



PAPER

Horizontals

Summary: An examination of the spiritual aspects and Geometrical implications of Horizontals.

During the Ceremony of Initiation, the Candidate is informed:

'... for your general information all squares, levels and perpendiculars are true and proper signs to know a Mason by.'

It is not until the Fellow Craft Degree that he encounters the word 'horizontals' for the first time:

'...the Level to lay levels and prove horizontals'

and then

'the level [teaches] equality'

No further explanation of the term horizontal is made. It is left, like so many things, for the individual to work out the symbolic application for himself.

Webster's Dictionary defines the word Horizontal as: *parallel to the horizon, being on a level, flat surface*. So, has been derived this vague definition of equality. According to the Fellow Craft Degree (and borrowing from Shakespeare's Hamlet):

We are traveling on the level of time to that 'undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler has returned.'

As Freemasons, we can all agree that we travel together over time to our inevitable destiny with 'The Grand Lodge above' (death).

We as Freemasons may have the same ending to our lives, but the road that we travel is far from being perfectly level for any of us. Our individual biology prohibits life from being on a level plain during its allotted span. Perhaps more importantly, no rational person would insist that our abilities and skills, and even our achievements operate at the same level. So, what do we mean by Equality? The true meaning of equality lies in our relationship with God. We are all Brothers because we are all sons of the one Father. We have a common spiritual parent. This is what is meant by the expression: *'All men are equal in the eyes of God'*. But how we as individuals discharge our duties, or how we understand his love, can hardly be said to make us



equal. We must understand that men do not labour, or travel, or accomplish, at the same level. Nevertheless, this should not be confused with our relationship, as Brother Masons, with the Almighty. In Lodge, we meet upon the level all having the same right in the eyes of God, the same opportunity to seek him, the same right of Brotherhood with our fellow men. In Lodge neither place, position, strength, power, influence, or money count at all.

So, let us take a fresh look at what is meant by the expression, '*to lay levels and prove horizontals*'. In the beginning when the original goals of Speculative Freemasonry were formed in the late 18th century the objective was to create a level and common platform upon which universal Brotherhood could grow and achieve mutual respect and understanding. This is still one of the most important and fundamental principles upon which our Order is founded. This brings into sharp focus the symbolic meaning of the expression '*to lay levels and prove horizontals*'. Or put another way, to prepare a smooth and level foundation for that understanding which will enable men everywhere to work and to live together in harmony and peace. There never has been, nor will there ever be, a more profound and desirable basis for human relationships.

In the frenzied times in which we live, when nations are fighting in the names of freedom and justice, and the future of our children's children seems in doubt, many men are beginning to give way to fearful doubts about the spiritual nature of mankind. The thoughtful Freemason who has learned to lay symbolic levels and horizontals will not give up so easily, but will continue to search for that Truth which please God, will one day lead to a more sympathetic understanding and universal 'Brotherly love' for the whole of the human race.

One of the first steps in the construction of a building is the site preparation. It is a levelling operation of the ground formation in preparation for the foundation of the building. Wonderful examples from the ancient world demonstrate the remarkable skills employed in those days to construct a horizontal raft or platform on which their beautiful structures were erected. For example, The Parthenon on the Acropolis in Athens built between 447–432 BCE, first required the construction of a massive stone platform across the mountain top as a horizontal foundation for a structure that is regarded by Architects all over the world as one of the finest examples of beauty and dignity.

Similarly, King Solomon's Temple, constructed in 960 BCE, on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem called for a very similar structural platform as a horizontal foundation to receive the magnificent Temple. The laying of these massive foundations would have been incredibly hard work. The toil and effort without modern material handling equipment almost beggars belief.

As Speculative Freemasons we can immediately bring to mind a symbolic interpretation of these remarkable achievements. To build that house '*not made with hands*', the temple of universal Brotherhood, also requires hard work. This is not practical effort, but spiritual. It requires nothing less to achieve a level headed foundation, and a horizontal platform of understanding of what is involved, to achieve the universal Brotherhood of all men as equal children of God. In a Speculative sense, for a Brother '*to lay levels and prove horizontals*' is to prepare himself for the building of Brotherhood by levelling one's own passions, prejudices, ignorance and animosities and creating more noble and glorious virtues in their stead.



Let us now set aside the spiritual aspects of Horizontals and examine the Geometrical implications. Horizontals may be classified as signs, together with right-angles and perpendiculars. Geometrically speaking these concepts are very closely related. In order for a building to attain strength and stability a building must be designed and constructed so that the principal stresses are perpendicular to the horizontal. It is a matter of geometrical consequence that a perpendicular must be at right-angles, or ninety degrees, to the horizontal. Now let us take a look at this statement of fact from a global point of view. To do this, imagine that you are sat in front of a terrestrial globe. Direct your attention to the North Pole and imagine that you are to erect a perpendicular at this point in the earth's surface. It will of course need to be at right angles to the horizontal, at this point. Next, take a look at any point on the Equator. Again, erect a similar perpendicular, with its horizontal, at this point. Take a look at both perpendiculars. The perpendicular at the North Pole is now at right angles to the one at the equator, and actually parallel to the horizontal at this point. In fact, it is also perpendicular in the opposite direction to a horizontal at the South Pole. Yet both have been established based upon identically the same mathematical criteria. Let us for a moment reflect upon the implications of this remarkable experiment. It illustrates the fact that the application of the same principles, but in different parts of the world produces unexpected and different effects, both can be regarded as correct, but they do differ depending entirely upon the view-point. So, there we have it.

To understand Universal Brotherhood requires a Speculative enlargement of one's spiritual point of view. To realise that Brethren of different places and different practices, although believing in the same basic knowledge will not necessarily come to the same conclusions. This more involved definition of laying levels and proving horizontals illustrates the complex relationship of horizontals when viewed from a global perspective. In other words, if a horizontal at the equator is parallel to a perpendicular at the North Pole, then 'never the twain shall meet'. The lesson for us all is to understand our differences in such a large global framework in the world that we live in; is to lay levels and prove horizontals whereon men of goodwill can always meet together in friendship and Brotherly love.



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- Read at home for private study
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 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
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They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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Acknowledgement:

UGLE gratefully acknowledges Ray Hollins as the compiler and editor of this document, which is an extract from his series of ten volumes, collectively titled 'A Daily Advancement in Masonic Knowledge' and for his permission to publish it in this form.

He wishes to acknowledge the assistance of RW Bro Richard Fletcher, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Vermont in The United States of America, and the Masonic Service Association of North America (MSANA) who gave their permission for the use of a wealth of interesting and informative material within their publications known as 'Short Talk Bulletins' and MSANA references are made at the end of each Short Talk in full copyright acknowledgement. Each 'Short Talk' has been carefully re-written by WBro Hollins PAGDC, to provide supplementary information from a wide variety of sources used for the benefit of Freemasonry in general.

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