishes and where the Lodges have gone dark.

We are enjoined to be true to our government and just to our Country. There is no better way to do this than to protect our freedoms and hold high both the symbol and Freemasonry.