

Some Misconceptions About Freemasonry Unknown

"Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! ... For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." (JOB 19: 23, 25)

In these sentences Job is replying to his critics, who were asserting that his afflictions were the result of his unrighteousness. In the first verse Job expresses the wish that his honor be proclaimed for all generations to know; but in the second, he rejects the dream of a human acquittal in the centuries to come and confidently asserts his belief in an Ultimate Vindication.

Job never knew Freemasonry, but his words might well serve to encourage Freemasons who are troubled by the misconceptions and the falsehoods which are disseminated about the Ancient Craft.

In the charge of the Entered Apprentice Degree, Freemasons are told: "neither are you to suffer your zeal for the institution to lead you into argument with those who, through ignorance, may ridicule it." This Bulletin, setting forth seven of the accusations which are levelled at Freemasonry, is not a polemic to confute those who do not understand our Order. It is written as a reassurance to the members of the Fraternity that "truth and justice are on our side" and that these are the living Redeemer (ie., a Vindicator) in whom we put our trust.

"FREEMASONRY IS A SECRET SOCIETY"

The statement is not true. Freemasonry is a society which keeps certain matters secret, but the organization, its membership, its officers, its purposes are not secret.

Freemasonry meets in Temples. Many of these are beautiful, prominent buildings in the cities and towns in which they are erected. Men enter and leave these Temples openly, not secretly. A number of Grand Lodges publish the names of the members of the Order in their Proceedings. Many lodges issue directories of their membership. Men wear the square and compasses on their lapels. Who's Who lists Masonic membership in many of its biographies. Masons appear as such in public at cornerstone layings and at funerals. These are not the characteristics of a "secret" society.

The vast majority of Masons are proud of being such. They boast of it, knowing that the general public conceives of Freemasonry as an honor; that not every one can be a Mason; that it is a character building organization of good men.

But let us suppose for a moment that "Free- masonry IS a secret society." Is belonging to a "secret society" criminal? Only if such a society has inhuman or unlawful purposes. There are "secret societies" which engage in conspiracies, or terrorism, or other illegal practices; membership in them is "secret" because their members do not admit publicly that they belong to such organizations.

On the other hand, a number of individuals form a "secret" Christmas Club. They each make a contribution to buy gifts for poor children at Christmas. They keep the organization and their names secret because they know that otherwise they will be overwhelmed with publicity and with too many requests. They take pride in doing good without advertising. Is it harmful because it is secret?

In this country the Masonic Fraternity whose only objectives are charity and the building of character, counts approximately four million men in its membership. It is difficult to conceive how such a number, proudly asserting their affiliation, can constitute a "secret" society.

"FREEMASONRY, BEING A RELIGION, DETRACTS FROM ALL ORGANIZED RELIGION"

The statement is also untrue. Freemasonry is not a religion. The dictionary (Funk & Wagnalls Standard) defines religion as "Any system of faith, doctrine and worship, as, the Christian religion." Freemasonry has no "system of faith", and its acknowledgment of a Grand Architect of the Universe is, in its own words (Old Charges, first printed in Anderson's Constitutions of 1723) "that natural religion in which all men agree" – that is, the reverence for a supreme, single, creative Power.

No Grand Lodge phrases a doctrine, and a religion without a doctrine is no religion. No Masonic Lodge uses any service of divine worship in its ritual or meetings.

True it is that lodges have an Altar, use a Sacred Book upon it, open and close meetings with prayer, possess an officer called a Chaplain, and are dedicated to God and the Sts. John.

In almost every hotel room in America is to be found a Bible. Does that make the hotel either a religion or a church? The Army and Navy have Chaplains for every regiment, every ship. Does that make the Army and Navy religions, or the ships churches? The American Legion and a hundred other organizations have Chaplains, but no one thinks of them as religions.

Our symbols are not religious symbols. Our purposes, while virtuous, are not religious. We seek no converts; we profess no dogma; we gladly accept men of any and of every faith; indeed, we accept men of no particular faith who yet believe in one Supreme Being. Freemasonry does,

indeed, inculcate morality, believes in human dignity, encourages charity, practices relief. The family, schools, institutions of higher learning, organizations of a hundred characters, all are moral, charitable, humanly helpful. But that does not make them religions.

One of the central teachings of Freemasonry is immortality. The answer to Job's question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" and the central teaching of all religions is also immortality. Therefore, say our critics, Freemasonry must be a religion.

But that is false reasoning. The central teaching of the land in which we live is patriotism – love of America and the American way of life. Exactly the same thing is true of an Englishman, of a German, a Frenchman. Each is taught patriotism, but that does not mean each loves OUR country best. Each loves best his own. Freemasonry insists on a belief in immortality, but it teaches no particular doctrine concerning survival after death.

Freemasonry is reverent, charitable, and ethical in precept and practice. So are millions of people who are neither Masons nor church members. The only religious affirmation required of a Freemason is that he believe in one God.

Freemasonry accepts as members the Christian, the Jew, the Mohammedan, the Parsee, the Buddhist; a man may be a Unitarian or a Baptist, a Spiritualist, a Quaker or a Catholic. Freemasonry accepts him as a man, not as a member of a church. Quakers and Catholics cannot become Masons without offending their own religion, which fact Masonic authorities will always explain to men of those faiths who apply, but Masonry accepts them if they are good men and wish to join. Ministers of all faiths are Masons, just as Masons are members of all churches. A minister of one faith cannot profess a doctrine other than his own; yet he can be a Mason. The Fraternity obviously is not a religion, but only a philosophy of life.

"FREEMASONRY IS ANTI-CHRISTIAN"

Freemasonry is not anti any faith. It is non-Christian, yes – it is also non-Jewish, non-Mohammedan, non-Buddhist, non-Republican, non-Democrat. Freemasonry makes no test of religion or of politics. Discussion of both is strictly forbidden in Masonic lodges. Freemasons, being good Americans, and teaching patriotism and love of the American way of life, are individually anti-communist. Some Grand Lodges have passed anti-communistic resolutions, but most of them have not dignified that cruel system with any notice, preferring the positive teachings of patriotism to any "anti" expressions whatsoever.

The American public school is non-sectarian. It teaches all children of parents of all faiths. It is non – not anti – religious. Any bank will receive and care for the money of any well-recommended citizen without regard to his color, his race, his creed. The bank is not anti-Negro, anti-African, anti-Christian; it is merely non-Negro, non-African, non-Christian. Its concern is with money and credit. Freemasonry's concern is with character and morality. School, bank, Masonry are all non; none of them is anti.

"FREEMASONRY DENIES JESUS – IT NEVER MENTIONS HIM"

Freemasonry does nothing of the sort. It does not mention Isaiah. Does that connote denial? It does not mention Woodrow Wilson or Abraham Lincoln. Does that mean that Freemasonry denies that they lived and worked and were great Americans? Freemasonry does not talk of Mohammed or Confucius, but that does not mean that the Order denies their greatness, or their importance to those to whom they are great and important.

The Chaplain of a Masonic lodge who prays as the voice of the lodge does not pray in the name of the Carpenter of Nazareth or the name of Jehovah or the name of Allah. He prays to the Grand Artificer or the Great Architect of the Universe. Under that title men of all faiths may find each his own deity. Failure to mention any deity by name is not denial, but merely the practice of a gracious courtesy, so that each man for whom prayer is offered can hear the name of his own deity in the all inclusive title of Great Architect.

"MASONIC CHARITY IS ONLY FOR MASONS"

The statement that Masonic charity is only for Masons is simply not true. While the charity provided by the local lodge may be largely for Masons, their widows, and orphans, the individual Mason participates in a number of other benevolent enterprises under Masonic auspices which are not limited to Masonic beneficiaries. He can also point out examples of benevolence which his lodge has extended to non-Masons or community projects.

But let us suppose for a moment that a Masonic lodge charity IS only for its own members. Is that a matter for censure? A father provides a home for his own children, not his neighbor's. He clothes and feeds his own family, not another's. A church builds its edifice for its own members first. A member of a workingmen's group gets into difficulties; his fellows contribute to his necessities. To help, aid, and assist those with whom we are closely associated is common practice. It is admirable, not reprehensible.

Many of the co-ordinate bodies of Freemasonry have established outstanding charitable foundations or enterprises, whose efforts to help the needy or to alleviate suffering are not restricted to those who are Masons or who have Masonic relatives. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the point. The Supreme Councils of the 33^o, Scottish Rite, in both the Southern and Northern jurisdictions, have made tremendous contributions to education, public health, and relief. The Southern Jurisdiction founded the George Washington University's School of Government with a grant of one million dollars, and has supplemented it with additional gifts and scholarships. Recently it has given a \$20,000 grant to American University in Washington, D. C., and \$10,000 to Baylor University in Texas. The Northern Jurisdiction provides scholarships for young men and women at the Boston University School of Journalism and Arts of Communication. Proven ability and financial need are the only tests applied to applicants for these scholarships.

Both Supreme Councils maintain a Foundation or Benevolent Fund to help, aid, and assist. In the Northern Jurisdiction the Fund is used to promote public health by promoting research in the field of mental illness, particularly in the area of dementia praecox. In the Southern Jurisdiction local bodies support particular charities, two of the most famous being Hospitals for Crippled Children at Atlanta, Georgia, and Dallas, Texas.

Each of the local bodies of the Rite has an Almoner, who is provided with substantial funds to administer to the needy, without regard to Masonic membership. This longtime contribution of the Rite to public welfare is never publicized; its extent and importance are rarely known. Thousands of people are helped each year by Scottish Rite Almoners.

For more than thirty years the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States has maintained a large trust fund as an Educational Foundation, to enable young men and women to defray the costs of a college education, by borrowing on exceedingly liberal terms a part of their college expenses. More than a thousand young people are helped annually; they are using approximately a half million dollars each year. The Grand Encampment has also set up a foundation which supports research and treatment of diseases and injury to the human eye, in an effort to prevent blindness. The treatment is provided for individuals who are in need, regardless of race, creed, sex, age, or national origin.

Most widely known, perhaps, is the extensive work of alleviating distress which is carried on in the Shriners' Hospitals for Crippled Children. All Nobles of the Mystic Shrine must first be Master Masons; but the seventeen hospitals which Shriners have built and maintain at tremendous cost are for children of all colors, faiths, and either sex. They must be crippled and unable to get other hospitalization; the Shrine requires no other tests for admission.

Most of the Masons in the United States, through their Grand Lodges, contribute to the support of The Masonic Service Association. The far-reaching comfort and personal helpfulness of this agency's Hospital Visitation Program is provided for all who need it in the ranks of our disabled veterans, regardless of race, creed, or fraternal affiliation.

Freemasonry is proud of its contributions to human welfare!

"FREEMASONS FORM A POLITICAL PRESSURE GROUP"

It is difficult to say of one false charge against the Ancient Craft that it is more ridiculous than another, but no accusation of wrong-doing by Masons is more unjust than this one. Freemasonry has existed in the United States since 1730. Enough years have passed since our earliest American brethren met in Pennsylvania to demonstrate the "political activities" of the Fraternity, if such existed.

Politics – meaning partisan politics – are strictly forbidden to be discussed in lodges, and have been, since the publication of Anderson's Constitutions in 1723. If Masons were a "political

pressure group", obviously they would need a cause, an idea, a program for which to exert their pressure. No one has as yet been able to name such an aim.

Freemasons, as a general rule, elect a new leadership every year; a few Grand Lodges re-elect a Grand Master for a second term, one usually for a third term. Each year every one of the Grand Lodges of the forty-nine in the United States publishes its Proceedings, which contain the annual addresses of the Grand Masters. In none of these, for any year, at any time in the history of Freemasonry in the United States, is there to be found any political objective, any aim to be obtained by pressure, any indication of the Fraternity's taking any part in partisan politics.

If Freemasonry is a "pressure group", it must have something to "press" for. It must have a political leader; he must apply that pressure. Since not the slightest scintilla of evidence for such activity exists, it is obvious that this charge is the nonsense of ignorance.

"FREEMASONRY WORKS IN SECRET FOR SECRET AIMS"

It would seem essential, to establish the truth of such an accusation, that somewhere, at some time, someone must have known of these "secret aims".. A secret which no one knows and no one does anything about seems harmless!

What are these "secret aims"? No one has ever stated! Presumably, they are something too terrible to phrase. The destruction of government? The murder of opponents? The elimination of all religions?

Thirteen Presidents of the United States have been Freemasons. At the present time five members of the Supreme Court are Masons. A majority of Congress is now and always has been composed of Masons, whose political beliefs have been as various as the nation itself!

Thousands of ministers and hundreds of Rabbis are and have been Freemasons. What "secret aim" can be imagined which would appeal to such men as these?

Thousands of books have been written about Freemasonry, for Freemasons and for the general public. Many books have been published by the enemies of Freemasonry. The most virulent of these have never been able to specify any "secret aim" to the completion or attainment of which the Fraternity is dedicated. They cannot find it, because it does not exist. A "secret aim", of which there is no evidence and which no one has described factually, can exist only as a fancy in a credulous mind.

Freemasonry will continue to have its critics and detractors. Just criticism should always be welcomed; but ignorance and willful misrepresentations should be ignored. "By acting upon the square ... and avoiding the intemperance" of a reply, the true Freemason will maintain "a zealous attachment to those duties which will insure private and public esteem."

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