

Masonic Matters

June 10, 2007

By Ed Halpaus

“It is what we think we know that often prevents us from learning.” Claude Bernard

This publication, while it is printed with the permission of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. M. of Minnesota, contains the writings and opinions of Ed Halpaus and is not in any way the opinion of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota.

“If you can’t teach me, don’t criticize me.” Sonja Carson

I bring you greetings from Most Worshipful Brother Raymond G. Christensen, Grand Master of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Minnesota, and all of the Grand Lodge officers elected and appointed of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota.

“In order to be a truly knowledgeable person, one has to be engaged in serious systematic learning.” Benjamin Payton

I don’t know how many Masonic Bibles you own, but I have three. The first one I got was right after my Third Degree, and I really liked that Bible. I read in it every day for years, and I carried it with me in my car and brief case when I was on the road for my company for about 20 years until my retirement. This Bible is in its 30th year with me and it looks it. I have another small Master Mason edition, (which should look better longer now that I’m not on the road every week,) and a large Family Masonic Bible too. (I like to read in each of them fairly often along with my Study Bibles, which I do use more.) The Bible portion of a Masonic Bible is the standard King James or Authorized Version of the Bible, but what makes it a Masonic Bible is the information in the front of the book that tells about Masonry and has a good question and answer section. A Mason can spend a great deal of quality time reading in his Masonic Bible. But then if you have a Masonic Bible you know what I mean, and if you don’t have one you really ought to look into getting one.

I still read and study the Bible, and in my old Masonic Bible too, and I always find something interesting: for instance, in the Bible I got in 1977 in the Questions and Answers section is a section called “Doors of Masonic Knowledge,” and then comes the question; “What is one of the lamentable weaknesses of Masonry?”

Here is the answer it gives: *“That the newly initiated candidate is left to shift for himself, and not instructed that there is more to Masonry than just a few grips, signs, and passwords. He has received the key, the degrees, and it is necessary, if he desires to leave the rut of ritualistic routine, and inform himself on the nature and character of the institution, that he enter the recesses of its caverns with Masonic pick and shovel, in search of the jewels hidden there, and invest himself with the rich fruits of Masonic knowledge all the days of his life.”* Please note the section above I’ve underlined; that he is left to shift for himself.

This definitely is a weakness in Freemasonry, and this weakness is a kind of weakness that will continue to grow to gigantic proportions unless there is a concerted effort to do something different to bring knowledge into the forefront of Masonry. Many Lodges do not use the mentor or intender program their Grand Lodge has in place. Possibly this is because the program is perceived as being something that is not necessary or required, (but in my jurisdiction it is,) or maybe it might be perceived as something that is so old it isn’t any good any more. Well one Brother helping another Brother learn more about Freemasonry, so that he can enjoy being a Freemason more, never gets too old or goes out of style.

Another section and question in that first Masonic Bible of mine asks “What is the Philosophical basis of Masonry?” the answer has to do with what was just mentioned: The philosophical basis of Freemasonry has to do with the history of the origin of our fraternity. It involves an inquiry *“into the ideas that lie at its base, an investigation of its peculiar form, an analytical study of its several degrees, and a development of the ideas which are illuminated by its ritualistic emblems, myths, and veiled allegories and which speak through its sublime system of symbols.”*

By the way a veiled allegory is synonymous with a parable. They each are a way of saying one thing and meaning another. From my 1977 Masonic Bible by A.J. Holman company: *“In the New Testament we find the teachings of Jesus in veiled allegory. The same is used in Freemasonry, to*

conceal from those, except to whom the teachings rightly belong, the mysteries of Speculative Science; and then only to them that has the desire to enter its caverns in search of the jewels hidden there.” That’s one of the things about Mentoring and Masonic Education; [Look at the underlined words again please.] We all are interested in it, [Mentoring and Masonic Education,] but to varying degrees. Some are really interested and some are mildly interested, while some are not to interested at all, but a Lodge needs to assign a Mentor and provide Masonic information and education to everyone in order to make sure those who want it receive it. In my mind every Mason needs a Mentor, (one or more over the years,) because also to me, another name for Mentor is an interested and somewhat knowledgeable friend who is also a Freemason; and none of us have too many friends.

Near the beginning of this article it was mention about a weakness in Freemasonry. Unless we have a concerted effort to provide Mentors and Masonic information and education it can be a great weakness in our fraternity; but it is a weakness that can be prevented and corrected. We don’t want a weakness to grow and grow. We need Lodge leaders who will be able to help the rest of us learn the things Freemasonry has to pass on to us, and every Master of every Lodge is important when it comes to providing this information to the members of his Lodge.

“Why should a Master of a Lodge be well informed?” From the Masonic Bible I’ve been referring to: *“Because if Masonry be as it is defined, ‘ a science of morality, clothed in allegory and illustrated by symbols,’ it is evident that a successful teacher (and a Master is, in an emphatic sense a teacher) must qualify himself by a diligent investigation of these symbols and veiled allegories – the myths and legends of Masonry – their mystical application, and the whole design of the institution in this, its most important feature, must constitute his study.”* I will add that the interest and the training of the Master of the Lodge begins with his Mentor as a new Mason and continues from his first appointment as an appointed officer right up to and through his year as Master of his Lodge: it does not begin when he is elected Master. Lodge officers need to be trained and helped in many areas and it takes Mentors to give this help; each of us are capable and able to be a Mentor and a friend to our Brothers; to help them be all they can be to help our Lodge and our Fraternity.

“Never get to the point where you will be ashamed to ask anybody for information. The ignorant man will always be ignorant if he fears that by asking another for information he will display ignorance. Better once display your ignorance of a certain subject than always know nothing of it.” Booker T. Washington

From the Great light of Masonry = “The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight; for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life; doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young – let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance – for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.” Proverbs 1: 1-7

More Light – Mehr Licht ©, Masonic Matters © and T.F.S. ©, are sent out by E-mail at no charge to anyone who would like to receive them. If you enjoy these publications please share them with others. To subscribe to any one or all of these publications just send an E-mail to ed@halpaus.net with Subscribe and the Title, or ‘all 3,’ in the subject line and you will be added to the list to receive the publication you want.

Please remember: if you would like to participate in the latest Masonic Monday Question, please go to <http://www.lodgebuilder.org> and click on the Lodge Education forum. Past Masonic Monday Questions and the current one may also be read on the Web Site for the G.L. of MN at www.mn-masons.org under Masonic Monday Q&A When you have an answer send it to masonicmonday@gmail.com This weeks question is: **“Of what is the substitute word a symbol?”**

With “Brotherly Love,”
Ed Halpaus
Grand Lodge Education Officer

Political Freedom, Religious Tolerance, Personal Integrity; Freemasonry – it’s not for everyone.