

Dependent Membership

"It does not follow in requiring a Companion to maintain his good standing in the Lodge that we are especially desirous of retaining him in either. The idea is that if he is not possessed of that 'sense of honor' which would impel him to make good his obligations in the 'lower bodies,' he is not the character of man whom we desire to retain in the so-called 'higher bodies.' "

That point of view must appeal to any who give the subject consideration. Wanting the characteristics that go to make a good Master Mason he is not likely to be a desirable acquisition in the Chapter, Commandery or anything else. In expressing our individual conviction on this question let it be understood that we are not defending the attitude of the jurisdiction we represent. It is purely a personal opinion. In Canada there are a few who are in agreement with the doctrine advocated by our Companion and we are willing to admit that "the whole hog" is more consistent with reason than the qualifying morsel required by our own and even other Grand Chapters which enact that an applicant for the Royal Arch must be an affiliated Master Mason and leave him to his own sweet will subsequently. To be strictly in line with our idea of independence and that freedom which we hold is consistent with the principles taught by the ancient Craft, the qualification should stop at being a Master Mason in "good standing" affiliated or otherwise. Dependent membership, like many other innovations is simply the modern necessity for dollars and cents.

It is perplexing, but true, that we have too many "Masonic" governments that claim their influence and sustenance from the one source, and rely on that source for their future stability. Dependent membership would not now be a subject for controversy had the traditions and regulations of old been adhered to. William Preston, the distinguished English ritualist and writer who became a Mason in 1762 says, and his words even from that remote period, may well apply to present day experience.

"It is well known to the Masons of this country, that some men of warm and enthusiastic imaginations have been disposed to amplify parts of the institutions of Freemasonry, and in their supposed improvements to have elevated their discoveries into new degrees, to which they have added ceremonies, rituals and dresses, ill suited to the native simplicity of the Order, as it was originally practised in this country. But all these degrees, though probably deserving reprehension, as improper innovations on the original system of Masonry, I can never believe that they have either proceeded from bad motives or could be viewed in any other light than as innocent and inoffensive amusements."

And as it was then, so it is now. At a later period- (1813) it was "declared and pronounced" by the act of union between the two Grand Lodges of England.

"That pure Ancient Masonry consists of the three degrees and no more, viz.: those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch."

There were no upper stories to that structure. The additions have all been "attracted" since and to insure their stability have nested upon "pure ancient Masonry." By many it is believed that our pioneer brethren, both in the old land and the new, erred, when they divorced the Master Mason from the Royal Arch which is its logical continuation and completion. In placing the latter under separate government that error was accentuated and the further opinion prevails, that in decorating it with incongruous frills, the product of imitative successors to the inventive genius of William Preston's time, it was but adding insult to injury. That the Royal Arch should be more nearly allied to the Master Mason and under the one ruling head, has been, and is, the dream of many which neither at this day, nor in the near future, is likely to be realized. Were it so, dependent membership and other vexing problems born of outside influences would never be heard of for the latter could not without their basic support have ever attained to the dignity of an influence.

Sources:

Proceedings of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada at the annual convocation, 1906, report on Foreign Correspondence - DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

