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## Masonry in the Garb of Christianity.

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Pastors will often meet with Masons who assert most emphatically that since their initiation they view the Masonic oath-bound fraternity in a different light and consider it a distinctly Christian institution, and that his opposition to their favorite lodge betrays his ignorance, excusable indeed because he has not been "entered, passed, and raised." All material at the service of the pastor proving the distinctly unchristian character of Masonry must in such cases be of special value to him. But Masonry does bedeck itself with the livery of Christianity, both before the eyes of the public and in various of its degrees of the American and Scottish Rites.

From all that has been written and printed about Blue, or Symbolic, Masonry, comprising the first three degrees, Entered Apprentice, Fellow-Craft, and Master Mason, it is evident that in not one of its many lines does it voice any distinctively Christian doctrine or make any reference to the name of our adorable Savior. In Chapter Masonry there are two Scripture-readings from which the name of Christ has been studiously expunged. Mackey admits (*Ritualist*, p. 272) that in the fourth degree of Mark Master, the first degree of the Chapter, "slight, but necessary modifications" have been applied to 1 Pet. 2, 1—5. The Masonic mutilation renders the closing words thus: "to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God," omitting the words "by Jesus Christ." Again, according to Mackey's *Ritualist*, p. 348, when 2 Thess. 3, 6—16 is read during the opening ceremonies of the Royal Arch degree, the fourth of the Chapter, the name of our Savior is omitted from verses 6 and 12. But when some of our anti-Masonic friends maintain that Masonry in no instance adopts a Christian garb or mentions the name of Christ and His suffering and death, they are quite mistaken.

Masonic authorities have taken it upon themselves to tell the "outer and profane world," as humanity outside of the inner veil of Masonry is called by Mackey and Sickels, that their institution is the most exact reproduction of Christianity. Inwood (*Masonic Library*, p. 47) says: "Masonry is the excellency of Christianity, and every Mason is, if he is in reality a Mason, a true Christian; or at least he is in reality truly religious according to his profession, whether Jew or Christian." Arnold (*Rationale and Ethics of Freemasonry*, p. 189) says: "We do not hesitate to say that we regard Freemasonry as the truest expression of the mind and thought of Christ this age is destined to witness. Christianity is its central idea and at the same time the foundation and corollary of our temple. Nay, Masonry is Christianity, Christianity applied to life, made actual in the arrangement of society, Christianity realized in man's relation one to another."

But these pretentious claims can be met by quotations from other Masonic lights, who assert the very opposite. Mackey (*Encyclopedia*, p. 641) says: "Freemasonry is not Christianity nor a substitute for it. It does not meddle with sectarian creeds or doctrines, but teaches fundamental religious truth." On page 207 he says: "Blue Lodge Masonry has nothing whatever to do with the Bible. It is not founded on the Bible; if it was, it would not be Masonry; it would be something else." Benjamin M. Holt, an ex-Mason, has gathered from recent Masonic publications ample proof that Masonry does not claim the honorable title of Christian as its own. Here are a few of his gleanings as found in the *Christian Cynosure*, January, 1922: "It is true that a Jew may be a good Mason and reject the teachings of Jesus Christ. With that Masonry has nothing to do." (G. E. Knepper, Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Idaho; Official Document, January 8, 1921.) "We do not require any member seeking admission to the order to make any declaration except a belief in one God. There is no rejection of Jesus Christ, neither is there any requirement of acceptance of Jesus Christ." (W. L. Stockwell, Executive Member of the Masonic Service Association, United States; Official Document, January 18, 1921.) "Hundreds of churches over the land to-day are anti-Christ, not only the Jews, but hundreds of others; yet they believe that God rules and reigns over the universe; and by such belief they are eligible to become members of our order." (Dave Jackson, Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky; Official Document, February 2, 1921.) "The principles we teach are the only influence that can save and redeem the world." (A. G.

Burnett, Grand Master of California, Proceedings, Oklahoma, 1918, p. 225.)

Some public demonstrations of Masons, however, prove to be unquestionable attempts of this institution to impress the unwary with the striking likeness of Masonry and Christianity. The *Globe-Democrat* of St. Louis, in its gravure picture section in one of its Sunday editions of this year, presented scenes of the Passion Play produced by the Consistory players of Bloomington, Ill., at their Scottish Rite temple, scenes depicting Christ's trial before Pilate and the institution of the Lord's Supper; also a picture of the man who impersonated Christ.

We have before us the tastily printed order of Easter services held under the auspices of three different Commanderies of Knights Templars in Chicago, in 1922, at three different places, the North Shore Baptist Church, the Cort Theater, and the Oriental Consistory.

The service at the Baptist church mentioned fairly teems with things Christian. There is a confession of sins, and the words occur: "Restore Thou those who are penitent, according to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus, our Lord." The Prelate, Sir Knights, and "the people" recite the Apostles' Creed, and the words "He descended into hell" are not omitted. The collect for Easter Day as we find it in our hymn-book, p. 33, tune edition, is part of the service. Psalms 113 and 114 are read responsively, and Is. 63 and Matt. 28 serve as lessons for the day. Col. 3, 1 and 2 Cor. 13, 14 are read by the Prelate. The Gloria Patri, Magnificat, Nunc Dimittis, and Nos. 104, 45, and 377 of our hymn-book are sung. Apparently such a service ought to convince superficial judges that Masonry is out and out Christian.

The service at the Cort Theater does not compare as favorably with the foregoing. The latter mentions no solos or other singing by professional vocalists, while the former does. There was no confession of sins at the theater, if the program informs us correctly, but the Apostles' Creed was recited, the words "He descended into hell," however, having been omitted. The Scripture-reading by the Prelate was Matt. 28. Selections from various psalms are offered for responsive reading. "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," and "God Be with You till We Meet Again" were sung by all present.

At the Oriental Consistory, housed in a church purchased by the Masons, the Knights Templars were under their own roof, and here they did not see fit, if we are to believe the program, to

make any confession of their sins nor to give expression to their faith in the words of the Apostles' Creed. The Apollo Quartet sang several anthems, the titles of which seem to indicate that they gave expression to the message and joy of Easter. Mark 16, 1—8, Luke 24, 13—15, and John 20, 26—29 were read responsively. No. 375 of our hymn-book was sung.

At all three services the Lord's Prayer was repeated, and the stereotyped hymn of Templarism, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," was sung as a processional.

We shall refrain from any comment and offer no criticisms for the present, but proceed to exhibit proofs that esoteric Masonry in some degrees, especially in the twelfth of the American Rite, the Knights Templar degree, alludes to Christ and His suffering and death and in other respects attempts at presenting itself as a Christian institution.

Masonry frequently alludes to things, persons, and places associated with Christian lore. As a password it uses, *e. g.*, "Golgotha" in the Knights Templar degree, and the grip of the Knights of Malta degree, the thirteenth and last of the American Rite, is named "Immanuel." The cross on their banner is said to represent "the cross of Calvary on which the Savior was crucified." The initials of the motto upon this banner of the Knights of Malta are given as I. N. R. I., and there is no tomfoolery in this instance, because they are said to stand for "Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum." But Mackey (*Lexicon*, Article "I. N. R. I.") offers some historical comment, which, he says, "may afford some interest to the Rose Croix and the Knight Templar." The comment: "The Rosicrucians used them as the initials of one of their hermetic secrets: *Ignis Natura Renovatur Integra* — *By fire, nature is perfectly renewed.* They also adopted them to express the names of their elementary principles, salt, sulphur, and mercury, by making them as the initials of the sentence, *Ignis Nitrum Roris Invenitur.*" In the degree of Knights of the East and West, according to Mackey's *Encyclopedia* (Article "Knights of the East and West"), Christian symbolism is employed in the Lamb lying on a book with seven seals and in the initials given of the Seven Churches. Even regarding the work done in the degrees of Blue Lodge Masonry theological terms are employed. Sickels (*Ahiman Rezon*, p. 51) says: "The entered apprentice is the type of the unregenerate man, groping in mental and moral darkness and seeking for light to guide his steps." Page 54: "The rite of induction signifies the end of a profane and vicious life, the *palingenesia* [new birth]

of corrupted human nature, the death of vice and all bad passions, and the introduction to a new life of purity and virtue." "To initiate is to regenerate," is an aphorism of Masonry. Thus we could heap instance upon instance of Masonic *camouflage* of the nature mentioned in the introductory sentence of this paragraph. We might now refer to some of the degrees which are designed to convey the impression that they are specifically Christian degrees, but which strongly remind us of the apostolic injunction: "Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

Mackey (*Encyclopedia*, Article "Rose Croix, Prince of") says of this eighteenth degree of Scottish Rite Masonry: "In passing from Scotland to France, it greatly changed its form and organization, as it resembles in no respect its archetype, except that both are eminently Christian in their design." "Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday are two obligatory days of meeting." "It was indeed, on its first inception, an attempt to Christianize Freemasonry; to apply the rites and symbols and traditions of Ancient Craft Masonry to the last and greatest dispensation; to add to the first Temple of Solomon and the second of Zerubbabel a third, that to which Christ alluded when He said, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The great discovery made in the Royal Arch ceases to be of value in this degree; for another is substituted of more Christian application; the Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty which supported the ancient Temple are replaced by the Christian pillars of Faith, Hope, and Charity. The great lights, of course, remain because they are of the very essence of Masonry; but the lesser give way to the thirty-three, which allude to the years of the Messiah's sojourning on earth. Everything, in short, about the degree is Christian." May we know what is "eminently Christian" about this degree? It must be because in the lodge-room where this degree is enacted there are three apartments — the first, hung in black and lighted with candles, representing Mount Calvary; the second, representing the ascension of Jesus by means of a transparency; the third, representing hell in all its gruesomeness. By visualization, then, Masonry seeks to impress upon its devotees the Christian character of its institution, just like the aforementioned Consistory players of Bloomington sought to impress the uninitiated. In more than one instance the words of Milton apply to this buffoonery: —

Yet have they many baits and guileful spells  
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense.

But Mackey himself sets us at ease by saying that this "eminently Christian" degree is not what it pretends to be and what he calls it. He has already told us this *sub rosa*, calling it Christian only in its design. But he is even more explicit: "In its adoption by the Ancient and Accepted Rite its organization has been so changed that, by a more liberal interpretation of its symbolism, it has been rendered less sectarian and more tolerant in its design. For while the Christian reference is preserved, no peculiar theological dogma is retained, and the degree is made cosmopolite in its character." "The Christian teachings of the degree have been applied to the sublime principles of a universal system and an interpretation and illustration of the doctrines of the Master of Nazareth so adapted to the Masonic dogma of tolerance that men of every faith may embrace and respect them. It thus performs a noble mission. It obliterates alike the intolerance of those Christians who sought to erect an impassable barrier around the sheepfold, and the equal intolerance of other religions who would be ready to exclaim, 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?'" The chief use which Masons now make of this mummery may be inferred from the words of the Master of Ceremonies which he addresses to the candidate: "The horrors which you have just seen are but a faint representation of those you shall suffer if you break through our laws or infringe the obligation you have taken."

(To be concluded.)

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