

Bro. Conrado C. Pabillo (33)

Its *philosophy* traceable to the spiritual beliefs of the earliest forebears of Adam and Eve and its *organization* historically linked to the building of King Solomon's Temple at Mt. Moriah, Jerusalem, Masonry can claim to be the oldest fraternal organization for men. But, ironically, it is one of the least understood and, perhaps, the most misunderstood. This irony has hurt the Order.

Philippine Masons have been hurt the most because the different Papal Encyclicals which excluded them from the Eucharistic Communion influence the predominantly Catholic population to be antagonistic towards them. It is only in the last five years that Philippine Masons have a respite from this attitude due to the liberality of Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI — which began with the ecumenical movement of the former.

The Philippine Grand Lodge did right in taking advantage of this period of open-mindedness, on the part of the Vatican, by encouraging dialogues, discourses, associations, and fraternizations with Catholic organizations and leaders. Likewise, Past Grand Master William Quasha did a worthy service when he directly and personally communicated with the Vatican in behalf of Filipino Catholic Masons. Every Mason in the Philippine Jurisdiction should not miss this opportunity to project a favorable picture of Freemasonry in order that non-Masons may be more informed about this Fraternity; that Catholics may better understand its objectives; and, that the Philippine Catholic hierarchy may lend a more receptive ear to its request for the

lifting of the Papal condemnations against Freemasonry.

In group discussions, private exchanges of opinions, or when called upon to present the side of Freemasonry, it may help to be well-informed on various related subjects. The following food for thought seek to serve as a guide in this regard.

INITIALLY, two things about Catholicism must be recognized: 1) the observation that Philippine Roman Catholicism has virtually ceased to be missionary, and 2) the fact that lay Catholics are not free to make interpretations about Christianity — the "magisterium" or teaching authorities of the Church do it for them. The *first* brings the realization that the burden of obtaining "rescript" from the Papal bans rests primarily with Philippine Masons inasmuch as the Church, not much interested any more in gaining converts, is not expected to voluntarily pave the way for the re-admission of Catholic Masons into the "Community of the Church". The *second* focuses attention on the need to revise attitude towards Catholics — instead of the usual recriminations ranging from the charge of bigotry to fanaticism, there should be understanding and acceptance of a Catholic's faith. This doctrine of unquestioning acquiescence to what the Church says, having weathered the splinter of Christianity into two — the Church of Rome and the Church of Constantinople in 1054, the division into Protestantism officially started by Martin Luther on October 31, 1517, the secession of the Church of England in 1534, and the Renaissance Movement of the

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14th and 15th centuries, will not be changed. If Masons want the Catholics to understand them, the former must first understand the latter.

SECONDLY, for Philippine Masons to utilize the ecumenical movement as a means to their ends, they must fully know the meaning and application of the term "ecumenical movement".

This term has two senses: the *ecclesiastical* and the *non-ecclesiastical*. The generally accepted meaning is the ecclesiastical which refers to the call for unity of all Christians of different religious persuasions and denominations, the less-known, because it seldom appears in the smaller and abridged dictionaries, is the non-ecclesiastical sense which means liberality, tolerance, and worldwide acceptance. In seeking rapprochement with the Church by invoking "ecumenicity", Masons may do well to qualify "ecumenicity" as referring to the non-ecclesiastical sense; otherwise, they may fall into an embarrassing acceptance that Freemasonry is a form of religion.

THIRDLY, it is to their advantage if Masons possess wider ideas about Papal Encyclicals because even while the different Papal Encyclicals from Pope Clement XII to Pope Leo XIII were the bane of Freemasonry, it is in knowing the nature and breadth of Encyclicals that Freemasonry, Philippine Masonry that is, may find justice for its cause.

The nature of Encyclicals is such that they are only circularized after a thorough study by a commission of experts leafing through documents and other evidences. Their breadth are for definite moments of history, in response to contemporary situations, and for specific areas.

It may be concluded, therefore, that Masons will be uselessly "barking at the wrong tree" if, in the espousal of their cause, they continue

to insist that the different Papal bans against Freemasonry are without basis in fact — there were. It will be more productive of satisfactory results if "briefs" from these Papal bans may be based on the breadth of such Encyclicals and Constitutions.

That they are for definite moments of history make them subject for review — thus the ban started by Pope Clement XII was confirmed, re-affirmed, or ratified by other Popes, in their times, notably by Benedict XIV, Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, and Pius IX and liberalized by Paul VI — thence making tenable the Philippine Masonry's position on the rescripts. Under the concept of "response to contemporary situations", Philippine Masonry's claims can be supported by the great differences in the socio-political atmospheres between today's and those of the 18th and 19th centuries when the bloody emancipatory struggles throughout the world contributed immensely to the issuance of Encyclicals against Freemasonry. The present situation does not create any climate which can be inimical to the relationship between Freemasonry and the Church.

While the condemnation of Freemasonry from the Seat of Episcopal Powers is comprehensive, yet some declarations from Rome were selective — witness the declaration by Pope Leo XIII against the Masons of Italy only and that by Pope Paul VI for the Masons of England and the United States only. This gives hope to Philippine Masonry that its case may be treated separately from those of other Masonic Jurisdictions.

FOURTHLY, a fuller grasp of the histories of Masonry in general and of Philippine Masonry in particular will enlighten more the cynics in the Philippine Freemasonry's desire for communion with the Church.

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For instance, it may be pointed out that the first Filipino Masonic Lodge, the Lodge Nilad No. 144, was approved only on March 10, 1892, while Papal censures were as early as Pope Clement XII's of April 28, 1738 and as late as Pope Leo XIII's of April 20, 1884. Whatever lodges there were in the Philippines before 1892 were those for Europeans and Penninsular Spaniards — Filipinos were admitted as members only somewhere and sometime in 1885. Philippine Freemasonry, therefore, could not have participated in the precipitation of the clash between Freemasonry and the Church since it was non-existent at the time.

Another is a fact in Freemasonry's organization wherein there has been no central authority — each Grand Lodge is autonomous with its own Constitution and By-Laws. The only tie among the different Grand Lodges is the "ancient landmarks" most important of which is the mode of recognition. The act of omission or of commission of one Grand Lodge, therefore, may not necessarily reflect on another. This fact is essential to know because considering that almost all evidences in support of the various Papal Encyclicals in condemnation of Freemasonry were from the acts of the lodges in France and Italy and, such acts not having been endorsed by the Philippine Grand Lodge, then the latter cannot be jointly held responsible with the former. Perhaps, it is in recognition of this Masonic organizational structure that Pope Paul VI on March 12, 1968 exempted the Catholic Masons of England and the United States from automatic ex-communication by their *ipso facto* membership in lodges in those jurisdictions. Philippine Freemasonry may seek the same exemption under the same ground.

FIFTHLY, it may be to the advantage of Freemasonry if Philippine Masons should help dispel the myth of mysticism surrounding this fraternal organization. One way of doing this is to explain some terminologies.

From about 1000 BC where in Asia Minor there was organized the "Fraternity of Dionysiac Artificers", composed mostly of priest architects and engineers, up to the building of King Solomon's Temple where the "Institution of Freemasonry" began, and to the 14th century, Craftsmen in pursuit of architectural designs and constructions of edifices and cathedrals organized themselves into "Guilds" — being actual stone-squarers, they were termed "Operative Masons". After the decline of the construction projects, persons not members of any skilled craft were allowed as members of these guilds and Masonry became theoretic, hence the term "Speculative Masonry". Speculative Masonry started in the British Isles in the Medieval ages: present-day Masons fall in the category of Speculative Masons. Speculative Masons are linked to the Operative Masons in that instead of being builders of stone structures, they become moulders of character and that, they use the tools of the Operative Masons as symbols of some aspects of morality which they inculcate.

The term "ancient" has reference to antiquity; although some writers, perhaps alluding only to Speculative Masonry, trace the origin of the term to a Lodge in England. The British Museum is in possession of the "Regius" or "Halliwell" Masonic manuscript dated 1390. But, the first Grand Lodge, the "Premier Grand Lodge", was organized in 1717 on the birthday of St John the Baptist, on June 24, through the efforts

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of two Protestant Ministers, Anderson and Desaguliers. There sprouted other lodges, most influential of which was the "Ancient Grand Lodge of England". There started a great schism in the Masonry of England — this was supposed to have been instigated by Irish Masons residing in London. These Irish Masons, not of the older branch of Masonry and belonging to the "Premier Lodge" caused the latter to be called the "Moderns". The struggle between the "Ancients" and the "Moderns" ended in a merger on December 27, 1883. The present practice of affixing the word "ancient" in the phrase "ancient and accepted" does not, however, infer a line of descent — it is only a matter of taste.

The term "free and accepted" while finding rational explanation in Operative Masonry is more applicable to Speculative Masonry. Members of the ancient guilds of craftsmen were 'free' to pursue their own ventures under the rules of ethics of the guild. In the building of King Solomon's Temple, the workers and their descendants were exempted or 'freed' from the payment of taxes and duties and were 'accepted' as workers on the basis of their skills as apprentices, craftsmen, or masters. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple and King Cyrus decided to have it rebuilt, he 'freed' the Jews from captivity and 'accepted' them for the reconstruction job. Speculative Masonry 'accepts' members on the basis of their character and Godliness and such members are free to enjoy the privileges of the Order. Masonically, the word 'free' does not connote the popular concept of liberty even if the ritual says "free-born".

The term "ancient mysteries" generally taken by non-Masons as meaning strange, occult, or unknown power had a different meaning in past centuries down to the Middle Ages —

it then meant "skilled craft". Handed down in the rituals, "ancient mysteries" in a Masonic way, refer to the secrets of the trade of craftsmen. Incidentally, these ancient mysteries mostly came from Egypt, Syria, and Greece.

The term "brotherhood" found its deeper meaning in the mystic tie of Freemasonry when Hiram Abif, a member of the Fraternity of Dionysiac Artificers and one of the principal builders of King Solomon's temple, was able to establish a strong bond of harmony and friendship between the Jews and the Tyrians which races, then, were so antagonistic both in religions and in manners.

Masons, as a rule, tend to refute with silence any calumny heaped against them. Perhaps, the general inhibitions against public participations especially on social affairs and the prohibition against the solicitations for members abetted, again perhaps, by the uncertainties of which portion of the rituals are isoteric and which are exoteric, produce these engulfing shells of silence.

But, records show that when Catholic Masons could not defend their convictions and their ideals in the stillness of death, their families, understandingly wanting to be secure in a Church burial, "agreed to their retractions". The opportunity to correct this incongruous situation is within sight through the application of ecumenicity by way of the revision of the Papal Encyclicals which condemned Freemasonry.

In times like these, silence is not golden. ▲

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The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

— Edmund Burke