

Three Phase Masonry by Robert F. Smith

The first phase of Masonry is our ritual and is the basis on which the foundation of Masonry rests. It has existed and been refined over the course of centuries. Originally it consisted of one degree only. It is believed that some time after the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 the second and third degrees evolved. Many men have contributed to the development of the ritual and filled it with the morality and symbolism that we today recognize as Masonry.

Ritualism is the means by which we teach our candidates to become true Brothers instilled with the positive aspects of the order. In addition to the three degrees, our various ceremonies are an important part of our heritage and point out the great lessons that we can use in our daily life. The ritual is always positive and never destructive or negative. It shows the proper moral course of action in every situation and allows each Mason to decide for himself how the ethical applications shall be applied to his personal life. This is the basic phase of Masonry on which our beliefs are founded and the concepts by which we live our lives.

The second phase of Masonry concerns how we apply the principles of Masonry to service to our members. Masonry is about friendship and cements true relationships among men. Masonry teaches that each man must be regarded for his deeds alone and is responsible for his actions. Thus we are enabled to come together as equals and share in our joys and sorrows without regard for wealth or station in life. As Masons we learn to lend a sympathetic ear to anyone, especially brother Masons, who are troubled either emotionally, physically or financially. It is our duty to relieve the distressed if we can do so without material injury to family or ourselves. We are to befriend the lonely, visit the sick and comfort those in distress. Relief for those who are financially distressed is taught symbolically as a part of the first degree in Masonry. And we are often called upon to render the Masonic funeral service for a brother after he has departed this life. The widow and orphans are then the subject of our concern as Masons. Our Ohio Masonic home provides for the welfare of our members who feel they are no longer able to take care of their own needs in the public environment.

The third phase of Masonry is service to the community in which we reside. Masons have contributed to special programs for our communities for many years but it is only of late that these acts have been made known to the public. Ohio Masonry supports Special Olympics and a very fine college scholarship program. Many lodges are part of the Adopt a Highway program in the state. Youth activities such as athletics teams are supported by our lodges. On a personal level, Masons are involved in many activities in their communities, such as charity drives, blood banks, and patriotic projects. The hospital visitation program of the Masonic Service Association fills a need in our Veteran's Hospitals. The appendant bodies of Masonry support many charities with help for physically and mentally disadvantaged children and adults and

other worthwhile programs for the benefit of the community. Financial support is solicited and offered in many cases of natural disasters. As individuals you will find members of the Masonic lodges at the forefront of our churches and community projects. In short, Masons are good citizens. We practice in public the lessons that are taught in our rituals.