
ACALANES FELLOWSHIP LODGE #480

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Masonic Education Series:

FREEMASONRY, A WAY OF LIFE

by

Byron E. Hams, PM

Prince Hall Lodge #1, The M W Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Missouri and its Jurisdiction

The Masonic Education Series is part of the continuing education service of Acalanes Fellowship Lodge. The Series catalogs relevant, educational and inspirational articles written by Masonic Scholars world-wide.

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FREEMASONRY, A WAY OF LIFE

This is a talk that was made at a recent Lodge Banquet by the guest speaker, Byron E. Hams, who signs himself as "A lifetime Apprentice". It says something to all, Masons and non-masons alike.

The making of a Freemason consists in a continued course of education, training and character forming. While it may be accepted that it is an innermost desire, followed by obligations, that makes one a member of the Craft, yet in a truer sense, a man is not a Freemason unless he lives up to his obligations. Keeping this in mind, you have to realize that as an organization Freemasonry has "Members" and it has "Masons" and the two are not the same.

The Mason goes into deeper research about Freemasonry and the more extensive knowledge of its hidden art and mysteries. The philosophy of Freemasonry, when discovered and then accepted and practiced, provides simple but profound solutions to the problems of human relationships. Freemasonry is a way of living to the Mason who is interested enough to appraise and value the wealth that is his by virtue of his Masonic Membership.

The best-informed Master Mason is the Master Mason who reads and studies about the Craft. He reads and learns to understand the "Volume of the Sacred Law" of his religion and he also should read and study the "Volume of the Sacred Laws" of other religions. For to be able to have some understanding of what others believe, you have to have some knowledge of what it is that they believe.

It is with this knowledge and understanding that a Mason is able to find common grounds to come together with others, in Love, Peace, and Unity for the good of all mankind with any good man of any race, creed, or religion.

MAKING MASONRY MEANINGFUL

Freemasonry is not a religion even though it is religious in character.

It does not pretend to take the place of religion nor serve as a substitute for the religious beliefs of its Members. Freemasonry accepts men, found to be worthy, regardless of religious convictions. An essential requirement is a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being.

Freemasonry is not an insurance or beneficial society. It is not organized for profit. However, the charity and

About This Article

The Masonic Service Association of North America, started in 1919, produced a report called ***Its About Time - Moving Masonry Into the 21st Century***. It was written in response to the decline in membership of which we are all too painfully aware. Here in the United States our membership has declined from 4.1 million in 1959 of 4.1 million to 1.6 million in 2005 according available records. That is a decline of 62%!

The report explores changes in our fraternity over the past 200 years including how we are viewed by the general public. It also makes some recommendations for the future. One of the eleven recommendations that can be carried out at the lodge level is to apply concepts of education and self-improvement into print and non-print media.

With this in mind, we have added a professionally produced video to our web-site that was produced by the Grand Lodge of Indiana and is geared to candidates and those simply inquiring about our craft. Additionally, we will look for educational and inspirational pieces to include in our monthly *TrestleBoard*. With that in mind we are happy to include in this month's issue an address by Missouri brother, Byron E. Hams, PM. It is definitely appropriate for our times, inspirational, and likely to generate some discussion and debate which is an added bonus (also one of the 11 recommendations in ***Its about Time***).

Editor

services rendered are beyond measure. It teaches the Golden Rule. It seeks to make good men better through its firm belief in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the Immortality of the Soul. The tenets of Freemasonry are ethical principles that are acceptable to all good men. It teaches tolerance toward all mankind. It is known throughout the world. Freemasonry proudly proclaims that it consists of men bound together by bonds of Brotherly Love and Affection. It dictates to no man as to his beliefs, either religious or secular. It seeks no advantage for its Members through business or politics. Freemasonry is not a forum for discussions on partisan affairs.

At our Altars, without any vanity or pretense, we assemble for work and fellowship and to learn to love and cherish one another. By so doing, we bring light out of darkness, beauty out of drabness, exaltation out of despair--to the end that every Brother's life may become more radiant and meaningful.

A Mason believes that Faith is the foundation of justice, the bond of amity, and the chief support of society. He lives by Faith: he walks by Faith; by Faith he has a continued hope in the acknowledgement of a Supreme Being; by Faith he believes he will be justified, accepted and finally saved.

A Mason believes that Hope is the anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and center into that within the veil; let a firm reliance on the Almighty's faithfulness animate his endeavors, and teach him to fix his Hopes within the limits of His promises.

A Mason believes that Charity is the brightest gem that can adorn his Masonic profession. Happy is the man who has sowed in his breast the seeds of benevolence; the produce thereof is love and peace. The objects of true charity among Masons are merit and virtue in distress, persons who are incapable of extricating themselves from misfortunes in their journey through life, industrious men who, from unavoidable accidents, have fallen into ruin. Widows left destitute by lack of husbands' support. Orphans in tender years, needing a father's care. The aged, whose strength is exhausted, and who are thereby rendered unable to procure for themselves that substance necessary to nourish their declining years. This is CHARITY, the keystone of our mystic institution.

THE PRINCIPAL TENETS

The principal tenets of our profession are threefold, including the inculcation and practice of those truly commendable virtues, Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

By the exercise of Brotherly Love a Mason learns to regard the whole human race as one family, the high, the low, the rich, the poor who, being created by one Almighty Parent, and inhabitants of the same planet, ought to aid, support, and protect each other. On this principle Masonry unites men of every Country, sect, and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.

To relieve the Distressed is a duty incumbent on all men, but particularly on Masons, who are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection. To soothe the unhappy, to sympathize with them in their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to their troubled minds is the great aim we have in view. On this basis we form our friendships and establish our connections.

Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. To be good men and true is the first lesson we

are taught in Freemasonry. On this theme we contemplate, and by its dictates endeavor to regulate our conduct. Hence, while influenced by this principle, hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us, sincerity and plain-dealing distinguish us, and the heart and the tongue join in promoting each other's welfare and rejoicing in each other's prosperity.

SUMMING IT UP

In my very short overview of what a Mason is I hope that I have cleared up some of the misconceptions that are out there about Freemasonry.

Now I will move on to what is a Member. A member is hopefully a future Mason.

No one came into this world as an adult and no one comes into Masonry as a Mason. It is the hope of every Mason that by his example he will lead the Members around him to also advance in Masonry to become the future Masons of our Order.

If all of us are not what you think we should be, just remember that, "God is not through with us yet", and that someday all of us will be just what, "God wants us to be".

No man can live according to the principles and teachings of Ancient Craft Masonry and do anything, knowingly and willingly, that is contrary to moral and upright principles. Freemasonry frowns on every wrongful act and admonishes the right actions between each of us and the world at large.

Freemasonry is and should always be a guide to our actions. Freemasonry is kindness in the home, honesty in business, courtesy in society, fairness in work, pity and concern for the unfortunate, resistance toward evil, help for the weak, forgiveness for the penitent, love for one another and, above all, reverence and love for God. Freemasonry is many things but, most of all: . . .

FREEMASONRY IS A WAY OF LIFE.

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