

## FREEMASONRY AND RELIGION

Freemasons find it extremely perplexing that in spite of our high ideals and moral standards, our belief in a Supreme Being and the Brotherhood of Man, and our religious and ethnic tolerance, we find ourselves under attack and unjustly criticized. Many of our new brethren are surprised to learn of the viscous accusations against Freemasonry largely in the name of religion, and also the alleged great Masonic conspiracy to achieve world-wide dominance. This paper will touch on the religious aspect.

Some attacks are mild and come from those who have little knowledge about the Craft. While other assaults are made by those who deliberately malign our fraternity and seek to outright destroy Freemasonry.

It is not too difficult to respond to critics who have little or no accurate knowledge about Freemasonry but have an open mind on the subject. Usually a cordial and constructive dialog will dismiss or at least minimize anti-Masonic attitudes.

Our real problem is with those who have a closed mind, a warped view of the Craft and who will use every means at their disposal to discredit Freemasonry. An example of some of the most vicious and virulent attacks on the Craft can be found on numerous Web sites.

Freemasonry has been attacked by various individuals and groups who have been hostile toward our Craft down through the ages. Our fraternity has always been assaulted by those who want to control the hearts and minds of men in both the religious and political spheres.

We Freemasons are fundamentally at odds with those who would seal off the light of freedom and knowledge. As such we have always been and continue to be one of the primary targets for destruction by tyrants, extremists, and repressive governments. Freemasons have historically resisted them, frequently at the cost of the lives of many of our brethren around the world. When one considers the tenets and history of the Craft, it is not difficult to understand why Freemasonry has been anathema to Communist, Fascist, Nazi, and leaders of equally repressive forms of governments, and their followers.

Given Freemasonry's belief in a Supreme Being and the Brotherhood of Man, its high moral standards and its ideals, its uncompromising rejection of atheism, its religious tolerance, and its diverse ethnic membership, Freemasons cannot find any justification for the attacks (some very vicious) by certain religious groups on our Craft.

We are accused of having a Masonic God, and a Masonic religion, of being anti-Christian and being incompatible with Christianity. We are also accused of being anti-religious, and often described as a satanic cult that worships the devil along with other equally absurd and offensive charges. All of which are totally false and deceiving.

Freemasonry's oldest document, the Regius Poem also known as the Halliwell manuscript, circa 1340, is actually a poem of moral duties. It instructs Freemasons to "Pray we to God almighty..." this practice has been followed by Freemasons continuously up to the present time.

Freemasonry has without question repudiated atheism. In its entire history Freemasonry as practiced in our Blue Lodges has never claimed or remotely suggested that it is a religion nor has it ever sought to compete with any religion. Every Freemason and unprejudiced student of our Craft knows there is no such thing as a Masonic religion. The alleged Masonic religion by some of our critics is in absolute conflict with our core beliefs as Freemasons.

No Master Mason who is a member of a regular Masonic Lodge can possibly conceive of Freemasonry being anti-Christian in particular, or anti-religious in general. All thinking

Freemasons know that the Craft is not the enemy of any religion, but rather its ally. Also that Freemasonry is compatible with all the great faiths of the world, not the least of which is Christianity. Any impartial, in-depth study will prove this to be true beyond a doubt. As an interesting aside, the seal of the Grand Lodge of Israel is composed of the Christian cross and the Muslim crescent overlaid on the Star of David.

To the extremists who would attempt to intimidate some of our brethren into leaving the Craft, or to discourage good men from seeking admission to our noble fraternity in the name of religion, your interpretations, your conclusions, and your assertions regarding Freemasonry, are not only contrary to simple straight forward justice, but thoroughly misleading. To you extremists who condemn us on religious grounds based on a superficial review of our tenets and some of our activities, you have failed to comprehend what Freemasonry is all about. As such you are not in the least qualified to evaluate our Craft. To all those who state that Freemasonry is not compatible with this religion, or that religion, you should know that down through the ages Freemasonry has been the handmaiden of religion and continues to be.

Some of the founders of our great nation as well as those who fought in our War of Independence such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and John Paul Jones to name a few were Freemasons. Are the extremists who criticize Freemasonry so vehemently telling Americans that these fine patriots of yester-year were misguided men because they were Freemasons?

Do we discard the memory and accomplishments of our WW II Presidents, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry Truman, both of whom were Freemasons? Were Freemasons like John J. Pershing who led the AEF in WW I, Jimmy Doolittle who led the first bombing raid over Japan in WW II, Claire Lee Chennault of Flying Tiger fame, and Admiral Ernest King who led all the U.S. Naval forces in WW II misguided men or lacking in principles?

Here in the Hawaii Jurisdiction we have a multi-ethnic population which is reflected in the diverse membership of our Lodges. This ethnic mix consists of brethren of many different religious persuasions with roots that originate from almost every part of the globe. As a 47-year Hawaii Freemason I am proud and happy to be able to say that in spite of the many different religions of our brethren coupled with their varied ethnic roots there is no religious or ethnic discord among them. At no time have differences in religion and ethnicity disturbed the harmony of our meetings, our social affairs, or our public appearances.

Looking at the terrifying religious and ethnic strife in so many parts of the world at the present time, one cannot help but be reassured and gratified by the harmony we Freemasons enjoy within our great fraternity. This congenial environment which is cherished by all of our brethren is attributed to the practice of tolerance, a hallmark of Freemasonry...and we intend to keep it that way.

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