

MASONIC MATURITY

The following is taken from a speech delivered to Pyramid Lodge No. 869, Vilseck, Germany, by Dr. (med) Hugo Thomas, Past Grand Master, American-Canadian Grand Lodge, within the United Grand Lodges of German Freemasons, on September 21, 1978. It contains inspirational and universal challenges which each of us must face. We thank "Brother Hugo" for permitting its use as our January Short Talk Bulletin.

With my grateful appreciation I proudly salute the incoming and outgoing symbolic representatives of the trinity of Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, and all Officers and Brothers of this Lodge.

Brethren: I love our Lodges and at the end of the day it is good to feel that we have helped some Brother, that we have accomplished some Masonic groundwork. And I freely admit I don't have trouble sleeping at the end of my busy day. My biggest problem is trying to find time to sleep.

As always in Freemasonry, the election and subsequent installation of officers is a time for both acknowledgment and hope. The Brothers who have served deserve our deepest appreciation, for they have taken time and energy from their offices and their homes to apply their efforts toward the goals of Freemasonry. The friends and families of these dedicated Freemasons have witnessed their labors for the Craft and have encouraged them in their endeavors. They realize - as do the officers themselves - that to serve self only, is to enter a prison of egotism and vanity. Only by giving of ourselves can we better ourselves . . . Only by loving can we be loved. Such men, such officers become the very symbolic stone and mortar of our Order. They serve beyond the call of duty and set an example for those that follow in their footsteps. Our full acknowledgment and deepest gratitude go out to those who lay down their present tasks to go on to new responsibilities or who take a well deserved respite.

This sense of acknowledgment for past service is joined to a new hope for those who take up the work of the Fraternity and accept the duties attached to Masonic office. These new officers we greet with fraternal well wishes and confidence that they will sustain the drive, direction and accomplishment of those Brethren who have preceded them. This does not mean only those Brothers who have just held the posts of authority, but also that long line of Brethren who have served since the Constitution of the Lodge was drafted and recognized.

These men and officers - past and present - represent Masonry at its finest. Each man is a leader among men. Each has a special talent, a special love of Freemasonry and a special ability to do his job well. They meet challenges that go far beyond simply serving as officers at Stated Meetings. They give guidance and inspiration. They make the wheels turn. They accomplish real benefits.

Our Masonic achievements do not end here, for out of this service comes a sense of personal fulfillment, fine fellowship and mutual endeavor that improves and strengthens both leaders and

workers. Here in the Craft, we build character in men. We make men better and thus build a better world. It is a goal and a challenge for all to share - family, friends, members, officers. Let each of us at every Election and Installation of Officers express gratitude for the accomplishments of past officers, accept the leadership of the new Brethren and assume the full responsibility of our own important role in Freemasonry.

In unity and solidarity, let's continue the great work of Masonry, exemplify the principles we so heartily endorse, and do our utmost to promote the growth of our order in numbers and caliber, so it exerts its influence long after our own years on earth have ceased. Make it be true that Masonry "has grown in the years fulfilling-the highest hopes and inspirations of its early Brothers." Let us do our work in the new Masonic Year to "stand the test of time." We need builders not joiners; crewmen not passengers; and the program of the Lodge should be so arranged that all Brothers are attracted to our meetings and given a chance to actively participate in and push forward our real objectives. We need the skill of them all; but do not expect perfection in a man just because he is a Mason. If you do, you will be disappointed. Masonry makes men better, but no human agency makes them perfect. If he is a Mason, you have a right to presume he is a fairly good man, but do not condemn the Institution, even if a few Masons turn out bad. Even the great Teacher himself had a Judas. Our aim and purpose is to receive good men, keep them good and make them better. Judge the Order not by a few failures but by the average of its successes. The average is high and gives standards to its members, but it cannot be an infallible guide. Each of us must be a working and acting instrument within our society of Brothers, which will enable us so to live, that men might better understand who we are and whom we serve. Masonry can form us into a stronghold and landmark for goodness and nobility in the middle of evil, and enlighten us to show the way out of darkness. It can and does serve as a peaceful pacemaker in the midst of turbulence, a magnetic force influencing mankind by its pure principles. In our profession as Masons we must have the boldness to speak and act as such. It should be so obvious from the things we say and do, that we have been inspired "with the symbolic purity and perfection of our institution." Our responsiveness to these noble gifts should be with humble gratitude, but also a willingness to achieve perfection in our weakness and to regulate our lives accordingly. Paraphrasing Brother Goethe: "Only he deserves his Freedom, his Life, and his Light, who daily earns it anew." Truly, only in this manner may we grow in knowledge, faith and contemplation; in understanding and experience; in hope and charity; in brotherly love, and in the boundless joy of eternal salvation through Light in Masonry.

Our daily work in Freemasonry should be distinguished by enthusiasm and excellence. We are obligated to minister each according to the best of his ability; while we "volunteer" our daily services, we are simultaneously "drafted" by those same obligations, and solemnly charged to preserve the purity of the Fraternity unsullied. We are forever reminded and encouraged in doing so by the writer of Ecclesiastes: "Whatsoever thy hand finds to do, do it with thy might. Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required." This is true of all tasks assigned to us, minor or important: that we be true and faithful custodians of our Masonic heritage. When we combine fidelity with faith, we know we shall succeed, and only then can we truly hope the LORD will bless our decisions and actions.

When thus spiritually prepared, I believe I can truthfully state, that Germans, Americans or Canadians or any other nationality should not be elected Master of a Lodge or to any Lodge Office.

We are summoned to elect only Free and Accepted masons.

If we distinguish in any other way how we select our leaders, on Lodge or Grand Lodge level, we violate the teachings of the LEVEL . . In Lodge all men are equal and in the sacred walls of the Temple we are constantly reminded to forget the division or existence of different creeds, professions or nationalities.

I believe that the attainment of Master of a Lodge is not and was never the ultimate goal of our great Order. Our great purpose and objective is to seek admission into a Lodge and to become as great a mason as humanly possible, to receive Light, more Light and further Light, allowing the Mystic Tie to weave its wonderful message into our lives. I even sometimes think, there are certain advantages to keeping in office for more than one year that rare Master or officer who has been touched with the tender message of Masonry and who has those qualities of administration and leadership so badly needed for all well-governed organizations.

The purpose of Masonry is to bring men from darkness to Light. Therefore, may we set aside the quest for any single honor of office, and search for more Light in Masonry. So if we can find this great Light through capable leadership through a Brother, especially gifted, - who loses? Certainly not a seeking Brother or a Lodge. The office must and should seek the man; not the man the office. It really only matters that our leaders be Masons capable of leading and will never promote their own advancement to any office other than that highest of all offices-- serving his Brothers!

I, therefore, believe: Germans, Americans, Canadians or other nationalities should not be Master of Lodges or Grand Master; only Masons, who have seen Light, have allowed it to brighten the pathway and can spread it to others, should serve in this position. So if by accident of birth the selected Brother is of some nationality other than the most common in our midst, it should only be noted to strengthen our chain of Universal Brotherhood. Inspired leaders are what we need in our Mystic Circle. You, Worshipful Master, have exemplified this tenet during your term, as so many have done who have gone this way before you. Some may think of leadership in terms of political or business prominence, or some other obvious position of prominence. I'll not use the word in such a narrow sense. One meaning given in the dictionary is: a leader is one who acts as a guiding force. A great need of our society is that every Mason when qualified as a leader be an example of honor, morality, zeal and charity, compassion and aggressive willingness: Honor, that we not only refrain from doing ill, but that we extend ourselves to do good. Morality, that every facet of our lives could be a worthy example for the guidance of others, because the world needs active examples as much as it needs to be preached to. Zeal, that we not only are committed to doing much that is constructive, but discreetly letting our enthusiasm mark our behavior that others may be attracted to this way of life. Charity, for every created being that he may fulfill his destiny as designated by the Supreme Architect. Compassion, for the unfortunate, whether high or low, rich or poor; taking no pleasure in the misfortune of any. Aggressive willingness, to help meet any worthy need by giving a helping hand, a word of encouragement,

an under- standing hand on the shoulder, helping others to have hope and to believe in themselves. The list is limitless. We do not always perceive the opportunities for this kind of service, but as we use the opportunities, we learn to recognize them.

Quality of character automatically makes the possessor a leader by virtue of his example. Masonry's task is to produce that quality. Further acclaim and prominence are not Masonry's objective, though we take satisfaction when these things come to a Brother who merits them. Our prayer then, is that he will always be a Mason, in the most profound sense.

Masonic leadership, as I understand it, means consistently exercising those qualities which are inculcated in our lectures, so that each Mason is an example for good, wherever he goes; leadership through example and with truth.

I have no doubts that this Masonic maturity will continue to be the guideline of all Masters who govern this good Lodge.

Before closing this presentation, I will leave you with a few personal remarks to the outgoing Master:

Worshipful Sir, how swiftly the year has passed and we are fast approaching the end of a wonderful journey. Among our most valuable possessions are our friendship and our happy memories that you have given to us this year, and for the Brothers and friends who have proven themselves so faithful and true. We thank you for your many acts of kindness and for the courtesies; and as we bow in a prayer of thanksgiving to our Heavenly Father we thank Him for the gift of your friendship and enthusiasm. It is only through the spirit of giving that we are able to accomplish the objectives of our Order, that of extending Brotherly Love, Truth and Masonic Charity. We are most grateful for these contributions you have made to your Lodge, and we hope the Brothers will take renewed pride in their membership.

Brother William Preston expressed it well: "Virtue is true nobility, and Wisdom is the channel by which it is directed and conveyed. Wisdom with humility and virtue alone distinguish Masons."

May our Heavenly Father bless your lives in the same bountiful measure in which He has blessed ours and may He supply your every need. And late, very late in life, you may be transmitted from the fading honors of an earthly Lodge to the mansion prepared for the faithful, in another and a better world.