



Being Frank (About “Freemasonry”)

It is of no small coincidence that the phrase, “hidden within plain sight” has dwelled so significantly within the hearts of those Craft members who have experienced one revelation after another. They have lived it and hence this phrase specifically states with no reservation what they have experienced first-hand. What is special about the phrase is what it most perfectly expresses to those who are Seeking: what is desired can and shall be found once you have trained yourself to See differently. This phrase hits home. It does so with those who zealously Seek to find and unravel the mysteries they desire most. So it is with the mystery behind the word, “Freemason”.

- Bro. John S Nagy

Being Frank (about “Freemasonry”)

First of all Brethren I must give credit to the source of this talk.

There was an article published on April 1, 2014, April Fool's Day, by my friend and Brother, Dr John S. Nagy, who practices his Masonry in Florida, USA.

John S. Nagy is a multi-degree professional business/life coach and technical advisor who provides coaching support to business professionals through his home office in the Tampa Bay area. John has been in the coaching field since January 1989, running his own coaching practice since that time.

He is a published author since the early 1990's, writing and publishing many articles and booklets on personal and professional development. But it is his writings on Masonic subjects that interests us here today. The aforementioned article eventually became a chapter in his book: Building Free Men - Uncommonly Freeing Masonic Education - Volume 8. Its research, writing and subsequent publication also became the inspiration and foundation for his book The Craft Unmasked - The Uncommon Origin of Freemasonry and Its Practice, which I would strongly recommend to you all.

The catalyst for both of these books is as follows.

Among many other misconceptions and Masonic myths, we're often told by several learned members of the Craft:

1. That there exists no clear evidence as to the origin of the phrase "Free & Accepted Masons" or that this phrase alluded to "Operative & Speculative Masons"
2. That the word "Freeborn, (one word); Free-Born (hyphenated); Free Born" (two words), meant "Born Free; that is, not born a slave".
3. That the word "Freemason" was from "Free Stone Mason" or "Free from the Guild" or "Free to Travel".
4. That there doesn't exist any clear and historical difference between Freemasonry, one word, and Free Masonry, two words.

All of these has since been proven wrong

Obviously these Brothers were mistaken. Had they done their Work and not merely memorized and the repeated Societal Dogma, which by the way continues to be the case today, they would not have been compelled to share these things.

It is of no small coincidence that the phrase, “hidden within plain sight” has dwelled so significantly within the hearts of those Craft members who have experienced one revelation after another. They have lived it and hence this phrase specifically states with no reservation what they have experienced first-hand. What is special about the phrase is what it most perfectly expresses to those who are Seeking: what is desired can and shall be found once you have trained yourself to See differently. This phrase hits home. It does so with those who zealously Seek to find and unravel the mysteries they desire most. So it is with the mystery behind the word, “Freemason”.

This especially with those who ask themselves: What were this specific word’s origins and its originally intended meaning?

Nagy referred to what he calls “Masonic Forensics”, rather than Masonic Archaeology, due to the fact that he is not digging up the past most of the time trying to figure it out. Rather, the work he does is more geared toward solving puzzles, and sometimes this leads to solving some remarkable mysteries. This is what he has done in making the effort in evaluating the assorted sources of speculation as to the origins of the word, “Freemason”.

These speculations usually fall into a few narrow categories but every last one of them could be considered fraudulent once one considers the conjectures supporting their collective conclusions.

There are many Misleading Origins, however it becomes clear that differences exist in how the word [Freemasonry] was thought to have come about. Some sources claimed Free-Masons were Masons who worked freestones and the word eventually merged through common use.

Others claimed that these were merely free men who were also Masons. Still others claimed that it was only through their association with a guild that these Masons were free to travel, work, earn and contribute. And yet there are some who state just the opposite: that this applied to Masons who are free from the constraints of guilds and lords.”

To say authorities on the subject differ as to origins of the word, “Freemasonry”, would be grossly simplifying things. However, this is nowhere near the intent of what Brother Nagy would set out to achieve.

The intent is to share a few clear connections that have been hidden in plain sight for over three centuries and that have yet to draw the attention of Craft members, or those members who claim for themselves the titles of researcher or historians.

The quest to uncover this mystery started with researching the word “Freestone”. There are authorities within the ranks of Freemasonry who have insisted that this specific word was the reason behind Masons of old eventually being called, “Freemasons”. They have collectively claimed in one manner or another that, “the word appears to have contracted from Free-stone-mason to Free-Mason, to Freemason” and freemason “meant one who carved freestone.”

Unfortunately, it is differences like these that have spread as highly contagious thought viruses throughout the un-inoculated Craft world and done so by eagerly trusting and well-meaning Brothers. (I like Brother Nagy’s term “un-inoculated”! In this cyber-world where we seem to take great pleasure in things going “viral”, surely it’s time for some real “anti-biotal” truths to cure the misconceptions that lead to “mythological viruses”?)

Moreover, the conjectures and their carriers actually do the Craft more harm than good by misleading generations into believing unfounded falsehoods.

Furthermore, Brothers are led in directions that do not serve to Cultivate them toward what Freemasonry was originally intended.

How can any such misleading Light be considered anything but counter-productive and unhealthy for the Craft as a whole?

So the term “Freestone”

“Freestone” is commonly defined in modern usage as, “rock that can be cut easily in any direction without splitting or cracking, in particular a fine-grained sandstone or limestone of uniform texture.” This description does not cut deep enough into the reason why such a stone is called, “free”.

Not going deep enough is understandable, since most Brothers depend upon others to provide to them the Light that they desire so much. That Light is often provided incompletely and superficially, and usually without substantial backing. But, just as applied Bastard Ashlars, the beautiful façade provided by them is backed by inferior workmanship.

The word, “Free” as used within the word, “Freestone”, actually takes its origins from the French word, “Franche”, and is misunderstood to be describing stones that are free from flaws and that are easily worked in any direction.

It is an assumption that the words “Freemason” and “Freestone” are indeed associated based upon the

meaning assigned today to the word “Free”. Unfortunately, associating the name of workers with the type of stone these workers worked upon is an erroneous conjecture.

It is also not a sound assumption.

Unless you actually investigate the root of the word, “Franche”, you shall never see the significance of its use, especially when it is used in conjunction with words like, “mason”, “stone” or “court”. Minimal research efforts reveal that the words, “Franche” and “Franc” originally signified, “excellence” and “superiority”. One can easily see this in other related words like “Frankincense” that contain the “Franc” root. This example comes from the Old French words, “franc encens”, meaning, “Superior Licences”. It was in this vein that “Freestone”, originally “franche pierre” or “superior/excellent stone” was so named.

What about the word “Freemason”?

Likewise, workers called, “free masons”, (two words), were “superior or excellent builders”, no matter what materials with which they used to build. It is clear that the word “Freemason” did not originally refer to a specific type of stoneworker. It referred to a specific skill level of a special type of

worker overall and especially one who worked with stone in general, not just freestone.

Direct evidence as to this connection can be seen in literature. Many Brothers have read phrases like, “mestre mason de franche peer {as in: pierre or stone}” [master mason of free stone], is the most significant and probable origin of the term “freemason”. They might not realize that both the authors and reporters of such statements have placed their conjecture forth into the world and unfortunately in doing so, they are putting into motion opinions that shall eventually be taken as accepted dogma by Brothers who shall never investigate their opinions any further. They shall accept their opinions as their own.

All that needs to occur to prevent this is, quite simply, doing proper work. When the phrase “mestre mason de franche pierre” is properly translated, it reads, “master mason [as in “masterful builder”] of superior or excellent stone”. In this case, it is not just about the material the worker works; it is about the skill of the worker doing the work and the superiority of the materials being worked!

This information is supported by many sources, but one that I shall share with now is the writing of one Reverend Walter William Skeat. In his book on English Etymology, the author writes quite frankly:

“So, Freestone. This word occurs in Shakespeare, in the compound freestone-coloured, (from the play), *As You Like It*, iv. 3. 25. And much earlier, spelt frestone, (also) in Weber's *Met(ropolitan)*. Rom. iii. 118. I have had some difficulty in tracing its etymology. The is correct or corrupt; and again, in finding out what is the meaning of free, if it be correct. This difficulty existed long ago, for I remember meeting with the spelling frieze-stone, though I forget where, as if the derivation were from stone suitable for making a frieze.”

In Johnson's Dictionary, two contradictory reasons for the name are given:

1. because it can be dug up freely in any direction, which makes no good sense;
2. because it can be cut or wrought freely in any direction, which is just about right.

The difficulty is entirely solved by observing that the word is a mere translation from the French “*franche pierre*”. Cotgrave, as usual, gives us the correct answer. He gives: '*Pierre franche*, the (soft white) freestone'; and further explains the F. franc by 'without any fault or ill quality.' Littré" has: '*Pierre franche*, *pierre parfaite dans son espece*, qui n'a ni la mollesse du moellon, ni la durete du caillou,' i.e.

a stone perfect in its kind, having neither the softness of a soft stone, nor the hardness of flint. We may thus understand free to mean of excellent quality, without flaw, easily wrought in any direction. I may add that the expression “fraunche piers”, meaning 'stones of excellent quality,' occurs in the English Allit. Romance of Alexander, l. 4356: and the expression precious piers, i.e. precious stones, in i.5270 of the same. [85-7; 20.]”

It is clear that the word, “Franche”, that is translated to mean “Free” and used within conjoined words such as “Freemason” and “Freestone” describes both the stone and the worker. What is not clear to most Brethren is that how the word “free” as used and understood within these words today is not how it was used and meant originally. The word “Free” as it was originally understood and used years ago referred solely to the superiority or excellence of both.

The origins of the word “fanche” appear elsewhere in the English language, although somewhat obsolete. It was used in Scotland from about 1290, in various spellings: by the word “franchise” which meant, freedom, especially from imprisonment, servitude, or moral restraint.

So now we have a “Eureka” moment! Don’t we?

Just as the stone was labelled “Franche” or “Free”, because it was “superior” or “excellent” in its nature, the stone worker obtained his associated label “free” by virtue of the “superior” and “excellent” work that he produced, no matter what materials he worked.

The stone worker did not get his associated name from the fact that he worked upon a specific type of stone or for that matter that he was somehow “free” to do his work, as the word “free” is currently understood by most people today. He was referred to as “free” because the word meant “superior” or “excellent”. A “Superior Builder”, or “Free Mason”, is called such because that is exactly what he was!

Furthermore, what made possible this excellent worker’s ability to freely travel, work any stone, be free to work and to do so with or without a guild or incorporation, was the simple fact that his work and, more specifically, his skills overall, were “Masterful!”

The ramifications of this Light are enormous. It means that most every guild name and trade in the past that was prefaced with “Franche” or “Free” can no longer be considered referring to anything but “Excellent” or “Superior” workers. This also indicates that the phrase, “Free & Accepted”

Masons could not possibly mean, “Operative & Speculative” Masons. In this Light, the phrase can only mean “Superior-Excellent & Apprentice” Masons. And that’s fodder for another article.

So to conclude, some points for you all to consider Brethren:

1. How often do you accept the “Light” that Brothers offer you without doing your due diligence on what is shared?
2. When you do accept what is offered and then find the Light shared was inferior work, how do you feel about your choices or decisions?
3. What actions can you take in the future to assure that the Light you are offered is accepted in the Light in which it is given?

Thank You!