

# You Called me Brother!

By RWBro Wayne Anderson

The Craft is a society with secrets, but until recently, the public at large thought it was a secret society. The secrets must and will continue to be guarded, but a general understanding of what Masonry stands for and does is now becoming available to the ordinary citizen. As a result, some of the old myths will be exploited, respect for our aims and activities will increase, and our numbers may grow – not because numbers as such matter, but because every additional citizen who joins and commits himself to a notable ethical movement brings added strength to society.

The point is stressed by the Scriptural passage that deals with God's command to take a census of the Israelites. But not by means of counting heads. No! Everyone who wished to be counted had to contribute half a shekel, and it was the half-shekels that were counted. The lesson? That one should be impressed, not so much by mere numbers as by whether an individual was willing to make a worthwhile contribution. What then is the worthwhile contribution that one makes as a Mason? To me it is suggested by a story told by a Russian writer. He relates that a man is walking along and is accosted by another who asks him for alms. "I'm sorry, brother," is the reply, "I have nothing and cannot help you". "Don't worry," says the beggar, "you called me 'brother', and that's enough!"

This is the first thing that Masons learn to do, to call each other "brother". They meet in fellowship. They commence work in harmony and conclude in peace. They have their honest differences but respect each other the more highly for them. They see each other's virtues and, with good humour, tolerate each other's faults. Wherever they go, their unspoken motto echoes the words of Joseph, Et achai anochi mevakesh – "I go seeking my brethren" (Gen. 37:16). They know one can depend upon a brother. They are not angels – far from it – and at times their brotherliness is found wanting, but never will they let themselves forget that it is goodly and pleasant to have a brother and to dwell in harmony. But more than this, even greater and far more momentous, they know that each fellow man is also a brother, and that to each fellow man one must be able to say:

*"Brother, I acknowledge you.*

*Brother, I trust you.*

*Brother, you can rely on me.*

*Brother, I honour your dignity.*

*Brother, I respect your opinion.*

*Brother, I rejoice in your success.*

*Brother, I am happy at your happiness.*

*Brother, I feel your pain.*

*Brother, I understand your need.*

*Brother, I support your hand.*

*Brother, the world needs you.*

*Brother, I need you.*

*Brother, even if I have nothing to give you, I call you 'brother'."*

Someone has described this as the age of the unbrotherhood of man, and it is little wonder. There appears to be an epidemic of immorality wherever you turn. Injustice, exploitation, self-seeking, arrogance, callousness, corruption, victimization, viciousness, violence – no wonder the poet wrote, "A mighty wave of evil is passing over the world."

There is an old allegory in the Talmud (Gen. R. 8:5, etc.). It tells that before creating man, God called the angels together and asked their opinion on what He had in mind. "Shall I create man?" He asked them. "Create him not!" said the angel of Justice. "He will be unjust towards his brother man; he will injure the weak and exploit the vulnerable!" "Create him not!" said the angel of Peace, "He will stain the earth with the blood of his brothers; he will spread mischief and discord wherever he goes!" "Create him not!" said the angel of Truth, "Though You create him in Your image and stamp the impress of truth on his brow, yet will be desecrate Your creation with falsehood and dishonesty!" They would have said still more, but Mercy, the youngest and dearest of them all, stepped up to the Divine Throne and said, "Father, create him!"

Make him in Your image, as the crowning glory of Creation. When others forsake him, I will be with him. I will touch his heart with pity and make him kind to others weaker than himself. When he goes astray, turning from the ways of justice, peace and truth, I will gently direct him back again to the upright path, and he will be a brother again to his fellow man!" The Father of Mercy, relates the tradition, listened to the voice of Mercy, and with Mercy's support He created man.

Might one not be right in suspecting that there were times, possibly quite frequently, when the Almighty was tempted to regret His decision? When Justice was slighted, and the other fellow did not get a fair go; when people gave in to blackmail and bribery; when you were decent to others, provided they belonged to your side, but the rights of others could be trampled on with impunity...When Peace was brushed aside, and even when there was no outright war there was no concern for each other, no understanding of each other, no goodwill and generosity of thought and deed...When Truth was disdained, and the world grew full of broken promises, ambiguous half-truths and hypocritical double-talk...And yet the angel of Mercy suggested there was a fundamental decency in human beings which would, with her help, at last rouse itself.

And this is where the Masonic Craft has a crucial contribution to make. By learning to call each other "brother", by learning to recognise a brother in every fellow man, Masonry will by attitudes and acts, help to build up the moral fibre of mankind. Leo Baeck, a saint, scholar and sage, was imprisoned by the Nazis in Theresienstadt. He refused to compromise his dignity or become demoralized. He said on his release, "Some of us were determined to demonstrate that the goodness in man can be victorious over brutality and bestiality".

If we are going to use this impressive service in the midst of this vast assembly as a spur and inspiration to anything, let it be our resolution that we renew our pledge to learn to call each other "brother" and thus to stand at all times, and wherever we may be, for the goodness in man.

If we are going to allow the eventful experiences of these Masonic gatherings to leave a permanent impression, let it be our determination that Masonry in Frontenac District will find fresh energy to be benevolent in the old ways, and new vigour, to seek and adopt new ways to be of service to each other and to our society. And may the Great Architect of the Universe, whose favours we acknowledge in reverence and humility, continue to preserve the Masonic Order, by cementing and adorning it with every moral and social virtue.

*BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE  
BE PROUD OF WHAT YOU DO and  
BE PROUD TO BE A MASON.*