

The Hierarchy of Labor

22nd Degree Essay

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Submitted by:

David E. Amstutz, KCCH

Valley of Richmond

Orient of Virginia

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Introduction

In the following essay labor is defined as man's output in all matters that he undertakes. Labor then becomes the full measure of a man's worth: the only measure of his contribution – his reason for being – the only indicator that the world may be a better or worse place for his having lived. "For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing whether *it be* good or whether *it be* evil." Eccl 12:14. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Rev 22:12.

Labor (work) being the measure of accomplishment, it may be said: "But our work is not abolished, and has not vanished. It remains, or the want of it remains, for endless Times and Eternities." Pike (1962) p.341. Man can only undertake and produce to the best of his ability; some men are more or less able than others in one or many, but not all, ways. Thus we witness a hierarchy of performance as a natural characteristic of labor.

The Hierarchy

Type of work is not as important or relevant to determining the hierarchy as it once was. Years ago a physician might have been categorized into the upper end of the hierarchy while a salesman was assigned a lower rung. Today some might place a highly skilled NFL quarterback above the physician. Certainly, some pay more to watch their favorite quarterback than they do for their annual checkup. It would seem that the quality of labor performed has become more important or relevant to establishing placement in the hierarchy than the type of labor. For placement in my hierarchy of labor, quality of labor performed is more important than type of labor.

The hierarchical sense that I use stems from my personal evaluation and appreciation for the type of labor being performed. If the labor is of a type which I can not perform, those who do perform it have the potential of receiving high marks. Someone who performs labor which I can do, but at a superior level will receive high marks. Poor performers, regardless of the type of labor performed, go to the bottom.

Let's consider how two persons, employees at a local fast food palace, might place within my hierarchy of labor. The type of labor is low on the ladder; primarily because I and most others could perform the work. Now we will consider how the two hypothetical employees perform the labor. One of the employees is neatly dressed, looks you in the eye, attends to business and serves you promptly, correctly and courteously; earning a high place in the hierarchy. The second employee has a face full of body piercing and stares with blurry eyes at something in the distant cosmos while taking your order. I cancel the order and drive off, thinking not of Pike's three headed serpent but of how low on the ladder (beneath the first rung) this fellow would be placed. Why is this the case? Because the employee cares so little for his work that he has no regard for the customer;

not so much as to even present himself in an acceptable fashion to people who are about to eat. This care less disregard for the very people who enable him to have employment cements the fellow at the bottom of my hierarchy of labor.

Consider construction labor. Two workers are digging a ditch. One is sweaty and has dirt up to the knees of his trousers; the other is leaning on his shovel praying for a hole. Compare one neighbor, who can neatly and cleanly convert a live hog into smoked bacon and sugar cured hams, with another neighbor who could at best gut-shoot the hog and leave it running through the woods. Applying my criteria for placement in the hierarchy of labor is pretty easy. It comes down to this: there are some who labor with grace, skill, enthusiasm, attentiveness and confidence - they enjoy (or at least respect) what they do; and, there are those who display few if any of these traits.

This range of performance is easily observed today, for example in newspaper and mail delivery, at customer help desks, in the performance of politicians and civil servants and yes, even at Scottish Rite reunions. In all labors there are those who do their very best to get it right; and, there are those who don't give a hoot.

Knight of the Royal Axe

What does Albert Pike have to say in the twenty-second Degree about labor? The entire Degree is summarized in the first sentence: the Masonic lessons of the Degree are to be sympathetic with those who labor in earnest, respect what they do, and resolve to do your best. We are reminded that all work is noble and of the uselessness of men who live without duty. Our duties are to subdue chaos, attack ignorance and stupidity and avoid idleness. Labor produces excellence in human nature. The ever growing opprobrium of toil must be done away with. "We are not sent into the world like animals, to crop the spontaneous herbage of the field, and then lie down in indolent repose: but we are sent to dig the soil and plough the sea; to do the business of cities and the work of manufactories." Pike (1962) p.344. Pike also reminds us that the desire of accumulation to achieve a life of ease is wholly wrong. One of Pike's more memorable lessons taught in the twenty second Degree is that: He who does nothing, yet doesn't starve, is living proof that someone has worked. Paraphrasing Pike: 'Do what is worthy of being written; write what is worthy of being read.' Pike (1962) p.350.

Work to be Done

We must recognize the value (the purpose and consequence) of labor. We must do our up most to instill these values in our children. Another obligation (duty) is to do our best to instill these values in others, as we may constructively do. All are labors that we can, and should be expected to undertake and to perform well. To be successful in this undertaking we must also do all that is possible to reverse the present trends in all levels of government. We must do now what others will one day write about.

In the twenty second and other Degrees, Albert Pike warns us of the consequences of government run amuck. How can we cope with and successfully labor against this

crushing influence of government? We must write to guide others to appreciate their duties. Write to encourage others to put their shoulders to the wheel in the collective effort to purge government of its irresponsible, self-serving leaders who care not for this or the coming generations. Today we are in the process of adding a trillion dollars worth of new entitlement programs in the country. Every day our government does its best to enlarge the class of those who do not toil, thereby making Pike's observation all the more true. And, for those who would toil and want to earn their daily bread, our government does its up most to discourage job creation and job security.

And, we must recognize and address the fact that many of our elected leaders are quick to assert 'the times' as their rationale for doing the things that they do. Their uncaring for the consequences of their ill-advised actions seems always to be wrapped with the notion, that well we need to move on. For example: we are reminded daily by government that there is a swine flu strain in the world. Our elected leaders propose that we confine ourselves, avoid crowded places and avoid travel, especially by train, air and ship. No one follows this ridiculous advice. Doing nothing has resulted in the death of a dozen of our citizens and visitors in the U.S. The politicians fail all the while to remind the population that some 38,000 of our citizens died last year from the 'ordinary flues' we encounter every year.

Those who labor to provide help to the poor, the disadvantaged and those who face health expenses beyond any means are discouraged by government and penalized by the imposition of taxes on their labors of giving. How can we encourage helpfulness and giving in these circumstances? Is there a path other than to give up and point the needy and helpless in the direction of their nearest government office?

We must all learn to recognize and labor against this 'recklessness cloaked in righteousness' and not fear to call it by its name. In the current times the phrase, a car in every garage and a chicken in every pot, has taken on a new and ominous meaning.

References

Holy Bible (1957) Masonic Edition, A.J. Holman Company, Philadelphia, PA. 1246pp.

Pike, Albert (1962) *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Washington, D.C. 861pp.

'Recklessness cloaked in righteousness' is a descriptive reference to the oratorical expression of our current President; a phrase coined and expressed by former Vice President Richard Cheney. The former Vice President also criticized the President for advancing political strategies in place of national strategies. (MSNBC news, May 21, 2009)

