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When Jacob Drownowski was preparing to write his famous work on the ascent of Man,

THE THOUGHT THAT became uppermost in his mind during his early preparation was this--
Man is a singular creature.

He has a set of gifts which make him unique among the animals.: so that unlike them, he is NOT just a figure in the landscape, - He is a shaper of the landscape.

Great plans, sound workings, and firm foundations have all emanated from small Books. When Moses descended from Mt. Sinai, he carried with him the First Book- small and concise. Freemasonry, throughout all the world, and among all the Hebrews, recognised the Ten Commandments as the fundamental Law, given by God to mankind, as the Moral code by which they should regulate their lives and actions, both in relation to God, and to their fellowman.

Some years further in time, another small book appeared. It was entitled- "The Great Learning". The workings contained in that small volume were dictated by one called Confucius. The first paragraph states- "The wise men, of antiquity, when they wished to make the whole world peaceful, and happy, first put their own States into proper order. Before putting their State into proper order, they regulated their own families. Before regulating their own families, they regulated themselves. Before regulating themselves, they tried to be sincere in their thoughts; they tried to see things exactly as they really were. "An astonishing definition of intellectual sincerity, and intellectual conscience,- to get our wishes out from between your eyes, and see the facts, - and see things as they are. And the crowning piece -

"And when they learned to see things as they really were, then they became sincere in their thoughts, When they became sincere in their thoughts, their own selves were regulated. When they themselves were regulated, their families were in proper order. And when their families were in proper order, their Country was in proper order". Almost, as if to say that all the Acts of Parliament ever passed could not make up for the decay of the family way of life, its organisation, and its morality.

In this, there lies a truth so profound, and yet so obvious, that nobody has ever taken the trouble to question it. And for this very reason-few people have ever set out deliberately to follow those precepts.

But embodied in that reasoned argument for sound logic is encompassed the fundamental precepts of Freemasonry. Research has a part to play in promoting a better understanding of the Craft. The Book of Constitution defines the objects of Research, to be "The Historical and comparative study and illustration of the origins, development and trends of Freemasonry, its organisation, ritual and teachings, and the dissemination of Masonic knowledge, among the Brethren". In short, the object of a Research Lodge is Education. An issue which is absolutely vital to the future of our craft. If its members are good Educators, then the Lodge will be a successful one.

But unless Research, without some findings, and as a sequel to those findings, is able to put forth a positive plan for development and extension, it is a waste of time and effort. To such a distance will the resulting cause and effort take place, that ultimately, interest will wane, and members are lost.

In former times, a Lodge of Masons, consisted of a certain number of Brethren who assemble together, to expatiate on the mysteries of the Craft; having the Holy Bible open on the pedestal, to teach them the sacred principles of religion and justice. To consider all the teachings of Freemasonry. To discuss its precepts and

its symbolism. Above all, to re-affirm those things which constitute the Character of a Mason. The ability to walk humbly in the sight of God, to cherish Mercy, and to maintain, and extend Justice to all, in society.

There is no mention in the older manuscripts and prints of early mason's lodges, of meetings just to work ceremonies, as the principle reason for their gathering. Yet, sadly, that appears to be the major work of our lodges today. Learning, almost reduced to a minimum. But Education, without learning, is a recipe for ultimate collapse. Those esoteric ceremonies in earlier times, were very short indeed, and were often carried out by a small team of Officers, meeting for that special purpose, some time before the full meeting of the Lodge. Many instances may be found of a Lodge called for say, Five o'clock, with a note stating- 'makings at four o'clock, passings at half past 4'. The actual work done when the lodge met, was, apart from business matters, the rendering of the catechisms known as the lectures. These were followed by copious explanations and discussions on the symbolism and principles of the Craft.

This was the pattern in vogue up until the Union of 1813, in many places. It is also a pattern that today's Lodges may well think on. Lodge Ceremonies are NOT a test of Merit for the Master. Their importance lies in the meaning for the Candidate, and not just in the words themselves. If the working is perfunctory, then no true Masonry is worked. In the same way, the members must not only show real interest in the proceedings, but also, must be given a part to play, in the Ceremony. But a Lodge is still not complete, and fulfilled, without some time given to discussion and contemplation of the meaning of Masonry.

William Hutchison, in his book " The Spirit of Masonry" published in 1775, tells of what a right thinking Mason should see in his Lodge.

"The Lodge appears to a Mason, as he enters that glorious place, as a representation of what the World should be in which, from the wonders of Nature, we are led to contemplate the Power of Her originator, And we are thereby also moved to exercise those Moral and Social virtues which become mankind as the servant of the great architect of the world.

The Great Book, our Volume, commences its story with the time honoured phrase,- "In the Beginning"--, and thereafter unfolds a wonderful story. Surely, with its enormous back-ground, Freemasonry should be ready to quote its origins, to those who are waiting to learn something of the Birth of the one Society that has endured from time immemorial.

During the year of 1842, there was formed in London, an Architectural College. It stood up under the banner of 'Freemasons of the Church'. Its definition was 'For the, Recovery, Maintenance and Furtherance of the True Principles and Practice of Architecture'. The Founders, announced their objects to be- 'The Re-discovery of the ancient principles of architecture. The sanction of the good principles of building and the condemnation of bad ones The exercise of scientific and experienced judgment, in the choice and use of the proper materials. And eventually, by developing the powers of the College upon a just and beneficial footing, to Reform the whole practice of Architecture.

To raise it from its then abused condition, and to bring around it, the same unquestioned honour, which was, of that day, enjoyed by almost every other profession.

It was intended that the profound views, of the College should be 'The recovery of the true principles of the practice of building, and the preservation of architectural remains of antiquity, unnecessarily threatened with demolition and destruction.

It is not difficult to relate those principles and objects to our practice of Freemasonry. Much less to social problems of our present day society. Any organisation such as ours, that can trace its history back to 1375, (that is, to the first recorded use of the name "Freemason"), and show that it has continued to be an influence on Life on this earth ever since, can surely claim to be of greater substance, and worthy of more respect, than many other institutions that have stormed across the surface of this earth. More particularly, as the building of Character is one of our great objectives.

For Freemasonry is a very special system of morality, using symbols of architecture to express its meaning.

The moral teachings of Freemasonry are clear, simple and concise. They are easily understood by the most humble initiate. But the Craft's greatness is dependant, not only on the willingness of its individual members to accept its philosophy, but also –to live what they have learned.

In the days when people laboured for six days, and nearly everybody went to their Church on Sundays, each person changed into their Sunday best clothes, for that day, a Vicar was once moved to remark on the performance of many of the parishioners., From his observations, it became clear to him, that many people brought their morality out of the closet on Sundays, along with their Sunday best clothes, aired them for that occasion, and returned all to the closet at the end of the day. Thus, forging a huge chasm, between the philosophy of religion, and the world of practicality.

In the present day, it seems that fewer and fewer of the people go to their church on Sundays, while the precepts of Truth and Justice slide further into the shadows of reality.

At a time when our country is looking at itself, wondering just how to come to grips with the multitude of problems that are forming a groundswell for confrontation with Social Justice in our society, surely Freemasonry should be putting forth, in no uncertain fashion., its standards for moral reforms. Because, Freemasonry is the one organisation which teaches those values which underpin society. Ethical and moral standards, - respect and responsibility. Without such a system of values the structure of society will surely disintegrate, as time goes by. But if Freemasonry has lost some of its relevance in the world of today, part of this issue must lie with the Craft itself. Shouldn't we be asking ourselves some questions ?. Can it be, that we, like the College of Architecture of the 19th. Century, need to recover the True Principles,- and practice of Freemasonry? Re-discover the original ancient principles for living on this Earth. Re-learn the art of good judgement, based on experience? How to choose, and use, the best people for the job in hand. By teaching, and developing the Power of The Craft, for the implementation of fair and equal opportunities for our young people. -and- The practice of true Justice.- Perhaps Freemasonry has failed to convey, not only to its members, but also to the Community at large, three important facts. Firstly, what Freemasonry is ; secondly, its purpose in this Life : and Thirdly, its message.--

--Freemasonry has three main aims;- First; To promote the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. Second, -- By such behaviour in daily life as will demonstrate to others that the teachings of the Craft have a profound and beneficial effect on all who sincerely embrace its precepts, and Third -To render practical assistance to the less fortunate members of the community. - One of the Objects of Freemasonry is to proclaim, and practise, the eternal welfare of Man as something worthy of our constant pursuit.

It is worth keeping in front of our minds one very poignant fact- that while Freemasonry is supported by three Great Pillars- (Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty),- Democracy, that most difficult of all forms of Government, - is also founded on three great pillars. One, A share in the management of the country, for the people, - Two. The Freedom to work, and Three, Justice for every-body.

Freemasonry is not a society apart- it is a part of Society. Because we have chosen to be a part of Freemasonry, - we must learn to live in two worlds. One, that ponders on the philosophy of its symbolisms, and the other, the World of practicality. This requires a balancing act of no mean proportions. For without balance, there is no real sanity, nor can there be true justice. for too long, some of the Leaders of this country have been engrossed with the need to accumulate funds. While it is good to have some money, and the things that money can buy, it is well to check up occasionally, to make sure that you haven't lost some of the things that money cannot buy.

As Freemasons, we are descendants of the greatest builders that the world has ever known. But like the College of Architects, the Freemasons of The Church, - perhaps we need to review our Aims, and Objects. Because around us, our Society needs some re-building. As every good builder will do, we must be careful what materials and resources we select, and draw on. Our greatest renewable resource on this Earth, is our young people. Shouldn't we be ensuring that we manage that resource, with all the care and concern that we can muster ?. The vast majority of our young people today are not content to sit back, and let the rest of the world go by. But large numbers of them are being forced to, simply because Society is saying to them- "There is no place for you in the scheme of things today. - We will help feed you, but do not ask for a step on the Ladders of Life! -Because there are not enough rungs to go round".! There is an old Chinese proverb that

says - ' If you give a man a Fish, it will feed him for a day, but give him food ,and a fishing line, and somewhere to fish, and he will feed himself, for the rest of his Life.

But, no matter what the problems are in the community, - always, it comes back at last, to the individual, who is a living stone in the wall of society. By every wrong deed, by every lack of integrity, society is weakened. The security and sanctity of common life is in peril. There is nothing more sacred on this Earth than human life.

By every noble act, we make all sacred things more sacred and secure, not only for ourselves, but also, for all those who come after us.

One of the great problems facing our community today, is the social behaviour of some of our citizens. Their performance is totally unacceptable. But, there have been committees set up to inquire into the reasons why young people break the laws of God and of man

Is it the straining the bonds of credulity too much, to suggest that one reason at least might be this : That they have never heard of the former, and regard the latter, with the same amount of scorn as do their Elders, who spend a great deal of the time and ingenuity in trying to circumvent them. They refuse to recognise a fundamental truth. That culture, in its highest sense, is moral as well as intellectual.

Freemasonry is a way of Life that has been established by Our Craft, which is an Art Form, and a Science. Let us be quite certain that we understand the relationship of Science to our Art. Science is the acquisition of Knowledge- Our Art is the application of knowledge within the Framework of the Divine Laws as we have them, within the Ten Commandments.

If we are to make any advances with the attitude of the outside World- we must seriously ask ourselves whether or not our teachings and philosophies have any relevance in the present day permissive society. Without having to delve very deeply, we soon discover that Freemasonry is not a Society apart- it is a part of Society that should always be apparent.- It represents stability and integrity, in a constantly changing world. Sadly, this is not the impression held by a substantial majority of the general public. If we intend, not only to be survivors in this chaotic present scene of civil disobedience, but also to be one of the Leaders for a return to public morality, and common sense social justice, we must emphasise our insistence on high levels of integrity in our Civic Leaders, as well as within our own organisation.

Above all, we must have the courage of our convictions, and be willing to show public how these convictions effectively relate to our Life today. Those wonderful thoughts and directions for action, as well expressed in the charge directed to the newly Installed Master, will soon become a litany of forgotten dreams if we fail to insist that they become our first priority. 'To forcibly impress upon the members, the Integrity, and high importance of Freemasonry, -and charge them to practice out in the profane world, those excellent concepts which they are taught within these sacred walls."

Therein lies the gauntlet which is cast forth, for all the Brethren to seize and take out into the Community at Large.

Civilization in the outside world, is a fragile, vucrable thing, and great devotion in control is needed to defend it from the attacks of the insidious. Governments, on their own, are impotent to cure the underlying sickness of society, which has deliberately abandoned reason as a guide to human conduct. And why do we need to continue to underline the principles of Freemasonry ? Simply because no people can survive, and no free Nation can endure, unless its roots are embedded in moral principles.

Through the ages all civilisations have progressed through a process of 'Challenge and Response'. Men throughout history, have been confronted with a series of challenges. When they responded to those challenges successfully, they advanced, When they failed to respond to a challenge successfully, they went into a period of decline, and eventually disappeared - as in the case of many ancient civilisations. The same thing is true of organisations. Freemasonry, today, is confronted with such a challenge. That challenge may be even sterner in the years ahead. But Freemasonry has a tremendous inherent strength. Its philosophy has stood the test of time. It is a product of the greatest thinkers of the Ages, but every generation must make that

philosophy come alive in the minds and hearts of its members. It must be seen and recognised as an effective and dynamic force for the good in the world. The Real World that men see about them today. This then, is the role of every Freemason in the Future. It is the same role we have had in the past. It is our role today, for Freemasonry does not change. The Truths it teaches are eternal. What must be revived from day to day, year to year, and generation to generation, is the dedication to follow the lessons of our craft.

Remember that one Freemason cannot do everything but every Freemason can, if he wishes, do something. Our future, as individuals, and as a Nation, is secure, if we always keep this fact close to our hearts, and before our minds. The future, undoubtedly, will challenge our spirits.

The best of us will be taxed severely, but our Glory, and the heritage we will bequeath to our children will be how we acted, -how we followed the ideals of Freemasonry- and how we inspired others to do likewise.