



Nugget

Five Points of Fellowship

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An exploration of the 'Five Points of Fellowship'.

Summary

An exploration of the timing and possible origin of 'Five Points of Fellowship'.

Keywords

Third-Degree, Five, Points, Fellowship

Five Points of Fellowship

'Brother Wardens, having both failed in your attempts, there remains a third method, by taking a more firm hold of the sinews of the hand and raising him on the five points of fellowship...'. A familiar and important part of the Third-Degree Ceremony, where the Brother representing Hiram Abiff is informed that, 'It is thus that all Master Mason's are raised from a figurative death to a reunion with the former companions of their toils'.

There have been references to the 'Five-Points-of-Fellowship' dating back many years. The earliest appears in 1696 which would suggest that they were known before this time (20 years before the Premier Grand Lodge was created) and 30 years before the "three-degree-system" we know today was developed.

In 'Mason's Examination' published in 1723, there are six points which are described as *'foot to foot, knee to knee, hand to hand, ear to ear, heart to heart and tongue to tongue'* if considered literally, many will be grateful that they were not Freemasons in 1723!

In 1730 Pritchard's 'Masonry Dissected' described the 'Five-Points-of-Fellowship' in a way which almost resembles the Ritual as we know it today. It was in a question and answer form: -

Q. 'How was Hiram raised?' **A.** 'As all other Masons are, when they receive the Master's hand'

Q. 'How is that?' **A.** 'By the Five Points of Fellowship'

Q. 'What are they?' **A.** 'Hand to Hand, Foot to Foot, Cheek to Cheek, Knee to Knee and Hand to Back'

In all of the early texts that contain references to the points of fellowship there is, however, no mention or hint of the Hiram legend until 'Masonry Dissected' was published. It would appear that the Points of Fellowship were in use in the Craft many years before the Hiram legend.

As to where the five points originated, that is not so obvious. There are three Biblical instances of the miraculous restoration of life, in which the prophet or apostle lay full length upon the body and breathed into its face, the modern 'Kiss of Life'.

If the five points ever had a practical purpose, ignore the precise terms in which they appear in our Ritual today and speculate that they could have been taught originally as a method of reviving someone who had been killed by a fall in the course of his work. Accidents of this kind must have been very common in operative times.

The penalty for carelessness leading to a death is an example of the powers of the operative Lodges in those days. A Master who was found guilty was doomed for the rest of his life to work as an underling. In the light of this, the Five Points of Fellowship, viewed as a practical lesson, acquire a new importance, which might well explain their regular appearance in nearly all our earliest ritual texts.

There is not a word of explanation for the Points of Fellowship in any of the early texts. It was not until the 1760s, when a lot of English exposures began to appear that we find explanations for the points. In spite of the total absence of legend in connection with the earliest versions, however, there must have been some legend or story to explain those details (not necessarily Masonic).

The Points of Fellowship as explained by the Worshipful Master in the Third-Degree serve a double purpose of instruction in fraternal duties as well as forming a mode of recognition. They are interpreted somewhat in the Lectures of the Three-Degrees in Craft Masonry: *'We would do well to practice the 'Five-Points-of-Fellowship in our own life and in Lodge; a Mason should be quick to extend understanding and benevolence to all, but especially to a Brother'*. In them - and this should apply to all Freemasons - a Master Mason is encouraged:

'Hand to Hand - to put forward a hand to save a Brother from sinking, knowing that he is worth it;

Foot to Foot - to be quick to help a Brother.

Knee to Knee - to remember a Brother's welfare in prayer;

Breast to Breast - to never betray the trust one Brother places in another;

Hand over Back - to never denounce a Brother or allow others to, behind his back'.

##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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