



**The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free
and Accepted Masons of Virginia**
Committee on Masonic Education



Lodge Presentation Program Paper

The Letter G

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In light of the prominence we give to the letter G in our Virginia Lodges, one might expect to receive instruction and explanation regarding its significance earlier and more often in our degrees. In fact, it only comes up twice in the Fellowcraft lecture. During the geometry lecture, we are instructed in its first allusion to the fifth of the seven liberal arts and sciences. We also are instructed that it refers to the sacred name of Deity, to whom we owe reverence at all times. It is this second allusion that gives us the best clue as to the origin of its use in modern Virginia Lodges.

Keep in mind that the letter G is not universally used in Freemasonry. It is most often found in the symbolism of English-speaking jurisdictions since our common name for Deity is God. We refer to our creator as the Great Architect of the Universe which also begins with the letter G. However, in countries speaking a Latin-derived language, the root word for God is Deus from which we get the English word Deity. From this, we can safely assume that the derivation in this context is most certainly English.

The use of the symbolic letter G is a modern introduction in Speculative Masonry. We do not find its use in the symbolism of the

ancient guilds, even the English-speaking guilds. A plausible reason would be that the Operatives not only taught geometry as a necessary science and language of building, they actually made use of it each and every day. The pervasive nature of geometry in their daily work would, indeed, give it a place of high esteem to the ancient builders, but their close proximity to its daily use would make it unnecessary to express it symbolically.

Speculative Masons do not have the same appreciation for, or understanding of, geometry and would have a need to express the importance of geometry in a more symbolic manner. This would certainly be a clue that the use of the letter G is a modern and symbolic development. But the fact that it is more modern in its use does not diminish its importance to us as Speculative Masons.

As we meditate further upon the letter G, we discover that it is the seventh letter of our alphabet. This brings up further connections. The number seven has always been a sacred number. In ancient sacred geometry, the sacred cut (a method to quickly halve the area of a square) has the base 10 value of 7.

The equivalent letter in a more ancient language is the Greek gamma, which is the third letter in their alphabet. Three also is a sacred number. We learn that there are three attributes of Deity: omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. A more ancient language, Phoenician, also places their equivalent letter gimel as third in its alphabet.

This close correlation in our languages between God and geometry is quite fitting. Geometry is the language and science of the building trade. It is also the very language of creation. God, as the Great Architect and Creator of our universe, the Builder of our universe, certainly makes the

most intimate and extensive use of geometry in His creation. Thus, it is my conclusion that geometry might be considered as the very language of our Creator.

The word itself is interesting. “Geo” means “earth” and “metry” means “measuring.” Taken together the word geometry literally means “measuring the earth.” Now, many of you may have bad memories of geometry in Junior High or High School. But when you really stop to consider it, geometry underlies all of the other six liberal arts and sciences.

Classical geometry begins with axioms which are definitions and accepted basic truths. From here we progress to theorems or speculations, which end up as proofs, or new truths. This whole system employs a great deal of logic to arrive at these truths, rhetoric to express these truths, and arithmetic to actually prove them. So where does grammar fit in? Grammar deals with the logic and structure of our language, just as geometry deals with logic and structure in creation of physical things.

This finally brings us to Music and Astronomy. The latter is a no-brainer. When scientists talk about thrust, orbits, and trajectories the link with geometry is completely obvious. Also, with the many satellites circling our planet to measure its topography, light, heat, and radiation, these astronomical endeavors perfectly fit the definition of “measuring the earth.”

But, where does music fit in? Our ancient friend and Brother Pythagoras had a close connection with both music and geometry. He is considered to be the father of music because of his seminal work on the geometry of music and his developing the very first system of musical notation – just ask any student majoring in music. Pythagoras took harp

strings of identical length and stretched them to equal tensions with equal weights. When pinching off one of the strings in its exact center, he made the exact same tone only an octave higher. In fact, he discovered the concept of the octave. It was not an arbitrary division of eight steps in the scale, but the discovery by trial and error that the pleasing tonal progressions were perfectly even numbered relationships in the lengths of the strings. Thus, we can understand how music and astronomy share the very closest relationship with geometry. Geometry is the means by which the other two are expressed.

But, there is another aspect of geometry which is important in the Masonic context. This is the ancient subject of sacred geometry mentioned earlier. Whereas classical geometry deals with the niceties and uniformities of our universe, sacred geometry deals with the uneven, unknowable, incomprehensible, irrational numbers. For convenience we refer to these numbers as pi and phi. They describe the most pleasing and the most commonly occurring relationships in our world, but their exact mathematical values have never been perfectly calculated, not even by super computers –but this is a topic for another discussion.

The Great Architect of the Universe has given us an understanding of geometry as the under girding of everything in His creation. He has also given us sacred geometry to remind us of our limited ability to understand and comprehend. The letter G in our Lodges stands as a constant reminder of our obligation to the Deity and recommends to us the study of geometry. For it is through geometry that we can better understand and appreciate God's creation, and this understanding and appreciation brings us closer to the Almighty.