

Secret Society

The only secrets of Freemasonry are modes of recognition, such as passwords. These go back to the days of building the medieval cathedrals when a new workman, presenting himself on the building site, was required to prove that he was a qualified tradesman.

In the same way, an army camp will post sentries and require a password to be given by those seeking entrance. Only those authorised have possession of the password.

Salvation by works

While Freemasonry is vitally interested in teaching moral behaviour to its members, the work of Salvation is the domain of a brother's own Church and religion.

Freemasons are concerned to live in a right relationship with God, and by encouraging men into the Brotherhood of Freemasonry, lead them to share in the fellowship of men with God.

Conclusion

It is the hope of Freemasons that under the Fatherhood of God they might bring about the Brotherhood of Man, that each Freemason might so regulate his life and actions by the principles of morality and truth; and learn to limit his desires, so that he may live respected and die regretted.

A fuller discussion of these issues may be obtained in a document available at your Grand Lodge office.

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Freemasonry and Religion

Introduction

Freemasonry is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for religion. It has no theological doctrines, offers no sacraments and does not claim to lead to salvation. There is no 'new' expression of religion that a member must subscribe to, apart from admitting to a belief in a 'Supreme Being'. A member's concept of a 'Supreme Being' is undefined; it is left to the individual to preserve his own understanding according to his own religious traditions.

Freemasonry promotes unity and tolerance amongst all men and does not discriminate against any religion. The principles and practices of Freemasonry are compatible with all compassionate religions that teach respect for the deity and tolerance towards one's fellow man. If anything, Freemasonry complements the philosophies of these faiths.



There is nothing whatsoever in being a Freemason that conflicts with a member's religious beliefs and practices.

Therefore, men from all religions, whether they be Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Hindu, for example, come together in lodge, confident in the thought that they have a common shared foundation. This common belief is the basis of the Masonic brotherhood.

In the Lodge Room

Traditionally there is one or more Bibles in all lodge rooms; however, provisions are also made for members of all faiths who might be present and holy books of a myriad of different faiths are very welcome. Their presence in the lodge room is so that an obligation can be taken on a member's own religious book, just as is done in a Law Court when a witness is being sworn in.



Freemasonry admits men of all religions who believe that there is one God and reminds them that they should base their life and morals on the teachings of Him as revealed in the Sacred Writings of their own individual faith or religion.

Within the lodge, discussion of religion and politics is forbidden as such discussion can easily lead to argument with men being divided against each other by categorising. The essential tolerance and respect of Freemasonry is that men might meet together in peace, love and harmony.

History of Freemasonry and Religion

The tolerance of religions and the freedom of an individual's religion was introduced into the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 by Reverend James Anderson, a Scottish Presbyterian minister. At the time in England, there were many legal restrictions

on non-conformists, but Anderson made it possible for members of the Church of England (the established denomination) and others like Presbyterians, Baptists, and Quakers, to sit together on an equal footing in lodge.

Later, when the Lodge was taken into places like India by the British Army lodges, the courtesy of tolerance was extended to other major religions, provided a man was able to express his faith in a 'Supreme Being'.

When it is remembered that in history many wars and much persecution have been caused by religious bigotry, it is time that mankind gave heed to the vision of Freemasonry that allows tolerance of another man's religion while not compromising his own.

Masonic Ritual

Masonic Ritual does vary the name of God. He is referred to as the Great Architect of the Universe, and the Great Geometrician of the Universe, but these names only serve to illustrate different characteristics of God. A Freemason is entitled to interpret the name of his Supreme Being after his own religious leanings.

Compatibility with Christianity

To be incompatible means to be opposed in character or discordant. If Freemasonry were incompatible with Christianity, then the teachings and principles of Freemasonry would have to be opposed to, and in variance with, Christianity.

In the First Degree, the master of the lodge assures the new candidate that in Freemasonry: "there will be found nothing incompatible with your moral, civil, or religious duties."

Broadly speaking, the moral duty of both Christian and Freemason is to offer charity to a fellow man.