

ARE WE REALLY MAKING MASONS?

by C. Donald Prosser, MPS

Definition: **Make** To Bring Into Being: Put Together: Build: Form; Shape.

My own Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of Florida, instituted a Masonic Education Program for their candidates in 1954. This Masonic Education Program was built on the premise that the Fraternity should be "MAKING MASONS." Prior to this, only a program of catechism in the Three Symbolic Degrees was being used. The Grand Lodge Masonic Education Committee was concerned that our candidates were not receiving sufficient education for a man to truly become a living and thinking Freemason.

This new Masonic Education Program stressed the importance of Masonic History, Masonic Philosophy, and Masonic Tradition of the Fraternity as well as the personal enrichment and growth that each candidate would experience as a man when he became a True Freemason. It also brought into focus the basic lessons of life and the principle that Freemasonry has so long stood upon; "to Make Better Men Out Of Good Men. " This Masonic Education Program was designed to help a candidate comprehend and understand that great Masonic Foundation Cornerstone "the Brotherhood Of Man Under The Fatherhood Of God."

During a survey that I undertook to ascertain which Grand Lodges had a Masonic Education Program, I found the following statistics; of the 21 Grand Lodges that responded only 2/3 had any type of program at all. Half had converted to a simple catechism program with some Masonic Education and the other half had no Education Program for the candidates, Lodges or their Lodge Officers.

Lately we have heard a new theory promoted, that we must change to fit modern times, eliminate or shorten our process whereby our candidates receive the Three Symbolic Degrees of Freemasonry. To do this, these so-called modernization experts tell us we must reduce or eliminate the memory work to facilitate the fast pace of today's life and our lack of available time. It is no secret that our Fraternity has been losing membership for more than 50 years, but are we really looking at the root cause of this decline in membership, by saying that it is the speed of modern society and lack of personal time that is causing this? Can it be that today's man is looking for something or some place where he can have time away from today's hectic pace? Some place where he can find kindred spirits, and some peace and quiet to contemplate, reflect and refresh his very soul? Why has Freemasonry remained alive and able to influence men's lives and through them society at large during the past 270 years, when all other fraternal and social organizations have appeared and died? I think the answer lies within Freemasonry's very being and foundation. RELIEF, TRUTH AND BROTHERLY LOVE are not hollow words; to help those who are in distress, to be truthful in everything we do in our lives, and to love all mankind as Brothers is the very essence of what the world is searching for and needs in this so called fast paced modern world.

A man comes to the door of Freemasonry in search of filling a void that now exists in his life. He is looking for a higher plane upon which to live his life. When he encounters the teachings of Freemasonry, taught as they should be taught, this void becomes direction and inspiration and therein lies the problem.

Lodges are not teaching any of these great Masonic principles. They are merely pushing their candidates through the Three Symbolic Degrees by teaching either a full or shortened form of catechism or possibly no catechism at all with no other form of Masonic Education, to enlighten him with knowledge about the Fraternity and its way of life. Is it any wonder that Lodges are having extreme difficulty in obtaining instructors and Lodge Officer candidates, when a candidate completes the Three Symbolic Degrees and still knows nothing about what Freemasonry's basic fundamental beliefs are, and the principles which we as Freemasons are to live by in our daily lives? Is it any wonder that our new members are dropping out after 2-3 years because Freemasonry has given them nothing that we promised in the beginning of their Masonic life?

The answer lies within us and Freemasonry. We must give our candidates more Masonic Education, not less. We must revise our current thinking that a man must progress from one degree to the next in the minimum time possible, that a Lodge's only aim is to make him a Master Mason as quickly as possible. The catechisms must continue to be taught, but with increased emphasis that the teaching process is also meant to explain and enlighten the candidate about what the catechism means in relation to Freemasonry and how it binds each and every Brother to each other and to the Fraternity. To teach our candidates the catechisms without the explanations and accompanying Masonic Education is wasting his time and eliminating the very process whereby he becomes a living and thinking Mason.

A Masonic Education Program should be the foundation of every Grand Lodge's candidate process. If we do this then we are truly "making Masons" and giving them "Masonic Light." The definition of LIGHT in regard to Freemasonry is as follows; Light = Knowledge, Information, Mental Or Spiritual Illumination. Anything less and the Fraternity is giving up the very principles of Freemasonry MAKING BETTER MEN OUT OF GOOD MEN. "We are throwing away the very reason for the existence of our Symbolic Lodges. According to the Masonic Principles laid down by our Masonic Forefathers, the ONLY purpose of a Masonic Lodge is to "make Masons."

If the Fraternity returns to teaching and emphasizing to our candidates and Brethren, the Masonic cornerstones of our Fraternity, Relief, Truth And Brotherly Love, they will again experience an awakening in their lives and the lives of their Lodges. All people with whom they come in contact with, will know that something dramatic has happened to them. If we do not return to the foundations and basic teachings of our gentle Craft, we will indeed not survive, because these beliefs have down through the ages, been what has made our Craft distinct and unique among all organizations. We will become what some of those who would institute or called modernization upon Freemasonry seem to want, just another social or civic club without direction, education, philosophy or foundation.

I urge each Lodge, its Lodge Instructors and Officers to dedicate themselves to "making Masons." I urge all those Brethren who have not received the Masonic Light they should have had, to seek that Light and request their Lodges to insist that their Grand Lodges institute a Grand Lodge Masonic Education Program for their candidates, Lodge Officers and Brethren. The Program can and should be used for ALL Brethren, whether he is an Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft or Master Mason.

If we as a Fraternity fulfill this basic requirement to our candidates and Brethren, the men coming into our illustrious Fraternity will be "True Freemasons," not card carrying members and Masons in name only. By the way they lead their daily lives, the outside world will again know and respect Freemasonry and its Brethren. Our Brethren will be truly living examples of Freemasonry. Non-Masons will notice the change in our candidates, Brethren and will be interested in the change and inspire its members. We will begin to see our membership roles grow, our suspensions for nonpayment of dues will cease to be a problem except for our Brethren in distress, which is not a problem but a duty which we are called upon to help with, and a lack of Lodge Instructors and potential Lodge Officers will also decline.

In essence we must; strengthen our Fraternity by increased Masonic Education and instruction of our candidates and Brethren, not weaken it by no Instruction.

Wayne Anderson, FCF, MPS

Tel: 613-634-3029 (H)

Cel: 613-453-7791

Alle Menschen werden Brueder 2B1 ASK1