

Freemasonry: A three-legged Stool? By Errol E. Hinton

I have noticed throughout my travels quiet and sometimes not so quiet murmurings from brothers about those "others" in Masonry. I have heard the words, "he isn't a good Mason because he doesn't know his ritual well enough", or "That lodge is very snobby. All they care about is themselves and look down their noses at the rest of us". I have been toying with these very thoughts when something rubbed me the wrong way. I guess it was the final straw, but I got angry. I was very upset about the way that a visiting brother treated a lodge while helping with degree work.

"What a control freak", I thought. "This lodge is finally getting some degree work done and this guy has the nerve to come in and tell these brothers of their faults like that. Give them a break"... I got home and shot off a note to some of my well informed brothers to blow off some steam.

"Fundamentalist Freemasons," I wrote, "have an idea of what they think is right and that is the end of it. They refuse to listen to the voice of reason." I got some immediate feedback. The important message I got from my brethren was that even though a brother comes off a little heavy handed towards others, seldom is his heart in the wrong place. This made me feel a little better. I then received "The Fundamental Nature of the Craft", by MW Brother Neil Neddermeyer, Grand Master of Minnesota. In this, piece Bro. Neddermeyer shows how the craft is divided into three groups. The first is the fraternal or social side of the Masonry. The second group focuses on the community action, and public giving. The third group exists to believe in the promotion of Masonic light and teaching. This group believes that we exist first and foremost to teach and learn Masonic principle as a way to better living and personal growth. As I reflect upon this I realize that Freemasonry is like a three-legged stool. When one leg is longer or shorter than the others, the whole stool is unbalanced. A challenge lies ahead of us because like minded brethren join similar lodges. Thereby we get lodges that seem to "specialize" so to speak in different areas. Too often we try to compensate for our own lopsided stool by sawing off the other two legs to fit. In so doing we solve no problems at all, but rather get a very small stool. We also can sit on our lopsided stool and pretend that there is no problem. We also occasionally blame the table or the floor for the lack of understanding of our needs.

The question that remains is how do we find balance? The answer; though simple in principle, is a challenge. We must work together. As Masons we must work with not against each other's strengths. Perhaps the individual lodges form groups of brethren to work on these areas. The bottom line is this; we are stronger together than the sum of the individual strengths, and together we can make the difference and secure Freemasonry as it was meant to be for generations to come.

Originally published in A Fourth Part of a Circle Vol. 2 No. 4 Issue No. 8
Stephen A. Dafoe publishing