



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

November 1, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Six days ago, in the DMC Newsletter of Sunday, September 26, 2014, I raised the subject of this Order's dichotomy on religion. I noted the many inconsistencies and paradoxes in Odd Fellowship regarding religion - for example, on the one hand we profess to be non-sectarian, while on the other hand we maintain a Christian Bible in the Lodge room. And the practices vary considerably throughout the Sovereign Grand Lodge family - for example, the Lodges in the United States require a Chaplain, while the Lodges in many European countries (e.g. Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, etc.) do not. We require our members to state that they believe in "a Supreme Being" even though there are major faiths on this planet (such as Buddhism and Hinduism, for example) which do not have "a Supreme Being" - thus we have effectively excluded the population of close to half the planet. Yet in all this, we profess that "Odd Fellowship is not a religion."

Needless to say, my September 26, 2014 DMC Newsletter has generated a great deal of thought and comment from the Brothers and Sisters of this Order. And that's appropriate. Part of the mission of DMC is to serve as a think tank for this Order - to get us to look at ourselves and our purpose as a fraternity. In this regard, I have received many thoughtful comments on the issue. Below is an e-mail I received from Brother Robin Oliver. Robin has always been a thoughtful and articulate member of our Order, and his comments are worth considering.

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

Dave, I stand to applaud your audacity to raise this topic... especially on a Sunday morning...

If the Order is to speak with any integrity about the improvement and enhancement of the character of humankind, the the Order needs to evolve beyond the Abrahamic traditions in which it was nurtured...

The Order has to find a way to teach the attributes and behaviors of fraternity to an entire species. That is no small task. It is an enormous undertaking. And as I have said on numerous occasions, it involves holding nothing as sacred except the central strategic goal of improving the



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character of humankind, one member at a time, and making Friendship, Love, and Truth the central guiding principles of that journey...

It confounds me how those who seek to recharge the Order defer to a few thousand (or a few hundred or perhaps a few dozen) very stubborn people when there are tens or hundreds of millions of people seeking a good path in life and finding no cause or movement with which they can connect (except for religion and politics which seem invariably to bring our species into very senseless conflict and self-destruction). The leadership of the Order would do better to look to the needs of this larger humanity than trying to understand who will be offended within the puny subset of humanity the Order would call its loyal membership...

It should be an orderly revolution, one that recognizes (1) the current state and prospects of the Order, (2) the current state and prospects of our human family, and (3) the basic desires and dreams of all good people to live a good productive life. I will let others write the resolution and articulate the whereases and now therefore, but that resolution should have as broad an appeal as possible even if it is seen by most as the idealistic vision of dreamers...

And from that resolution should arise the methods in a new Ritual containing themes and methods that will guide without undue hegemony and that may be adopted by all good people anywhere for:

impressing upon strangers the importance and personal relevance of the Order's work...

teaching the mastery of knowledge and skills related to accomplishing good things in life in every role as a member of a family, as a contributor in the workplace, as a participant in a community of any dimension (neighborhood, town, city, nation, globally)... and in FL&T...

challenging members to develop their mastery of the aforementioned skills in real "community" efforts that have genuine meaning and impact. There are no limits on the scope or scale or geography of the Order's undertakings except those that are created in the minds of its members...

celebrating the personal accomplishments of those who rise to the challenge of Odd Fellowship and can show personal growth and a record of accomplishment...

The Degrees will remain important to the Order and its members but Degrees have to be made meaningful and important beyond the Old Testament skits. The Order should also learn by its mistakes to ensure that they never occur again. The Order became stuck in its adherence to Abrahamic traditions long after it should have evolved to a non-secular organization. The Order



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has long struggled to reconcile its non-secularism against its liturgy and literature...

It is easy to become a Third Degree member of the Order today and to have essentially no better understanding of Friendship, Love, and Truth or personal character than somebody who has never even heard of the Order. There is nothing odd about these people in common with the ways that members of the Order ought to be proud of being "odd"...

The thing that most people do not understand is that the keys and the secrets needed for the Order's future relevance to humankind are not the traditions of the Order... BUT they ARE FOUND in those traditions. You and I would be hard-pressed to find any good person under any secular influence who would not agree that friendship, love, and truth are the noblest of virtues...

So why are so many of us in this world ignoring these virtues...? Why is it easy to talk the talk but not walk the walk...? It is time for the Order to find its relevance to modernity. You have taken a step in the right direction...

In FL&T...

Robin