

A Statement made by the First Grand Master of The Order of Women Freemasons, M. Wor Bro. The Rev. W.F. Geikie Cobb , DD, Rector of St Ethlburga's, Bishopsgate, London

Saturday 20th June, 1908

Our Aims and Purpose

What is the driving force and faith that has made possible the foundation of our Order? Brethren, it is the dynamism of a burning belief in the real and acute need for the Masonic spirit, and in the possibilities of a Masonic Order for women.

Let me make it quite clear and so obviate any feeling of antagonism which may be met and felt from members of the established Men's Order. We do not seek to be admitted to their Lodges and will not admit men Masons as visitors ourselves. Our appreciation of the fact that men and women should practice Masonry separately, although in an identical manner, is based on experience gained in the early years of our Co-Masonic Mother Order.

Of course women were refused admission into Operative or Guild Masonry because they were unable to take their share in the heavy physical work. Other regulations concerning the religious belief, the legitimacy and the physical fitness of candidates which also obtained in operative masonry have since been waived or modified, and we claim that the permanent exclusion of women from the Masonic light cannot be held to be an unalterable landmark.

Men of understanding, when questioned individually, search their hearts and have to agree that Woman today is spiritually and intellectually more mature than in the past, having, through education, freed herself from the lowly position in which she had been kept for many centuries. She has done so by proving her worth in every type of responsibility which can fall to the individual in the modern world. It is certain that no woman will seek the spiritual solace of Masonry if she is not endowed with the finer qualities - there are many other ways in which she can apply usefully her moments of leisure through various secular societies. I can but endorse the argument often invoked that the mixing of the sexes would destroy the feeling of spiritual communion achieved only by members of one sex meeting together, and refer you to the clear statement I made above.

Women do feel the need for a spiritual haven in which to refresh their minds and seek new strength through friendship and understanding and devotion to face the many responsibilities of daily life in which they are now full partners with men. In their own evolution, men have long realised the full value of the building of the individual into a larger corporate unity, this experience of Brotherhood is equally needed and wanted by women.

In former civilisations, in Greece and Rome, women had their own mysteries as the men had theirs, but these are irretrievably lost in the mists of time. Traces are however preserved in the House of Masonry, which has also gathered into itself the tributaries of Guild union with its religious drama the symbolism of the mysteries and the teaching of the philosophers most wonderfully expressed in parable form in the Bible. No contemporary designed ritual could carry the deep experience that Masonry has acquired throughout the ages.

And is not woman fundamentally qualified to understand and appreciate Masonry? Is she not a builder, of her family, and of the character of her sons and daughters? What greater help could she have in her creative tasks than the teachings of Speculative Masonry?

Many men have refused to become Masons for the sole reason that their wives would be unable to share the joys of masonry with them. Through our Order, we offer these women the full benefit of Masonry, for it is practised by us in the true and only way, founded on a belief in the Fatherhood of God. to achieve the Brotherhood of Man. Our Order unhesitatingly rejects and repudiates any Masonic organisation which does not place Faith in God as its corner stone. At its moment of foundation, our Order presses forward on the road worn by so many feet before us, and though its present members look forward to the full harvest, even if it be beyond their time, all their thoughts today are for the proper sowing.

'Protector of Travellers bless the road.'