

DeMOLAY'S RELATIONSHIP TO FREEMASONRY

This article has been developed from an address presented to the executive Councils of DeMolay of North America on March 1, 1991. It was prepared by Thomas W Jackson, Grand Secretary of The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. Editor

It was my privilege to recently address the executive officers of the Order of DeMolay on the subject "What Does Freemasonry Expect from DeMolay?" When preparing to address this subject, I found it to be an interesting and intriguing question but one without a recognized and clear-cut answer. Many times we hear expressed what DeMolay expects from Freemasonry, but I had never before considered what Freemasonry expected from DeMolay.

As a boy I did not have the opportunity to be a member of the Order of DeMolay. In fact, I never heard of DeMolay until I became a Freemason. I was, however, active in the Boy Scouts of America for a period of 27 years and found the basic principles of both organizations to be the same although the modes of operation are quite different. I would have loved, however, to have had the opportunity to work with the ritualism of DeMolay.

Freemasonry does, indeed, have a right to expect something, from not only the Order of DeMolay as a Body, but also from each individual member of that Body. Simply defined, we have the right to expect a performance from the members of DeMolay that reflects the purpose of the organization. Many of our Members, however, fail to recognize that purpose.

Brother Frank Land, when asked to define the Order of DeMolay, stated: "Literally speaking, I would say the Order Or DeMolay is a youth organization for young men whose purpose is the building of better citizens."

In trying to define what Freemasonry expects from DeMolay, we should look to the seven cardinal virtues and the vows of a DeMolay. They are, after all, reflective of what it takes to become a better citizen. They also represent what is required as a commitment to DeMolay.

The systematics within the Order to build that better citizen lies within the keeping of the vows and the practice of the seven cardinal virtues. Freemasonry has every right to expect that purpose to be carried out by each individual member of the Chapter, as well as the Order in general!

One of the unique facets of DeMolay which has made it so different from other youth organizations has been the emphasis on the first cardinal virtue, Filial Love. This is a quality never specifically stressed in any other organization with which I am familiar. We have the right, as a Masonic Fraternity, therefore, to expect the members of the Order of DeMolay to display a respect for their parents and to acknowledge their parents contributions in their lives.

We have every reason to expect a member of the Order to display reverence for sacred things. A genuine belief in a Supreme Being is a fundamental philosophical principle of Freemasonry, and we can accept no less from the Order of DeMolay.

Courtesy as a virtue seems to be a lost ingredient in present day society and is an attribute which contributes to the exemplary quality of the Order. Freemasonry has every reason to expect courtesy in every way from our young men.

The ability of man to relate to man may well determine the future of the world. Indeed, I would suspect the virtue of comradeship would be one that will become more valuable in the life of a young man with each passing year. We have every right to expect the development and practice of this virtue by members of the Order.

We have every reason to expect a display of fidelity on the part of each young man who belongs to the Order. Perhaps this is one of the least emphasized virtues in society today, yet one of the most valuable.

Cleanliness in thought, word and deed becomes more unique to general society yearly! The last two decades have evidenced a remarkable change in sociological attitude toward this virtue. Indeed it seems almost nonexistent in our permissive society. What was once an accepted standard is now almost the exception. We have however every right to expect cleanliness as a virtue within the members of DeMolay.

Finally, above all, we should expect no less than an absolute dedication to the concept and display of patriotism. The Masonic Fraternity, itself, emphasizes the need for the commitment of each of us to his country, and we should never expect less from members of the Order of DeMolay.

In addition, the vows of DeMolay require each member to uphold and aid the public school system, and to honor and protect every woman. Freemasonry has a right to expect to see these vows practiced.

To see a more specific aspect of what Freemasonry expects we would have to look at the reaction of our Members to specific stimuli and the image that they expect to see in the organization they support.

It may not be fair and, indeed probably is not, to expect the members of DeMolay to respond to the image some of our Members expect. However, as an active Advisor of a Chapter, I heard, and I am certain all of you have heard, some of our Members complaining about the actions of individuals within the Order of DeMolay. These actions can be as minor as simple misconduct in a Lodge Hall to major misconduct which can reflect upon the organization as a whole.

Many of our Members who have never been exposed to the Order of DeMolay, or for that matter to the actions of current young people in general, have a much greater tendency to look with disdain upon the Order of DeMolay because the young men of the Order do not always create the image which is expected of them. Appearance and acts of individual DeMolays can and do impact the opinion of Masons about the Order.

I personally do not disagree with the right of anyone to express themselves, this is part of their inherent right as an American citizen. I do, however, as a Freemason, feel that there is an assumed obligation by a member of the Order of DeMolay to display a mode of conduct which reflects positively upon the Order. Many Masons who are in a position to greatly influence the future of DeMolay express concern with images created by individual members of the Order.

The fact remains that simple and unintentional misconduct or poor appearance by one individual member of the Order can and does create an impact on the Body as a whole.

We as Masons assumed an obligation that whatever we did would reflect positively upon the Fraternity. The members of the Order of DeMolay assumed that same obligation !

Because the majority of society accepts a certain set of values does not mean that Freemasonry or the Order of DeMolay are obligated to comply with this same set of values! What is considered wrong in accordance with Masonic Law and Masonic values does not have to fall to the level of the values of today's society. This higher value system applies also to the Order of DeMolay. Therefore, what Freemasonry expects specifically from the young men comprising the Order of DeMolay is that they present themselves in appearance and conduct on a level higher than that expected from society in general.

Much of the "sale" of DeMolay to Freemasons is based upon their future membership in Freemasonry, and it certainly serves as a selling point for Masonic support for the Order.

However, Masonic membership is not the purpose for the existence of the Order of DeMolay. Brother Land stated that its purpose was to develop better citizens. If those "better citizens" then choose to affiliate with the Masonic Fraternity, that should be regarded as a side benefit. But, it certainly should never be the expected end result to justify the support of Freemasonry!

Inasmuch as our Fraternity is devoted to developing a better world, if we can develop a better citizen, we are accomplishing that purpose whether they are a Member of the Craft or not.

There is a universal problem today in securing leadership in the form of Advisors to our Chapters. This lack of leadership is alarming to all of us. However, it would behoove us to recognize that it is not a problem limited to the Order of DeMolay. It is a problem basic to our Lodges and to just about every other organization in existence.

When I affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America in 1948, I joined a troop which was being re-organized because they were able to secure a Scout Master. In the 27 years I was active in that organization, lack of leadership was always a problem. Whatever decisions we make today to solve this problem should be based on a thorough analysis of what the end results will be over a period of time!

We, as leaders of DeMolay, must take the initiative to expose the Order to the Masonic Fraternity. We cannot sit back and expect the Fraternity to invite us to be a participant in their activities. It is important that we educate our Masonic membership to realize that the purposes of DeMolay justify all the support we can provide, but Masons must know that purpose.

It, therefore, is extremely important not only to let the Order of DeMolay know what Freemasonry expects from it, but also to let Freemasons know what Freemasonry expects from DeMolay. We must educate our Masonic membership so that they realize that the purpose of their support for DeMolay should be to produce better citizens, through the teachings of the Order of DeMolay.

It is the responsibility of members of the Order to become better citizens. This improved citizenship should be revealed by the practice of the seven cardinal virtues and vows of the Order. Freemasonry has every right to expect to see this end achieved.

The understanding by both members of the Craft and the Order DeMolay of what is expected from DeMolay cannot help but improve the relationship between the two organizations!