

BOOK REVIEW

PRACTICAL FREEMASONRY – Matt Gallagher

I have to say that reading Matt Gallagher's *Practical Freemasonry* opened my eyes to the symbols of Freemasonry. Symbols that I have taken for granted over my 11-year experience in being a Free and Accepted Mason.

I have a better appreciation for the tools and implements of the craft and their use, as each are highlighted to the degrees. This book would be enjoyable for the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason.

As Matt Gallagher described his experience with his travels, it was, for me, like looking in a mirror. I felt like I had followed in his footsteps. Going to lodge month after month, seeking answers to my personal questions only to return home or reflecting back during the drive home and wondering what just happened in the hour to hour and a half meeting that would answer my questions – questions as to *why* we do *what* we do in ritual and degree work to make a man better.

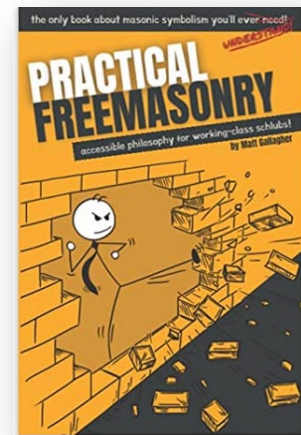
The author describes the three levels of understanding as Axiomatic, the Practical, and the Esoteric, and how they are used and how they differ. He illustrates them in a simple manner and uses perfect examples to form a better understanding.

Practical Freemasonry is about practicing Freemasonry, but if you don't have the knowledge of the tools and symbols and how to use them, it's all for naught. We need to find out what the meanings of our symbols are, so that we can better ourselves and shine brightly.

The twenty pages dedicated to the 24" gauge are loaded with useful information that should be followed by all Masons and taught to every Entered Apprentice, carefully.

Next is the Common Gavel and its uses, made known to us in a contemporary time. Gallagher explains how to use the gavel, not only on ourselves, but also on other brothers to shape us as living stones and also our lodge as a Temple.

We move on to the section of the Fellowcraft and the three tools assigned to this degree. These tools are not used to measure or chip away. These are building tools – designing tools. The square measures right and wrong. The author gives great examples comparing universal morality, relative morality and their meaning.



Brother Gallagher gives simple and clear examples of how to define a man of moral character in the ways needed. The plumb is described as man's narrative path through life, and the three stages we each Travel as a child, adult and aged man approaching the end of our travels. Included is the wonderful exercise in self betterment that we can use weekly for a month or year to report to ourselves our progress. Maybe our family and friends or co-workers will notice.

The section on the level gave me some interesting new insight. Not only about time (I was aware of that), but that we are all equal in one aspect – the inevitability of death!

Part three of *Practical Freemasonry* discusses the Master's tools and what a true Master Mason is and seeks to be come. We are building the walls to make a Temple, not to separate, but to unite and strengthen to hold together. In today's times there are so many different Masonic Lodges. There are ones that have a regular business meeting, research lodges, and lodges for ritual. Brothers, our Craft is in dire need of reflection on who we are, why we do the things we do in degree work and how to be a positive leader in Lodge. To apply the mortar of brotherhood, set clear goals, lead from the front, be decisive and show positive behavior so fellow brothers will want to be at Lodge.

I will quote Brother Gallagher in his own definition, "Freemasonry is merely a philosophy of morality, ethics, and living. Wisdom and philosophy is in the doing and not the knowing."

Please keep searching.

Published in 2021, *Practical Freemasonry* is available through online booksellers.

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