

MASONRY IS - - - A PROGRESSIVE SCIENCE

By
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Science is the study of the laws and substances of nature. Philosophy is the study of man's place and his duties in the natural scheme of things. both involve pursuit of truth, which is the first and simplest definition of Science or Philosophy. The search for truth, the gathering of knowledge; these comprise the Science of Masonry. when we ask "What is masonry? What is it for? How can we use it?" we are concerned with the philosophy of it and the unfolding of the wisdom of it. We seek this wisdom in numerous ancient sources and from its symbols, allegories and legends. These are rooted in the morality and the events of old testament times and they can teach us the lessons of Masonic Science.

Asia Minor produced and preserved the ancient mysteries and in the legendary birthplace of masonry. Europe and the Western world, however, have given regularity to masonic teachings and morality and form to Masonic action, and developed the advantages which mankind may reap from them. More consistent and more simple in its mode of procedure than the ancient mysteries, masonry has put an end to the allegorical temples that were dedicated to All the Gods of the ancient mythologies. It has itself become a science, a wonderful moving science, which has existed and grown over many centuries, has held and profoundly moved a multitude of men, and has gathered us all here today. Truly it is a wonderful science.

In the sense of which thinkers of Freemasonry have used the term, "Philosophy is the Science of fundamentals", it might be correct to think of the philosophy of Freemasonry as organized masonic knowledge or as a system of masonic knowledge. Although masonry can be called a Science it is only a science in the broadest sense, however masons are not necessarily scientific. Few masons have taken the time or trouble to gather that knowledge in depth that is so desirable and so necessary to the understanding of our order. Yet are we not here today to seek understanding? Perhaps some of us only want the mountain air - some to have a party, some to simply "get away". Most of us, I hope - have come here seeking - wanting to know more of Masonry, wanting to progress.

We have come this far, we have made an effort, we have done more than many others, but it might all amount in the end to wasted time unless WE KEEP looking, asking and progressing after we have returned to our homes. We must be prepared to do more and continue our search and progress when we leave here.

I suggest that most of us are too uninterested or too lazy to take masonry seriously, and I speak from experience - my own early experience. There are so many "other things" to put before masonry. There are unnumbered

excuses we can use to explain why we can't go to lodge, or do some work in lodge. "Other things" can always come first if we don't make an effort.

Has our masonic order let us down? Is it worthwhile? Are we expecting of our leaders actions and initiatives that we should be taking ourselves? Or are WE letting OUR ORDER down, are we not taking or making the time to think? I believe that many of us are like children going to school and doing nothing, daydreaming during the day and too busy after school to study - and then worst of all, making excuses to our parents and to our teachers.

Are we really that heedless?

We have gone through the three degrees of Masonry. We have been led, we have been taught, we have been instructed, we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears. Most of us however have done nothing more. We have gained little since those early days, if indeed we have gained at all. It has been said that the nature and purpose of masonry is to diffuse light, that is, to spread knowledge among men. If that is the nature and purpose of masonry, we as masons must absorb knowledge of our craft before we can attain that goal.

If we think back on the long life of masonry we must realize that there is something more than appears on the surface. If we are less truly involved in masonry than some are surely it is because we have looked no deeper than the surface, and those that are involved HAVE LOOKED BELOW the surface. They have progressed in masonic science and philosophy. As we look at these progressing masons we know that they have found what we have missed. They have seen something, they have felt something, they have heard something that we have missed.

How have they managed this and why have we missed these things? Why do some progress in this science of ours whilst many stagnate or fall by the wayside?

It is not because they have searched for and found the most wonderful mystery of all, that one mystery, that has inspired masons throughout all generations? They have looked for this mystery. They have seen under the surface. they have gone far in the search for knowledge. they have progressed. Many of us look only at the surface and say "There is little or nothing here to interest me". We see only reflections.

There was a British judge named Troward who was a very popular lecturer and writer around the turn of the century. He was way ahead of his time in his thinking and I'd like to give you a short quotation from something he wrote:

"There is an inner and an outer side to everything; and the quality of the superficial mind which causes it to fail in the

attainment of Truth is its willingness to rest content with the outside only. So long as this is the case it is impossible for a man to grasp the import of his own relation to the universal, and it is this relation which constitutes all that is signified by the word "Truth". so long as a man fixes his attention only on the superficial it is impossible for him to make any progress in knowledge. He is denying that principle of "Growth" which is the root of all life, whether spiritual, intellectual, or material, for he does not stop to reflect that all which he sees as the outer side of things can result only from some germinal principle hidden deep in the centre of their being."

So much for the quotation from the good judge Troward.

Earl Nightingale said, "If you'll think a moment you'll realize that everything you see is an enlarged symbol -- a symbol of the seed that caused it." This is true if what you see is a person or a beautiful home in the suburbs. It's true of a dilapidated slum building or a marble skyscraper, of success or failure, of poverty or wealth, of happiness or unhappiness. Whatever you see or experience in your life is only the symbol of the seed that brought it into being.

This is why we need to look deeply into things if we are to learn what brought them about.

If someone has something you would like to have, don't envy him, or call him lucky, or indulge in self-pity. Look through what he has to the reason he has it. Duplicate the reason; match the seed and you will have it too.

Remember what the judge said. there is an inner and an outer side to everything. Not just some things -- everything! It is a superficial mind that is content to see the outside only. And he will never know the truth of what he sees until he learns to look to the inner side of what he sees and experiences.

You can learn to do this with a little practice. When you see a tree, look through it to the tiny seed from which it grew and through that seed to the tree from which it spawned. The same with a blade of grass. If you find yourself angry with someone, look deeper into the person and within yourself and you'll find reasons to get rid of your anger.

If there are things you want that you do not now have, look within them to the causes of their being and the reasons for their belonging to someone and you'll find the seed that will lead them to you.

There is an inner and an outer side to everything. And what we see in the apparent outer shell is only a symbol of the truth that lies deep within. This is what we're looking for.

Before anything can become real in the outer world the seed must be planted from which it is to grow. What do you want? Begin today to plant the seeds of those conditions and things you want to harvest tomorrow.

How foolish we are to have gone so little forward in searching. We have examples those masons who have found that mystery - who have progressed. We have seen all that and failed to look more deeply ourselves.

We who are here today obviously have the desire to learn more of our order, to look under the surface. Let us then direct that desire and mould it or channel it along the true road, the road to greater knowledge of masonry. We would not be here today if we did not want that knowledge. Let us, therefore, resolve to try during the next year to gain masonic knowledge, to learn to see below the surface - to progress. Let us use our libraries. Let us take books home, read them, study them and gather from them what can be of use to us and to our fellow men. Let us talk of masonry and its many facets, let us visit lodges to learn what we can, let us grow and progress rather than stagnate. There are many dedicated masons - men who have seen or found that special something that remains a mystery to so many of us. In talking to several of these dedicated masons, I learned that they had never been asked the "WHY" of their zeal - no mason had gone to any of them to find out WHY they were active - WHAT they had seen - WHAT they had found.

There is an old Greek parable that tells the story of how the Gods stole happiness from man and tried to find a place to hide it so that man could not find it. One suggested that it be buried under the earth in some remote area, another that it be sunk in the deepest ocean and yet another that it be hurled into the universe amongst the stars. In each case, however, it was feared that man in his wondering and searching would sooner or later find it. Finally the oldest and wisest of the Gods said "Hide it in man himself, as that is the last place he will ever think to look for it."

I suggest that these dedicated masons have sought and found the happiness, the fulfilment of masonry. They have found it, THROUGH KNOWLEDGE, IN THEMSELVES.

Let us seek and find the answers as to WHY some are active, HOW they found fulfilment and WHAT road are we going to take, and then - let us share that knowledge with our fellow brethren. Thus and only thus will we have progress, thus and only thus can masonry be a Progressive Science. We must work conscientiously towards that goal starting now for if we leave here with stagnant minds an opportunity will have been lost. I feel sure that all of us know the old saying, "There is no standing still, one either goes backward or one goes forward, one either regresses or one progresses." Let us resolve to progress in masonry.

Progress can take many forms and may be different for each one of us.

Many years ago on the Athabasca River a young surveyor came upon a bewhiskered old timer chopping kindling at the side of his cabin. He was promptly invited to stay and share a mess of fish. "Caught 'em while I'm down there gold panning", said the old sourdough. Inside the shack he busied himself fixing spuds and fish, but as he talked he made a half dozen trips up and down a four foot ladder to the iron stove perched on a platform up there. "How come you put the stove up there?" queried the surveyor when he could not contain his curiosity any longer. Don't you get enough exercise out gold panning?" the old sourdough looked at him in astonishment. "Blazes", he snorted, "any darn fool could tell that I plumb ran out of stovepipe." Yet this was progress of a sort. It was progress in comparison to cooking his meals over an open fire.

We must show progress regardless of what path we choose to follow. As long as we wish to call ourselves masons we must progress, as masonry is a Progressive Science. what path are we going to follow then, or better yet, where and by what path are we going to LEAD?

It is sad when a brother looks no further than the three degrees and decides "There is nothing here for me". He is being foolish. If a brother does look further he will, I am sure, find answers that will enable him to lead and he will become happy within himself and an inspiration to others.

The three degrees of masonry are called "Symbolic Degrees". In them, by symbols, by lectures and allegories, a mason is admonished to study and to acquire knowledge. In them a mason is offered a complete system of organized knowledge. In the charge in the first degree masons are charged to devote leisure hours to the study of such of the liberal arts and sciences as may lie within the compass of their attainments. Without neglecting the ordinary duties of his station every mason should consider himself called upon to make a daily advancement in masonic knowledge.

Thus we are taught, nay not only taught, but CHARGED from the first day of our masonic lives to make advancement in Masonic knowledge, to make progress in this science. we of the craft are workmen and our work is to gain knowledge of our order and to give and share that knowledge with others.

The great man Seneca said "No man can live happily who regards himself alone, who turns everything to his own advantage. You must live for another if you wish to live for yourself. the rewards of life are for service, and the penalties of life are for selfishness. Human service is the highest form of self-interest for the one who serves. We preserve our sanity only as we forget self in service." Let us, therefore, search for that knowledge, that we may share with others, let us reach out for it, look for it, grasp it and hold it. Let us understand that knowledge, let us use that knowledge, let us share that knowledge with our fellow masons. Let us realize that although we

often become discouraged, inclined to be pessimistic about all our errors and all the stumbling, better days can be ahead. They will be achieved when we see the labours of freemasonry, our labours, the labours that we must start now, shine in splendour. Freemasonry is growing in power and as its immortal principles take root in the fallow soul of the human heart and mind, it buds and blossoms into the foliage of kindness and the fruit of charity towards all mankind.

Masonry has survived century after century and it has grown, for it is a Progressive Science. It will continue to grow and to progress in relation to the number of Masons that look below the surface for the mystery that is knowledge and as that knowledge is shared with others.

Earlier when I made a comparison of school children and masons I asked the question "Are we really that heedless?"

Why don't YOU answer that question.

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