

## *All About Ecumenism*

*News and Views on the Ecumenical Movement.*

NBM

### **Masons and Knights of Columbus Bury Past**

*By Peter Millones*

Top officials of the predominantly Protestant Masons and the Roman Catholic Knights of Columbus, organizations whose hostility has roots in the 18th century, announced yesterday they would form joint national programs in the "moral civic and social action fields."

In recent years, councils of the Knights and lodges of the Masons on a local level have overcome their antagonisms enough to bowl or give blood together and to raise funds for civic causes.

But the pledge of cooperation made by the top officials at a private meeting here last month was described by the two organizations in a statement yesterday as "the first time that the highest officials met to explore avenues of cooperation."

The officials represent all 1.2 million members of the Knights of Columbus, in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, and 500,000 of the 4 million Masons in the United States. The Masons represented are in 15 Northeast and Middle Atlantic states.

Masonic officials note that there was no one national leader of the Masons and thus policy decisions must be made by sectional leaders. They said they expected other sectional leaders to join the agreement reached by George A. Newbury of Buffalo, sovereign grand commander, for the 15 states and John W. McDevitt of New Haven, supreme knight of the K. of C.

Officials of the two organizations said that the "fraternal" spirit was an outgrowth of the Ecumenical Council which encouraged subsequent discussions and cooperation among many Protestant, Catholic and Jewish groups.

The statement by the two organizations did not tell what specific form their cooperation would take. But it said that their objectives would center on three basic areas.

These are: "Promotion of true patriotism and love of country under God; support of positive programs for the development of good citizenship and respect for constituted authority, law and order; and encouragement of programs for youth and to train them for responsible leadership as participants in the democratic way of life."

Taking note of the new spirit of cooperation, the organization recalled an assertion last October by Irving E. Partridge of Hartford, Conn., a Mason official who participated in the high-level conference.

A new day has dawned and air is sweeter and purer by reason of a much better understanding on all sides," he said.

Such thoughts are a long way from the papal bull issued in 1738 by Pope Clement XII, in which he condemned the Masons on the ground that their beliefs and rituals amounted to a false religion. Catholics are still forbidden to join the Masons under pain of excommunication.

## *Called Wicked*

Masons practice elaborate secret rites and trace their traditions to medieval times. Their practices and beliefs, known as Freemasonry, are perpetuated by a worldwide system of fraternal organizations that preach "brotherly love, relief and truth and an unfeigned belief in the One, Living and True God."

Pope Clement referred to the Freemasons as wicked and said: "If they were not acting ill, they would not by any means have such a hatred of the light."

The Masons are now an organization with secrets but not a secret organization. Its meeting places are prominently identified, its membership rolls are matters of public record and its governing bodies publish annual proceedings.

There are many different degrees or grades of Masons, from entering apprentice to 33'd degree Mason, which is honorary. Elevation is determined by tenure, work in various projects and evaluations by screening committees.

Men of all walks of life meet as Masons and pledge to adhere to a moral code whose principles are largely conveyed through symbols and allegories connected with the art of building and emphasizing benevolence. It is believed that freemason originally meant a craftsman working with ax, mallet and chisel in freestone.

Uprightness is often symbolized by the stonemason's plumbline and other tools.

### *Founded by Priest*

Freemasonry came to the United States in 1730, when a Masonic lodge was formed in Philadelphia, with Benjamin Franklin as one of its members. Many Presidents have been Masons.

The Knights of Columbus was founded in 1882 in New Haven by a Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. Michael McGivney. It was a time when secret organizations were very popular and Catholics were not allowed to be members of them, so they formed a similar organization of their own.

The K. of C. is a fraternal society of men belonging to the Roman Catholic church and it has traditionally opposed the Mason's practices and beliefs as anti-Christian. The Masons have denied the charge. In a book published in 1920 by the K. of C., titled "The Knights of Columbus in Peace and War," it was noted that there were periodic waves of anti-Catholic prejudice — marked by lawlessness and violence — in the United States during the Revolution.

"Some of the causes for it," the book said, "were the participation of Catholics in the anti-Masonic movement, which was a bitter agitation."

In their statement yesterday, the organizations said it was agreed "that the ideal of a belief in the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God, which both fraternities embrace and support, could serve as a social and moral therapy for the ills of modern society. △

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### **REGIONAL GRAND . . .** *From page 12*

Hong Kong; on May 23 they will be in Taipei and on the 26th they will be in Okinawa and on May 28 they will be in Osaka. From there they will fly to Tokyo from whence they will go to Seoul, South Korea to constitute MacArthur Lodge U. D. there. After Korea, they will make a visitation to our two Lodges in Tokyo after which they will visit the Lodges in Guam before returning to the Philippines. △