

## FREEMASONRY IN THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY AND... BEYOND? (PART III)

*“For Where Your Treasure Is, There Will Your Heart Be Also.”*

**IF IT IS EASY TO JOIN, IT IS EASY TO LEAVE.** The survival of Freemasonry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century has been a topic of discussion and concern and rightly so. The latest issue of *The Philalethes, Volume LIX, October 2006* has a great article that cuts straight to the heart of the matter. Presented by the Knights of the North, the feature reprints a series of 1960 articles by Dwight Smith, Past Grand Master and at the time Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Indiana.

I will use parts of it to highlight this extremely critical issue within this short article and the next.

Let's begin this article with chapter four in the writings of P.G.M. Smith. Chapter four is entitled *“Pearl of Great Price?”* This chapter discusses: how Freemasonry is simply too easy to join and too cheap to belong to.

Before we are in a position to tackle some of the difficulties that beset us, we must reestablish the premise that Freemasonry is worth a great deal of effort and a great deal of sacrifice, a great deal of waiting to obtain, hence the title of the article Pearl of Great Price.

Let us consider that a century ago it was not uncommon for men to pay what amounted to a month's wages to become a Mason. We know without challenge that today's petitioners are paying a fee, which represent a very small investment. Have we placed such a cheap value on the basic degrees that it is no wonder newly raised Masons end up having little or no respect for their Symbolic Lodge? Has Freemasonry become too easy to obtain?

Arthur H. Strickland of Kansas wrote an article for *The Philalethes* entitled, *“Who Killed Cock Robin?”* Mr. Strickland's article was calling attention to the old saying, what is easy to get is not much appreciated. He further observed, “We have done everything that we can think of to cheapen Masonry...we have cheapened the Fraternity to the point that it is seriously reacting against us.”

Has money, speed and liberalization taken over as symptoms to this disease? Consider the following:

1. **Our fees for the degrees and for membership are too low.** An argument has been made that an investment in monetary value would accomplish more good than bad for the fraternity. What monetary value is our parent lodge worth? What do you expect to get back for your hard earned money? Do you get your money's worth now? Does raising the dues help identify the truly committed?

2. **Everything is geared to speed, as if a deadline had to be met.** Freemasonry is no longer worth waiting for, nor working for, nor sacrificing for. Too often it is only a badge of respectability, a prestige symbol, to be obtained with the same hurry-up zeal that would be assumed in acquiring a new car or new television. Comprehension of the philosophy of Freemasonry, its symbolism, ethics, and traditions, what it is and what it seeks to do are all lost in the shuffle. Is Freemasonry worth the trouble of waiting for? Would you have gone through all this trouble to be part of this fraternal organization?
  
3. **The liberalization of Freemasonry.** Have you heard the story of an incident in Montana where a brother Mason received his fifty-year button without ever having attended a meeting of his own Lodge? Are we becoming paper Masons? You know the type. These are brothers who wear the rings and talk a good talk but don't attend Lodge meetings or any type of Masonic meetings? Physical problems aside, how do they contribute to the betterment of Freemasonry? To the future survival of their parent Lodge? How do they make good men better men?

When we downgrade our Craft, submit it to all types of shortcuts, label it as something hardly worth mentioning, what can we expect if Master Masons no longer give to their Lodges their full measure of loyalty and devotion?

Please reflect on these words..."For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

My brothers, until the next article.

***Bro. George Weil***