

Extension to the Address to the Master

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Very Worshipful Brother Fitzroy kindly gave me a copy of his lecture being the extension to the first tracing board. In that lecture he expands on the seven virtues contained in the lecture. As he has extended the first tracing board lectures so I wish to expand on the address to the Master at his installation.

The address to the Master is a very powerful charge; Unfortunately, on the night of installation the new Master is probably so distracted by the event as a whole and the requirement for him to learn the investitures of the 1PM and Wardens that the true meaning of the address to the Master escapes him. He then faces the monthly meetings and if the Lodge has work then he is flat out learning degree work and, if he acquires an installation ritual, he probably will not look at it for another 12 months. Therefore, he is unlikely to fully understand the meaning of the charge.

In one fairly convoluted sentence at the start of the address lies the basic substance of the Master's duties; The words of that sentence are:

The brethren having committed the government of this Lodge to your care, you cannot be insensible to the obligations which devolve on you as its head, nor to your responsibility for the faithful discharge of the duties annexed to the appointment; the honour, reputation and usefulness of this Lodge will materially depend upon the skill and ability with which you manage its concerns, while the happiness of its members will be promoted in proportion to the zeal and assiduity with which you promulgate the genuine principles of Freemasonry."

Where does the new Master turn to find out what he is expected to do to faithfully discharge the duties annexed to the appointment or even what are the duties annexed to the appointment. What in the heaven does zeal and assiduity mean? The basis of a good Master' lies in his leadership ability. Among the attributes, or virtues, of a good leader are the following:

Planning.
Work.
Courage.
Loyalty.
Honesty.
Perseverance.
Self discipline.
Compassion.
Responsibility.
Friendship.
Faith.

PLANNING

Leadership does not come naturally to many people. In most cases it is an acquired skill based on formal education and, most importantly, practical experience. Most people are natural followers and therefore look for the person with a plan. It does not necessarily have to be a good plan as long as it seems to provide the followers with the happiness and security they desire.

An Australian's natural manner when joining a group is usually to ask "who's the boss?" or "who's in charge?" or "who's running this show ?" or even more colourful language sometimes depending on the situation. They will look for instructions and be prepared to follow orders from "The Boss".

It is therefore vital that a Master proves his leadership by producing a plan which will provide interesting and fulfilling lodge meetings and promote happiness amongst the brethren. Without a plan there is nothing to guide the Lodge. In planning we must always keep the objects and principles of freemasonry in our minds, thus avoiding the production of an unacceptable plan.

Two examples of leaders with extremely bad plans were Hitler and Stalin. Their plans included suppression of basic human rights by force and genocide on an unbelievable scale. They were able to force their plans into execution by playing on emotion and greed and implementation through thuggery.

It took war and rebellion to prove how bad these plans were.

WORK

A Master's work is not simply a matter of attending Lodge each month and ritualistically hammering out motions which deal with the business of the Lodge and then quoting large pans of ritual during the ceremony.

A Master of a Lodge must be prepared to work hard at being the best Master he can possibly be. Not only does he have to learn ritual work but also put in extra hours in planning meetings and other social activities. Remembering always that the happiness of the brethren will depend on his ability to guide and direct the Lodge.

COURAGE

A Master's courage must be displayed by always doing what is right and not bowing to pressure to do what may be popular. He will need courage to direct members of the Lodge, some of whom may be considered to have senior status, and who may not agree with his decisions. However, the test is always "is it for the good of Freemasonry".

The courage to provide clear direction will always be respected provided that the Master does not abuse the power he is given.

LOYALTY

Loyalty is like courage In that it shows itself most clearly when we are operating under stress and has three facets

Loyalty to the principles of Freemasonry

Loyalty to the leaders of Freemasonry

Loyalty to the members of the Lodge

By showing loyalty to the principles of Freemasonry, a Master will demonstrate to the members of the Lodge that Freemasonry has true moral foundations which they should be proud of.

By displaying loyalty to the District Grand Master and the Grand Master a Master demonstrates to the members of the Lodge the proper respect which must be shown to those in authority. Remember the words of the address to the brethren, "such is the nature of our constitution, that as some must of necessity rule and teach, others must submit and learn".

A Master must show loyalty to the members of his Lodge by accepting responsibility for the actions of a Lodge when necessary. The ability to delegate is important. However, a Master must adopt the doctrine of noblesse oblige when such is necessary.

HONESTY

To be honest is to be real, genuine, authentic and bona fide. To be dishonest, engenders the idea of fake, fictitious and cheating. Honesty expresses both self-respect and respect for others. Dishonesty does not respect reality.

Subordinates will not respect a leader who will not admit he is wrong when proven so. I believe that most people recognise that no one is infallible and provided we admit our mistakes then we will retain the respect of others. However, we can't make too many mistakes otherwise that will certainly lose the respect of subordinates.

PERSEVERENCE

A good leader perseveres with his plan and does not easily give in. We need courage to persevere and we must understand that the best of plans fail through hesitation, faltering, wavering, vacillating, and just not sticking with it.

Remember Robert the Bruce - "if at first you don't succeed, try, try again"

However, persistence and perseverance are not good when they are used to frustrate and block the will of the majority. This type of perseverance is destructive. In addition, persevering with a bad plan can also be destructive. As such, a leader must always be prepared to accept criticism of his plan and assess it in the light of the likely outcomes.

SELF DISCIPLINE

Self discipline when coupled with a good plan, hard work and perseverance makes a formidable leader. This quality again requires courage or the ability to do what is right. Above that, it also requires a leader's ability to remain calm during times of stress and not to lose his temper. A leader must not follow impulses but be disciplined to stick to the plan. However, he must also have the self discipline to accept criticism and evaluate suggestions and be flexible enough to alter the plan where necessary.

COMPASSION

This is the quality that makes us human beings. it is linked with mercy. Remember our ritual that asks us to judge with candour, admonish with friendship and reprehend with mercy. Compassion is the virtue which takes into account the distress of others and guides us to assist them.

The charge delivered by the Senior Warden in the first degree talks about the "all important duties we owe to God, our neighbours and ourselves" and goes on to challenge us to act towards our neighbour on the square, to render him every kind office which justice and mercy may require, to relieve his necessities and soothe his afflictions and to do to him that, which in similar cases we would wish he would do to us.

The other important part of the address to the Master stresses that "when one is said to be a Freemason the world will know that he is one to whom the burdened heart may pour forth its sorrow, to whom the distressed may prefer their suit, whose hand is guided by justice and whose heart is expanded by benevolence".

Compassion promotes benevolence "which like its sister mercy, serves to bless he who gives as well as he who receives". No Freemason should ever forget the lesson on benevolence he learnt on the night of his initiation, and when he becomes Master he should display compassion and benevolence at every opportunity.

RESPONSIBILITY

A Master is responsible for the actions of his Lodge. There is the ritual, The Book of Constitutions, the Lodge by laws, the by-laws of District Grand Lodge, the Statutes of our Local, State and Federal Governments and the Volume of the Sacred Law. Each of these publications sets down a number of rules for us to obey. A master is responsible to see that the Lodge obeys all those rules.

A Master is not responsible for the actions of an individual member if he contravenes any of the above rules without consultation with the Brethren of the Lodge or while acting independently of Freemasonry. A Master is not responsible when a brother steals or murders unless he is a party to the offence.

Responsibility comes with maturity. Those who are irresponsible are childish.

FRIENDSHIP

A master "must admonish with friendship". What does this mean. As Freemasons, above all other societies, we must act towards our fellow brethren "on the square".

A Master cannot stand aloof from the brethren of the Lodge. As he is entrusted with the column of the Ionic order he is told "It is an emblem of wisdom and points out that you are to combine wisdom with strength and firmness of mind, and the beauties of persuasive eloquence, in the government of the Lodge"

A Master cannot use dictatorial attitudes to control the Lodge. He must use friendship and persuasion to gain the trust of the brethren and then once he has gained that trust they will cooperate with his plans.

FAITH

"In all cases of difficulty or danger, in whom do you put your trust?"

I have never heard a candidate say anything else but GOD. He has most likely been prompted with the answer given the circumstances he is in. However, I have never heard a candidate object against the answer. Therefore, as a Master he should have faith to rely on the assistance of God through prayer.

The address to the Master contains "in fine W.M., by a strict observance and above all, the precepts laid down for our guidance in the V. of the S.L. which are given as a rule and guide to our Faith " Therefore a Master can look to the V. of the S.L to refresh his Faith.

The charge in the first degree, which is delivered by the S.W., contains the suggestion that we owe God all important duties which include "by never mentioning his name but with that awe and reverence which are due from the creature to his creator, by imploring His name in all your lawful undertakings and by looking up to Him in every emergency for comfort and support".

If a Master has faith he has a number of sources for his guidance.

A master must also have faith in his superiors to be able to govern correctly. The Installation ritual of the Grand Master contains the words "to rule has been the lot of many but to rule well has not been the fortune of all those who have held power". A Master should have the confidence that the brethren who run Freemasonry can do it well.

A master must have faith in his brethren to do the work of the Lodge.

Above all, a Master must have faith in his own ability and where he does not have certain skills he should have the ability to rely on others and have faith that they are right.

SUMMARY

'No man is an island". A master is not alone. He should feel comfortable with his own abilities to plan the activities of a lodge and by using all the above virtues, be the best Master he can possibly be.

CARRY ON by Robert Service

It's easy to fight when everything's right,
And you're mad with the thrill and the glory;
It's easy to cheer when victory's near
And wallow in fields that are glory,
It's a different song when everything's wrong,
When your feeling infernally mortal;
when it's ten against one, and hope there is none,
Buck up, little soldier, and chortle:
Carry on! Carry on!
There isn't much punch in your blow.
Your glaring and staring and hitting out blind
You're muddy and bloody, but never you mind.
Carry on! Carry on!
You haven't a ghost of a show.
It's looking like death, but while you've a breath,
Carry on! my son! Carry on!

And so in the strife of the battle of life
It's easy to fight when you're winning:
It's ease to slave, and starve and be brave:
When the dawn of success is beginning.
But the man who can meet despair and defeat
With a cheer, there's a man of God's choosing;
The man who can fight to Heaven's own height
Is the man who can fight when he's losing.

Carry on! Carry on!
Things were never looming so black.
But show that you haven't a cowardly streak,
And though you're unlucky you never are weak.
Carry on! Carry on!

Brace up for another attack.
Its looking like hell, but - you never can tell:
Carry on! old man! Carty on!

There are some who drift out in the deserts of doubt.
And some who in brutishness wallow:
There are others, I know, who in piety go
Because of a heaven to follow.
But to labour with zest, and to give of our best,
For the sweetness and joy of the giving:
To help folks along with a hand and a song;
why, there's the real sunshine of living.

Carry on! Carry on!
Fight the good fight and true:
Believe in your mission, greet life with a cheer:
There's big work to do, and that's why you're here.
Carry on! Carry on!
Let the world be the better for you;
And at last when you die, let this be your cry:

Carry on! My soul, carry on!

Bibliography:

- 1.The various rituals of U.G.L.Q.
- 2.The book of Virtues - Bennet J - First edition - Bookman press of Australia
3. 'The various text books for a Degree in Life from the University of Hard Knocks'
