

Why This Confusion In The Temple?

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Chapter 1

Introducing the Shock Treatment

Applying a Shavian witticism to present-day Freemasonry, the author of "Whither Are We Traveling?" asserts that not only do Master Masons need to be shocked, but they need to be shocked pretty often.

ONCE UPON a time the labors of the Craft came to a standstill. There was confusion in the temple. A trestleboard, which long had displayed the designs of a master workman, was blank. Like sheep without a shepherd, the workmen wandered about idly. No longer was there a sense of direction; order had given way to chaos. A noble Tyrian in whose mind the designs had been conceived had been stricken down in the performance of duty – *not by enemies from without the temple, but by foes from within.*

The extent to which a legend may be repeating itself in American Freemasonry today may be open to dispute, but certainly no man can challenge the premise that the Craftsmen are not at their labors.

And few, I daresay, will take issue when I suggest that there is indeed confusion in the temple.

Regrettably, the analogy ends there. Designs of a sort are on the trestleboard, but are they designs of master workmen? From where I view the scene they are not. Rather are they the faulty sketches of amateurs. All too often our idle workmen are confronted with patterns foreign to the style and purpose of the temple we are erecting. Sometimes I feel it would be far better if the trestleboard were entirely blank than to try to build a structure of beauty and majesty with plans that are fundamentally unsound.

AT THE RISK of offending some of my friends, I submit that in American Freemasonry today too many fertile minds are having too many bright ideas. And those bright ideas-if we can dignify them by calling them bright-bear little or no evidence of a sense of purpose or direction. It is as if each workman were attempting to take the place of the Master Builder, and making a sorry job of it. Here and there may be heard an occasional voice calling for calm reasoning, pleading that we stay on the track. But too many of our leaders far too many-are running in all directions at once, advocating almost everything the human mind can conceive. "Lo, it is here!" cries one, while another proclaims, "Lo it is there!" And out of all the confusion there appear the inevitable nostrums as fantastic and incredible as they are prolific. if taken seriously and followed to their logical conclusion, they would indeed mark the beginning of the end of Speculative Freemasonry in the United States.

Only one panacea to my knowledge has not been advanced (and I am almost afraid to mention it): Not yet have I heard a Masonic leader advocate a remodeling of the Ancient Landmarks so that women may be admitted!

WHAT DO I mean by all this scornful reference to bright ideas? Specifically, what am I talking about?

Two years ago I raised the question, *Whither are we traveling?* Over a twelve-month period I probed the body Masonic with a ruthlessness that caused some of my Brethren to wince. To their everlasting credit let it be said that by and large, Master Masons accepted the whiplashing with good grace. Even though not in agreement with all the conclusions Of that soul-searching, an amazing number of them observed that it was a refreshing interlude to leave off self-glorification for a season and engage in some frank self-examination.

In the concluding chapter I pointed the finger of ridicule at the Masonic Gimmick Manufacturing Company, Unlimited, which, I said, is "working overtime devising stunts to 'modernize' Freemasonry, to put it in line with ten thousand other organizations that clamor for the attention of the Tribal American."

Of course I know now that "gimmicks" was not the proper word, for they are more than that. Perhaps I should have described them as Prescriptions of the Masonic Medicine Men. At any rate, here is the way I enumerated them:

- Abandon the "free will and accord" rule which has placed our Craft far above the mine run of societies and permit outright solicitation.
- Ape the service clubs. Get busy on "projects" galore in the best Babbitt fashion.
- Go into the organized do-good business in a big way. Find an area of the human body that has not been exploited. Exploit it. Set a quota, have a kickoff dinner, ring the doorbells.
- Subsidize other organizations right and left, and, in the doing, ignore, neglect and starve the parent body.
- Feminize the Fraternity. Carry "togetherness" to even more ridiculous extremes than we have already.
- Hire press agents to tell the world, like Little Jack Horner, what great boys we are. ("Masonry is not getting its *proper share* of publicity," complains one Grand Master.) Never mind actions; concentrate on words.
- Imitate Hollywood. Stage an extravaganza. Bring in all the groups that ever fancied themselves remotely related to Freemasonry. Form the parade, blow the bugle, beat the drums, and cheapen the Fraternity.
- Let Freemasonry "take a position" on public issues of the day. Stand up and be counted (assuming, of course, that the position our Craft takes is in line with our own pet prejudices).
- Go all out for materialism. Raise money; spend it. Build temples, institutions. Subsidize; endow. Whatever can be had by writing a check, get it.

- Centralize, centralize, centralize. Pattern Freemasonry after Washington bureaucracy. Let nothing be done modestly by an individual or a Lodge; do everything on state or national level the super-duper way. Make a great to-do about local self-government, but accept no local self-responsibility.

AT THE VERY outset, may I hazard two guesses:

First, that every Masonic leader of any stature in the United States today has heard all ten prescriptions advocated in one form or another, and,

Second, that an appalling number of readers, finding in that list a cherished idea, will bristle and inquire, "Well, what's wrong with that?"

One time several years ago I was engaged in small-talk with a friend on some of the food combinations we had observed that to us seemed rather odd. We mentioned sugar on sliced tomatoes, the peanut butter and ketchup sandwich, custard pie smeared over with mustard. Then I recalled with a shudder the time I had seen a man pile an ample helping of strawberry preserves on top a curdling mass of cottage cheese.

"Well, what's wrong with that?" my friend countered in a flash. We both laughed. It was plain to each of us what we had been doing. We had been in complete rapport until I had poked fun at one of his own concoctions.

Thus, the confusion in the temple is compounded by the fact that many present-day prescriptions have some degree of merit. Not all of them are completely vicious, ill advised though they may be.

It is not a situation wherein all is black or all white. In many instances the shades are gray. But the trouble with all the prescriptions is this: On the surface they may appear innocent enough, but each is fraught with grave dangers; each is capable of setting in motion forces that would destroy American Freemasonry as we have known it. *And what shall it profit us if we gain new members by the thousands - whole regiments and armies of them and lose the soul of Freemasonry in the doing?*

IN THE NEXT several chapters I hope to examine all prescriptions here outlined and subject them to the acid test. And with me the acid test is not whether a prescription will add new members or whether it will give occasion for newspaper and TV publicity. To me the acid test always must be, *Does the prescription comply with the fundamental usages, customs, philosophy and purpose of Ancient Craft Freemasonry, or would it necessitate a change in the character of our Craft which would make it something other than Freemasonry?*

By now I daresay you have suspected that I am not going to "buy" any of the prescriptions, for I do not believe them to be sound. In experimenting with nostrums there is always the possibility that the "cure" may be worse than the illness.

My position on each bright idea may be stated in advance and with utter simplicity: *We had better think it through.* There are no signs on the horizon that any of them have been thought through just yet. The very fact that immature and irresponsible schemes are advanced at all is evidence of our lack of thoughtful consideration.

Sadly enough, in excitable America one who challenges Sacred Cows or questions pet theories must run the risk of having his motives misunderstood. It is possible that I may be labeled a tool of Soviet Russia before I am through, since that is one of our favorite methods of disposing of all who point out our weaknesses. But I trust there will be a few level-headed Brethren who will appreciate my deep concern for the future of our Craft and at least give me credit for sincerity.

What a shame George Bernard Shaw was not an American and a Freemason! His razor-sharp wit could have worked wonders for us just now. It was Shaw the Inimitable who, without knowing it, advocated the only sensible treatment I have seen for Freemasonry's first trip to the clinic. Hearken unto the wisdom of GBS: *"The plain working truth is that it is not only good for people to be shocked occasionally, but absolutely necessary to the progress of society that they be shocked pretty often!"*

Chapter 2

Into the Highways and Hedges

Abandon the free will and accord rule which has placed our Craft far above the mine run of societies and permit outright solicitation.

ASSEMBLE IN ONE room a half-dozen Masonic leaders of any Jurisdiction, or any group of Jurisdictions, in the United States today. Get them to talking about Freemasonry, its present and its future. I am willing to place a small wager that within 15 minutes one of them will say, "Well, it seems to me that sooner or later Masonry is going to have to face up to reality and discard the foolish notion that a good man, highly esteemed in his community, may not be invited to petition for the degrees."

"You're exactly right," another will affirm. "Why, I know a man in my home city who undoubtedly is more highly respected than anyone I have known in my lifetime. I heard him say once that he always had had great admiration for Masonry, but he never had joined because no one had ever invited him."

"I can tell you one even better than that," Number Three will say. "I can show you a Grand Master who waited until he was past forty before he petitioned. He was wondering all the time why he had been invited to join numerous organizations in the city, but the Masons never had asked him."

"Of course I wouldn't be in favor of going all out with a campaign, or anything like that," Number One will assure us. "I just think there should be some dignified way whereby we could invite hightype men to petition."

And so on, and so on, far into the night.

Never yet have I heard a Master Mason, however irresponsible he might be, advocate an outright membership campaign. (No one just yet proposes that the door be opened quite that wide). It would all be dignified, understand. Only top-flight men would be invited. And right away, almost, our numbers would increase and the prestige of the Fraternity would start upward.

It all seems so simple.

Well, it isn't simple. *We had better think it through.*

JUST HOW SERIOUS is this discussion about the desirability of diluting the safeguard which has placed our Craft head and shoulders above other fraternal organizations?

I should like to believe that such Masonic leaders are just talking to hear their heads roar, but I am afraid their talk cannot be brushed aside so easily. More and more, we are hearing expressions on the subject which would have been regarded with horror a half-

century ago—and which, by the way, are regarded with horror *today* in the greater part of the Masonic world.

Here are just a few straws in the wind:

—The fact that the subject has even been discussed at four of the last eight Conferences of Grand Masters in North America.

—The Grand Master of an American Jurisdiction instructing his District Deputies that "dignified, intelligent approaches can be made to good men who would make good members," and that although "no direct, open solicitation is permitted or desirable, (yet) let us ever be alert to inquiries when they come.

—The Grand Master who encouraged each Lodge to have a "Booster Night," and when that appeared a little too obvious, altered the name of the rose to "Masonic Friendship Night." Technique is this: An open meeting at which men of high character (of course) are invited to hear a speaker describe what Freemasonry is. Questions are encouraged. A booklet is presented each guest, but no petition unless said guest should request it. Host is encouraged to follow up within a week or so to see whether booklet has been read. If guest has not read it within four weeks, his name is marked off as a prospect.

"Such meetings as these," we are assured, "serve the purpose of bringing to the attention of desirable men what our organization is and what it stands for. This is its only purpose and nothing should be done in notices or in any other manner to in any way savor of membership solicitation."

—The Grand Lodge committee reviewing the Booster-Friendship Night project treating free will and accord with something bordering on scorn: "Our Grand Master has been deeply influenced by the tradition which would suggest that a man must knock with bruised hands before the doors of Masonry would swing open," the committee says. "We all agree with him that there should be no indiscriminate appeal for members. However, we live in a different social situation. We can no longer 'fold our hands and wait' . . . To paraphrase his obvious restraint his advice might be, 'Present a strong right hand in fellowship but leave the left hand free to lift an application from the inside pocket.' "

ALL RIGHT, let's think about that Dignified-Intelligent-Approach-to-Good-Men theory for just a moment. Once we depart, or even stray, from the practice that has placed Freemasonry above the level of mine run societies, what forces are we setting in motion?

1. Well, in the first place, he who thinks a program of invitation could be controlled, discreet, dignified, so that only men of high caliber would be invited, is living in a fool's paradise. The late Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio probably didn't say it, but at least he gets credit for the pungent remark that "a little inflation is like a little pregnancy; it keeps growing." Inelegant though it may be, that is an epigram worthy of *Poor Richard's Almanac*. And we can mark it down that a little inviting would be just

about as discreet, just about as dignified and just about as capable of control as a little pregnancy.

Of course every responsible Master Mason thinks he would invite only the cream of the community to petition for the degrees. But what reason do we have for thinking that our membership at large, representing all walks of life and all strata of society, would confine its efforts to the cream of the community?

The time-honored rule of no solicitation and no invitation; the principle of free will and accord; these can be understood by any Mason. A diluted rule in which there would be just a *wee bit* of solicitation and a *wee bit* of invitation, and in which free will and accord would no longer mean what it says—that can be understood by no one.

Modify the old principle ever so little and every man becomes the judge of what is proper and what is improper; what is good taste and what is poor. Once the door is opened, however tiny the crack may be, who is naive enough to think it can be closed again?

2. Any relaxation of the free will and accord rule would serve to cheapen the Fraternity. I am old enough now that I enjoy reading the newspaper columns telling what happened 25 and 50 years ago. Just a few months ago I came across a paragraph that gave me a jolt, because I remembered the incident well. The District Deputy of a fraternal organization had won the trophy offered by the governing body of the State for having secured the most new members during a specified period. That was the beginning of the end for that fraternal society. It is not yet completely defunct, but it might as well be.

Yes, and I remember the time when as a young newspaper man I covered a great wing-ding at which a prominent political figure was initiated. The gathering attracted men by the hundreds. The privilege of staging the initiation was the "prize" offered the local chapter which could secure the greatest increase in membership. The chapter which was in the limelight that night has not been heard from in years, and the VIP, after a year or two, was suspended for non-payment of dues.

If we abhor the thought of Freemasonry exhibiting similar poor taste, we had better not unleash the very forces which bring about just such exhibitions.

3. Has no one considered the fact that an invitational system for Freemasonry would be unfair to the man so invited? Twenty-five years ago Carl H. Claudy was saying the same thing in a Short Talk Bulletin which all of us need to read and re-read: (MSA: "Seek and Ye Shall Find"; Sept. 1939.)

"To ask a man to become a member of the Fraternity is not only a violation of one of the unwritten laws, but a positive injustice to the man. He who joins a Lodge, not because he wants, but because another wants him to, necessarily misses, for life, something in the Ancient Craft which other men possess and hold dear. It is human to value that for which

we labor, try, strive, get by our own efforts. It is also human to hold as of little value and small worth that which comes unsought, which is easy to get, which requires no effort.

"With the most loving intentions and highest hopes, many a father has laid a petition to his Lodge, together with the required fee, at the breakfast plate of his son when the young man reached his twenty-first birthday. And many a father has seen those high hopes dashed, when his son took little interest, gradually lost touch and finally demitted or was dropped NPD. It is one of the tragedies in the lives of ardent Freemasons-without intending it, they killed that which they loved the best!"

4. All the rituals of Craft Freemasonry that I know anything about would have to be discarded. Let the Brother who wants a "discriminating appeal" go to his Craft Lodge some night when the Entered Apprentice degree is being conferred. Let him listen carefully, and mark down every phrase that would cease to apply if the candidate no longer came of his own free will and accord. Let the restless Brother go back for the Fellow Craft degree; for the Sublime Degree. Then let him ask himself, "When the time-hallowed rule of free will and accord no longer means what it says, what will be left of Speculative Freemasonry?"

5. Thus, to abandon our historic position, or even to relax it, would mark the beginning of the end for Speculative Freemasonry as we have known it. Once we renounce our ancient principles and practices, our beloved Craft becomes just another organization, of which there are hundreds. Once we compromise with expediency, once we disregard the future to gain the immediate good, we might as well adopt the old French proverb, "After us, the deluge!"

For come the deluge will. As the late Carl H. Claudy observed, mushroom growth dies like the mushroom; what is quickly built is jerry built. We have only to recall the circus tent evangelist to know how rapidly the backsliders can equal the conversions. Most of us can remember how the Ku Klux Klan rose like a meteor in the American firmament -and how quickly it collapsed. (MSA: "Seek and Ye Shall Find"; Sept. 1939.)

"Yes, we can increase our numbers in Masonry," says Grand Master LaMoine Langston of New Mexico, *"but we may lose Masonry while we are doing it!"*

PICTURE IF YOU CAN the utter inconsistency of the Booster-Friendship Night in which Master Masons are expected to tell desirable men *"what our organization is and what it stands for."* Why, the very fact that an appeal, however discerning, is going on at all is ample evidence that far too many Master Masons have no clear conception of what our ancient Craft is and what it stands for. It still is true that "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

In 1943, when Freemasonry had been through years that were really lean, a Grand Master of California was pointing out the fallacies in the tiny-bit-of-solicitation theory. Reasons advanced for solicitation, he said, are three: (1) To get the men who, through ignorance, wait to be asked, and never being asked, are lost to the Fraternity; (2) To get

outstanding men of ability who know they will never be asked, but who think they are too busy to become Masons; (3) To insure a membership increase.

Numbers One and Two, Grand Master Smith declared, are directed at a relatively minor group and offer no assurance of success. "Merely to ask does not guarantee acceptance on the part of the other person," he said, "and in this case, *rejecting of the invitation would prove worse than failure to apply under our established system.*" Number Three he termed "so obviously an evil as to merit no serious consideration."

THERE SHOULD BE NO "indiscriminate appeal" for members, the label on the Soothing Syrup bottle says.

No, of course not. The appeal must be thoroughly discriminate but an appeal it is nevertheless.

Whence comes all this talk about "dignified, intelligent approaches"? Is it Ancient Craft Freemasonry which advocates a relaxation of the very standard which has made it great? It doesn't sound that way to me. The voice may be the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau! (See Genesis 27: 22.)

And we had better be getting back on the main track-back to our Symbolic Lodge-becoming acquainted again with its usages and customs, refreshing ourselves with its ageless wisdom. For once the Craft Lodge departs from its moorings, all Freemasonry will pay the penalty.

Chapter 3

Masonic Babbitry

Ape the service clubs. Get busy on "projects" galore in the best Babbitt fashion.

A LITTLE more than forty years ago Sinclair Lewis published a novel, and immediately a noun was added to the American language. That noun was the title of the book: *Babbitt*. From that day forth the word Babbitt came to mean a person of the type depicted by George F. Babbitt, real estate dealer, who lived in a Dutch Colonial house in exclusive Floral Heights, in the city of Zenith—fastest growing little burg in the Midwest, by golly. George F. Babbitt had the "right connections." Professionally, spiritually, fraternally and politically, his Status Symbols were most impressive. He believed fervently in restricted immigration to "keep those blasted foreigners out;" he had no racial prejudice, of course, but insisted that the Negro "stay in his place;" he was certain the labor unions were inspired and controlled by alien influences, and he viewed with alarm the teachings of the "pinks" at the State University.

But of all his orthodox affiliations, he found the weekly luncheon group known as the Boosters' Club the most satisfying, and to it he paid homage. Local chapter of a national organization, its grand aim was the promotion of Sound Business and Friendliness among Regular Fellows.

FOR FOUR DECADES, Americans have chuckled over the superficialities of George Babbitt, squirmed as they saw themselves in the mirror . . . and faithfully followed in his footsteps. Babbitry has found its way into every area of American life, excepting none—and including Freemasonry. The great aim set forth in Freemasonry's Declaration of Principles is a lofty one indeed:

"Through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the *individual man*, Freemasonry seeks to improve the community ..."

But that is not enough for a restless, itchy, pragmatic America. It is not enough to endeavor to bring men to Light, nor to satisfy intellectual hunger, nor to minister to the inner needs of a confused people, nor to provide a moral bulwark for everyday struggles, nor to give men a foundation upon which to build a righteous life.

No, we must worship at the altar of Service to Our Fellow Men. Our organizations must "do things"—that is, things which may be *seen*, and *heard*, and *felt*; things which may be measured by dollars, and buildings, boards of directors, and letterheads, and intense "busyness." There must be some tangible endeavor, some material object to which we can point to "justify our existence." We must be able to show by local projects, by fundraising activities, by annual contributions to a horde of organized charities, by some movement to eradicate one of the physical ills of the human race that we are indeed boosters, and Solid Citizens, and Civic Leaders Devoted to the Advancement of the Community.

NOW, at the very outset let me make one point perfectly clear: the Grand Secretary of Indiana is not attacking the service clubs. I shall repeat that statement before I am through. In 30 years I have been affiliated with two such clubs; I am a past president of one; I have nothing but admiration for them. In their field they are making a magnificent contribution to our American life. Their purpose is to engage in community service, and they are doing it admirably.

But that does not mean that Freemasonry should try to imitate them. It is the copycat school of thought within our Fraternity that I oppose. Masonic Babbitry is not Masonry, and I must part company with those who advocate it. By tradition, practice and temperament the clubs are not equipped to do the work of Freemasonry—and Masonry is not equipped to do the work of the clubs.

Anyone who knows anything at all about Freemasonry would suppose that our Craft would be the last place into which such philosophies and practices would penetrate. But herein lies the trouble: *Over the last several decades we have conferred the degrees upon far too many men who could not comprehend the message of Freemasonry.* Knowing little or nothing about the Fraternity, they have made no endeavor to find out. The weekly luncheon club was something they could comprehend; it required no effort on their part other than to meet, eat and pay; consequently, the service club idea and technique has left its mark upon our Craft. We may as well face it.

AND IF YOU THINK I am exaggerating (there are those who feel I do), then I invite your attention to just a few items gleaned from here and there:

—A Lodge in one large American Jurisdiction asked the Grand Master for permission to offer a \$10 prize to the member having the "*most perfect attendance*" (whatever that is) during the year.

—A Grand Lodge in the United States created a study committee and asked it to give consideration to "some worthwhile service project" that could be adopted.

—In one Canadian Jurisdiction the Grand Master was appalled at the use in Lodge meetings of large saucer-type identification badges, each bearing the *nickname* of the Master Mason wearer. They are, of course, patterned after the badges used at service club luncheons.

—In another Jurisdiction an "Achievement Trophy" is awarded annually on the same kind of point system used by service clubs in their district competitions. Points are granted on the basis of degrees conferred, affiliations, reinstatements, *net gain in membership* (yes, that's correct), educational meetings, average attendance at district meetings, and so on.

—Several years ago I had a friendly debate with a distinguished leader of another Jurisdiction on whether or not a Master Mason should be penalized for failure to attend

meetings of his Lodge. (My friend thought fines should be assessed; that has a familiar sound!)

—The Grand Master of an American Jurisdiction in his address to his Grand Lodge inserted a long and wearisome recital of what he termed "Visitations of the Grand Master." Believe it or not, the list included meetings of Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions Clubs, an organization of policemen, several PTA groups, numerous church and Sunday School societies, a social unit of an industrial organization, and chapel exercises at one of the State penal institutions!

I COULD CITE MANY, many more examples, for the Proceedings of our American Grand Lodges reveal all too clearly the trend towards less and less Freemasonry and more and more Babbitry.

Only rarely does a leader of any stature raise his voice to remind us that Masonic Lodges have their own particular job in the scheme of things; that they should do that job and nothing more. One of the most scholarly discussions on the subject was an article entitled, "Freemasonry is Not a Service Club," by Laurence Healey, Past Grand Master of Masons in British Columbia, published in *The Indiana Freemason* in March, 1951. It should be required reading for every Master Mason.

NOR IS MASONIC BABBITRY confined to areas outside Indiana. My readers already know what I think of speakers who accept an invitation to address a Masonic gathering and then proceed to talk about everything under the sun except Freemasonry. One time at a great occasion in an Indiana Lodge I heard a speaker upon whom our Fraternity has bestowed some of its choice honors actually *belittle* the conferring of the degrees of Ancient Craft Freemasonry. He said to the members of that Lodge, in effect, that if they were going to do no more than to "confer a few degrees," they would be parasites in the community. On the contrary, he said, they should be contributing to this movement and subsidizing that group, working at a project here and doing a good deed there. He told them service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy. It was an excellent Kiwanis speech.

Well, of course, I seethed as I listened, and said to myself, "There is Exhibit A—just another example of the point I have insisted upon: that we have too many Masons who are hazy as to what Masonry is all about. Instead of familiarizing themselves with Freemasonry, they think the Fraternity should be made over to fit the pattern of the luncheon club with which they *are* familiar."

SHOULD THE TREND towards Masonic Babbitry continue at its present rate, we might as well prepare to close up shop. For when we set out to imitate the service clubs, we have abandoned Freemasonry in the first place, and we shall do a sorry job of imitation in the second place. Their entire province is that of community projects. They are doing their work and doing it well. As Freemasons, our work is cut out for us; the way we do it is peculiarly our own. To discard one banner and attempt to hoist another would only mean our absorption; our Craft would become just another club.

Why, in Heaven's name, do we overlook the fact that there is one thing, and one thing only, that our Craft can give a worthy man that no other organization on the face of the earth can give him? *That one thing is Freemasonry.*

When we stick to our knitting the field is our own; we have no competition whatever. We can contribute something to society, something to humanity, something to the community in which we live that all the service clubs combined cannot touch. Why, then, should Master Masons become busybodies in areas where we do not belong?

My Brethren, *we had better think it through.* We had better reflect on the sobering fact that much of the appeal of Freemasonry lies in its unique character; in short, that it *does not* operate like other organizations.

SURELY NO MAN who loves Freemasonry could welcome the thought of a Senior Tail-Twister and a Junior Tail-Twister in the line of Lodge officers. Or a plaque in the hotel lobby announcing that the Masons meet and eat on Mondays, 12:30 p.m. Or the raucous laughter and ribald stories of a weekly luncheon of Master Masons. Or good old Bill (ladies' ready-to-wear) with his saucer badge and white apron—maybe aprons could be discarded altogether. Or attendance contests. Or the annual Lodge dinner in honor of the basketball team. Or the summer excursion when Masons' grandsons and their friends' grandsons are taken to see a big league ball game. Or members of a Lodge committee running about like fussy old ladies to persuade the business houses to display the Stars and Stripes on Flag Day!

And when we come to the point that a Master Mason who misses a stated meeting of his Lodge has to travel to the neighboring county seat to make up his absence—that will be the day!

Do I see someone all bristled, insisting that I am poking fun at the service clubs? If so, let my outraged Brother relax. The service clubs, blessings on 'em, are acquitting themselves nobly. It is just that I love our ancient Craft too much to want to see practices and philosophies introduced into it which would make a travesty of Freemasonry; I do not want to see our Fraternity embrace ways and methods other than our own. *I hope the Great Architect spares me the anguish of seeing our beloved Craft watered down to the point that Master Masons become no more than Rotarians wearing aprons!*

THEN WHAT is our job if it is not Service to Our Fellow Men?

Is it a Master Mason who raises the question? Doubtless it is. I recall the time I received a letter typewritten on an impressive looking letterhead asking my opinion as to the purpose of Freemasonry. The writer was a Past Master of his Lodge, he said, and he makes speeches on Freemasonry. He went on to acquaint me with the wisdom that no organization can exist without a purpose.

Well, it isn't often that I ignore a letter, but I had to pass on that one. I was not interested in a Gallup Poll on such a subject. And what could I tell a Past Master who so obviously had no clear idea what Freemasonry is all about? He missed his first opportunity years and years ago, and never yet has he sought for That Which Was Lost.

Long before the clubs were ever dreamed of, Freemasonry was rendering Service to Our Fellow Men in a multitude of ways, without fanfare and without bustling "busyness." Service, benevolence, charity, loyalty to country and flag, responsible citizenship, community betterment—these are the *fruits* of its teachings, rather than the reason for its existence.

Then what do Freemasons contribute to humanity, to the improvement of country and community, to serving the needs of our fellow men? What is our purpose?

The answer, my Brother, is one you might discover for yourself with profit both to yourself and the Fraternity. Try finding out what Freemasonry *is* and what it *is not*, and leave off chafing over what you think it *should be*. Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and the door shall be opened unto you!

Chapter 4

Doing Alms Before Men

Go into the organized do-good business in a big way. Find an area of the human body that has not been exploited. Exploit it. Set a quota, have a kick-off dinner, ring the doorbells.

DURING THE PERIOD when the prestige of American Freemasonry was at its highest point, our Brethren knew a little something about charity. It was the "greatest of these," they were taught—the topmost round on Jacob's Ladder. It was one of the Tenets of a Mason's Profession. It was one of the reasons why a Master Mason was induced to become a Master Mason, as we are reminded by the Senior Warden at the opening and closing of every Lodge. Yellowed pages from ancient minute books describe how they put those precepts into action.

Our Brethren had some strange ideas about the practice of charity. Not only was their basic attitude rather odd, but they had such an impractical, horse-and-buggy technique! It is difficult to imagine where they got such queer notions unless it was from Jesus of Nazareth in his Sermon on the Mount:

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them . . . When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men . . . But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."¹

INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, in those areas of the world where the prestige of Freemasonry still is at a high point, Masonic benevolence still is practiced in accordance with the admonition of the Galilean carpenter. Only in America—restless, itchy, pragmatic America—do we have the aggressive school of thought with its noisy insistence that we must indeed do alms before men, and sound the trumpets, and let the left hand (and everyone else) know what the right hand is doing. Provides lots of publicity. Creates a favorable image. Gets people to talking about the Fraternity. Helps increase membership.

HERE ARE A FEW signs of the times:

—Just listen to the talk when Masonic leaders get together. Invariably it will drift in the direction of Doing Alms Before Men.

—A distinguished Grand Master in his address to his Grand Lodge looked over the fence at the green grass in the pasture of "some well-known organizations" devoting their energies to organized charities which, he said, "have reflected great credit on the sponsoring organization." Despite a benevolent program running into tremendous sums of money, he was unhappy because his Jurisdiction was not engaged in an *organized* charity.

¹ St. Matthew 6:1-3.

—The learned Past Grand Master complaining that "we have let service clubs take over to a very large extent the functions of Freemasonry." (With utter astonishment I heard him say it!)

—The Grand Orator in his Grand Lodge address unburdening himself of the following scholarly dissertation :

"Now men, I know that you have a very fine program in your Grand Lodge, and I know that the subordinate Lodges have programs for youth— excellent! I understand that in the Grand Lodge you are helping in the educational field, making it possible for grants to be given to youth that they might be able to carry on their work in school. Excellent . . . ! But men, the question is, are we doing enough, and are we carrying it far enough? Are we giving these kids what they really need to make them better citizens? . . . I know that Rotary has the student exchange program with other nations, which is excellent; I know that the Lions work with people who are sightless and need glasses, and so on. I know that other outfits have the seeing-eye dog; the other lodges have cerebral palsy programs like the Elks work on . . . But, men, I think the time has come . . . that we are going to have to pick a field of endeavor and put it through, with all the strength and enthusiasm we have, if we are going to justify our reason for being a Masonic Lodge and a Masonic Order."

—The fact that regional conferences of Grand Lodges in the last four years have discussed such subjects as "Should Freemasonry Have an Object?" "Should a Lodge Sponsor a Project Serving to Identify the Lodge with a Community?" "Should Not Symbolic Masonry Have a Definite Objective? If so, What Should It Be?"

—The well-known fact that Masonic leaders of all grades and descriptions have twitching heebie-jeebies. Looking nervously at other organizations, they wonder whether our Craft also should not be doing something spectacular to attract attention to itself, completely ignoring the fact that during the time when American Freemasonry made the least noise, it commanded the greatest respect.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED? Several things, I should say. An American society running in circles, for one thing. Urbanization and centralization. Decline of the personal element in Masonic charity, to Freemasonry's distinct loss. The age of organized charities. Launching of large scale charitable projects, with all modern fund-raising techniques, by many affiliated and allied groups. General lack of knowledge and discrimination as to what Speculative Freemasonry is and what it is not.

Again, at the outset, let's get one thing straight: I am not attacking organized charities, nor benevolent foundations, nor research projects, nor the humanitarian objectives of any Masonic or related organization, nor the cherished hobby of any individual. The point upon which I am insistent is this: that Ancient Craft Freemasonry has its own peculiar calling in the scheme of things; it operates in its unique manner; it has done so very well

in the past; it will continue to do so if we will but permit it, and that when it ceases to operate in the manner of Freemasonry, then it ceases to be Freemasonry.

Like all other problems facing our Fraternity today, *this is one we had better think through.*

CONSIDER these few premises:

1. In the first place, may I ask what is wrong with the charitable and benevolent work Symbolic Freemasonry is doing now?

From where I view the scene it looks rather impressive:

—Masonic homes, hospitals, orphanages in 35 States of the Union.

—Sizable expenditures for relief, benevolent grants and other charitable services in at least 40 States.

—Liberal contributions to a nation-wide visitation program in veterans' hospitals by more than half the Grand Lodges of our nation.

—Benevolence rendered by individual Lodges and individual Masons in the U. S. A. in an amount impossible to compute, but which is known to be at least a half-million dollars annually.

(All the above in the year 1964 alone added up to a total in excess of \$27,000,000. But that is by no means the entire story.)

—Scholarship programs in nine Grand Lodges; scholarships authorized by individual Lodges in 25 States.

—Blood banks of far-reaching importance in some Jurisdictions, notably Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, New York and Oregon.

—A nationally acclaimed hospital erected by the generosity of the Masons of Minnesota on the campus of the State University.

—A history-making research program pioneering in the field of gerontology by the Masons of New York, preceded by strikingly successful research leading to control of rheumatic fever.

Looking beyond the borders of the United States we find:

—Impressive grants to a long list of benevolent institutions and organizations annually by the Grand Lodges of the English, Irish and Scottish constitutions, in addition to numerous homes, hospitals and institutions under Masonic sponsorship.

—Annuities and mortgage payments on behalf of widows and dependents by the Australian Grand Lodges.

—Night schools for vocational training maintained by Freemasons in Greece.

—Scholarship programs in England, Ireland, Scotland, the Australian Jurisdictions and the Canadian Grand Lodges that are recognized nationally for their excellence and their liberality.

OF COURSE, it has become popular now to say without thinking that Masonic homes do not count because "we are just taking care of our own—sort of like an insurance policy."

And what, may I inquire, is so reprehensible about taking care of one's own? Every responsible head of every family I know anything about takes care of his own first and last, and spends the greater part of his adult life doing it. The laws of the various States regard family support as a rather praiseworthy effort—at least they frown on "runaway pappies" who *do not* support their own!

And when it comes to comparing Masonic homes with an insurance policy—well, that would be a hilarious joke if it were not such a tragic example of Masonic ignorance. *We haven't thought that one through, either.*

One time I was going through the Indiana Masonic Home with a clergyman friend of mine who is not a Master Mason. I said to him (rather apologetically, I fear), "We are criticized sometimes because the facilities of our Home are open only to destitute persons who are Masons or who have a Masonic family relationship." Quick as a flash he rebuked me: "On the contrary," he said, "that is one of the finest features of your Home—the fact that you provide a place of refuge for needy and worthy persons who are bound by a common tie."

Coming as it did from a man who is not a Mason, that statement caused me to reflect a bit. After all, *why should we apologize?* Our ancient Craft was engaged in its noble work of benevolence long, long before the organized do-good societies were ever dreamed of. Why berate ourselves for carrying on a great work that is the admiration of those not members of the Fraternity?

2. Has it ever occurred to our restless Brethren that to "tag" Craft Freemasonry with someone's pet fund drive could serve to limit even more the scope of our benevolence? Dr. Thomas S. Roy, Past Grand Master of Massachusetts, has a classic illustration on the monitorial work of the Entered Apprentice degree—how the length of a Lodge is from east to west, its breadth from north to south, its height from the earth to the heavens, its depth from its surface to its center. All this serves to remind us that Masonic charity should be equally extensive to the point of being limitless—that there is a place to begin the practice of charity, but no place to stop! A Freemasonry tagged with

the label of a specific objective would, I fear, have both its beginning and its end in that objective.

3. Should Symbolic Freemasonry become the sponsoring, fund-raising agency of someone's cherished project, what would we do with our Declaration of Principles and our ritual? It might be a good idea for our restless Brethren to go to their Craft Lodges and listen to the ritual again sometime—particularly the lesson of the square in the Entered Apprentice degree and the lesson of the globes in the Fellow Craft degree. The Declaration of Principles might be read with profit, paying particular heed to those statements reminding us that the practice of charity is the *fruit* of Masonry's teaching—not the reason for its existence.

Yes, our Craft has just about as much business singling out a specific ailment to cure as it has identifying itself with a certain political party or a certain religious sect.

4. Should we go into the organized do-good business we would be detracting from the dignity and effectiveness of Freemasonry.

Just how ridiculous would our Fraternity look going out in search of a project? May Heaven forbid that the label of any physical or mental infirmity should ever be fastened onto our ancient Craft! Let our noble Institution never become known merely as the organization which does so much for St. Vitus' dance, or halitosis, or the ingrown toenail, or the seven-year itch!

NOW THIS DOES not mean that I am giving the charitable work of Ancient Craft Freemasonry a Grade A rating. Not at all. Our experience in Indiana on the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, 1963, when *one Lodge out of every five* failed or refused to pass the Box of Fraternal Assistance at its Table Lodge ceremony is a symptom of an illness of serious proportions.

I believe Craft Masonry should broaden its charities, for one thing. It should seek to restore the personal element in Masonic charity. But the charities of Masonry should be *the charities of Masonry*—not a bill of goods sold the Fraternity by some agency eager to capitalize upon its funds and its influence. Such programs should be of our own making; they should be conducted in accordance with our traditions and practices; they should not be absorbed by any big business fund-raising enterprise or technique. And they should concentrate on those areas where they can be most effective to individuals, rather than scattering shotgun fire at a score of copycat projects.

Thank God for benevolent programs and humanitarian research, and for the American generosity which makes them possible! As individuals we should support them liberally, as Freemasons are taught to do, and we *are* supporting them liberally as every fundraising agency knows. But as a Fraternity we have plenty to do to practice charity in the manner consistent with our obligations and traditions. Let our noble Craft stay off the sucker lists.

WHEN ALL THE aches and pains and diseases, all the handicaps and deformities and deterioration of man's physical body have been attacked and conquered through fundraising campaigns, men and women and children still will be rejected and insecure and lonely and disturbed. Young people still will need help in furthering their education. Surely a few will need hospitalization and life-giving blood. Yes, and men left alone to die in veterans' hospitals still will need to be reminded that they have not been entirely forgotten. Even those whose bodies are whole will suffer disappointment, financial crises, stress, anguish, bereavement. They will become old, and be left unwanted and alone.

Somewhere there will be need for sympathy and compassion in ministering to *all* the ills that flesh is heir to—not to just an isolated germ, nor to a specialized area of the human body!

Is there not yet a place, then, for the mission our gentle Craft has performed for generation upon generation—a mission no impersonal agency in the world can match? To open the heart of compassion to all God's children . . . to care for the widow and the orphan . . . to stretch forth the hand to assist and support the Brother who also has traveled, who has shared a common experience, who has knelt at a common altar, who is bound by a mystic tie, who has used the familiar working tools to make men wiser, better, and consequently, happier . . . is not that what we have come here to do?

Chapter 5

The Cow Must Be Fed

Subsidize other organizations right and left; and, in the doing, ignore, neglect and starve the parent body.

THE LAND IN Penn Township, in the northwest corner of Jay County, Indiana, is what is known as gently rolling, and good for grazing. I should know, for I grew to manhood on a farm in that community.

We kept cows on that farm. At an early age I mastered the milking technique while balancing myself on a one-legged stool. We milked those cows twice a day—morning and evening. *And twice a day we fed them.*

Perhaps it is indelicate of me to think of such plebeian pursuits in connection with the numerous organizations which present-day American Freemasonry is expected to support. If it is, I am sorry. But as I have thought about the subject over a period of years, I have come back repeatedly to the same earthy illustration of rural Indiana— that if you milk a cow dry morning and evening, some provision had better be made for her feed, pasture, salt and water.

For a long time one organization after another has sold Freemasonry on the premise that it should "give of itself," and that is all very true up to a point. But from where I view the scene, that point has long since been passed, so that now our Craft is giving of itself far in excess of its receiving.

We all have heard the pleasant and sentimental analogy of the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee—how the Dead Sea has no outlet and its waters therefore are sluggish and repugnant to life, while the Sea of Galilee, with an outlet, has fresh, life-giving water. But no one as yet has invented a pretty little example to illustrate what happens when the sea has more outlet than inlet. And that is what we had better be considering in connection with Ancient Craft Freemasonry.

OF COURSE I AM well aware of the fact that my position opens the door to scathing denunciations. In all probability I shall be accused of hostility to our youth groups, the ladies' orders, the numerous fund-raising projects which wish to profit by their association with Freemasonry, the various rites and bodies and auxiliaries and side organizations clear down to the end of a long, long list. And all such feverish protest will be completely beside the point.

For many months I have tried to emphasize the fact that I have only good will for *all* groups dependent upon Ancient Craft Freemasonry for their existence. But I am getting good and tired of seeing Symbolic Freemasonry used primarily as a Sugar Daddy, as a benevolent old gentleman whose chief reason for existence is to provide funds and housing facilities and a stock pile for candidates. Especially do I seethe when I see the

parent body so blithely ignored, neglected and starved by those who drain off its resources with such profligacy.

And as usual, it is largely our own fault. The groups which are milking the cow without feeding her did not create the condition. We gave them the original idea. We could have developed a well controlled "Masonic Community" years ago, insisting on a proper sense of proportion for each segment of the community. We could have provided activities for a ladies' auxiliary (and one would have been enough), for two junior divisions (and two would have been plenty), and for all others willing to *work for* Craft Freemasonry without pumping the well dry. Our Symbolic Craft could have pursued its own ways with dignity, maturity and restraint, But no, like typical Midwestern Americans, we have gone overboard; we have made ourselves ridiculous by becoming obsessed with the "family" idea to the exclusion of everything else.

CONSIDER JUST A few signs of the times:

—The incident in which an American Grand Lodge was sold on a proposition to finance about 40% of the cost of erecting a new fraternity house on a University campus. After a \$1-per member solicitation campaign had yielded only about two-thirds of the quota, the Grand Lodge had to assume responsibility for the balance. As it did so, it was made very clear that the Grand Lodge was under no further financial obligation.

—The fact that in one American Jurisdiction official recognition already has been extended to *twenty* appendant organizations, with others knocking on the door each year. Another Jurisdiction recognizes eighteen.

—For the last few years I have taken the time and trouble to do some tabulating of visitations made by Grand Masters of various Jurisdictions in the United States. The results have been astounding. One Grand Master reported 79 visitations, 45 of which were to appendant organizations. (I counted them.) Another Grand Master made only 11 visitations to Symbolic Lodges— six of them to one Lodge—and during the same year he made 58 appearances before appendant organizations. Another Grand Master reported a score of 66 to 62, with Symbolic Masonry coming out at the little end of the horn.

—The regrettable incident in which the international head of DeMolay gave the Grand Master of one large American Jurisdiction to understand that DeMolay owed no allegiance whatever to Symbolic Freemasonry, and was under no obligation to abide by Freemasonry's regulations. To the everlasting credit of DeMolay, that statement was repudiated, but damage was done, at least to the extent that it raised some questions in the minds of thinking Masons.

—I can think of at least four Jurisdictions in the United States in which serious financial problems have arisen in Masonic Homes because of the unwillingness of the Eastern Star to accept its share of responsibility for providing operating funds to take care of its own members. Indiana was one of them for years and years until steps were taken to correct the situation in 1962.

—The tendency to look upon Symbolic Masonry as an institution with no purpose other than to sponsor and pay for someone's pet hobby. Talking through my hat? Not at all. Right here in Indiana the process has penetrated Lodges to the extent that other groups are participating in the conferring of degrees, in Past Masters' Nights, in installation ceremonies, and in goodness knows what else. It has even gone so far as to move in on the traditional Feast of St. John the Evangelist and take advantage of a fine old Masonic festival to beat the tom-toms for other groups. I know whereof I speak.

—The fact that there are Lodge publications and "trestleboards" by the hundreds which serve no useful purpose for Ancient Craft Freemasonry whatsoever. To look at them one is moved to wonder sometimes whether there is a Masonic Lodge in the community. They have become mouthpieces and promotion sheets for groups which should be learning the fundamentals of self-reliance.

—It is a known fact that at least one youth organization upon which Freemasonry smiles actually uses the young people to *solicit petitions* for the degrees of Masonry. The sales talk is this: "If your father becomes a Mason then you, too, can dress up and look pretty and parade and perform like the others." I am not saying the organization operates in Indiana, but it might be so. Our Brethren would do well to find out whether such goings-on take place in our Jurisdiction.

NOW, JUST WHAT DO WE mean by subsidizing other organizations to the neglect of the Symbolic Lodge?

Ordinarily we think of a subsidy as a financial handout from a paternalistic organization or government. Most groups related to Freemasonry would be insulted if we told them they were being subsidized, and many do not expect an appropriation of funds—at first. Usually the subsidizing process follows a pattern something like this:

1. Attachment to Ancient Craft Freemasonry to profit by its name, its resources, its influence, its man-power. The current trend towards trying to persuade Grand Lodges to sponsor retirement homes without any financial obligation (*not yet*, at least) is a case in point.

2. A rent-free, utility-free place in which to hold meetings.

3. A place on the Masonic Temple calendar wherein certain nights in the month may be set aside for Lodge hall use to the exclusion of the Symbolic Lodge.

4. Appeals for "moral support" from Masons; then appeals for leadership.

5. Hints that funds would be welcomed.

After that comes diversion of manpower and funds which should be used for the work of Craft Masonry into a dozen, or score, of other organizations.

Finally, and worst of all, comes the "brainwashing" process to create a certain superiority state of mind in which Ancient Craft Freemasonry no longer is regarded as of any importance. I heard the Grand Master of Masons in one American Jurisdiction make a speech in which he actually *disparaged* Symbolic Freemasonry. He likened it to the kindergarten in the school system, and pointed out that once a pupil has completed kindergarten, there is no reason why he should have any further use for it. I heard him say it—a man, incidentally, who is greatly in demand as a Masonic speaker. Thank goodness it was not the Grand Master of Indiana.

FORTUNATELY, there are some encouraging signs. A few Masonic leaders here and there are awakening. I am thinking in particular of one Grand Master who had the courage to say no to the ridiculous practice of running hither and yon to extend official greetings in every organization which claims a relationship, however remote, to Freemasonry.

Another Grand Master was realistic enough to recognize that many of our problems today can be traced directly to the "57 Varieties" of appendant organizations which have attached themselves to Freemasonry. "The time is rapidly approaching," he said, "when this Grand Lodge may not only have to limit new organizations, but possibly curtail the activities of some already in existence."

One western Grand Lodge took a second look at appeals for funds from various youth organizations, turned down all requests and reminded the youth leaders that "one important part of their training is *to learn to stand on their own feet.*"

But it was California which made the ringing declaration that should be read and reread by every Masonic leader in the nation:

"We believe the time has come to call a halt on these prerequisite organizations who grow fat on the false claim of Masonic affiliation, and in so doing violate our fundamental laws and principles, and in which the individual members thereof violate their obligations taken at the altar at which we all kneeled. These organizations believe that what they do is of no concern to the Grand Lodge. We sincerely suggest that their actions and conduct are the concern of this Grand Lodge. A Master Mason can bring reproach upon the Fraternity in ways other than being convicted of a felony or some similar offense. In many instances . . . the good name of Masonry is more lastingly harmed and causes our friends to wonder and our enemies to rejoice . . .

"There now exist enough, if not too many prerequisite organizations which have fastened themselves on the proud ship of Masonry like barnacles on a ship. The great American ambition to organize and promote is worthy of praise—but when Master Masons, often those who seldom see and rarely support a regular Lodge, begin to believe, and even boast, that their organization represents Masonry, we suggest that it is time to stop, take count and say, 'No more!'"

There are some encouraging signs in Indiana, also. Let me name just one:

Looking ahead to the Sesquicentennial Jubilee Year for Freemasonry in Indiana in 1967-68, the Executive Secretary of the Indiana DeMolay Foundation has been in touch with me on many occasions to offer the full support and "manpower" resources of DeMolay in staging that great celebration. It has been made clear that DeMolay does not want to dress up and parade and be in the limelight—that instead, the boys wish to do yeoman service quietly, without fanfare, wherever they can be used. In short, they are not asking what they can *get out of* Freemasonry; they are asking what they can *do for* Freemasonry. And that is a refreshing question we do not hear very often these days.

Am I too optimistic in suggesting that perhaps some long overdue thinking is under way? I hope it is, for *we had better think it through*. The present trend can have only one result, and that is to push Craft Freemasonry and the appendant organizations alike farther and farther into decline.

And this much should be borne in mind: *a check to one of the Masonic charities cannot repair the damage*. Organizations which expect Craft Freemasonry to furnish manpower and funds, time and leadership should remember that the good health and well-being of the parent is rather important if the family is to be protected, and that such things cannot be purchased.

ALL OF US have seen the spoiled, selfish, inconsiderate child with a case of "gimmies"—the immature juvenile who looks upon his father as a Santa Claus to supply his wants, and who thinks his Dad's only purpose on earth is to work and furnish the funds to gratify his desires.

Well, we are going through a similar period in American Freemasonry. Those who have attached themselves to our Craft have a bad case of "gimmies," and we have been encouraging them in it. And, like immature children, we seem to think it can go on forever without any necessity of looking to the source of our luxuries.

We had better be paying a little deference to the parent body. It was here laboring on the Temple for centuries before the "dependent" organizations were ever dreamed of. The minimum of our obligation is to think about that old parent with a little affection once in awhile . . . to siphon a little manpower and energy and resources *into* the Ancient Craft Lodge instead of forever draining it off.

Yes, we might with profit paraphrase the ringing words of the late President of the United States in his inaugural address: "Ask not what the Symbolic Lodge can do for your pet organization; ask what your pet organization can do for the Symbolic Lodge—the fountainhead of all Freemasonry!"

Chapter 6

Ruffles on the Apron

Feminize the Fraternity. Carry "togetherness" to even more ridiculous extremes than we have already.

THE PICTURE ON THE front cover of a women's magazine of national circulation² tells the story. The baby is splashing in his little red bathtub on top of the kitchen sink. Daddy is clothed in a dainty, frilly little apron, shirt sleeves rolled up, bath towel thrown over one shoulder. To the wall above the sink there is fastened a note in feminine handwriting. It reads:

"Darling—(1) Test water. (2) Not too much soap. (3) Dry and powder everywhere. Back at 8:30."

When my good friend Paul W. Grossenbach, Grand Secretary of Wisconsin, was called upon to discuss frankly some of the problems that face present-day American Freemasonry at the Conference of Grand Secretaries in North America in 1959, why did he use that magazine cover as the "text" for his address? Simply because he had been keen enough to observe trends that many other Masonic leaders either had missed or ignored.

Because my friend from Wisconsin is a gentleman, he spoke only of "togetherness" in the home and outside the Lodge hall as a factor affecting Freemasonry. Because I am *not* a gentleman, I am going to be bold enough to point my index finger at "togetherness" *within* Freemasonry as a factor which I believe is affecting our Craft, and affecting it adversely.

LET ME HASTEN TO SAY that I am a member and Past Patron of the Order of the Eastern Star, and proud of it. I am realistic enough to know that many and many a Lodge hall in Indiana would look like a dreary, barren, unsightly second floor warehouse were it not for the Chapter of the Eastern Star which shares the meeting place.

Yes, and I love the ladies as much as anyone. Years ago I was advocating that each Lodge have a ladies' night once a year, and that certain Lodge and Grand Lodge ceremonies be open to the ladies. I was not prepared for what happened, although perhaps I should have been. Despite my familiarity with the American practice of moving from one extreme to another, it did not occur to me that our Brethren would go to such preposterous lengths; that we would approach the place wherein a Lodge of Freemasons is scarcely able to turn a wheel unless the ladies are present!

What happened to bring about the movement towards feminization of the Fraternity?

² Ladies Home Journal, February 1959.

Well, far be it from me to attempt a scientific analysis of trends in our American society. Others have done a far better job than I could do—and what they say about the American male is none too flattering. From where I view the scene, I simply would observe that it is difficult to tell these days which sex is putting forth the greater effort—the women to be more like men, or the men to be more like women.

Any way you look at it, the performance is absurd. The American male probably needed to be civilized, but certainly not feminized; the American woman needed to discard her baby doll role, but there was no call for her to go overboard and become an uncouth, swaggering, pants-wearing showoff.

BUT TO GET BACK to feminization: H. L. Haywood, in his classic book, *The Newly-Made Mason*, advances one of the most interesting theories I have ever encountered.³ Describing what he terms the "Masonic Community" of the Middle Ages, he tells how the operative craftsmen lived together as a group and worked together as a body. The quarter in which they resided, within the shadow of a cathedral, perhaps, was called the Masonic Community.

In such a community it was only natural that men should develop the spirit of fraternalism, fellowship, charity, religion and thought, for, as he points out, "men who live together as well as work together have everything in common . . . They could not be indifferent to each other if they wished, because whether at home or at work they were kept continually together . . . There is no mystery as to why they left so much fraternalism to us Speculative Freemasons because the first Lodges of Speculative Masons inherited not the old Operative *Lodges* only, but the whole Masonic community. Wives, families, children, widows, orphans, relatives and friends were in the circle of the Fraternity from the beginning. . . ."

Then Haywood goes on to tell how one of the most unfortunate consequences of the anti-Masonic movement of the eighteen-thirties and 'forties came with a radical swing of the pendulum. For its own protection, perhaps, Freemasonry became a *secret* society in the most narrow and isolated sense. The inevitable reaction after many years was the formation of "all manner of growths, good and bad, which under a wise leadership would have had a normal growth inside the Fraternity itself."

"Not one of these extramural, or extra-curricular, or quasi-Masonic associations would ever have been constituted," he says; "in no instance would any need have been felt for one of them, had we in the United States kept firm hold of the ancient and fundamental fact that it is the Masonic Community as a whole, and not the Lodge only, which is the basic unit of the Fraternity in any local jurisdiction."

It would appear, then, that the original damage may have been the work of our Masonic forbears of the Nineteenth Century. But if we continue to permit the pendulum

³ Quotations by permission of the Masonic History Company, publisher, 2300 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 111.

to swing in the opposite direction to an extreme even more ridiculous than isolationism, *then that is our own fault, here and now, in this mid-Twentieth Century.*

AM I MAKING A MOUNTAIN out of a molehill, perhaps? Well, let's take a quick look at a few things that are going on:

—In one American Jurisdiction, Master Masons tried to persuade Grand Lodge to change the time of year for installation of Lodge officers in order that the Lodges might have joint installation ceremonies with the Eastern Star. (It was voted down.)

—In another Jurisdiction, a Grand Lodge committee commended the Grand Master highly for having made 24 appearances before Eastern Star groups during the year. I believe my memory is correct when I say that about one visitation in three was to an O.E.S. Chapter.

—I remember the occasion when a Lodge wrote to say it was purchasing a lighted emblematic sign for its Temple and wanted to know which emblem should come uppermost—that of the O.E.S. or the Square and Compass.

—Yes, and I haven't forgotten the angry Brother who wrote one vitriolic letter after another because it seems the Brethren would not display a photograph of the head of a ladies' organization in the Lodge hall!

—Then there was the time when a Lodge was determined to make alterations in the script of one of Carl H. Claudy's Masonic plays so it could be presented at a ladies' affair—and was not interested in presenting any play at all unless it could be "coeducational."

—There was the Jurisdiction, too, in which a *Master Mason*, mind you, acting on behalf of a ladies' organization, conducted a campaign to place in every Lodge hall an emblem which completely denies the basic universal quality of Freemasonry. The emblems were installed, and nothing was done about it.

—Every year I review between 70 and 75 addresses of Grand Masters to their Grand Lodges. Out of the 49 Jurisdictions in the United States, about one Grand Master out of every five feels compelled to outdo all predecessors in paying compliments to the *Little Woman* and publicizing all her activities. Several years ago I came across one that reminded me of a gushy Valentine Day message. It was so sissified in content as to be downright mawkish. To top it off, the Grand Master concluded with home-made verses that were asinine beyond description. Interestingly enough, *it is only in the United States that such things occur.*

—Then there was a Grand Master who went so far in his address as to assert that "if it were not with the approval and co-operation of our ladies, a Masonic Lodge *could not exist.*" And I recall the utter disgust with which a Reviewer in British Columbia read that statement, and how it did not have a leg to stand upon when he got through!

DO I HEAR SOMEONE protesting that I have cited only a few exaggerated examples, and that they are not typical? All it takes is eyes to see and ears to hear.

Have you noticed who is participating in the installation of Lodge officers these days? I can show you a newspaper clipping describing an installation at which "the Eastern Star gave the procession, response and song." Just where a procession, response and song by a ladies' organization can be introduced with propriety into the ceremony for the installation of Lodge officers, I do not know.

Have you detected what has been happening in the observance of Past Masters' Night? I was utterly appalled the first time I learned a Past Masters' Night, *of all occasions*, was to be a ladies' affair.

Have you observed what is going on in the presentation of the Award of Gold for 50 years a Mason?

Have you taken note of the reluctance with which some Lodges have accepted the Table Lodge tradition in observing the Feast of St. John the Evangelist? (You see, the Table Lodge is a tyled Lodge open only to Masons!)

Have you seen how difficult it is to persuade some Lodges to attend divine services in a body and as a Lodge on the Feast of St. John the Baptist and to keep it a *Masonic* occasion?

Perhaps one who is a Masonic speaker can detect what is happening more clearly than anyone else. Time was when I received countless invitations to speak at *Masonic* gatherings; rarely do I receive an invitation today for any kind of function other than one open to ladies—oftentimes the children as well. And the Brethren expect a "Masonic" speech under such conditions! I have developed several different ways of saying no.

WHEREIN LIES THE FAULT? Shall I be chivalrous and blame only Master Masons? Shall I be a first class boor and blame the ladies? Or shall it be a little of both?

Sadly enough, I cannot let the ladies go scot-free, for I have observed too many incidents over too long a period of time to ignore what is plain as day. Never can I forget the outraged lady who flounced into my office to protest the action of a Lodge in rejecting her son's petition for the degrees. When she left her temperature still was above normal, for while she was there I gave her a brutally frank lecture on Master Masons who talk too much and Master Masons' wives who are unable to mind their own business.

On many and many an occasion I have talked with Worshipful Masters so browbeaten that they literally had to get down on their knees and beg for the use of the Masonic hall for Lodge purposes . . . and with building committees trying to erect or remodel a Temple to conform to Masonic purposes and stay within the limits of their resources when the ladies were calling the shots.

I am not prepared to say it is common occurrence for the ladies to meddle in Lodge policy matters, but I can say it happens too often. Even once in a hundred years would be too often.

The all-time record, I believe, was reached when I heard the spouse of a distinguished Mason tell a story about something that had happened "when *we* received the thirty-third degree!"

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that there are far too many women trying to behave like men, I am convinced that the trend towards feminization of the Fraternity is not primarily the fault of the ladies, nor of the ladies' organizations. Our own Brethren—far too many of them—have become so thoroughly indoctrinated with "momism" that they live and breathe "togetherness." We have not yet overthrown the Ancient Landmarks so that women may be admitted officially, nor have we revised the ritual for their accommodation. Not yet. But I shall not be surprised any day to find a Lodge in which the Brethren have ruffles on their aprons.

In every community, I suppose, there are a few mannish females who by sheer aggressiveness and avoirdupois seek to push their way into groups in which they do not belong, and to dominate them. But they are the exception. I am convinced that, by and large, the ladies do not wish to feminize Freemasonry, nor to manage its affairs, nor to have a voice in its councils, nor to determine its policies. They are content to maintain a dignified auxiliary relationship. They are proud of that relationship, and they would be proud to see their husbands and fathers and sons and brothers enjoying the fellowship of the "Men's House."

But the menfolk—poor, cowering creatures—are insecure. They are reluctant to venture out to the "Men's House" unless they are safely attached to Mom's apron strings! As a result, the movement in our Lodges in the direction of "togetherness" has long since passed the point of being ridiculous. How long American Freemasonry can remain Freemasonry in the face of such a trend, I do not know. This much I do know, however: our leadership has literally abdicated in favor of the "family" idea, and Masonic fellowship has been one of the casualties.

THEN where do we go from here? I wish I knew.

Really, now, wouldn't it be for the good of all Freemasonry to get back on the main line and bring this silly move towards feminization to a screeching halt?

My dear Brethren, can we not confine our all-consuming zeal for "togetherness" to the bridge clubs and the bowling leagues? Even the service clubs manage to get along with only four ladies' nights a year, and to keep functioning in the meantime when the ladies aren't there!

Honestly, don't you think the ladies would love and respect us just as much if we were to go our own way, as we are expected to do, and to keep Freemasonry the great institution of men banded together by a common tie and for a common purpose that it is expected to be?

For my part, I believe the ladies will like us even more if we are just ourselves—just men, if you please, without the effeminate fussiness which seeks to make everything coeducational. Ruffles on the apron will add nothing to our dignity nor to our effectiveness!

Chapter 7

Hammers, Axes, Tools of Iron

*Hire press agents to tell the world, like Little Jack Horner, what great boys we are.
Never mind actions; concentrate on words.*

FOR MORE THAN seven years, Solomon's superb model of excellence was under construction on Mount Moriah. From the quarries came blocks of stone hewn, cut and squared ready to set in place, and transported with prodigious effort by the most primitive means of transportation. Tied together in great floats, majestic cedars from the forests of Lebanon came by sea to Joppa and thence slowly and laboriously overland to the Holy City. The designs were conceived by the Master Builder of the age, and from his skillful hands came masterpieces in gold, silver and brass. A widow's son he was, from out of Tyre.

Strange as it may seem, the craftsmen labored without envy, discord or confusion.

Even the elements cooperated, for the legends of Josephus tell us there was no rainfall save at night in order that the work might proceed without delay. So near perfection was the finished Temple that it appeared to have been done not by human hands, but by the hands of the Great Architect Himself.

And it was all accomplished without the use of hammer, axe or any tool of iron!

Could it be done today?

Could our modern Speculative Craft engage in even the most simple of undertakings without the loud clash and clatter of attention-attracting devices?

Suppose a great temple is to be erected in mid-Twentieth Century on some American Mount Moriah. Can you not hear the discordant din and clamor of every advertising technique known to man as present-day craftsmen go forth to raise the funds . . . to persuade Brethren to donate a cedar tree or a block of stone . . . to obtain publicity in all the newspapers and TV stations from Dan to Beer-sheba . . . to give King Hiram of Tyre the "hard sell"?

SOMETIMES I THINK the First Book of the Kings may be trying to convey more in the story of the tools than a mere recital of details of a building operation. Might it not contain a bit of allegory, as is true of so many of the episodes in Holy Writ? Could it be a gentle exhortation to quietness and modesty? Or perhaps a means of illustrating how beautiful the spiritual temple can be, and how much greater the achievement, when it is erected without the accompaniment of that which is loud and harsh and coarse?

Strange words, I daresay, to be coming from one who was trained as a newspaper man to use one of the media of mass communication. But remember, I am speaking now as a seasoned Freemason. Remember also what I said in the opening article of this series:

that the prescriptions offered by the Masonic Medicine Men are not all completely vicious. Many of them—yes, most of them— have certain elements of merit, and all of them appear innocent enough on the surface. Yet each is capable of setting in motion forces that could destroy American Freemasonry as we have known it.

NOW AT THE VERY OUTSET let us get the distinction between Masonic public relations and an all-out campaign for publicity on the airwaves or in the public press. The one we could not escape if we would; the other is a cheap and unseemly activity far beneath the dignity of our Fraternity, carried on by those who think the beginning and the end of public relations lies in filling the scrap-books.

When we have a story to tell that is newsworthy and in good taste, there is no reason why we should not tell it. But the building of favorable public relations is not measured by newspaper space. On the contrary, Freemasonry can be placed in a ridiculous position before the public by an ill-advised and all-consuming appetite for attention at any price.

I am one who believes that just such a situation can happen all too easily. Should we abandon our historic position of dignity and restraint and throw open the doors, it requires but little imagination to visualize what could happen. To control the quality of public information about the Fraternity is just as impossible as to control solicitation of membership, and the damage can be just as devastating.

WHY DO I VIEW with alarm? Let's see how the wind is blowing:

—In one Jurisdiction in the United States a Committee on "Public Relations" was created a few years ago. It sounded good. But when the committee made its first report to Grand Lodge it let the cat out of the bag, for all it had done in the way of "public relations" was to prepare canned releases for the press and TV stations.

—In another Jurisdiction a newly-formed Committee on "Public Relations" announced its real objective to Grand Lodge when it said: "We would like to see the Junior Warden of every Lodge act as the *publicity agent* for his Lodge during his term of office."

—Then there was the Grand Master whose statement I have repeated with horror on many occasions. "Masonry with its associated bodies has not been getting its *proper share of publicity* in the newspapers," he said.

—Another large American Jurisdiction displays its collection of newspaper clippings each year during the annual communication of Grand Lodge.

—The fact that at two of the last three Conferences of Grand Masters in North America the subject of more publicity has been discussed. Regional conferences of American Grand Lodges also have the bug; they are engaging in shop talk on how to set up publicity committees.

—A large American Jurisdiction launched a great humanitarian movement that was looked upon with universal admiration, and then spoiled everything with a report to Grand Lodge which said that although its benevolent program did make a "significant contribution in service to all humanity (and) while many Masonic dollars had been spent in this activity, *the publicity value to Masonry was diluted*" because the work had been done in a number of locations.

—One Grand Master offered this argument for holding the Conference of Grand Masters in cities other than Washington, D.C.: "We come to this Conference ... we do not get much notice. You may as well toss a pebble down the well for all it is known in Washington, D.C., that we have been here . . . But take this Conference to one of our midwestern cities and it will have considerable impact upon the people in that community . . . The meeting will be publicized in the area."

(Incidentally, the Conference was moved to a midwestern city, but not one clipping could be taken home for the scrapbook—and it turned out to be one of the most fortunate things that ever happened to American Freemasonry that there was no news coverage.)

"**NEVER MIND WHAT THEY SAY** about me, just so they say something," a philosophical American politician is supposed to have remarked. That seems to have become the objective of a certain segment of our leadership. It frightens me to see that gnawing hunger for publicity that is being advocated openly today by so many in high places.

There is a fine line that divides legitimate news from that trivia known as publicity. It is when we cross that fine line that we stoop to a position beneath our dignity. Well-meaning Brethren who fancy themselves writers and correspondents but who know little or nothing about the usages and customs of the Craft can unwittingly do the Fraternity irreparable harm.

And where is that fine line? On a newspaper copy desk I learned what obviously is an oversimplified, yet often accurate, statement of the difference between news and publicity. It goes like this: Publicity is that which is of little or no interest, but which individuals seek mightily to get into print; news is that which is of great interest, but which individuals seek mightily to keep out of print.

LET ME INTERRUPT at this point to emphasize again that I am making a distinction between public relations activities and the craving for indiscriminate publicity. Our Craft maintained public relations of a sort for generations before the current name-in-print rage developed. My good friend, M.W. Jack F. Hewson, Past Grand Master of Masons in Indiana, said to me in a letter written early in 1962, "Whether it knows it or not, whether it likes it or not, the Grand Lodge (of Indiana) has had public relations since January 12, 1818. The relations have not always been good, and for the most part over the years they certainly have not been planned. But the fact remains that everything the public has learned or imagined about Freemasonry has affected the public's like or dislike of our order."

He is one hundred per cent right. And incidentally, the unrestrained use of hammers and axes in American Freemasonry is just as distasteful to him as it is to me.

Then how can we guarantee that a Masonic publicity program will be restrained and in good taste? Alas, we cannot. An organized program to obtain Masonic publicity has small chance of being anything other than unseemly in character. Certainly it will be so if the Junior Warden is made *ex-officio* "publicity agent" for his Lodge. It takes more than a whispered pass word to make a perfect ashlar out of a rough ashlar; more than a communicated sign or grip to instill in a man a sense of the fitness of things.

THINK FOR A MOMENT on just three points:

1. One of the characteristics of Freemasonry that has appealed to men over the years has been its "peculiarity." By that I mean the simple fact that Masonry *does not* operate like other organizations. Men have deemed it an honor to be identified with an ancient Craft which does not sound the trumpets in an ostentatious effort to call attention to itself and what it fancies its "good works." It is a relief to be free of the clash of hammers and axes in at least one human experience. The late Carl H. Claudy, whom I always like to quote, was saying it this way more than thirty years ago:⁴

Take from Freemasonry her reputation, and make of her an organization striving for notice, competing for publicity, members, attention, with all the hundred and one distractions of modern life, and she becomes just "one of a crowd." And then—she dies! Let her be silent, secret, reserved, dignified; keep her what she has always been, a mystery, a secret force for good in the world, an Order which men cannot join save they be worthy— and her power increases.

2. If we are interested in a favorable "image" for the Fraternity, then Little Jack Horner is not the man for the job. The thought of telling all the world about our "good works" and moulding public opinion so the praises of Freemasonry will be sung in one endless anthem constitutes a tempting apple indeed. But whenever our Craft adopts the methods of Little Jack Horner, every man becomes the judge of what is proper and what is not. And believe me, I know Brethren by the hundreds whom I would not want to trust to publicize the activities of Freemasonry—and some of them are news writers. Many a time I have winced over the product of a Masonic press agent. To embrace 1964-model publicity methods and clothe them with the garments of respectability is to turn loose those who, well-meaning though they may be, are lacking in responsibility and discrimination.

I remember all too well how, some ten years ago, American Grand Masters literally fell over each other to be photographed for the cover page of a magazine of national circulation—and I remember the tongue-in-cheek manner in which the writer of the feature article dealt with our Craft. That is only one example to illustrate the wisdom of our historic position of quiet dignity.

⁴ MSA: "Masonry and Publicity," May 1929.

3. And remember, a publicity campaign can backfire. We think we would publicize only the so-called "good works," but when we descend to the level of all other publicity-hungry groups we must be prepared to pay the penalty of having public attention called to the dirt under the rugs within our own house.

No amount of prepared publicity can repair the damage if a Freemason or his dependent is in distress and the Lodge looks the other way.

Little Jack Homer's loud protestations will not be very convincing if the Masonic Temple is run down and seedy in appearance.

Reams and reams of mimeographed news releases will be to no avail if the Lodge officers whose names appear in the newspaper are not men who can command respect in the community.

All the press agents in the business cannot erase the distasteful image created by an obnoxious publication claiming to be "Masonic," or a Lodge trestleboard that is immature and undignified.

It will take more than newspaper space to wipe out the memory of a careless and slipshod funeral service . . . or if the Brethren perform their public ceremonies like awkward bumpkins . . . or go to Lodge in bowling league attire . . . or allow their aprons to be anything other than white and spotless . . . or if the Chaplain is one whom the community has reason to know is not on speaking terms with the God to whom he recites his prayers.

LIKE ALL OTHER prescriptions offered by the Masonic Medicine Men, *this is one we had better think through.* We are conducting our Masonic public relations program every hour of every day, as our distinguished Past Grand Master of Indiana said so very well. We are going to "get publicity" of a sort, also—and it can be a publicity that is ruinous.

Let Freemasonry stay out of the business of "managed news." We do not belong there; such activity is repugnant to everything our Craft stands for. Once we forsake our traditional gentility we are unleashing forces as capable of damage as an untrained layman attempting to perform a surgical operation, or practice law, or build a bridge, or teach school.

Legitimate news pertaining to the Fraternity there must and should be, but the man who presumes to speak for our Craft should be one who knows that some things are done and some things simply *are not done* in Freemasonry. Publicity for the sake of publicity should never even be considered. Let Freemasons be the last men on earth to imitate Little Jack Horner!

We do not need to *create* a favorable "image;" we need only to use what we have. A good "image" before the public can be maintained if we have it, or established if we do

not, and there is but one certain way to do it. That is to do the work of Freemasonry as it should be done—all the time— and always in the best of Masonic traditions.

When we do the work that Freemasons are expected to do and as they are expected to do it, we are conducting the best possible public relations program. If the leaders of our American Grand Lodges will but forget their scrapbooks and concentrate on providing inspired leadership in the true Masonic tradition, our Lodges will respond and follow, and the "image" will take care of itself.

Chapter 8

Earthquake, Wind and Fire

Imitate Hollywood. Stage an extravaganza. Bring in all the groups that ever fancied themselves remotely related to Freemasonry. Form the parade, blow the bugle, beat the drums, and cheapen the Fraternity.

HIGH ON MY list of favorite stories is the Old Testament account of Elijah's experience in his wilderness cave.⁵ I could not get through *Whither Are We Traveling?* without telling it, nor can I drive home my point in this series of articles without recalling the lesson demonstrated so vividly and so forcefully before the eyes of the prophet on Mount Horeb.

Like many of us, Elijah had become discouraged over what appeared to be a hopeless situation. About him he could see only decline and decay of moral and spiritual values. Recounting how God's covenants had been forsaken, His altars desecrated and His prophets slain, Elijah was convinced that only he had remained faithful to his trust. "I, even I only, am left!" he cried out in despair. Then come those stately lines that I never read without experiencing a thrill:

*And behold, the Lord passed by,
And a great and strong wind rent the mountains,
And brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord;
But the Lord was not in the wind:
And after the wind an earthquake;
But the Lord was not in the earthquake:
And after the earthquake a fire;
But the Lord was not in the fire:
And after the fire a still, small voice.*

AND SO IT WAS that the Ancient of Days spoke to Elijah, and to us. From the clouds lingering about a present-day Mount Horeb, I like to think His admonition would be phrased in simple, direct American slang, something like this:

"Simmer down, Elijah! Don't expect a celestial blast-off to signal the workings of My eternal plan. I don't operate that way. My method is to work quietly and patiently—you know, like the leaven in a lump of dough. I do it the hard way!"

AND INDEED, is not that what we tell those who knock at our doors in search of Masonic Light? "Freemasonry erects its temples within the hearts of men," we say to them. "Through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the *individual man*, Freemasonry seeks to improve the community," we affirm, and then with sonorous boast we add, "The design of the Masonic Institution is to make its votaries wiser, better and consequently happier."

⁵ I Kings 19: 7-21.

Then why are we so impatient to deny by our actions that which we proclaim with our words?

Why are we so restless? Why do we bite our individual and collective nails in travail, trying to give birth to some extravagant Hollywood-type production to call attention to ourselves—an act which by its very nature is the antithesis of Freemasonry?

After all, the leaven in the dough is something that does its work without the flashing of lights or the ringing of bells. It cannot even be seen with the naked eye. Why, then are we so consumed with the ambition to stage an earthquake to end all earthquakes, a wind to end all winds, a fire to end all fires? Are we laboring under the delusion that the erection of a temple within the heart of a man will attract favorable notice if we buy enough advertising space, or assemble a large enough crowd, or make a loud enough noise?

EVEN THOUGH I HAVE no patience with the spectacle itself, there *is* something about the word *wing-ding* that I like. The dictionaries have not yet taken cognizance of it; but they should, and I trust they may before too long.

For wing-ding has become an expressive word in the American language—a word which carries a message no other word can convey. It means a big splurge, a great extravaganza, a huge bit of Barnum-like showmanship which today brings out the crowds, the flags and the bands, and tomorrow is gone and forgotten.

Anyone who knows anything about Freemasonry would suppose that our Craft would be the last to experiment with wing-dings, for they are utterly foreign to Masonic philosophy. But here and there we see signs that the temptation has been too great:

—A contest to see how many men, women and children can be crowded under one roof to eat breakfast on an occasion labeled as a "Masonic" function.

—A mammoth effort to get thousands of human beings of all ages, sexes, sizes and shapes (and wearing every conceivable type of regalia) into a parade, and then to jampack them into an arena. This, too, is billed as a "Masonic" event.

—A Grand Master looking with longing eyes across State lines and pleading with his Grand Lodge for funds with which to stage a similar wing-ding and thereby keep up with the neighboring Joneses.

Indiana has not succumbed to the urge to produce a wing-ding, and thank Heaven for that! It is a tribute to our Masonic leadership in the Hoosier State, and indeed, to the leadership of most American Jurisdictions, that the Big Spectacle is shunned as an activity incompatible with the dignity of Freemasonry.

TEMPTING THOUGH IT may be to show off before the public, *this is something we had better think through*. When we do think, as Freemasons should now and then, we begin to see some byproducts of the wing-ding that do not appear on the surface:

1. Let's face it: The wing-ding is not designed to promote loyalty to the basic unit of Freemasonry, nor is that its purpose.

Billed as a "Masonic" event, the Big Spectacle is about as Masonic as the State Fair. Women, children, teen-agers, "dependent" organizations, uniformed groups whose members rarely darken the door of a Masonic Lodge and would not know how to act if they did—all these thrive on the opportunity to dress up and be seen. The net result is that Symbolic Freemasonry is pushed far into the background. The wing-ding becomes no more than a mass rally of hangers-on (except, of course, that the Lodges are given the honor of paying the bill).

One time not too many years ago I was an eyewitness to one of these fabulous spectacles in which a Grand Lodge was sold a costly bill of goods, and apparently for no purpose other than to give "dependent" groups an opportunity to parade before the television cameras. The manner in which Lodges of Freemasons were relegated to the back seat on that occasion was no less than an insult.

2. The wing-ding is a lazy way of doing things. It is a great splash in one place, for just one day, and then it is heard no more for another twelve months. It seeks to accomplish in one day and in one place what Masonic leadership is unwilling to do within the framework of its Lodges the other 364 days in the year.

In Indiana, we have chosen to remember that Masons meet in almost every village and town in the Hoosier State, and on almost every night in the week, rather than in a crowded coliseum on one hot summer day. Thus far, we have chosen to do our work among Freemasons in their Lodges, out where the Brethren live. I hope and pray it may be ever thus.

And if that means living in a horse-and-buggy era of decentralized operation where individuals and local Lodges are regarded as having some importance, then the defendant pleads guilty and is proud to affirm that that is exactly the way individual" Masons and Lodges should be treated.

3. The net result of the wing-ding is to cheapen the Fraternity. The man who is ambitious to ride behind the bands in an open convertible and to make a speech to the masses in competition with the popcorn vendors should look at the spectacle through the eyes of the non-Masonic public. He should read some Masonic history. In particular I can recommend a careful study of that period in the 18th Century when mock processions were staged in London in derision of the Freemasons. Then, let the Brother who yearns for the klieg lights ask himself this question: If processions that were dignified and strictly Masonic appeared ridiculous to Londoners in the 18th Century, how utterly silly

must the "coeducational" family-type productions labeled as "Masonic" appear to Americans today?

Not many of our Brethren are willing to be honest with themselves these days, but those who are will recognize that our Fraternity is constantly being made to suffer humiliation before the public because of a multitude of extraneous organizations which claim relationship to Freemasonry, but which actually detract from its dignity and effectiveness.

4. When we resort to the Big Spectacle to advertise our wares, we must be prepared for the day when the Big Spectacle is a fizzle. I remember when one American Jurisdiction used to stage annually what was claimed to be the largest tyled Lodge meeting in the world. It attracted Masons by the thousands. I have heard nothing about it for several years. In all probability the time came when it was no longer a novelty.

Then, annually, I used to receive notices of a mammoth rock quarry gathering in one of the Southern States. It also drew crowds up into the thousands. It is my understanding that the project was abandoned because it became so large it got completely out of hand.

Bear in mind, these were *Masonic* occasions—not mass meetings.

At least one distinguished American Masonic leader is doing some thinking on the subject. He told me not long ago that the wing-ding in his Jurisdiction is due to be given a quiet and decent burial, and thereupon will be forgotten. "I do not relish the thought of being the man in command when the day of failure comes," he told me.

5. Worst of all, the wing-ding is a denial of all our Craft is trying to teach and to do. Freemasonry is a peculiar institution. Countless individuals never seem to be able to understand that we do not operate in the manner of other organizations. Even Masons themselves in great numbers are unable to comprehend what it is all about. Unwilling to adjust themselves to the Fraternity, they want the Fraternity to adjust itself to their whims.

More than thirty years ago a Masonic writer saw the trend all too clearly when he observed:⁶

"It would seem that we have erred by ignoring one of our oldest landmarks, that of secrecy. We have suffered from the press agent and from the public newspaper fraternal pages. Our craft has become blended in the public mind with the screams of eagles, the bellowing of moose and the hooting of owls.

"For Freemasonry was born to the task of cleansing and quieting the hearts of men; of furnishing a sanctuary from strife and toil where Craftsmen might lay aside selfishness and drink the pure waters that have run down to us through the centuries."

⁶ Lewis R. Decker in "The Master Mason," Sept. 1928.

Yes, the dignity of the individual and his importance in the eternal scheme of things . . . the erection of a moral edifice within the heart of a man . . . the spiritual bulwark which gives a Freemason that strength of character to *know his duty* as a citizen without being instructed what to think and how to vote . . . all these qualities are not instilled by mass action, nor parades, nor bands, nor fireworks.

I HOPE TO SEE the day when American Freemasons begin to think and act a little more like Freemasons. Yes, and I hope to see the day when we can exercise greater dignity and restraint—when again we can operate as Masons without calling in the ladies and the children, the junior leagues, the barons and lords and sheiks and emperors!

A Grand Master of Masons in Missouri⁷ said all this with such eloquent feeling that I am moved to propose his words as a credo for American Freemasonry in this mid-Twentieth Century:

"It ought to be our ambition that the world in future will say that Freemasons of this age were truthful when truth was almost everywhere assailed;

"That they were honest—with each other and all the world—when intrinsic honesty was openly questioned . . .

"That they gave great thoughts and great minds to great purposes when other great minds wasted themselves on petty fancies and selfish ambitions;

"That they were modest and fine and delicate when to be loud and coarse were sadly too common . . .

"That they showed dauntless courage when hope and courage were languishing in the hearts of men . . .

"That they built true character, even though they wrought not with their hands in stone and wood!"

To that majestic litany of hope, surely with one voice we can respond, *So mote it be!*

⁷ George W. Walker, 1937.

Chapter 9

Little Man, What Now?

Let Freemasonry "take a position" on public issues of the day. Stand up and be counted (assuming, of course, that the position our Craft takes is in line with our own pet prejudices).

ONE OF THE BEST friends I have ever had was a blue-blooded Calvinist twice my age. In our present-day society he probably would be known as an egghead. Strait-laced though he was, he had a rare sense of humor. I am still chuckling over some of his salty remarks.

Of all the amusing incidents he related to me, I believe I have derived the most unholy glee from his story of the divisions within a church congregation. It goes something like this:

After many years' absence a clergyman returned to pay a visit to his former parish. When he discovered that one venerable Watchman on the Walls of Zion was no longer affiliated with the local congregation, he sought out his friend and, in the course of the visit, asked why he had separated himself from the fold.

"Well, parson, it's like this," said the weather-beaten old pillar. "Some of the brethren in the church embraced false doctrines. Those of us who could not accept the new heresies withdrew and established another branch of the church."

"Has that arrangement proved satisfactory?" the minister asked.

"Not exactly, parson. Everything went well in the new church for a time until other false doctrines were propagated and some of our brethren accepted them. Those of us who stood foursquare withdrew and formed a small congregation of our own."

"And that, I trust, has been spiritually satisfying to you?"

"No, parson, I am sorry to say it has not. Satan was busy even in that small congregation. Some of the brethren began to follow heresies my wife and I could not accept, and we were forced to withdraw and worship alone in our own home."

"Then at last you have found inner peace?" the minister asked.

"I can't exactly say we have," was the reply. "You see, even my wife began to embrace ideas that were theologically unsound, so that now she worships in the northeast corner of the living room and I worship in the southwest."

WHENEVER ONE OF MY zealous Masonic friends tells me the time has come that Freemasonry must "take a position" on some issue of the day, how our Craft must "stand up and be counted," mount a white horse and raise the banner of some-thing-or-

other, I chuckle to myself and think of the church congregation which "took a position" to the extent that only the old deacon and his wife were left—and even they could not agree.

It is amazing how many American Masons of today are obsessed with the thought that Freemasonry should become some kind of glorified pressure group. "Oh, but this is different," my idealistic Brother will tell me with patriotic fervor. "Just remember how our colonial Brethren dressed in Indian costumes and threw the tea overboard into Boston Harbor!"

"Yes, I'm remembering," is my stock reply, "and I am trying also to remember a certain paragraph that might not have been a part of the charge to the Entered Apprentice in 1773! I am remembering that many of the 'Indians' (though not necessarily all of them) were members of both the Lodge of Saint Andrew and of a revolutionary organization known as the Sons of Liberty which met in the same tavern. I am remembering, too, that the membership of the Lodge of Saint Andrew was perhaps 25 or less."

And what does the size of the Lodge have to do with it? Simply this: It was easy enough for those colonial Masons to be revolutionary-minded, for they were men small in number, united by common background, common interest, common purpose. Just how would you persuade a present-day Lodge of 800 to 2,000 members of diversified background, interest and purpose to unite on anything?

I HAVE SEVERAL Masonic friends who think Freemasonry should "take a position." From the tone of their conversation I gather they would want our Fraternity to become the handmaiden of the Republican party—and of the conservative faction of the Republican party at that!

Should they realize their hearts' desire, then all Democrats would have to be expelled for un-Masonic conduct; then all progressive Republicans would get the axe; then all modern middle-of-the-road Republicans would have to go, and finally our Craft would be reduced to the ludicrous position of the church deacon and his wife kneeling in opposite corners of the living room.

Why all the hue and cry to "take a position" on some ideology? It is entirely contrary to the Ancient Charges, to the Declaration of Principles, to the ritualistic ceremonies of the three degrees, to all there is in Masonic philosophy, usages, customs, traditions. And besides, to espouse the ideology of the day and lift the banners in its behalf would be to sign the death warrant for our Craft.

What has happened that so many segments of American Freemasonry want to make our Fraternity a sounding board for all kinds of inflammatory political tirades? Is it an outgrowth of the so-called democratic system wherein each man, operating under the guarantee of free speech, feels compelled to mount a soap box and bellow to all who will listen?

NOW THAT I HAVE expressed my opinion in advance, let us look at some specific examples of what I am talking about; then let us argue a bit. First, the examples:

—Two sessions of the Conference of Grand Masters in North America: one at which the Grand Masters went into "executive session" to talk about a national political campaign; the other at which there was bosom-beating and flag-waving on a divisive issue that was not only ill-advised but also beneath the dignity of Freemasonry.

—The Grand Master who issued a formal protest to the two United States Senators and Members of the Congress over what he termed the "most outrageous decision of the Supreme Court in *ruling out prayers* in the public schools in New York State." (Italics are mine).

—The Grand Master who got all his political, economic and sociological pet peeves off his chest with a peroration denouncing the United Nations and foreign aid, followed by a broadside blast at "professional politicians, labor racketeers, professional dogooders, free spenders and One Worlders."

—The Grand Orator of one Jurisdiction who took advantage of Masonic immunity to rave and rant on political subjects, the following of which is a sample: "Left wingers, politicians in Washington and the Supreme Court say that we must destroy traditions and customs of one-fourth of the American people because the Communists will say bad things about us—that if we do not integrate the races in (name of State) and the South, the people in other parts of the world will not like us . . . Our destiny is to continue our resistance to this lousy Supreme Court and the irresponsible leftists until the American people are awakened and sanity returns to the American governmental scene . . . Let us accept the challenge!" (The Grand Lodge then adopted resolutions to print the address in pamphlet form and to send a copy to each Lodge, to both United States Senators, to the Representatives in the Congress and to the Supreme Court.)

—Letters in my files, regrettable and un-Masonic that they are, in which efforts are made to identify Freemasonry in Indiana with partisan disputes, with so-called "States' rights" ideologies, with sociological issues, with almost every conceivable activity where Freemasonry does not belong.

The few illustrations reviewed above are serious enough in themselves. But the appalling aspect of so many of them is that they were not the work of newly-raised Master Masons ignorant of what Freemasonry is and what it is not—*they were the work of Grand Masters and Past Grand Masters*. It is discouraging to see how far we have to go to educate our leaders—those who should be setting the Craft to work and giving them good and wholesome instruction. "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch!"

I SUBMIT THAT *we had better think it through*. Freemasonry is one of the few institutions of Twentieth Century society which seems to have any interest in maintaining an attitude of good will. Consider these few basic questions:

1. When Freemasons "stand up to be counted" on political, civic and legislative subjects, do they espouse the side of Tweedle-dee or of Tweedle-dum? My old Calvinistic friend liked to quote the famous wisecrack of the Bishop of Gloucester: "Orthodoxy is my doxy; heterodoxy is another man's doxy!"

Look back over the last century and a half at the horde of religious sects which have come into existence to propagate a single (and trivial) point of doctrine, or custom, or individual peculiarity. On the north side of the street the People of God devote their energies to a lot of wild-eyed absurdities in connection with an "iniquitous" institution known as Freemasonry. On the south side of the street the People of God single out some personal practice or habit and seek to label it as a mortal sin. Down in the next block the People of God make a Federal case out of one small word in one particular translation of the Scriptures.

And you can safely wager that all three of them have exclusive custody of the keys to the kingdom!

Let Freemasonry "take a position" in line with one man's pet prejudice and it descends to the same level of pettiness and intolerance as the prolific sects, and makes itself just as ridiculous.

2. Just who would determine which "position" Freemasonry should take? A few years ago, when *The Indiana Freemason* began to publish paid advertisements for a cooperative industry, some of our good Brethren wrote letters to protest. "You are identifying Freemasonry with socialism," they said. They went on to tell us that the competing industry in which they owned stock represents the American Way of Life, and it employs a great many Masons who will not like this sort of thing.

We replied to each protest, patiently and in good humor. We had no intention of identifying Freemasonry with socialism, we told them, but first we must get Masons to agree among themselves as to what constitutes socialism. We reminded them that the competing co-operative industry to which they objected also is owned and operated by many hundreds of Master Masons. "Shall we expel them?" we asked. "Are you prepared to prefer charges?"

Our experience with the co-operative advertisements was good for us, for it gave us a clear picture of how unthinkable it would be for Freemasonry to "take a position" and become a pressure group for some ideology. Here was a school of thought which regarded its own business interests as epitomizing the American Way of Life and its competitor as "socialistic." Who, then, becomes the judge of which side of the battle for more business Freemasonry should take? And what would be left of our Fraternity if it were purged of all our business competitors, and of all who might disagree with us on political, social, civic and religious subjects?

3. Should Freemasonry "take a position," how then could we justify the Masonic insistence on the dignity and importance of the individual? I suppose the reason so many of our Brethren are restless in wanting Masons to "stand up and be counted" for or against something is that it has become the fashionable thing to do. Without any effort at all we can find organizations which will sound the trumpets for Mother, Home and Heaven. The political parties adopt platforms, and how silly they are! Every community is crowded with organizations which say they believe in Good Government, National Defense and Safe Driving on the Highways. Yes, and there are groups far too numerous to mention which will stand firm and resolute for Lower Taxes, Better Working Conditions, Higher Prices for Our Products, Government Subsidies for Us, No Government Subsidies for the Other Fellow, and all kinds of good things.

LET THE RESTLESS Brother who yearns to make Freemasonry just another pressure group go elsewhere. There are hundreds of pro- and anti-societies that will welcome him as a member and permit him to orate from the soap box, to conduct hate campaigns, to circularize, to lobby and to picket. The Masonic Fraternity simply does not operate that way. Our Craft maintains an historic position the wisdom of which has been demonstrated again and again.

Freemasonry, thank God, thinks highly of the individual man. It says so in a multitude of ways—and it does more than merely *say so*. Surely no man can receive the three degrees without being profoundly impressed, by word and symbolism, with the mighty fact that he is acknowledged to be a son of God!

The lessons of our Craft are such that no Masonic dignitary need tell the Master Mason what he must think, nor what he must believe, nor which side he must take, nor how to vote. Freemasonry has enough confidence in those who wear the lambskin apron that it believes the Mason will *know* these things—and it is not so small and narrow that it will sit in pontifical judgment on a Brother simply because of his convictions on a current public question.

TRULY, IN THE WORDS of the French poet⁸ we need to ask ourselves, "Where are the snows of yesteryear?"

It is a humbling experience to think back on some of the foolish and immature "causes" with which American organizations have been identified. Remember the Ku Klux Klan and how it tried to fasten itself upon Freemasonry?

I always have liked the gentle manner in which Dr. Joseph Fort Newton admonished his restless Brethren in an editorial written almost four decades ago.⁹

"In his capacity as an American citizen, each man of our Craft will do what seems to him wise and just and right and to the best interest of his country; but let us hope and pray that no echo of angry debate may be heard in any Lodge of Masons . . . lest we injure

⁸ Francois Villon (1430-1484), *The Greater Testament*.

⁹ *The Master Mason*, August 1928.

what is priceless . . . By the same token, the men who stand out in our history, to whom we pay the highest homage, are the men of personality, principle and ideals, who, combining sympathy and good will with unbending loyalty to great truths, defied the cynical spirit and wrought disinterestedly for the common good. By as much as Masonry creates such men and endows them with moral ideals, by so much does it render its highest service to the country and the Craft."

As a fraternity Freemasonry has no business "taking a position" on the fleeting fads and disputes of the day. These, too, will pass. If Master Masons have been given good and wholesome instruction we can depend upon them to take the right side when the lines are drawn on a vital issue. And if our Brethren are not of that caliber, then it is up to us to guard the West Gate a little more carefully; to do a better job of hewing and squaring the stones in the quarries where they are raised!

Chapter 10

Not By Bread Alone

Go all out for materialism. Raise money; spend it. Build temples, institutions. Subsidize, endow. Whatever can be had by writing a check, get it.

AN OLD LEGEND tells of an imaginary conversation in which Satan was taunting the angels with claims of superiority. The angels announced proudly that a way had been found to put evil to flight. "We shall plant lofty ideals and challenging principles in the hearts of men," they told him. But Satan only laughed the louder. "You never can defeat me that way," he said. "First I shall get men to create organizations to propagate your ideals; then they shall establish institutions to express them, and victory shall be mine!"

It has been quite a long while since I heard my friend, M.W. Dr. Thomas S. Roy, Past Grand Master of Massachusetts, relate that legend. I have seen nothing in the intervening years to lessen its impact.

"The achievements of yesterday were the results of seeing and using Freemasonry as a force, and not just serving it as a form," Dr. Roy went on to declare. "A force is that which can be used; a form is that which must be served. The danger in an organization such as ours is that while it starts with ideals and principles, the organization may become the greatest enemy of those ideals and principles . . . What happens is that the idea creates the organization and the organization chokes the idea. We can become so concerned about keeping an organization going that we forget the ideas and ideals that gave it birth. We begin by letting a great ideal force our thinking and acting into new channels, and we end by serving an organization."

JUST WHEN I BEGAN to be aware of a materialistic trend in Freemasonry I do not recall, but I remember very well how it happened. It was soon after I became Grand Secretary. Every summer several Lodges would celebrate their centennials. It was my privilege to be a guest at most of those observances. On each occasion a history of the Lodge would be read or distributed. After awhile I began to notice a striking similarity in those historical sketches—they contained little or nothing except a recital of all the tiresome details connected with the building of a temple.

Even then I was unable to diagnose the illness to my own satisfaction. One day I said to a friend of mine, "Why is it that nine Lodge histories out of every ten, with a thrilling story to relate, tell almost nothing except to describe the building of the temple?"

"Because," replied my friend, "most human beings are materialistic in their thinking, and Masons are pretty much like other men. They cannot comprehend anything that cannot be seen and felt."

Rather sad, I said to myself, because such a philosophy is the very antithesis of everything Freemasonry has tried to teach them!

And then one day I discovered the Worshipful Master of at least one Lodge was thinking on the same subject. First he swore me to secrecy; then he told me his story. He had arranged a great homecoming occasion in his Lodge. It was to begin with a banquet and conclude with a ball. The ladies were invited. A high-ranking Masonic leader was engaged to deliver the address. "The occasion was perfect for a great inspirational feast," the Worshipful Master told me, "but what did our speaker talk about? He went into great detail describing a construction program that could have been of interest only to a gathering of building contractors, and ended by pleading for money to finance the job."

NOW, OF COURSE, I must pause at this point to explain as patiently as I can that I am not opposed to temples and institutions. (The radical statements some of my Brethren read into my articles never ceases to amaze me!) No one enjoys and admires a beautiful temple more than I—provided it is a temple and not a mausoleum, and provided it houses a Lodge which is doing the work of Freemasonry and not acting as a caretaker whose only function is to maintain its Status Symbol.

Yes, and I never fail to be thrilled to see the great heart of Freemasonry attempting to express its benevolent concerns through an institution, and I yield to no man in loyalty to the institutions maintained by our Craft—provided the work of Freemasonry is not confined to the maintenance of an institution.

The point I am trying to make is the same point I have emphasized repeatedly in recent months: I have no patience with the fenced-in concept of Freemasonry which seizes upon one facet of our Craft and magnifies it out of proportion to its importance. The beauty in a mosaic is in the whole—not in a single, tiny, irregular piece of colored glass. That is the picture we should be always seeking to convey to our candidates and our Brethren. When our single-track minds are able to see in Freemasonry no more than a temple or institution, or a service club whose members wear aprons, or a vehicle for raising funds for someone's pet hobby, or cozy "togetherness" with the ladies, or cheap publicity-seeking wing-dings, or a political pressure group, then we are failing in our job.

Hence, I can rejoice when a new temple becomes a *means* to an end, but I have only pity when a new temple becomes the *end* itself—the sole reason for the existence of a Lodge. And believe me, there are far too many of the latter kind.

THINK WITH ME on these points:

1. The worship of *Things* can serve as a death sentence to a Lodge. Perhaps my great interest in Indiana's Masonic history has caused me to be more aware of trends than I might be otherwise. Over the years I have read hundreds of pages of quaint Lodge minutes. The history of one Lodge in particular haunts me. Year after year the Brethren persevered under conditions that would cause a present day Lodge to give up almost overnight. During years in which membership averaged about 45, their expenditures for local Masonic relief ranged from \$10 to \$25 per month—and that, in those days, was a sizable sum. *But they did the work of Freemasonry in the community.* Then the fat years came. They erected a large temple, and, like Rip Van Winkle, settled down to decades of

sleep. Nothing worth mentioning has happened since.

Now do not try to tell me the neighborhood deteriorated, because it has not. And do not try to argue that if the Brethren just had a parking lot, and air conditioning, and no steps to climb, all would be well. It isn't that simple. The unpleasant fact is that the real Lodge *died* three-quarters of a century ago—only the dry shell remains. It died because the Brethren were interested only in material *Things*, and when they achieved that which they coveted, there was nothing further to do.

2. For however pleasant and attractive a new building may be, it guarantees nothing. I have seen temple building projects which served as an open door to renewed interest, activity and zeal, and which gave the Brethren a new conception of the work of Freemasonry. And then I have seen the Brethren nestle down in their comfortable new quarters in self-centered seclusion and do nothing except pay the insurance premiums, watch for roof leaks and see that the walls were repointed. Saddest sight of all, I believe, is the magnificent temple erected 30 or 40 years ago with great joy and exultation, and which now has become cold as a refrigerator and quiet as a sepulchre.

The theory that a new temple out at the edge of town somewhere will give a Lodge the resurgence it needs is getting the cart before the horse. The resurgence had better come first, or the heart's desire, once acquired, will be no more than a lavish museum to house relics of past glory.

3. *Things* alone do not solve problems; they only create new ones. If I have been reading history correctly, there must have been a time when the work of Freemasonry was regarded as a *necessity*; comfortable quarters and monumental institutions were a luxury to be enjoyed after the Brethren had discharged their primary obligations, if any money remained. Today, all too often the situation is reversed. The comfortable temple and the monumental institution are regarded as necessities; the primary obligations of Freemasonry are something to be cared for when nothing else remains to be done, if any money is left.

WE LIKE TO BOAST about the Good Old Days in American Freemasonry when every man who was anyone in the community was a Mason, and the Lodge met in *rented quarters* (ghastly thought!) above the hardware store, with no air conditioning and no paved parking lot. But does it ever occur to us that those modest physical facilities may have had a direct relationship to the prestige and effectiveness enjoyed by the Craft to an extent that never has been equalled? Perhaps the Lodge was doing the work of Freemasonry in those days and not pouring all its energies and substance into the maintenance of a costly plant.

Take old Brotherly Love Lodge, for example. By all standards of the present day, Brotherly Love a century ago was a failure. It had only a few members—20 to 25, perhaps, and by the time the membership reached 40 the Brethren felt it was time to organize a new Lodge. They met in that horrid upstairs room—long flight of steps to climb; terribly warm up there in summer, too.

Well, now that Brotherly Love has moved out on its five-acre tract as far from human beings as possible, and has erected its glorified country club complete with everything except a bar, *has it regained the prestige and respect, the interest and loyalty and devotion it once enjoyed?*

Now that it has the best that can be had in brick and stone, stainless steel and glass, aluminum and vinyl tile—all the *Things* that can be seen and touched—*has it arrived at the summit of success?*

Now that it has a huge, cold gymnasium-like Lodge hall where five per cent of its members can sit and stare at each other across a broad expanse of costly carpet, I ask you, *has it solved its problems, or has it merely housed them in more elegant surroundings?*

Now that it is comfortably air-conditioned and there are no steps to climb, and now that three of its five acres are paved with blacktop so the five per cent can park their cars, *is the Lodge stronger and healthier thereby?*

IN THE LUSH surroundings of their big Status Symbol are the Brethren more keenly aware of the opportunities for benevolence in their own community, and do they seize such opportunities, or is that something that is pushed aside year after year with the excuse that the debt must be paid first, and then more comforts installed, and then something else?

And after the big Status Symbol is completed and dedicated, do the Brethren then come flocking back to their Lodge with renewed zeal? If they do, I haven't heard about it.

4. A materialistic Freemasonry is a Freemasonry with no message, no challenge, no power. One reason, I suppose, that our Masonic Brethren have become so obsessed in their devotion to *Things* is that almost everyone is doing it. Even religious organizations which used to preach that man shall not live by bread alone are taking a new line these days. It says, in effect, "Let's get our bread from the oven first, and then we'll talk about the Bread of Life." It did my heart good to read of a New York lawyer and lay theologian who arises boldly to challenge the worship of *Things*.¹⁰ If the Gospel cannot be preached to the hungry until they are fed, as the mission romanticists claim, he says,

"then this is no Gospel with any saving power, this is no Word of God which has authority over the power of death. The gospel is a Word which is exactly addressed to men in this world in their destitution and hunger and sickness and travail. The church must trust the gospel enough to come among the poor with nothing to offer the poor except the power to apprehend and the courage to reveal the Word of God."

TO THAT I WOULD ADD a fervent amen. And by way of paraphrasing the courageous layman I would observe that if present-day Freemasonry has nothing to offer beyond the erection of temples and the establishment of more and more institutions, then it has nothing to offer that a hundred other organizations could not do as well. If we have

¹⁰ William Stringfellow, *My People Is the Enemy* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston)

grown so prosperous and fat and lazy that there is nothing further to do except revel in our Status Symbols and create more Status Symbols, then we have ceased to possess anything that is vital. If we can worship only *Things*, and if the only solution we have for our problems is more *Things*, then we might as well set the date for the funeral rites, for we are dead even though we may be breathing still.

5. The worship of *Things* is a denial of the entire philosophy of Freemasonry. It is our own fault that we have gone overboard for materialism. We proclaim a challenging philosophy in our rituals and we repudiate it in our business meetings. We tell our Brethren how Freemasonry's grand design is to erect a moral edifice within the heart of a man, and then we assure him that all he has to do is to write a check and that will discharge his personal and charitable obligations to the Craft in full for the year ending December 31.

"LET'S UNSHACKLE the spirit of Freemasonry!" cries M.W. Conrad Hahn, another good friend of mine, in a *Short Talk Bulletin* (July 1964) published by the Masonic Service Association. M.W. Brother Hahn goes to Emerson for a cogent text: "*Every spirit makes its house, but afterwards the house confines the spirit.*" Then he makes this thoughtful observation:

"The more we have organized Masonic groups and activities, the more we have institutionalized our benevolent projects and charity, and the more we have set up programs and criteria for evaluating them, the more concerned and disturbed we seem to become over the results of our fraternal activities. May it be that we have concentrated our energies so largely on things, on the means for achieving our goals, on techniques rather than ends, that we have bound up the true spirit of Freemasonry to the point of ineffectuality?"

We had better think it through. Our great concern for *Things* has provided us with some beautiful buildings that today would serve just as well, or better, as crypts in a cemetery. They have not solved our problems; they have only created new ones. The heart of every Mason almost misses a beat at the sight of large and spacious institutions maintained by our Craft—and yet, if we are realistic we know that these, too, have not solved our problems; they too are creating new ones. If we are truthful with ourselves we must admit that the greater the emphasis on centralized charity, the less the attention to charity on the local level where it really counts.

We had better be giving a little more thought to the true purpose and mission of Freemasonry or our days of effectiveness will be few. Either we should teach our candidates and our members that *Things* are not the measure of the work of Freemasonry or we should rewrite our rituals to eliminate all reference to temples within the hearts of men.

Man shall not live by bread alone. An old, time-worn, horse-and-buggy precept, perhaps, but just as true as it was when first uttered by the Teacher of Galilee. And when

it ceases to be the dominant tenet in the philosophy of our Craft, then we shall have cut the heart out of Freemasonry.

Chapter 11

Where The Stones Are Raised

Centralize, centralize, centralize. Pattern Freemasonry after Washington bureaucracy. Let nothing be done modestly by an individual or a Lodge; do everything on state or national level the super-duper way. Make a great to-do about local self-government, but accept no local self-responsibility.

AFTER MOSES HAD safely conducted the Children of Israel through the Red Sea when pursued by Pharaoh and his hosts, he then, by divine command, erected a tabernacle and set it due East and West . . .

The time was some 1,400 years before the Christian era. It was 480 years before the foundations for the Temple of Solomon were laid on Mount Moriah. The long, bitter years of Egyptian bondage were over. The wanderings in the wilderness were just beginning.

To comprehend the true import of this incident in Old Testament lore, we must try to picture a simple, nomadic people, living in tents, their livelihood dependent largely upon flocks and herds. Their civilization, although crude in technology and the arts, was advanced in religion. We are not surprised to read, then, that soon after the Exodus, preparations were begun for the construction of a holy place in which to worship the Most High.

Only the select ones—the descendants of Levi—were permitted to engage in this great work. The Gershonites had charge of the furnishings: the fabrics, the curtains and cords and hangings. The Merarites had charge of the physical plant: the boards and the pillars, the bars and sockets and pins. The Kohathites had charge of the priestly functions: the altar and the candlesticks, the table of shewbread, the holy vessels and, most important of all, the Ark of the Covenant wherein rested the tablets of the law.

SIX MONTHS THEY SPENT erecting that pastoral shrine of Sinai. And when the time came for the dedication of the tabernacle, great preparations were made for transporting the offerings from each of the tribes. It was what the army would call a problem in logistics.

So lavish were the gifts that Moses ordered the use of wagons and oxen to bear them. But he made one significant exception: only the Gershonites and the Merarites were permitted to use wagons, and only to carry secular materials. The Kohathites, responsible for the holy objects now consecrated for the adoration of Jehovah, were forbidden to transport their burdens by wagon. The Revised Version tells the story in these words:

But to the sons of Kohath he gave none, because they were charged with the care of holy things which had to be carried on the shoulder.¹¹

¹¹ Numbers 3: 25-36; 7: 9.

Thus was it decreed even in that dim, far-off era of human development that those things which are sacred and precious, those things which lift mankind to heights of true nobility, must be guarded and preserved by our own muscle and blood and sweat.

The Ark of the Covenant must be carried on the shoulders of men.

ALMOST FIVE HUNDRED years later, at the quarries in the northeast quarter of Jerusalem near the Damascus gate, a vast labor force was at work. By the most laborious of processes, yet with infinite patience and skill, 80,000 Fellow Crafts were removing building stone from the place of its underground deposit.

By means of crude wooden rollers 70,000 Entered Apprentices moved the completed blocks from the quarries to the Temple site on Mount Moriah. Perhaps the immense masses could have been transported in their rough and unfinished state, but that was not the practice. Each stone was hewn, squared and numbered in the quarry where it was raised. Individually, block by block, each received the careful attention of skilled hands.¹² And the work was done with so high a degree of perfection that when those blocks arrived at their place each one "fitted with such exactness that it had more the appearance of being the handiwork of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, than that of human hands."

On many occasions I have walked alongside the working area surrounding Washington Cathedral, high on Mount St. Alban in the nation's capital. There I have seen blocks of Indiana limestone, hewn, squared and numbered in some Lawrence or Monroe County quarry. Precision tools have replaced the mallet and chisel, yet each individual block still must be fashioned by the hands of a skilled craftsman in a mill near the quarry site—and the completed blocks must fit in their places with the same degree of exactness. From a literal standpoint the basic methods of operative masons have not changed too much.

But when we begin to speak figuratively of the methods of speculative Masons—that is a different story.

NOW, WHY HAVE I gone into such detail to recount two episodes from the Old Testament?

The reason should be plain, I believe. The Sons of Kohath were not permitted to transport objects that were sacred and precious by wagon. Holy things had to be carried on the shoulders of men— *the hard way*. Stones for the Temple of Solomon were prepared individually, hewn, squared and numbered in the quarries where they were raised— *the hard way*.

Perhaps that is an over-simplified way of describing the designs on our speculative trestleboard, and yet, is not our grand aim just about as simple as that?

¹² I Kings 6:7.

When American Freemasonry begins to adapt our industrial "know-how" to the slow and patient process of making a Mason so as to accomplish it in three evenings at the most; when we neglect the individual, cease to spend any time on him or devote any attention to him, permit him to shift for himself and eventually to become swallowed up in a huge, impersonal crowd—then, I maintain, we are failing miserably in our task.

And when we look upon the individual petitioner for the three degrees merely as a check in payment of a fee, or as a potential member of another organization, we are prostituting our noble Craft to the basest of uses.

NOW, I AM SURE I hear someone protesting that all this is very good from an academic standpoint. But Americans are pragmatic, says my critic; we must not waste our time and thought on things idealistic; we must concern ourselves only with that which will "work." Very well, then, let's take a quick glance at the lengths to which our practical philosophies have brought us:

—Look at the incredible ideas now being proposed to "make over" our Craft to fit some other pattern. M. W. Harold D. Ross, when Grand Master of Masons in Illinois, recognized the watering-down process all too clearly. To his Grand Lodge he related how "countless solutions have been proposed to me . . . such as omitting the learning of the catechism, classes of candidates, conferring all three degrees in one night, and (believe it or not) three black cubes instead of one for rejection." Then he went on to observe: "It may well be that our numbers will continue to lessen until we are a hard core of earnest, sincere, devoted men committed to the principle that brotherly love, more than any other single human experience, is the greatness of mankind."

—Those who occupy positions of leadership in our Lodges are nearing the place where they can no longer think for themselves nor use the brains the Great Architect has given them. We have come to depend so much on centralized activity and standardized forms that individual imagination is unthinkable. I am constantly appalled at the requests I receive for some kind of "canned" program or ceremony for the most elementary of Lodge functions.

—Look how far we have gone already in the direction of centralization and standardization:

Lodge minutes have long since ceased to have any individuality; they have taken the easy course of prefabricated monotony. Floor plans for Masonic halls have settled down into a dull sameness; rarely do we see anything distinctive or creative. Even our temple designs are beginning to achieve a standardized effect. Who knows?—perhaps some day we will be able to identify a Masonic Temple just as readily as a Howard Johnson restaurant!

Masonic education programs, well meaning though they may be, are beginning to resemble a nationally advertised vitamin pill which claims to contain everything. Looking over the nation at all such standard products, I find little to set me on fire and much to

leave me cold. In far too many instances the packages are pitifully lacking in imagination, with little or nothing to offer except the reprinting of old booklets, the production of new booklets and the staging of dreary and lugubrious group meetings—a kind of dual epidemic of bookletitis and workshopitis. What happens when a Lodge is thoughtless enough to have its own peculiar set of problems not covered by the neatly catalogued "Plans" and "Programs"? Does it have to wait until its ailment becomes a standard one so it can qualify for the standard treatment? In the last few years I have seen countless examples of how hungry Lodges are for challenging ideas to meet their *individual* needs, and how enthusiastically they respond to *individual* attention, but I have seen few signs of any intelligent effort to capitalize on that hunger and that enthusiasm.

Small wonder our Lodges make use of mass methods when they see their Grand Lodge leadership using the same technique.

Yes, and ritualistic instruction, if we are not careful, will descend to the level of the fussy old drill sergeant I used to know in college who would spend the entire 50-minute period, day in and day out, rehearsing the exact manner of doing squads right.

CERTAINLY THERE ARE circumstances under which Lodges should do things the same way, and occasions when both Lodges and individual Brethren should act together as a unit. One such occasion comes twice a year with the Feasts of St. John. Another such occasion, in Indiana, is the annual Pilgrimage to the Masonic Home. The ceremonies of the three degrees always should be *basically* uniform—though certainly not to the point of being ridiculous. A certain amount of centralization and standardization is necessary for efficient and effective operation.

But it is so easy to go overboard—and it seems to be the besetting sin of Americans to go overboard. Whatever the current trend may be, we become obsessed with it. In the Hoosier vernacular, we go "hog wild."

Consider for a moment where centralization and standardization can lead us:

1. They contribute to a deadening mediocrity. I love some of those personal comments written by Secretaries on the annual returns of Lodges a century and more ago. They lend flavor to what otherwise would be a dull statistical report. The late George A. Avery, Grand Secretary of Pennsylvania, once told me of examining the original minute book of a Lodge almost two centuries old. Two pages were pasted together. Brother Avery and his associates were consumed with curiosity to know what profound secret might be hidden between those two pages. With great effort and no little expense, a firm of specialists was able to loosen the glue without damaging the pages . . . and then to their delight they read the news of the day written in a childish scrawl: "Sister has a new pair of drawers."

(At least it was different, and far more interesting than the standard form for Lodge minutes.)

2. They smother ambition, initiative, imagination, vision. I have reached the place that I glory in the Lodge which tries to hold on to a bit of individuality no matter how eccentric it may be. Nine Indiana Lodges (bless them!) still meet on or before the full moon. One Lodge has a provision in its by-laws that so long as that Lodge exists it will use three burning tapers, and nothing else, for its Lesser Lights—blessings on it! Once in awhile I visit a Lodge hall which has doors at unorthodox places, and it always makes me want to give three rousing cheers, for at least that Lodge is registering a silent protest against sameness!

3. They stifle the spirit and limit the scope of Masonic charity. Space does not permit me to develop this theme except to say that unquestionably here is an area in which we fall far short of the mark in doing the work of our Craft. If ever there was a subject on which serious thinking needed to be done, it is this.

4. They seek to take the easy way. And I maintain that Freemasonry must operate the *hard way* if it is to be of any effect. It must deal with individuals, and not masses; with Lodges, and not groups of Lodges. All over Indiana, and all over America, Lodges need individual attention—and here I mean something beyond routine ritualistic instruction. They need the *personal interest* of their leaders. They need inspiration, encouragement, challenge. But they need it *individually*—not some standard product sent out from a central office packaged and labeled with a trade name.

5. They repudiate the basic philosophy of Freemasonry. The stones for the Temple, erected for the adoration of the Most High, were hewn, squared and numbered in the quarries where they were raised. Tell me, if you can, what labor-saving device is there that is of any effect in the development of the immortal soul of a man?

The working tools of a Mason are designed for the use of *only one man at a time*.

The seeker after Light plucks off his shoe— individually.

He affirms his trust in God—individually. He comes face to face with destitution—alone. He stands in the Northeast Comer—individually.

He goes forth in search of That Which Was Lost—alone.

He retires to the Sanctum Sanctorum to pray— alone.

He meets the test of fidelity—alone.

He is raised to newness of life—individually and alone.

Andre Gide said it in words few in number but powerful in their impact: "Man is more important than men. God made *him* and not *them* in His image. Each one is more precious than all." When we seek to circumvent personal interest and attention, to cast

every Freemason in a standard mold and send him to the shipping room on a conveyor belt, then we deny the dignity of the individual and abandon our lofty mission.

We had better think it through.

I never fail to be lifted to new heights by those thrilling words of the late A. Whitney Griswold, President of Yale University: "Could *Hamlet* have been written by a committee, or the *Mono Lisa* painted by a club? Could the New Testament have been composed as a conference report? Creative ideas do not spring from groups. The divine spark leaps from the finger of God to the finger of Adam."

No, there are no short cuts, no mass production techniques, that can make a perfect ashlar out of a rough ashlar.

The stones for the Temple must be hewn, squared and numbered in the quarries where they are raised.

The Ark of the Covenant must be carried on the shoulders of men.

Chapter 12

An Army On Foot THE HARD WAY IS THE MASONIC WAY

Concluding "Confusion", the author asserts that in seeking to make Freemasonry large and affluent and easy we also can make it ineffective in present-day society.

"**WHAT COME YOU** here to do?" the Entered Apprentice is asked. With an eagerness as glib as it is unthinking he replies, "To improve myself in Masonry."

He seeks to improve himself, he says. Not a word about improving anyone else; no mention whatever of improving the community, or the government of the United States, or that of any other nation in the world, or of the world itself.

Note in particular that his expressed motive is not to improve Freemasonry, but rather to improve a Mason—and not some other Mason, but himself.

As an Entered Apprentice he is admitted into a Lodge of Freemasons for the first time to say, in effect, with becoming humility, "Here am I, a rough ashlar in need of improvement. Place your working tools in my hands and teach me their uses, that I may apply them in my labors to become a perfect ashlar."

As he progresses through the ceremonies of the three degrees, he hears a great deal about self-improvement. In the character of a Freemason he is expected to make his body a living stone for a spiritual building—his own body. He receives a gauge, a common gavel, a square, a plumb, all to be used for the improvement of his own condition first, and then, through him, the condition of others.

BUT ONCE RAISED to the sublime degree and invested with its emblems, he finds that his desire to "improve myself" has been given an entirely different interpretation. No longer is it the slow, patient process of chipping off the corners and ugly excesses of his own nature to make a rough ashlar perfect. Now he is assured that he can improve himself in Masonry by choosing one or more of several formulae. "Memorize this lecture," one Brother will demand. "Read this booklet," admonishes another. "Come to Lodge," a third will plead. "Sign this petition," insists a fourth. Improving oneself in Masonry suddenly has become as simple and as easy as that!

And then after awhile he hears his restless Brethren saying that *Freemasonry*—not Masons—needs to be improved, and with infinite conceit suggesting it is up to them to do the improving!

How seldom do we hear the calm voice of dear old Mr. Mason (there is at least one in every Lodge), and how desperately do we need to hear his words of gentle suasion: "My Brother, you have come here to improve yourself, you say. You will have countless opportunities for self-improvement in Freemasonry, yet you may fail to recognize most

of them. For there is nothing flashy about the erection of a moral edifice within the heart of a man. It is so simple that many Masons miss the point entirely. Neither is there anything easy about it. On the contrary, the Masonic way is so difficult it is seldom tried. It will be a full-time job—the hardest job you have ever tackled—but of all life's experiences, few will be richer."

BY NOW THE THEME of this concluding article should be plain: Freemasonry has no problems that cannot be solved by Freemasonry. Indeed, the only solution to Freemasonry's problems is Freemasonry. Our Craft has adjusted itself before; it can do so again, and it need not lose its soul in the doing.

That there is confusion in the temple, few will deny. That the state of confusion is caused by inferior designs on the trestleboard I, for one, fervently believe. With a thoroughly mixed-up sense of values we get all itchy over the thought of "improvements" that should be made to modernize our noble Craft. The way to change human lives is to change human systems, we try to persuade ourselves, as we parrot the environmental philosophy of the Shallow Sixties now being expounded on all sides by persons who also are confused.

But when we sort things out in the order of their relative importance, we begin to see that the improvement needed so sorely is not in Masonry, but in *Masons*; that whatever weaknesses may appear in the chain are brought about by weak links. Then, as the picture comes into focus, we are reminded that the way to change human systems is to change human lives. That sounds more like Freemasonry.

A JEREMIAD IS NEVER a popular theme. Freemasons in particular do not like to stand before the mirror and see imperfections and shortcomings, nor do we like to be summoned to return to basic principles. Regardless of the direction in which we may be headed, we like to fancy we are moving forward. But there comes a time when "Forward March" can be a suicidal command; there are occasions when it is the part of wisdom to shout, "Halt! About Face! Forward March!"

No, the message of a Jeremiah is not pleasant, and seldom is it received with acclaim. To emphasize the hard way instead of the easy way, the importance of the individual instead of the mass, individual responsibility instead of Lodge responsibility, Lodge responsibility instead of Grand Lodge responsibility, a favorable image created by the lives of Master Masons instead of one manufactured by news media—this is not soothing music to the ear. But we cannot escape the fact that such a way is the *Masonic* way.

Why are we so fearful?

Because there is a tapering off of the membership curve and a dearth of interest. Ill-gotten gains of the nineteen-forties are not holding up. Once we rushed men through the degrees with reckless abandon; now they are not lining up to be loaded onto the conveyor belt. Temples that were humming with activity in the 'forties are quiet as a tomb in the 'sixties. Then our Lodge rooms and banquet halls were filled to overflowing with Master

Masons on just about every occasion; now we have to bring in the ladies and children to get a crowd large enough to justify the expense of opening the building. Our sins are catching up with us. We have found that there is such a thing as Masonic inflation as well as inflation of the currency; that the penalty of Masonic inflation is Masonic devaluation—and that the penalty must be paid.

If it is consolation we are looking for, there is precious little to be found in the knowledge that most human institutions are having like troubles maintaining a healthy interest and activity these days, and that even those institutions which claim to be divine are fighting the air, uncertain which way to turn or what to try next.

Ignoring the lessons of our own history, the most discouraging aspect of our era of apathy is that, turn wheresoever we may, we are urged to experiment with just about everything under the sun except Freemasonry; to discard the usages and customs and traditions that have set our Craft apart and made it distinctive; to pattern the Fraternity after fleeting fads and fancies as changeable as the model of a motor car.

WHY SHOULD THERE be confusion in the temple? Why are we in search of bright ideas and prescriptions? Freemasonry has one mission on this earth and only one. Let him who asks what that mission is pause to reflect that in asking the question he confesses that he has missed the point of it all.

The mission of our gentle Craft is not to be another service club, or another civic league, or another pseudo-political pressure group. It is not to be another flag-waving society of super-patriots, or another agency to alleviate the physical ills of the human race, or another co-educational Friendly Neighbors Circle devoted to cozy and inane "togetherness." The woods in these parts are filled with such organizations. They are a dime a dozen. They are doing the work for which they were formed and doing it very well.

Why cannot Freemasons do likewise? Why can we not content ourselves with simply doing the work of our Craft? No other organized society on the face of the earth can do the work of Freemasonry except Freemasonry. Why do we not stick to our knitting?

The reason, I believe, is that we have become victims of a kind of brainwashing which protests that our ways are too slow, too quiet, too difficult, too old-fashioned. "This is the Twentieth Century," says the New Ideology. "Unless we are increasing in numbers and material wealth we are on the decline; we must have the last word in temples and institutions; we must make a big noise to call attention to ourselves and get people to talking about us; we must devise means whereby we can do things the quick way, the easy way, and get on to something else."

But there is no quick way and no easy way to erect temples within the hearts of men. There are no mass production methods, no huge conveyor belts on which men may be loaded to have the roughness chipped away and the smooth and perfect ashlar emerge therefrom. A great Freemason, General Lew Wallace, in his *Ben-Hur*, observed that

"When God Walks the earth, His steps are often centuries apart." The making of a Mason is a process almost that deliberate; the work of our gentle Craft is an effort that must be pursued slowly and with limitless patience—and it must be done *the hard way*, for there is no other way to execute the designs on our trestleboard.

IN HIS GREAT NOVEL, *The Robe*, Lloyd C. Douglas has a powerful scene which illustrates the point I have tried to make in almost every article and editorial I have written in recent years. The old Roman emperor Tiberius is speculating on the probable outcome of the peculiar Christian movement then getting under way. It would eventually disintegrate, he predicted, just as soon as it began to be successful and strong. Then, with prophetic words that sounded as if he might be talking about Freemasonry instead of Christianity, he clinches the nail:

" *'The Christian afoot is a formidable fellow— but—when he becomes prosperous enough to ride a horse—'* Tiberius suddenly broke out in a startling guffaw—*'He! he! he!—When he gets a horse! Ho! ho! ho!—a Christian on horseback will be just like any other man on horseback! This Jesus army will have to travel on foot if it expects to accomplish anything!'*"¹³

There simply is no effortless way for Freemasons to do the work of Freemasonry. When we are performing the noble tasks to which we have obligated ourselves our job is never easy, never popular, never fashionable, and we are never in the majority. The reason is plain: the work of a Mason must be done *the hard way* or it avails nothing. As the old emperor would put it, a Mason prosperous enough to ride a horse will be of little effect, for a Mason on horseback is just like any other man on horseback.

ONCE BEFORE I made the plea: Let's try Freemasonry. Now I renew that plea, for I have seen nothing superior to it, and I glory in these years of adversity that may bring us to our senses with the reawakening we must have if our Craft is to remain a vital force in human society.

And so I come to the end of my explorations in the morass of confusion with no pat answers and no sure-cure prescriptions to offer, proposing only that we do the work of Freemasonry and that we do it in the manner of Freemasons. That means, among other things, an agonizing reappraisal of our worship of bigness and wealth and material things, our passion for efficiency and know-how and quick results and public acclaim. The philosophy of Freemasonry properly applied is a power that works as slowly, as quietly and as irresistibly as a grain of seed sprouting in the earth.

If we have become so busy, so highly organized and centralized and standardized and mechanized and institutionalized that the individual Mason no longer counts for anything, then let's use the scissors on our rituals and cut out such obsolete trivia as those promises to help, aid and assist . . . to fly to the relief of a Brother . . . to remember a Brother's

¹³ Lloyd C. Douglas, *The Robe* (Houghton Mifflin Company). Quoted by permission of publisher.

welfare . . . to stretch forth our hands to assist and support . . . to go on foot and out of our way!

As American Freemasons it is time we were making up our minds what it is we have come here to do. If we are here for the noble purpose we once proclaimed so readily, then we must face the sobering fact that our assignment is the improvement of *ourselves*—not Freemasonry.

And unless we want our Craft to pass into that limbo where things of no further use or necessity are relegated, we had better learn to shift from overdrive into low gear—to become interested in men as individuals. Then, logically, the next step is to pull out to one side of the road, bring our fast, high-powered vehicle to a stop, and get out and walk—to do the work of a Mason *the hard way*.

For the "Masonic army" is in precisely the same position as the "Jesus army." As old Tiberius so sagely observed, it must travel on foot if it expects to accomplish anything.