

Freemasonry and Patriotism

We say that Freemasonry is a universal Brotherhood bringing together men of every nation, creed, and color and yet we also say that Masons are patriotic. How is this so? Is there a contradiction between the universality of Freemasonry and its patriotic bent?

The answer is no, and clearly demonstrated by the fact that some of the most patriotic of men in our country and in other countries now and over the centuries have been Masons. These include: General George Washington and General McArthur from our own country. Rudyard Kipling and Winston Churchill from Great Britain, and from France - General Lafayette and Felix Faure, a President of the French Republic, and the list goes on and on.

Of course, both Freemasonry and Patriotism can be manipulated and distorted. For example, in Hitler's Germany the normal patriotic instincts of the people were misused. Here, for example, is what Reich Marshall Herman Goering had to say about that.

"Naturally, the common people do not like or want war, but they can always be brought to the bidding of leaders: tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and, therefore, endangering the country. It works all the time."

And Freemasonry can be misused as well. For example in Italy

the P-2 Lodge was involved in financial irregularities and political intrigue and was erased as a Lodge.

But more generally, patriotism is founded on great principles and supported by even greater virtues. It involves duties and responsibilities as well as privileges, and it is far more than a tactic for manipulation or a gimmick for political gain. The idea of patriotism involves personal sacrifice.

Our obligations do not simply begin with obedience to law and end with the payment of taxes. True patriotism is a thinking patriotism. It goes beyond the shouting and hurrahs, beyond the blare of brass bands and the boom of fireworks. It is more than stump speeches and parades. True patriotism is a great, calm, and altogether lovely and holy thing that worships God and loves its fellow man. It is a consecration of high ideals, and it is the hallowing of a man's entire soul in a most holy cause.

We could call the role of nations, asking of each what it had or has to give of Beauty and Truth to mankind. Each country will have its own contribution, and the citizens of that country are justly proud. This stretches back to antiquity, where Judea, no larger than Illinois, gave to the entire human race its religion, and Greece, a tiny land, added an immeasurable wealth of art, drama, and philosophy to the world, as did ancient Rome.

In our own country, Americanism can easily be defined by the Declaration of Independence, which asserts the rights of man in one immortal sentence.

"We hold self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principals and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness."

No Freemason who reads those words, and those in our Bill of Rights and Constitution, would fail to recognize them as Masonic documents - not because of the great number of Freemasons who wrote or influenced them, but because they embody the living and time-honored tenets, precepts, and principles of our Ancient Craft.

Our country has a genius that is truly unique. We stand for the proposition that the highest ideals in government are wrapped into the phrase, "the "government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the face of the earth." For we believe this type of government makes for the greatest happiness of man, both from the standpoint of an individual and private nobility, and by providing the greatest benefit to the larger public welfare.

Every Freemason in these United States should understand that

Freemasonry, as an institution, has always been an integral part of America's history and destiny. It was Freemasonry in a preeminent degree that so carefully and yet so resolutely cradled democracy in the first eventful years of America's history. Indeed, American nationality was largely brought about by Freemasons.

We Americans are the freest people on the face of the earth. Our strength rests with our values and belief in freedom and the dignity of man and is sustained by our patriotism. Anarchy flees before its shining light and peace, order, security, and liberty are safe so long as love of country burns bright in the hearts of our people.

For loyalty to one's country is a basic Masonic principle and carries with it the highest obligation of citizenship - obedience to law, respect for constitutional authority, a recognition of the right of every human being to the enjoyment of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

And Masons also recognize that the rights we enjoy as citizens carry with them corresponding duties. Among these duties is the careful and intelligent consideration of candidates and measures coming before the people for approval in our nation's electoral process. No good Freemason will fail to be a good citizen, and he will be found on the side of decency, civic righteousness, and public order.

So we can be proud that our Masonic values and the exercise of

our patriotic duties have contributed so greatly to that civic progress which has made this uniquely American experiment with democracy work so well and for so long.

Of course, as Freemasons, our field is the whole world, but our solicitude is to our own country - as it makes its unique and priceless contribution to universal good. With due reverence for other nations, and by loyalty to our own flag, we best serve the whole human race.

Freemasons have always placed patriotism above partisanship to preserve and extend the free institutions of the Republic, to maintain the honor and dignity of the Nation at home and abroad, and to realize the lofty ideals of our republic that are so consonant with the principles of Freemasonry.

And wherever there is a constitutional government that respects the rights of men, Freemasonry is the loyal supporter of that government.

Freemasonry has always supported the right to think, the right to speak, the right to worship in freedom and as conscience alone shall dictate. We supported those principles in the formation of our great country, and today our Brethren around the world support these principles in their countries as well.

And thus it is that our Beloved Order has been and must continue to be the greatest force of all time on the side of individual liberty and the dignity of man, and fighting against tyranny and

usurpation. We join with our Brethren around the world in standing up for truth and justice and we hope that the freedoms we enjoy in this great country may one day be enjoyed by all mankind all over the world.