

# The Witness of Masonry

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It was Albert Pike, a lawyer, scholar, linguist, philosopher, and moralist, writing in his "Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite," the textbook of Scottish Rite Masonry, who said:

"Finally, the three greatest moral forces are FAITH, which is the only true WISDOM, and the very foundation of all government; HOPE, which is STRENGTH, and insures success; and charity which is BEAUTY, and alone makes animated, united effort possible. These forces are within the reach of men; and an association of men, actuated by them, ought to exercise an immense power in the world. *If Masonry does not, it is because she has ceased to possess them*" (p. 91. Underscoring supplied).

Masonry, as a noble and distinguished Fraternity, inculcates a firm belief in God, the practice of prayer, the acceptance of the Holy Bible as the rule and guide of conduct, and an all-abiding faith in the brotherhood of men under the Fatherhood of God.

While Masonry is not a religion nor does it seek to rival any religious sect, it is, in the words of Mackey, the greatest authority on Freemasonry, "indebted solely to the religious element which it contains for its origin and for its continued existence and that without this religious element, it would hardly be worthy of the cultivation of the wise and good."

As a society which teaches brotherly love, relief, and truth, Masonry

is an onward and progressive movement, abhorring any and all ugly *status quo* which hinders growth and advancement. Its members are called upon to testify to its lofty ideals by leading exemplary lives. They are to bear witness to the creative and constructive force that is Masonry's in order to make our community a fit and decent place to live in. They are to be living monuments of the Fraternity's relentless struggle against all enemies of free thought and intellectual excellence, and to be forever mortal foes of spiritual decadence and insidious impediments to libertarian causes.

Indeed, it is all too easy to profess adherence to the aforementioned basic Masonic doctrines. We hold them to be sacred trusts which have been handed down to us from generation to generation. We take pride in being heirs to traditions of the Craft which we cherish as sublime.

But have we taken time out to take stock of ourselves seriously? Have we given a moment's pause to reflect on our daily living and see if we have done justice to the Fraternity? Have we stopped to consider the thought that instead of being effective vehicles for warm fellowship and greater achievement within the Order, we are actually being a hindrance to its steady and continued growth?

We owe it to ourselves, first and foremost, to re-appraise our sense of values to see if it is attuned to the high calling of Masonry. Were we properly motivated when we joined

this Ancient Craft? Did we sign our application for membership for curiosity's sake? If so, has our curiosity been duly satisfied and our physical, intellectual, and moral being enriched which could be a beacon light to others? Were we propelled by social aspirations in enlisting with the Order? If so, have we remained humble notwithstanding the opportunities that have been extended to us in rubbing elbows with excellent men in the Fraternity who are probably prominent and high-ranking officials in the community and whose devotion to service should be manifested by us? Was it a desire for professional expansion which prompted us to travel the road which we have chosen? If so, are we now less mercenary in our outlook and more honest, sincere, and dedicated in discharging our calling?

Worth pondering upon are the words of Delmar D. Darrah in his thought-provoking book, "The ABC of Freemasonry." He said:

"What Masonry is going to be worth to you depends wholly upon yourself. You are going to get out of the fraternity just what you put into it. Therefore if you put nothing in, you need not be disappointed if you get nothing out. Very often you will hear men say that Masonry never did them any good. Many of these men carry dimits in their pockets or may have been suspended for non-payment of dues. The truth is that they went into the fraternity from purely selfish motives. They expected that masonry would be helpful in business, society or politics and while they never did anything for the institution, they attempted to draw wages which they had not earned, and were disappointed. Merely because a man keeps his dues paid is no reason why he should expect to lay claims to

the benefits of the fraternity" (p. 17).

Masonry, therefore, stands for hard, but constructive toil and endeavor. It is work that measures our success as Masons. In the immortal words of Alexander the Great: "Nothing is nobler than work."

We should, however, remember that work without careful planning and direction is wasted effort. We fail in many respects because we do not think ahead. We do not set our goals on clear and firm foundations. Our vision is marred by hazy and ill-prepared programs and projects which become self-defeating chores. Our lodges become do-nothing assemblies which fail to inspire and interest members. How often do we see lodges under the stewardship of supposedly capable men become agoras for nonsensical or unprofitable discussions which lead them to the brink of extinction! What a pathetic sight to behold lodges which find it so embarrassingly difficult even to open a Lodge of Master Masons because not just their members, but also their officers are nowhere about! Or, being able to, they are immediately forced to close shop for want of something concrete to talk about. This is exactly the picture of what Masonry should *not* be! It casts an unfavorable reflection upon the Masons composing the lodges concerned. If they cannot even put their respective lodges in order, how can it be said of them, "Thou good and faithful servants, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord?"

It is incumbent upon all good Masons to assert a leadership which is strong and aggressive in their individual lodges. They should have the crusading and missionary spirit of their forebears who risked even their lives to practice the tenets of the order, thus influencing not only their

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respective lodges, but also the community in which they lived. The greatness of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Douglas MacArthur, all architects of American society and of world peace, may be attributed to the wise discharge of their duty and equal dispensation of charity to all, which, they, as outstanding Masons, so carefully upheld. The heroism of Jose Rizal, Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, Marcelo H. del Pilar, and Emilio Aguinaldo, maybe traced to their love of country and their fearless espousal of libertarian causes, which, as Filipino Masons, they held supreme.

But even as these intrepid men of the Fraternity found their hands full in the saga of revolutionary life where they were daring participants, they always attended to the enhancement of their intellectual faculties. They always kept abreast with the advances of science, philosophy, and the arts. They were aware that "knowledge is convertible into power, and axioms into rules of utility and duty. But knowledge itself is not Power. Wisdom is Power; and her Prime Minister is Justice, which is the perfected law of Truth. The purpose, therefore, of Education and Science is to make a man wise. If knowledge does not make him so, it is wasted, like water poured on the sands."

The worthy examples set by our brethren who have either "fallen in the night" or passed beyond this life ahead of us should inspire us to greater heights of Masonic achievements. They toiled that we might live a life which should, in turn, be fruitful to others. They worked that we may have a better place to dwell in. How well it is for us to heed the admonition of Albert Pike:

"Work only can keep even kings respectable. And when a king is a king indeed, it is an honorable office to give tone to the manners and morals of a nation; to set example of virtuous conduct, and restore in spirit the old schools of chivalry, in which the young manhood may be nurtured to real greatness. Work and wages will go together in men's minds, in the most royal institutions. We must ever come to the idea of real work. The rest that follows labor should be sweeter than the rest which follows rest" (*Supra.*, pp. 40 and 41).

When a Mason ceases to work, he loses all the right to being called a Mason. He opens himself to retrogression and deterioration. He misses all the thrills and excitement that go with the challenges of the times. Indeed, he even ruins his dignity and identity. He simply passes into oblivion. How meaningful is this ex-

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cerpt from an anonymous author's writing, to wit:

"I expect to pass through this world but once . . . any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now . . . let me not defer or neglect it . . . for I shall not pass this way again."

The Great Teacher who came into the world to show Man "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," and who gladly offered Himself as Sacrificial Lamb on Calvary, labored as no other man did for the sake of humanity. He exemplified a perfect Mason. Even when He was about to take His last earthly journey, He left a more enduring promise to those whom He would leave behind: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:2-39).

The witness of Masonry is radiated effectively in the life of every individual Mason. Its strength lies in its members. Its universal appeal has its focal point in the hands of Masons who steer its destiny.

All Masons would do well to implant in their minds the Ten Commandments of the Fraternity which best express all that it stands for:

I. God is the Eternal, Omnipotent, Immutable Wisdom and Supreme Intelligence and Exhaustless Love. Thou shalt adore, revere and love Him! Thou shalt honor Him by practicing virtues!

II. Thy religion shall be, to do good because it is a pleasure to thee, and not merely because it is a duty. That thou mayest become the friend of the wise man, thou shalt obey his precepts! Thy soul is im-

mortal! Thou shalt do nothing to degrade it!

III. Thou shalt unceasingly war against vice! Thou shalt not do unto others that which thou wouldst not wish them to do unto thee! Thou shalt be submissive to thy fortunes, and keep burning the light of wisdom!

IV. Thou shalt honor thy parents! Thou shalt pay respect and homage to the aged! Thou shalt instruct the young! Thou shalt protect and defend infancy and innocence!

V. Thou shalt cherish thy wife and thy children! Thou shalt love thy country, and obey its laws!

VI. Thy friend shall be to thee a second self! Misfortune shall not estrange thee from him! Thou shalt do for his memory whatever thou wouldst do for him, if he were living!

VII. Thou shalt avoid and flee from insincere friendships! Thou shalt in everything refrain from excess! Thou shalt fear to be the cause of a stain on thy memory!

VIII. Thou shalt allow no passions to become thy master! Thou shalt make the passions of others profitable lessons to thyself! Thou shalt be indulgent to error!

IX. Thou shalt hear much: Thou shalt speak little: Thou shalt act well! Thou shalt forget injuries! Thou shalt render good for evil! Thou shalt not misuse either thy strength or thy superiority!

X. Thou shalt study to know men: that thereby thou mayest learn to know thyself! Thou shalt ever seek after virtue! Thou shalt be just! Thou shalt avoid idleness!

Only after a Mason shall have earnestly exerted himself in the pursuit of these ideals can he honestly claim: "I have not lived in vain as a Mason."

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