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HASTINGS

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## CHRISTIANITY AND FREEMASONRY

Lecture by Rt. Rev. Bro. R. B. Waugh. 4/5/36.

Your W.M. has done me the honour of asking me to address you this evening. The subject I have chosen is Christianity and Freemasonry or Church and Lodge.

It will not be necessary for me to say that when I refer to the Church I do not mean any particular branch but just the Christian church in general. I am fully conscious that we are counselled not to enter on any religious discussion within the lodge, yet that does not prevent us discussing the relation between church and lodge.

In choosing the subject I was guided by what I consider should be a rule in speaking, i.e., I did not invent the title for something to speak about, the subject has been simmering in my mind for a very long time. I think there is something that needs to be said on this subject.

I have heard men say quite frankly, Oh, lodge is my church, and I wonder how many others have acted that way without actually putting it into words. I have known lodges holding rehearsals during church hours on Sunday and I have met more than one clergyman who regards Freemasonry as directly antagonistic to the Church. So there is a case to answer.

In the New South Wales Freemason (Aug. 1934) there was a very arresting article, the title of which was "Is Freemasonry Anti-Christian." The very title is a challenge. The sub-title was "Can a Christian be a Freemason." Now it is not in idle curiosity that such questions are asked. Can a man honestly and conscientiously subscribe to the tenets of his Church and at the same time with like sincerity follow the customs and practices of the "craft."

Let us see whether the two run in parallel lines or whether they go off at a tangent from each other. Freemasonry has suffered the bitterest persecution in days gone by and is still condemned and officially excluded from countries controlled by one particular branch of the Christian church and on religious grounds.

Wilmshurst (Masonic Initiation) says "Masonry is neither a religion nor a philosophy but is at once a science and an art, a theory and a practice." J. T. Thorp says "Great emphasis is laid on the claim that masonry is not a religion and yet the more you study its teachings and apply them the more do you realise that it is religion, a path of approach to the Supreme Being." The Founder of the Christian Faith said, referring to his followers. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold." No atheist or agnostic can be a Freemason. Our first declaration is a belief in God. In Christian countries he seals his obligation on the sacred book of the Christian church. Side by side with his belief in God is taught more than in any other institution the practice of the Brotherhood of man.

On these two counts F.M. and Christianity are absolutely parallel

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"

Now in all our calculations the human element is the "x," the unknown quantity, and it is the factor that is being catered for, for it (that is the human element) Religion exists as does also Freemasonry. Any system of

teaching is so much beating the air unless it caters for some human need. Has man any need that makes either Religion or Freemasonry essential to his wellbeing.

This brings us to our first definite statement "Man is constitutionally a religious being," his thoughts instinctively rise to a Being above him. Not of option nor of choice but worked into the very fabric of his being is the fact of God. There has never been a tribe found yet that had not some religion, crude, barbaric, pagan, but something corresponding to religion, and in that a being above himself.

Man cannot get along without some object to worship; if none is to hand he will create one for himself, an idol. Next to that idea there is another that God is not friendly, that He is angry with us humans. The pagans inflict punishment upon themselves to appease the wrath of that God. Then there is the subject you have to cater for a creature placed upon this earth, conscious of God, conscious of sin, and seemingly helpless and under a cloud.

The Christian Religion has a message for that man telling him how he can become friendly with the Supreme Being, that is the distinctively Christian religion. More need not be said of this here.

F.M. as we know it to-day is theistic, but not Christian, it is not anti-Christian, not by any means, but it is not Christian, it teaches God and a hereafter, but lacks the Christian message. Let us step back in history a little.

F.M. comes to us from the dim and distant past, there it was mixed with Philosophy and religion, in fact all three were one. From there it spread to Palestine carried by migrating peoples. Moses was versed in all the mysteries of the Egyptians. It antedated the Christian aspect of our religion by many centuries. Its symbols and legends are derived from the temple of King Solomon, its religious ideas are from the ancient priesthood, its faith is the faith of Noah and his descendents. Thus it continued as far as we know down to the time of the advent of Christianity into the religion of the Jewish people.

From then on there seems to have been a steady process of absorption of Christian teaching. This is only natural; the Jews were an intensively religious people, religion was their main business. For many centuries our ancient masonic brethren were engaged largely in the erection of christian places of worship, they became a very devout body of men working more from a religious motive than for hope of reward.

Students of the old manuscripts (the old charges) are aware that at the time they were written, between the 14th and the 17th century the brotherhood was undoubtedly definitely christian. Nearly all the old charges commenced with a prayer to the Holy Trinity.

M.S. No. 1 commences -

"The might of the Father of Heaven and the wisdom of the Glorious Son through the grace and goodness of the holy Ghost—one God and three persons—be with us all at the beginning, and give us grace so to govern us herein and living that we may come to his bliss that never shall have ending."

This Christian character of the order continued almost to modern times, certainly to the middle of the 18th century, then a very definite change took place, it assumed a non-christian and cosmopolitan character.

Why? Because it was recognised that by continuing a Christian order, the spread of the order would be limited to christian people. The desire to include Jews was partly at the back of the change. The idea was to place the craft on a broader basis. This broader basis has helped to spread F.M. over the whole world. Jews, Hindoos, Mohammedan, Parsees, Japanese, Chinese, etc. etc.

Then there arose the difficulty over the volume of the Sacred Law. To us the first of the three great lights but not so to others, so it was decreed that the Old Testament could be used for the Jew, the Koran for the Mohamedan and so on. Whatever book the candidate considered his sacred book could be used. Masonry allows each man to make his peace with his God in his own way as the tenets of his faith prescribe. Masonry has thus become possible for men of every religion.

In the first of the charges in the preface to the book of constitution of the Grand Lodge of England it is stated-

"Let a man's religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the order provided he believed in the Glorious Architect of Heaven and Earth and and practise the sacred duty of morality."

It is interesting to note that the change from, a christian to a cosmopolitan basis was not accepted by all masons. But brethren recognised the advantage of broadening the basis. One indirect result of this change is most interesting, it is believed to have promoted the establishment of quite a number of quasi-masonic degrees combining old legends with decidedly Christian teaching in them. The most important of these are -

1<sup>st</sup> – Rose Croix of Heredom, 18<sup>th</sup> degree

2nd- Knights Templar.

3rd Red Cross of Rome and Constantine.

Many Masonic authorities joined these higher degrees showing that they were not adverse to them.

And at the union of the two Grand Lodge of England 1813, provision was made to put them on side. Pike in his Morals and dogma says -

"If brethren of a particular belief have been excluded from F.M., it shows how gravely the plan and purpose of F.M. may be misunderstood."

Whenever the door of a degree has been closed against him who believes in God and the immortality of the soul because of other beliefs he may have, that degree is masonry no longer."

Masonry is an ancient system which in due course absorbed the religion of the Jewish people when it was taken to Palestine, then it absorbed the teachings of Christ and became very definitely a christian brotherhood. Its leaders recognizing that that latest addition would limit its scope to christian men alone dropped all that was definitely christian, keeping only the general broad facts of religion so that the craft could become universal.

There you have it to-day presenting its with the broad facts of religion, God, Brotherhood, world to come.

Masonry is not all a man needs -

When a Jew has been to lodge he does not consider that he has done his whole duty to his God, he goes to his synagogue.

When a Mohammedan has been to lodge he still goes to his place of worship.

When a christian man has been to his lodge he has been brought face to face with the great basic facts of religion he has been encouraged to practise the earliest injunction to be his brothers keeper, but he still needs the distinctive teaching of his church.

I am an admirer of F.M., a profound admirer. I believe it has a great mission to mankind, that it has been a haven of rest and sympathy and understanding to many a weary traveller, that it has strengthened many a man in the hour of trial to stand up for the right, but I do not think it should be allowed to become a rival of any man's church. It should be considered as complimentary to his church. A good freemason will be a better if he is loyal to his church.