



Nugget

What is Freemasonry?

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What is Freemasonry? That is the question.

Summary

An examination of the phrase ‘a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols’.

Keywords

Allegory, Metaphor, Symbols, Morality

What is Freemasonry - a definition

What is Freemasonry

Freemasonry describes itself as ‘a peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols’. We have all had to learn that phrase, but let’s spend a moment to examine it.

- ‘A peculiar system’; well that’s a peculiar phrase! The word peculiar is used here in the older sense of meaning ‘distinct’ or ‘unique’. It therefore means our own system of morality.
- A ‘system of morality’; this is the heart of it, and its meaning is straightforward, but we often forget that this is the core of freemasonry.
- An ‘allegory’; is typically a story or picture, which can be interpreted so that a hidden moral meaning is drawn from it. In the lectures there are a number of metaphors, some of which may appear surprising in an organisation which traces its history back to craftsmen in the building trade. For example, there are references to nature and plant life. However, it was often considered that, as God had created the universe, so His laws and plans could be revealed by a study of nature. In modern terms, we refer to ‘reverse engineering’, whereby you analyse the product and then work out how it was made. In so doing, you gain a better understanding of the Creator.
- ‘Symbolism’; forms a fundamental part of our ceremonies, and it begins the moment the Initiate enters the Lodge. The use of symbols as an aid to learning was a longstanding method of teaching, used in an era before literacy was common-place.

One of the subtleties of the Masonic system is that you come to discover further layers or levels of meaning within the symbolism. This is what is meant by the phrase ‘veiled in allegory’. It is necessary properly to appreciate the level you are at, before you can see and then pass through the next veil to progress further.

##END##

Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

Nuggets can be included as an item in the summons and read at most Lodge/Chapter meetings. They can be:

- Read by either a new or an experienced Mason with the minimum of preparation and practice; *though ideally, they need to be read a few times beforehand.*
- Themed with the meeting or activity.
- Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.
- Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.
- Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

For further nuggets and other learning materials visit 'Solomon' at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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