

THE MASONIC INSTRUCTOR

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Each of us has come to this honourable and ancient Fraternity with the purpose of improving himself in Masonry. Each of us has quickly learned that this improvement is not a passive process. We are to improve both through active study and by doing. Service and comprehension become our watchwords. "Every human being has a claim upon our good offices," and we are to "endeavor to add to the common stock of knowledge and understanding." Such are the admonitions which we receive. Such is the opportunity which Freemasonry offers us. We are provided with working tools; we hear the inculcation of "wise and serious truths," and we witness the unfolding of Freemasonry's ritual with its symbols shining like stars in a great constellation. We begin the journey from the shadows in the west toward the illuminated east. It is a journey of individual striving and personal commitment, yet it is not intended that we should travel alone or without assistance. The ancient charges give ample indication of the essential relationship between the mason who had mastered his craft and the apprentice who was commencing his training. From generation to generation, the art and the science of the builder was transmitted through a program of education within the Craft. Upon this instruction of the apprentice rested both the continuance of the art and the growth of the science.

Near the end of that era in which Freemasons built in stone, there appeared in the minutes of a Scottish Lodge and in the regulations known as the Shaw Statutes the mention of an appointed "Intender." The duty of the Intender was to expand the knowledge and to increase the understanding of the apprentice and new mason. In the position of the "Intender," we find an early expression of the importance of a continuing program of education within the active and well-functioning lodge. Today, the Masonic instructor within each lodge is an "Intender" in the fine old meaning of that term. His is the opportunity to assist the accepted candidate and the new mason in building a Masonic foundation. His is the challenge to encourage the new mason's efforts, to provide direction, and to give a proper scope to the abilities of each individual whom he has the privilege of helping. But it is not the new mason only who is the beneficiary in this process, of Masonic education, for through the instructional process the teacher comes to more fully understand the meaning of his own profession as a Freemason.

THE CHALLENGE

When we apply the analogy of that greatest of cosmic events to the making of a mason, we mean no irreverence. When the potential of Freemasonry is consummated in the reality of a man's life, it is for him a cosmic event. It is for him the coming of a new day - a day illumined by the light which dispels the darkness. There must be light at the beginning of a man's Masonic experience - a light which kindles his interest and which makes clear and shining his path through the three degrees of Craft Masonry. The purpose of any program in Masonic education is to assure that there will be that light in full measure. It is a challenge of the highest order, for often the opportunity of capturing the interest and of inspiring the commitment of a man to the way of the Freemason comes but once and with his knock upon the lodge door. Will there be light? Will we raise a man into the fellowship and wisdom of the Craft? This is the challenge.

THE NEED

The Fraternity has good reason to request from the initiate and new mason his wholehearted participation. Without such a willingness on the part of the individual, the Fraternity can contribute little to his experience and to his Masonic growth. Correlatively, the candidate and new mason have equal right to expect from the Fraternity ample instruction and assistance. Without such guidance and help, a man cannot be expected to find his way alone through the bewildering range of topics, ideas, and concepts which await him when he knocks upon the lodge door. Consider the spectrum which confronts the new mason:

- The multifold teachings and symbolisms of our ritual.
- The aims of the Fraternity at large.
- The history of Freemasonry.
- The present organization and government of the Craft.
- The individual's responsibility as a member of his lodge.
- The rights and privileges of the individual mason.

Obviously, it takes years of study and exposure to fully understand all these Masonic considerations, but to some extent, the candidate and new mason is exposed to all these aspects during the brief time he is taking the degrees of Craft Masonry. If we expect him to find his way, to build a proper foundation, and to feel a sense of belonging as a working member of his lodge, he must have proper help. The need for Masonic instruction of the finest caliber beyond that provided in our degree work is as obvious as it is essential.

PROPER HELP - THE SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT MEANS AND METHODS

Proper help is the key phrase in the aim of Masonic education. We should complete this phrase by adding proper help for the individual candidate and new master mason. While there are many similarities between the backgrounds, abilities, and aims of the men who seek admission into the Fraternity, each man is to some degree different and must be greeted and understood as an individual who must make Freemasonry his own. Masonic education, at its best, is personalized education based upon universal truths. It is a process of instruction which capitalizes upon the candidate's strengths and which matches the instruction to the means

by which he learns most readily. The choice of methods utilized in Masonic education is most important, for it is the applied method which sets what educators term the "climate" or the feeling of a cooperative endeavor and a sense of progress toward desired goals. The methods which we employ as Masonic instructors must be more than immediately effective; they must be consistent with the mission and philosophy of Freemasonry as well as with its ritualistic vehicle. The assumption that the ends justify the means is a dangerous one, for the means by which we deal with other human beings inevitably shape the end product. In addition, the choice of educational methods and means to be used in Masonic education must be governed by the fact that we are involved in a specialized form of adult education. It is worth taking a closer look at these factors which govern our instructional efforts.

The mission of Freemasonry is to build a better world of human relationships and achievements through the inspiration, dedication, and understanding of individual human beings. The task of the Masonic instructor, therefore, is not one of indoctrination, but rather of assisting in the growing comprehension of a new brother. The direction and the storehouse of wisdom for such a journey in growth is contained within the ritual of Freemasonry. The role of the Masonic instructor is to accompany the new brother in his journey from the west toward the East and to do so with understanding and inspiration. The vehicle which characterizes our, Craft degrees is one of symbolism and allegory. The spiritual as well as the intellectual growth of mankind has long developed by means of this same vehicle which begins with what the hands can touch and with what is common in our experience and which ends in the abstract which only the soul and the mind can grasp. The vehicle of Masonic ritualistic instruction is especially well suited to the fundamental goals of the Fraternity. A chief aim of the Masonic instructor should be to assist the new mason in exploring the wealth of meaning provided in the symbolism, allegory, and teachings of Craft Masonry.

The philosophy of Freemasonry which is carried upon the vehicle of symbolism and allegory is predicated upon the belief in the potential of the individual human being whose intellect and sense of moral purpose arise from the intimate relationship of the Creator to that which is created. Such a belief emphasizes the importance of the individual and presents the purpose of life as an on-going quest for fulfillment and, the attainment of wisdom and compassion. At every step, the methods adopted for use in Programs of Masonic instruction must assist the individual mason in his progress toward voluntary incorporation of Freemasonry's wisdom and inspiration within his own understanding and convictions.

A COORDINATED PLAN

Proper help for candidates and new master masons can only be assured through the high caliber of instructional effort within the lodges and by, the active support of such programs by the Grand Lodge acting through its Committee on Masonic Education and Lodge Service. Such a mutual assistance calls for a plan which will provide communication, assign duties, assure evaluation, and maintain support.

Alternative Approach -

In cases where the candidate load is small and where lodges are so geographically located as to allow close cooperation, lodges may wish to combine their candidate educational programs utilizing appointed instructors from the various lodges working under a chosen educational coordinator who shall make his reports to both the masters and to the District Representative of the Grand Lodge Committee on Education. It is possible that such a united program could be organized upon a district level. However, such a program would not relieve the master of each lodge from the responsibility of assuring that candidates and new masons of his lodge are receiving adequate, individualized instruction. Under such conditions it will be the master's duty to see that proper records are kept showing the educational progress of each candidate.

THE COMMITTEE ON MASONIC EDUCATION'S PART AND ROLE

The District Education Representatives of the Committee on Masonic Education

Role: The District Education Representatives (DER) shall be the contact between the Committee on Masonic Education and Lodge Services and the educational coordinators in each lodge in his district.

Duty of the DER: Duty of District Representatives: It shall be the duty of the District Representatives to assist the educational coordinators in the organization of lodge programs for candidate education, to assure a supply of educational materials, to maintain communication to and from the Committee on Masonic Education, and to help in the arrangement of training sessions for the lodge educational instructors. In those cases where lodges are pooling their educational programs, the representatives shall assist in the coordination. Of particular importance is the representative's role in relaying the field experience of the coordinators and instructors to the Committee on Masonic Education for the purposes of program evaluation and revision.

The Committee on Masonic Education's Role: The Committee shall work through the district representatives to provide the following:

Instruction and training sessions for coordinators and instructors.

Support of Lodge Programs by:

Advisory services on problems of an educational nature.

Supply of new and revised educational materials.

Providing of a regular and systematic opportunity for evaluation and revamping of the educational program and materials through the joint evaluation of representatives, committee members, coordinators, and

instructors.

Encouragement in the form of visitations and the presentations of aspects of Masonic education.

Circulation of a newsletter for coordinators and instructors featuring current information on education and shared field experiences.

Periodic updating covering advances in teaching techniques, the understanding of the learning process, and Masonic scholarship.

PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Pre-planning, attempt, evaluation, reconstruction, and renewed effort represent the process through which we humans progress toward any desired goal. As Masonic educators, we are dependent upon feedback gained during actual instruction if we are to continually improve our educational endeavours.

Finally, both the magnitude and the challenge presented in Masonic education demand that the instructor make use of the best information concerning the learning process in general. Much is known about this process, about effective teaching practice and about the variability of learning styles. IT IS NOT EXPECTED THAT THE MASONIC INSTRUCTOR WILL BE A MASTER TEACHER; however, he will find a study of the elements of good teaching practice well worth the effort. One of the great advantages of a commitment to Masonic education is the inevitable growth of instructor himself both in his knowledge of Freemasonry and in his ability to help a new brother.