

It's different now...

## Ecumenism and Freemasonry

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Whatever might have been the stature and character of Masonry in Camarines Norte in the year 1950, many then doubted its continued survival. Indeed, many entertained the passionate view that Masonry in the province would soon lie buried six feet in depth and would be incapable of reawakening. They were wrong. It spurted with much greater energy. Refurbishing itself with the resources that were heretofore unidentified with the movement, resulted in the popularity of Masonry among the more enlightened and independent intellectuals.

Meanwhile ecumenism gained inroads among the fathers of Rome. Many centuries of Papal excommunication of Masons ended with the new policy of the Roman church. How should Masonry take it?

As far as we can trace the history of rulers of nations and of the church in Europe, we find both the sole arbiters of the lives of men — the former, the human society, and the latter, the human spirit. Both vied with each other for supremacy. The kings and emperors claimed power over life and property as a "Divine Right," making themselves absolute in society. Not to be outdone, the church claimed more absolute control over life and by invoking a more superior "Divine Power," that power over the souls of men which is far greater and more absolute than those of kings and emperors. In certain lands interpretation of laws, execution of laws, formulation of new ones were not executory without the approval of the church. Peoples be-

came split into two encampments, one owing loyalty to the emperors or kings the other to the Pope in Rome.

Masonry belongs to none of those splinter groups. Fortunately the Masonic brotherhood was and is composed of the more enlightened individuals whose diversions consisted in formulating tenets and teachings that adopted the existence of a Supreme Being or GOD or the Architect of the Universe. Without requiring any one mode or form of worship. It grants the individual full choice of the mode or form of worship in accordance with his conscience. With regard to the state and civil authorities, Masonry enjoins "strict adherence to the laws of the land in which he resides" avoiding "inciting to rebellion or civil disobedience."

In our century the Masonic group gained wide adherence among the intellectuals; rulers, statemen, politicians, professionals, magistrates, generals, admirals, soldiers, sailors, financiers, bankers, businessmen, industrialists, scientists, artists, journalists, writers and leaders of Protestant churches the world over. Could one evade the flowering of ecumenism? Could even the strongest church permanently halt the assault of brilliant minds or enlightened intellects? Only communism can bar and bark away ecumenism within its iron curtains.

But Masonry should not entertain the grand delusion that ecumenism was effected thru its own efforts alone. True it is that Masonry expressed its determination to seek "more light" declaring itself emancipated and ready

Turn to next page

to adopt progress and change. Made major liberalizing tenets were: "Libertad, Igualdad, Fraternidad." Liberty enables him to conduct tests, qualify, verify and evaluate conclusions, generalizations and philosophy; equality gives him free access to all knowledge recognizing no limit than his own capacities; fraternity shields him from possible torture, ostracism, expulsion, banishment and excommunication.

One realizes now that the blight cast upon the souls of Masons which had lain upon him for over 350 years has become impotent like the sorceries of witchcraft. Among the liberal minded peoples of the United States, the idea took a deeper and wider root due mainly to her geographical isolation and the freer atmosphere inherent upon young and virgin lands. No powerful kings or emperors and not one dominant church dictated the height of the tree once it had broken open the pod. An amazing culture has developed. Her science, her literature, her arts produced wealth which are incomparable and matchless by its richness and immensity and variety. That was the result in a country that places high premium on any and all valid ideas or proven truth.

The great advancement in culture, in the sciences, notably in physics and electronics, in literature and arts and in medicine seems to have been duplicated in the communist countries as in Russia during and at the time the free expression and practice of religion is branded as the "opium of the people." Russia almost came ahead of the United States in planting her flag at the bottom of the world or at the South Pole. Her achievement in the exploration of other planets, which are possible only thru the amassing of enormous knowledge of physical sciences under the aegis that nothing is valid unless proved and validity remains until disproved is a banner

triumph which is the envy of the richest nation of our earth today. Russia was the first to orbit living animals and man around the earth. Piercing the stratosphere around the earth then penetrating a field of cosmic rays in thru the ionosphere to the exisphere, many hundred thousand miles above the earth and successfully landing man-made rocket on the surface of the moon are equally shared by Russia and the United States. To those peoples ecumenism excites not much visible reaction and excommunication had no effect.

Faced with determined opposition the autocrats of the "Divine Right" claimants have given in as demonstrated in the following very recent events as reported by David L. Dugas of the United Press International:

"—In January (1967) Pope Paul VI received Soviet President Nikolai Podgorny, the first communist chief of state ever to set foot in the Vatican."

"—last summer the Vatican agreed to exchange special envoys with Jugoslavia, a step that is expected to lead to eventual full diplomatic relations and similar accords with other east European countries."

Regarding the condition obtaining in the eastern countries of Europe we quote from the same author:

"—the church remains seriously impeded or suppressed in Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Rumania and has been all but obliterated in Bulgaria, Albania and Communist China."

"—in the Spring the government barred Pope Paul from attending observances of the 1,000th anniversary of Christianity in Poland."

Note the contrast when dealing with people that cannot be humbled. The visit of the Soviet President Nicolai

Turn to page 29

Podgorny was not considered a desecration of the halo around the holiness of the holy man in Rome but accorded the papal welcome.

It is significant to note the Vatican demands in those countries. We quote, "—the Vatican asks only the recognition of the natural rights common to all men to profess a faith and to live according to its teachings." This precisely is the guiding principle of Masonry since time immemorial, Ecumenism. Rome has finally conformed. From obstinate conservatism, from a very strong, undeviating, uncompromising, emphatic stand to granting that man may profess a faith and live according to its teachings. This pronouncement places an end to the disastrous "Holy Wars." It enlarges the prospect of world peace. It vindicates Freemasonry.

More things are bound to happen. New conception on celibacy, on procreation are bound to come. Watch. And Masons learn what history has to teach us. Ecumenism is what Ma-

sonry can teach. Now the church graciously lends her benign influence. We are therefore glad and happy that ecumenism has become acceptable among all our people.

I see our people and our country growing, invigorating, flourishing for we shall no longer allow ourselves to be comparted and divided into tribes, into sections as Christians and Moros and Protestants detached from one another. This constitutes our majestic failure. Thus comparted, thus divided, and thus sectioned, we had failed to seek spiritually and materially the advancement of all. We intensified prejudice. It is most regrettable that we had not initiated ecumenism ourselves. We waited for dictation from without. Quite colonial one may say. But colonial or not, unorginal or spoonfed, let us accept ecumenism and look forward. A brighter vista opens for us and all our countrymen for thru ecumenism we would be united from Batanes to Jolo, from West to East, in seeking the truth, in friendship and love, in brotherhood under the fatherhood of God. △



### THE ANONYMOUS GREAT

If you want to know whether you are ever going to amount to anything, ask yourself how you score on responsibility. Can you take on a job — even a small one — and carry it out under your own steam? Sir Winston Churchill, who was something of an authority on the subject, left us a wonderful hint. He declared that the price of greatness is responsibility and insisted that there is an element of greatness in every person who will accept responsibility — and discharge it.

The newsboy who brings your morning paper, regularly, on time, rain or shine, is great in his small way. The student who struggles with a tough assignment and completes it to the best of his ability can claim a private brand of greatness. The mother who raises her family and does a job she can be proud of, she, too, is great in her own fashion. Every person who carries out his responsibilities well has in him a bit of the stuff of the men on the pedestals.

—*The Little Magazine*