

A Masonic Minute

Some must of necessity Rule and Teach

During the Ceremony of Installation, the Master-elect is required to give his *unqualified assent* to several points read to him in a *Summary of the Ancient Charges*. One of them states, “*to propagate the knowledge of the mystic art.*” Later in the Ceremony, he is charged “*to communicate light and instruction to the Brethren.*” During the opening of every subsequent meeting over which he presides, he is reminded of his stated duty: “*to employ and instruct the Brethren in Masonry.*” Thus, the Worshipful Master assumes a heavy responsibility.

The Lodge has always been a place of learning. The Ancient Charges make this clear: “*A Lodge is a place where Freemasons assemble to work and to instruct and to improve themselves in the mysteries of their ancient science.*”¹ In Operative times when the lodge was a simple hut erected on the building site, the Apprentices were indentured to Masters to learn the skills of the stonemason’s trade – the trade secrets. When Freemasonry was transformed into a gentleman’s philosophical society in the age of enlightenment, the object was “*the cultivation and improvement of the human mind.*” So it remains to this day.

This has been clearly and forcefully articulated in a recently published note by W. Bro. Andrew Hammer, the author of Observing the Craft and eminent speaker who addressed our Annual Communication in July 2013. “*The very origin of Freemasonry itself is in education. Whether it be the practical education in stone-cutting found in the operative craft of masonry, or the search for inner knowledge and science presented to us by the speculative craft, the foundation of the art is inexorably based in teaching and learning. Without it, there is simply no Freemasonry taking place in a Lodge. Therefore, every meeting of the Lodge should offer some amount of Masonic education, be it through the degrees, or through presentations on the various lessons of the Craft. Even a ten-minute talk focused on the symbolic meaning of a single working tool is far better than a meeting where nothing but donations, dinners, and dues are on the agenda. ... A*

¹ The Charges of a Freemason, III. Of Lodges – reprinted Part VI The Book of Constitution

Lodge without Masonic education cannot be an observant Lodge, and is arguably not any kind of Lodge at all. The search for more light is at the heart of Masonry.”

Freemasonry teaches that all men are created equal – sons of Adam. However, within this concept there is, fortunately for the welfare of society, a wide variety of skill, aptitude, knowledge and experience. Everyone has something unique to contribute to the general good of humanity. However, not everyone is equipped to teach, train, or coach. A good leader knows how to identify and empower the human resources at his disposal – to delegate by aligning task with talent. It is his most valuable tool.

In our traditional history we have an instructive example. We read in the sacred writings that *“Solomon’s wisdom surpassed that of all the men of the east and of all Egypt. For he was wiser than any man. ... Men of all races came to listen to the wisdom of Solomon.”*² Yet, when he began the construction of the great Temple at Jerusalem, he formed an alliance with King Hiram of the neighbouring kingdom of Tyre to supply the necessary men and materials and retained the master builder and skilled artificer, Hiram to oversee the work. In other words, he delegated.³

Perhaps the Worshipful Master, as the humble representative of King Solomon, symbolically occupying the Chair of Solomon in the Lodge, should imitate his example and delegate the planning and presentation of learning opportunities to those Brethren with pedagogical training, skill, experience and knowledge. We cannot impart to others that which we do not possess ourselves. Every lodge has a vast talent pool of experienced, knowledgeable, able and willing Brethren – often just waiting to be asked to contribute.

Bro. Albert Pike issued this challenge more than a century ago, but which remains valid to this day: *“He who would become an accomplished Mason must not be content to hear, or even understand, the lectures; he must, aided by them, and they having, as it were, marked out the way for him, study, interpret, and develop these symbols, for himself.”*⁴

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² 1 Kings 4: vv. 30 / 34

³ A full list the officers appointed by Solomon is given in 1 Kings, Chapter 4.

⁴ Pike, Albert. **Morals and Dogma.** pp. 22-23