

The Letter "G" and the Fellowcraft Degree

(A Lecture to be delivered to a newly-passed Craftsman)

Often you may have asked yourself about the letter "G" in the square and compasses emblem of Masonry. You will have seen this letter displayed above the altar. Now as a F.C. you are in a position to learn about the significance of this deep Masonic symbol. This emblem holds a special significance for F.C.'s in three ways.

The first and most obvious is as an emblem of God. At its shallowest, it is the first initial of the English word "God". It has, however, a deeper significance.

As Fellowcrafts, the workmen on King Solomon's temple were entitled to take their wages in money ("specie") rather than content themselves with payment in the form of the daily necessities of life, as Apprentices were. In order to receive these wages, the Craftsmen had to present themselves at the Middle Chamber of the Temple, which could be found at the top of the winding staircase, and the password to which you have been taught.

At the entrance to the Middle Chamber, above the door, are Hebrew characters which are pointed out to all Craftsmen and which can be seen in the Tracing Board for this degree. The first of these characters is "Yod" and is the first letter of the Hebrew name for God, which Jews are not to pronounce aloud.

The letter "G" represents not only "Yod" as the initial of the name of God, but also as the character which illuminates the Middle Chamber of the Temple, as God illuminates the life of the Craftsman. A Fellowcraft Lodge represents the Middle Chamber, and the letter "G" in the centre represents "Yod" or God in the centre of our lives.

The second signification of the letter "G" is that it represents the Greek letter gamma (γ αμμα), the first letter in the Greek words "geos" (γ εοσ), meaning "the world" and "geometrikos" (γ εομετρικος), meaning "geometry". Fellowcrafts are particularly directed to the study of the liberal arts and sciences, and "particularly geometry, which is established as the basis of our art." Indeed, we are taught that Geometry and Masonry were originally synonymous terms. It is for this reason that the Deity is called the G.G.O.T.U. in this degree.

The third signification becomes clear when we view the capital form of the letter gamma ("Γ") which is in the form of an upside-down "L" or a square. The corresponding letter to our "G" in the Russian or Cyrillic alphabet also has this form. The letter "G" is therefore a symbol for the square.

The significance of the square in this degree is constantly emphasized. A F.C. lodge is opened on the square, candidates are received on a square, are obligated with their left arm in a square and salute in the same position. One of the working tools of the degree is a square and the other two, representing the vertical and horizontal, are the components of a square. A Fellowcraft is tried and proven by the square.

The square, being an angle of ninety degrees or the fourth part of a circle is also known as a right angle. The word "right" has a number of different meanings, deriving from its original and true meaning which is straight and true. From this is derived its

sense as a right or square angle, being a true relationship between vertical and horizontal. Also derived from it are its many figurative meanings, such as correct, proper, just, or perfect. We are constantly reminded of related words such as "rectitude", "correct", "rectify", "upright", "righteousness", "regular" and "regulate". The relationship between the rightness of an angle and the rightness of our actions is so deeply imbedded in our language that we barely notice it. In this degree, we are constantly reminded that the gamma at the centre of the lodge stands for all of these concepts.

We also refer to the right, as opposed to the left hand. Here again, the origin of the word stems from the fact that, most people being right-handed, the right hand is the correct or proper hand to use. Most of us will remember schoolteachers who laboriously taught left-handers to write with their right hands, because the left hand was wrong. The Latin word for the left-hand side, "sinister" (mano sinistra) carries that sense of wrongness whereas that for the right, "dexter" connotes nimbleness or "dexterity".

As F.C.'s we kneel on the R.K. to take our obligations and take our second step with the right foot. The importance of the right side in this degree not only points out the progress from the previous but also refers us to the square.

The Working Tools of the Craftsman are, it will be noticed, the same as the Moveable Jewels, the emblems of the Principal Officers of the Lodge. The plumb rule, or the vertical, is an emblem of our relationship with God, whereas the level, or the horizontal, is an emblem of our relationship with our fellow men. The square represents the relationship between the two, that justice and right which comes of uprightness before God and equal treatment of our fellow creatures.

When a Fellow Craft Lodge closes, the J.W. is asked what he, as a F.C., has learned. His response, though brief, refers us to all of the deepest symbols of this degree.