

The Fellow Craft & Human Heart
By Paul C. Smith, PM

The human heart is an organ that we as human beings cannot function without; it circulates blood throughout our body which is essential to every piece of the puzzle we call life.

The heart is made up of four chambers; the two upper chambers are called atria and the two lower called ventricles. Medical professionals often refer to the heart as 'right heart' and 'left heart,' probably due to the fact that there is a muscle, called the septum, separating the two halves and the two sides of the heart each have a distinct purpose (the two chambers making the lower and upper halves respectively).

The right side of the heart collects the blood that has been used by the body (it is called deoxygenated blood) and pumps it to the lungs. Once that blood has been oxygenated by the lungs, it is collected by the left side of the heart and pumped to the rest of the body.

The human heart then, for purposes of this discussion, will be categorized as making up two sides, or two chambers. Further, both sides of the heart provide essential functions to keep the human body going, and this is important for our discussion.

In our Fellow Craft degree, we arrive at the outer chamber of King Solomon's temple and must gain admission; we pass through the inner chamber and gain admission where we finally arrive at the middle chamber or Holy of Holies to offer up our adoration to God. This chamber, according to scripture, houses those laws which have withstood thousands of years of trials and tribulations.

The Ark of the Covenant may be a real, substantive vessel that contained the Word of God as given to Moses, or it may just have been a vessel that symbolized the faith of our ancient Jewish brethren at the time- I do not doubt its existence, or its importance to Masonic ritual. Further, I do not doubt the existence of King Solomon's temple; I believe that it existed and that its original design was to honor He who is the Lord.

But I believe that the ritual of the temple chambers in the Fellow Craft degree have more to do with our own bodies than they are meant to in history.

Our Grand Master (in New Hampshire, Paul M. Leary) has noted that Freemasonry is about introspection, that is to say, Freemasonry has often been described as making good men better, but this is not to be achieved by we (as in THE fraternity) making individual brothers better, but brothers using the teachings of Freemasonry to inspect how they can be better citizens, husbands, fathers, sons, brothers, employees and the like.

This introspection is the correlation to the middle chamber and the human heart as well, even at the physical level.

When humans began to understand the workings of the heart during the birth of modern science, the time of renaissance to enlightenment, our society was beginning to take shape. We then began to think about the structures in Masonry in a free way, rather than the operative way, and this led to our current philosophical bent on society. I believe it was then that our ritualists, who by now understood things such as the way the human heart works, used their interpretation of physiology and blended it with their form of philosophy to arrive at our degrees.

Thus it appears to me that the outer chamber is the right heart, where the blood comes from the body to be cleansed through the lung, and only after gaining admission is it welcomed to the left heart, the middle chamber or Holy of Holies, where it is passed on to the body to keep it alive.

The heart performs the functions necessary for life; it is the gift of God to mankind to sustain him through regular use. This I believe is the importance of man's physiology to the ritual of the Fellow Craft. The middle chamber is where we fellows of the craft come to worship, it is a sacred place where we come to learn; does this not refer to our hearts as well?

Do we not look to our hearts to find truth, which is to say, when we seek God, do we not seek Him from within? We are travelling upon that level of time, to that place not made by human hands; isn't it that we seek Him in those travels and that when we come to Him at the end of our lives, we are taught to lay whatever is in our hearts to Him for judgment?

I am imperfect; Solomon, who built the massive temple to our God was imperfect, indeed his kingdom was torn apart because he diverged from God, but the Ark containing our Laws was not destroyed despite the destruction of Solomon's temple, and mankind has known God for lo these thousands of years, so our hearts have been uplifted to Him by we mortal men since.

The human heart is a real thing; perhaps the temple of Solomon was not, perhaps the middle chamber is a fallacy and there was no Ark-but perhaps when we arrive at the outer chamber of our hearts and seek admittance we are there seeking to know God better, and when at last we are admitted to the Holy of Holies we have found Him, finding our spiritual temples completed, secure in the knowledge we found Him as just and upright Masons. This is what I believe the chambers in the Fellow Craft Degree represent; the human heart, and arriving at perfection before the Lord.