

How Do We Measure Ourselves As Masons?

By Dr. Albert E. Piatt, PSM

Presented to Georgia College, S.R.I.C.F., December 30, 1996

[These remarks were originally used to introduce and summarize the paper, *Discipline and Moderation*, by Dr. Wolfgang Rumetsch]

Why did you become a Mason? The familiar answer is that you became a Mason to improve yourself in Freemasonry. Why do you "travel"? Again the answer is that you travel "in search of light," i.e., you are seeking knowledge, truth, etc.

Upon being raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, depending on the ritual of your jurisdiction, you may have been informed that you had received, or were entitled to receive all the light which could be conferred upon you in a Master Mason's Lodge. This would imply that there is more light to be obtained outside the Master Mason's Lodge. Indeed this fact was confirmed—when you next beheld the Worshipful Master approaching you from the East, who extended you his right hand in token of the continuance of friendship and brotherly love and presented you with—a petition for the Scottish Rite and Shrine.

We say that it is the inner and not the outer qualities of a man which make a man a Mason. But, do we apply this same principle after we have become Masons? How do we measure ourselves as Masons? By improve ourselves in Freemasonry do we mean the outer or the inner self? When we travel in search of light, do we mean we are seeking more degrees, or are we attempting to internalize the moral truths those degrees convey to us? What does Masonic office mean to us? Do we seek the privileges of the offices in Masonic bodies and forget the responsibilities?

All too often we measure our Masonic stature in terms of the number of degrees received, or the number of offices held and/or titles acquired rather than the emulation of the moral principles conveyed by the degrees we have received. How many of us can remember all of the obligations to which we have sworn as we have advanced in Freemasonry? How many of us can honestly say that we have lived up to all of those obligations?

How many of us have received any other "light," i.e., moral/philosophical/esoteric teachings, apart from the degrees conferred in those other bodies? Have we truly used Masonry to improve our inner selves? Or, has it only benefited the outer self?

Masonically, we leave the West and travel toward the East in search of Light. Just as, in our physical and philosophical lives, we leave the womb traveling toward the tomb in search of truth. Along the way we may stray too far North into immorality where no light can shine. Or, we may stray to far South and, without the Junior Warden's supervision [remembering that our ancient Grand Master was slain and the South is vacant], drift into intemperance or excess. The purpose of the Masonry is to set our moral path straight so that we might pass through the misty veils of death and at last reach the source of All Truth, Knowledge, and Light.

Finally, as we stand before the great white throne, He who sits as Judge Supreme will look not to see how many degrees we have obtained, or how many collars, chains, or jewels we are wearing, nor will he look at our gilded aprons of blue, or red, or green, or purple. He will look underneath at that apron that we first received upon entering the Lodge—that plain white leathern apron, to see if we have defiled it with our stains and blemishes.

Thus is the responsibility of Masonry, not the conferral of degrees, but the dispensing of the additional knowledge that will guide us along a straighter path to our final destiny—to that "undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveler returns."