

Masonic Philosophy
By Joseph Fort Newton

Dr. Joseph Fort Newton was a clergyman and Masonic author. He lived from 1880 until 1950. Bro. Newton was raised in Friendship Lodge #7, Dixon, Illinois later affiliating with Mt. Herman Lodge #263, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He is the author of one of Freemasonry's classics, The Builders, on which this excerpt from a Short Talk Bulletin, published by the Masonic Service Association, was based.

Because the human soul is akin to God, and is endowed with powers to which no one may set a limit, it is and of right ought to be free. Thus, by the logic of its philosophy, not less than the inspiration of its faith, Masonry has been impelled to make its historic demand for liberty of conscience, for the freedom of the intellect, and for the right of all men to stand erect, unfettered and unafraid, equal before God and the law, each respecting the rights of his fellows.

Some day, when the cloud of prejudice has been dispelled by the searchlight of truth, the world will honor Masonry for its service to freedom of thought and the liberty of faith. No part of its history has been more noble, no principle of its teaching has been more precious than its age-long demand for the right and duty of every soul to seek that light by which no man was ever injured, and that truth which makes man free.

Down through the centuries -- often in times when the highest crime was not murder, but thinking, and the human conscience was a captive dragged at the wheel of the ecclesiastical chariot -- always and everywhere Masonry has stood for the right of the soul to know the truth, and to look up unhindered from the lap of earth into the face of God. Not freedom from faith, but freedom of faith, has been its watchword.

The real question, after all, is not as to the quantity of life, but its quality -- its depth, its purity, its fortitude, its fineness of spirit and gesture of soul. Hence the insistent emphasis of Masonry upon the building of character and the practice of righteousness; upon that moral culture without which man is rudimentary, and that spiritual vision without which intellect is the slave of greed or passion. What makes a man great and free of soul, here or anywhere, is loyalty to the laws of right, of truth, of purity, of love, and the lofty will of God.

How to live is the one matter; and the oldest man in his ripe age has yet to seek a wiser way than to build, year by year, upon a foundation of faith in God, using the Square of justice, the Plumb-line of rectitude, the Compass to restrain the passions, and the Rule by which to divide our time into labor, rest, and service to our fellows.