
MENTAL PREPARATION OF THE CANDIDATE

By Wor. Brother Dr. Roy D. Shortreed

If Freemasonry is to thrive in the future as it has in the past, we must look beyond the narrow limits of the physical preparation in the Ante-room to the broader field of the mental preparation of the Candidate, not only before, but after he has been admitted to the Craft. Ideal Freemasonry is intelligent, appreciative Freemasonry and the type of Master Masons our Lodges produce is directly predicated upon the mental impressions they receive at the start of their journey.

It may be assumed that the large majority of applicants come to us worthy and well qualified. They have a sincere desire in that first great preparation room, the heart, to become good Masons. By favorable opinions preconceived of the Order, and desires of knowledge and self-improvement they are zealous and respectful. Do we always realize our individual responsibilities to maintain that zeal and respect? Do we satisfy by educational means his desire for knowledge and encourage him to improve himself and serve his fellow creatures? Proper mental preparation before and after he is admitted to the Craft will go far toward attaining these results.

Before the application is signed, the applicant should be told that Masonry is neither a social club, a benevolent institution, nor a mutual benefit society, but a system of Morality. He should be impressed that we receive none but worthy men and that if he is accepted it will be because his reputation merits it, not because we need his money. The thoroughness with which the investigating committee carry out their duties will convey this impression and he will appreciate his membership when he receives it.

He should be mentally prepared for the sacred impressiveness of the degrees. Many Candidates enter our portals expecting horseplay, buffoonery and other clownish antics, having been mis-informed by some who should know better. The Craft must not suffer from these latter nor from that other band of ruffians whose offensive stories in banquet rooms are utterly out of harmony with our spirit and teaching. Samson used a dangerous weapon with which to slay the Philistines but it has no place among us.

The manner of collecting the necessary fee for initiation is debatable and has always appealed to the writer as being incongruous with the impression we wish to convey to the Candidate. He cannot buy his way in, and why collect his money right on the threshold of the Lodge? Surely the fee could be more suitably collected some place else during the day before his initiation, thereby keeping that memorable evening free from financial transactions.

Impressions made on the mind of the Candidate during and before the time of the conferring of the degrees are the most lasting. The impressive exemplification of our degrees and the ability on the part of the instruction committee to intelligently explain and answer questions are of the utmost importance if our Candidates are to understand and appreciate the true beauty of our Order.

Let us, therefore, convey proper impressions and ideals of Freemasonry to our Candidates. In other words, give thought to his mental preparation and he will be a more intelligent, enthusiastic and appreciative Mason and will not through apathy drift away from us.
