

MASONRY IN BUSINESS

All great moral forces in men's lives permeate, and to some extent effect, their business careers. A Sincere Christian will endeavor to live by the golden rule. A Consistent church member will not be honest because it is the best policy, but because he believes in honor. A real philosopher will apply the principles of his study to his daily relations with trade and commerce. A real Mason will act Masonically in business as well as in the lodge. It is idle to say that Masonry is only for Masons. It is not. Masonry, if it is to fill its promise, must be, in its esoteric aspects, as much for the profane as for the Mason. Still more must Masonic principles be applied when dealing with Masons.

But there are many abuses committed in the name of Masonic business, against which the newly made Mason may well guard himself. Chief of these is the demand, in the name of Masonry, for business favors which would never be asked or granted without a Masonic background.

There is no real excuse for the stranger who comes to you pleading for your indorsement on his note because of your common Masonry, and you are not acting un-Masonically if you refuse it. It is far less Masonic to get than to give, to ask than to offer, to demand than to propose. The Mason who uses his Masonry as a means of getting, when without the Masonry he would have no excuse, is not acting in a truly Masonic manner. Therefore, it is not at all necessary that he who is asked should respond as he would to a legitimate Masonic request. To a man who says to you:

You should do this because we have a common brotherhood;" you can well reply: "You should not ask it because we have a common brotherhood."

Your real brother will not ask you to do that in the name of brotherhood which he would not ask you to do in the name of friendship.

Yes, there are exceptions; many of them. The tales which might be written of the instances in which the Masonic brotherhood feeling has saved men from disaster are legion. A man in deep trouble may turn to his brethren for help, when the man who only wants an accommodation in business is outlawed before he starts. There was a Mason whom we will call Jim Jones, because that was not his name. Jim was about to fail in business, through no real fault of his own. Jim laid the matter before the Master of his lodge. The Master called a couple of bankers into consultation, and the loan needed was made, not as bankers to client, but as Masons to a Mason. Five Masons signed the notes; and every note was paid. Here was a case where a man had exhausted his commercial credit, and had to call on his Masonic credit; it was a wise thing to do, and the Masonic aid was beautifully given. But when Jim's neighbor, Smith, was ready to fail and asked the same remedy for himself, he met with no success. He professed himself as unable to understand why, if Masonry could help Jones, it could help Smith. But the reason was patent to all who knew of the cases; Jones was in danger through no fault of his own and Jones had a reputation, both in business and Masonry, which made him a good risk. Smith was in trouble

because he lacked judgment and ability, and his reputation was good in neither business nor Masonry.

We quote these little instances because it is difficult to phrase a rule as to when Masonry may be used in business and when not. In general, it should never be used when any other means is available. Masonry does not contemplate that its followers lean on each other, but expects them to stand upon their own feet. Masonry does not contemplate that the strong shall carry the weak, the able supply ability for the feeble. Masonry is not a panacea for social or business ills. A blood brother will help one while he will help himself, will love one while he is lovable, and defend one while he is weak, as long as he knows his brother will give him of his own strength when he recovers it. But blood brothers will not, because of mutual parentage, support one if he is a wastrel; lend to one if he is dishonest; or prop one up if he stumbles, if one is not man enough to learn to walk alone.

The Masonic brotherhood is modeled upon the tender relation of blood-brother. Its most optimistic altruists do not believe it should go further. If a rule be necessary, let it be this: Give, when you can, help sought; ask help only when all other means fail. Offer the helping hand as often as you have the strength to spare; use Masonry for a crutch only when its absence will mean disaster.

Never forget, in a sentimental willingness to lose rather than to deny an appeal, that when you aid a brother who has not the right to ask your aid, you, as well as he, are injuring Masonry. If the superintendent of a charitable organization receives a call for aid which he knows comes from an undeserving source, he should not give the aid requested. But if he is soft-hearted and yields, rather than say "No!", the result is that he wastes aid which should go to the deserving, cheapens his organization in the eyes of the recipient, and makes true charity ridiculous in the eyes of the public.

Lest some say that this seems to draw back from giving aid, rather than pressing forward to give it, let us reply that we truly believe it is better to give Masonic help where it should not be given, than to deny it where it should be given. But, we have a great regard for Masonry, and are jealous of its reputation; we hold it too high and too holy to look equanimity upon its exploitation. We believe there is no more heart-stirring appeal than that made in the name of Masonry, when it is proper to be made; as a consequence, we must believe there is no more despicable act than abusing Masonry for personal ends when the appeal is made and granted improperly. Help your brother all you may; but never let your brother abuse your help, your heart, or your Masonry. For Masonry is far, far greater than the individual, and its purity and its preservation far more important than, that we give ourselves the pleasure of saying "Yes," when the only Masonic answer we can give is "No!" The young Mason is faced with a question, almost as soon as he becomes a Master Mason: "Must I trade only with Masons; is it un-Masonic to trade with the profane?" He will submit this to older Masons and receive almost as many different answers as the questions he asks.

We give here an answer which seems to us to be correct. But it should be noted that others have rights to their opinions. In all questions which have two sides there is room for argument and

differing viewpoints. Since this question is not of law, but of ethics, there is probably more than one correct answer.

Masonry is not a mutual benefit society, in the sense that the Rochedal Corporative Society is one. That and similar organizations are formed for the purpose of promoting trade among members; they offer financial inducements to trade with their members.

There is nothing like that in Masonry!

There is no Masonic obligation taken at the Altar which even hints that a Mason must deal only with Masons. There is no Grand Lodge law, nor any lodge by-law, which compels such trading.

It is, therefore, not a violation of any Masonic law or obligation not to trade with a brother Mason. Any one who believes the contrary is misinformed. Nor is there any unwritten law on the subject.

But there is an obligation of brotherhood. How far that is here to be applied, every individual brother must decide for himself. If one has a blood brother for whom one possesses a sincere affection, and that brother sells, let us say, coal. That is, one would do so as long as the brother sold good coal on its merit, and for as fair a price and with as good of service as one could get from some non-relative. But if one's brother took advantage of the relationship to charge a dollar more a ton, or to keep one waiting and cold while he filled non-relatives' orders, one would speedily change one's coal merchant!

It would seem that the same principle should apply in regard to one's Masonic brethren. As between two merchants, one a profane, the other a Mason, both giving the same goods at the same price and rendering the same service, the Mason should receive the Mason's trade. But as between a Mason selling at a high price and a profane selling at a lower one, as between a Mason giving poor service and a profane giving good service, the choice should be the other way.

This is not only good business, and good common sense, but good Masonry. For Masonry should encourage progress and weed out the drones; it should make its membership love Masonry for what it is, not for what it brings. It should fight hard against any attempt to commercialize the Order, and resent bitterly the use of its teachings for the making of money.

The Mason who says: "Trade with me because I am a Mason" is seldom a good merchant. Certainly he has no pride of calling or willingness to stand on his own feet. The Mason who says: "Trade with me because I give good goods at an honest price" is upholding the dignity of his calling, and scorning to take advantage of his Masonic brotherhood for the sake of making more money.

The man who must depend on Masonry to enable him to keep his store open is not a good Mason.

It is a Masonic obligation to do one's best by one's family, to work hard and honestly; and to get, as well as to give, value received for one's labor. Paying more to a Mason than is necessary to

pay to a profane is injurious to one's family since it deprives them of something in order to benefit a Mason who has no right to it. As a general rule Masons are not the type and kind of men who wish to take advantage of their Masonic brotherhood. The greater part of them scorn to use Masonry to further business ends. The vast majority of Masons revere their Masonry; they hold it high and sacred, and far apart from the money changers and the marts of trade.

But there are exceptions who ask and expect to receive special consideration because they are Masons. This is very sad and very bad! No Mason has a right to ask or expect a discount from another Mason because of mutual brotherhood. To use Masonry - the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the Religion of the Heart, the Philosophy of Life - to get a ten percent discount on a purchase of garden hose, is to abuse Masonry. Give your trade to your Masonic friends because you like them, because you know them to be good men and true, because they sell goods at honest prices; hunt out the lodge member among the Masons to deal with because you like him and want to help him. But deal with him because you want to help him, not because you expect him to help you. If you sell instead of buy, give the Mason the best you can in service, because you like him and wish to help him, not because you feel you have any moral or Masonic right to trade to which your name, your business methods and your standard of ethics would not entitle you.

Hold Masonry high; keep its dignity, its reputation, unsullied. Do not mix it up with money and with barter. For it was written: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's."

Money and trade belong to Caesar. Masonry in men's hearts belongs to God!