



The CableTow

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THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF THE PHILIPPINES
144 San Marcelino St., Ermita, Manila



Grand Master Oscar V. Bunyi with Grand Master of District of Columbia, Mansour Hatefi. MW Bunyi's presence brought pleasant memories and amity.



Grand Master Oscar V. Bunyi with Grand Master William L. Holliday of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Virginia and members of the Philippine delegation.



MW Oscar V. Bunyi with Four Filipino Worshipful Masters of the Four Lodges composed of Filipinos under the jurisdiction of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of New York.



The Cabletow

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FREEMASONRY IS NOT ANTI-RELIGION!

Recently we have been barraged with tracts, leaflets and pamphlets alleging that Freemasonry is a religion, that it is consistently hostile to the Catholic Church and even to many forms of non-Catholic Christianity, and that therefore Christians, particularly Catholics, cannot and should not join Freemasonry.

In response to our critics and detractors, we quote Ill. Albert Pike, in his *Morals and Dogma*: "Those who are invested with the power of judgment should judge the causes of all persons uprightly and impartially, without any personal consideration of the power of the mighty, or the bribe of the rich, or the needs of the poor... They must divest themselves of prejudice and preconception. They must hear patiently, remember accurately, and weigh carefully the facts..." (p. 126). Later in his classic work, Pike writes, "...let the true Mason never forget the solemn injunction (in Matt. 7:1-2), necessary to be observed at almost every moment of a busy life: JUDGE NOT, LEST YE YOURSELVES BE JUDGED: FOR WHATSOEVER JUDGMENT YE MEASURE UNTO OTHERS, THE SAME SHALL IN TURN BE MEASURED UNTO YOU." (p. 135). We call on our critics and detractors to do likewise, and to embark with us on the exciting common endeavor of evolving a better mankind in a better world – a world where all men live with understanding and tolerance and respect toward one another, as well as aid, sup-

port and protect one another as children of one Almighty Parent and inhabitants of the same planet.



MW Oscar V. Bunyi

Through a succession of ages, men of high moral and intellectual attainments, mostly belonging to the Judeo-Christian tradition and not a few to Islam, have demonstrated their pride in their Masonic affiliation and did not withdraw their approbation from it since, as Bro. George Washington stated, "So far as I am acquainted with the principles of Freemasonry, I perceive them to be founded upon benevolence and to be exercised only for the good of mankind."

Wor. and Ill. Bro. Emilio Aguinaldo likewise perceived Freemasonry as "the world fraternity that stands for God and country, freedom and

democracy, service and charity, honesty and integrity."

Clearly, Freemasonry is not a religion, nor is it a church. It offers no plan for salvation and points out no particular road to heaven. But it demands of its candidates a profession of belief in God and in the brotherhood of all men. It does not discriminate any person who in faith believes in God.

Freemasonry, to our British brethren, is "a particular system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols."

Says the German *Handbunch der Freimaurerei* (1900): "Masonry is the activity of closely united men who, employing symbolical forms borrowed principally from masons' trade and architectural work for the welfare of mankind, are striving morally to ennoble themselves and others and thereby to bring about a universal league of mankind, which they aspire to exhibit even now on a small scale."


Freemasonry is, indeed, a fraternity that admonishes its members not to engage in religious and political diatribe. Religion and politics can be divisive. But, of course, we Masons are taught to respect other religious beliefs than our own. Wrote the eminent Masonic scholar, Dr. Rev. Joseph Fort Newton: "Freemasonry lays down no dogma about God; it speaks His name rarely, using instead that august phrase 'The Grand Architect of the Universe.'"

Freemasonry accepts to her bosom all men who believe in the existence of God. In the Philippines, it has as members Roman Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews. In fact, not a few of its members are Roman Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, and Muslim imams.

Wisely wrote Ill. Albert Pike once more: "To every Mason there is a God – one Supreme Being, infinite in goodness, in wisdom, in foresight, in justice, and in benevolence; a Creator, Disposer and Preserver of all things. How or by what powers or emanations He creates and acts and in what way He unfolds and manifests Himself, Masonry leaves to creeds and religions to inquire."

In the face of renewed attacks against the Craft, as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines, I formally declare that Freemasonry is a universal fraternity of men of diverse religious persuasions who believe in the existence of God and in the brotherhood of all men. Creed, or doctrine, is the personal commitment of any member of Freemasonry. The fraternity will not interfere as to how a member will express his faith in God. I want to invite those who consider themselves our adversaries, as did my worthy predecessors, to embark with us on a journey of mutual understanding of, as well as respect and tolerance for, each other's beliefs and convictions.

I urge the brethren, as well as members of their families and those of our appendant bodies, to consider seriously and weigh carefully the articles printed in this issue of *The Cabletow* so that they will the better be able to defend the Craft against anti-Masons.



MW OSCAR V. BUNYI
Grand Master

LET'S DO A GEORGE WASHINGTON (OR, STAND TALL FOR FREEMASONRY)!

In the face of the resurgent criticism and condemnation of the Craft from certain sectors of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as from some mainline Protestant religions and born-again preachers, there is a danger that our not-so-well-informed brethren, particularly the newly-raised and the candidates for Masonic degrees, when subjected to anti-Masonic influences or personally harassed by anti-Masons in their respective churches, may feel so torn between two seemingly absolute alternatives and, consequently, anguished as to consider demitting from the Craft as an escape from the dilemma.

The sad and awful truth is that some erstwhile Masonic leaders here and abroad have joined the ranks of the anti-Masons, claiming that they had been disappointed with Masonry.

But, of course, Masonry has not failed them; it is they who have failed Masonry. To them applies the following statement of the late Ill. Albert Pike:

"If you have been thus disappointed, then our labor has been in vain. Whether these degrees have for you a real value depends upon your capacity to understand them, and upon the amount of study and the degree of reflection you have bestowed upon them." (Cited by Ill. Rex. R. Hutchens, 33rd degree, *A Bridge to Light*, p. 327).

Those "renegades" have proven themselves unworthy of their Masonic affiliation, as may be gleaned from the following portion of MW and Ill. Reynato S. Puno's speech of acceptance of the Grand Cross of the Court

of Honor Medal awarded to him by the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Philippines:

"I like to think that Masonry is like tea – its best comes out in hot water. Harassments will not toll the bell for Masonry. They will only weed out from our ranks the unworthy Masons: those who do not comprehend Masonry; those who understand Masonry but will compromise its teachings due to social, political or religious convenience; and those who are in Masonry for what they can get and not for what they can give for the good of their fellowmen."

The majority of the brethren have held fast to their Masonic convictions in the face of anti-Masonic initiatives, as did our eminent Brother, U.S. General and President George Washington, several centuries ago. If we may recall, when asked to resign from the Masonic fraternity, Brother George Washington wrote a letter to the Rev. G. W. Snyder, in which he said, "So

far as I am acquainted with the principles of Freemasonry, I perceive them to be founded upon benevolence and to be exercised only for the good of mankind. I do not, therefore, upon this ground, withdraw my approbation from it."

Several years ago, some of our brethren in Iligan City, did a George Washington. Desirous of finding spiritual enlightenment, they became active members and even officers of the local chapter of a national Christian organization. Later, however, they were either booted out of the membership roll or stripped of their leadership positions a move designed to force them to renounce Masonry. But no one of them renounced Masonry.

We need not specify here the many other instances in which brethren throughout our grand jurisdiction have courageously stood tall for Freemasonry – in spite of the pressures, in spite of the dangers, in spite of the consequences.

To paraphrase Rev. and MW Bro. Raymond

Green, Past Grand Master of the Masons of New South Wales, let us further our resolve to show the community that we are an organization of excellence, that what we do counts for something, and if people have a problem with our existence, then the problem lies with them, not with us. Let us not diminish our Masonic responsibility and the valuable good works that we have been doing for years, just to satisfy the narrow worldview of some fundamentalist groups who believe they have a monopoly of truth and who would be happier if Freemasonry did not exist. Rather, we must give heed to this admonition of the late Ill. Pike:

"If Masonry will but be true to her mission, and Masons to their promises and obligations,...if we will but give aid to what were once Masonry's great schemes for human improvement, not fitfully and spasmodically, but regularly and incessantly,... then we may be sure that great results will be attained and a great work done. And then it will most surely be seen that Masonry is not effete or impotent, nor degenerated nor drooping to a fatal decay." (*Morals and Dogma*, p. 175).

MASONRY HAS SURVIVED AND WILL CONTINUE TO SUCCEED

The late Ill. Albert Pike, 33rd degree, Past Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A., stated, "Masonry has stood the test of ages, and the waves of persecution which have beat against her have only established her on surer foundation."

MW and Ill. Frederic H. Stevens, 33rd degree, a Past Grand Master of our Grand Lodge and the first Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Philippines, similarly said, "Freemasonry works chiefly through the upbuilding of the individual members and exercises its universal influence through them. And when our organizations are suppressed anywhere by the enemy, Freemasonry is not destroyed there but lives on in the minds and hearts and wills of the members, decimated and scattered though they may be.

Freemasonry is like a yeast. Though the container may be destroyed, invisibly it survives, always to leaven and quicken the social mass, no matter how sodden it has been rendered by despotic oppression." (Cited in *The Cabletow*, March – April 1996, p. 48).

MW and Ill. Reynato S. Puno, 33rd degree, in his speech of acceptance of the award of the Grand Cross, assured the brethren that Freemasonry in the Philippines is here to stay. Explained he: "The foundation of this country was built by Masons, and the

mightiest of men cannot obliterate the goodness of Masonry. Masonry has survived and will continue to succeed; for no institution that rests on the pillars of brotherly love, relief and truth will ever fall. There is only one thing that Masonry will not survive and that is the lack of Masonry among Masons. The future of Masonry lies in our own hands and not in the hands of others." (See *The Cabletow*, March – April 1998, p. 15)

He therefore resounded the clarion call for a more–honest–to–goodness Masonic education. Said he: "...Unless we immerse ourselves in our landmarks, laws, ancient rules, rituals, traditions and practices, we will never be able to defend the Craft. Our best shield against libel and calumny is knowledge of Masonry; our best defense against falsehood is truth, but let us remember that truth will hold only he who actively seeks the truth. Truth comes to the seeker. It is discovered. Seek and ye shall find. More than anytime, we should

seek more light in Masonry." (*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15).

Ill. Rex R. Hutchens, 33rd degree, also expressed the idea that Freemasonry is what we, its members, make of it: an institution of moral leadership, educational advancement and philanthropic endeavors or merely a social club with empty titles and vain pretensions. To achieve the former, we must work together in close harmony towards common goals and renew our commitment to learn and live – learn the simple lessons of practical morality and the sublime teachings of religious philosophy, then live them, that our light may so shine before men that they will continue to desire our fellowship and join in our assemblies. (*A Bridge to Light*, p. 327).

Let us, then, exert a lot more effort toward becoming *Magistri Interiores*, or Inward Masters, so that our influence over other men will bring much better result. (*Ibid.*).

ARE MASONS SATANIC AND THEREFORE ANTI-CHRIST?

In his inaugural address as Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, A. & A.S.R. of Freemasonry, for the Philippines, MW and Ill. Rosendo C. Herrera, 33rd degree, a Past Grand Master of our Grand Lodge and currently the Grand Master of the Supreme Council of DeMolay Phils., bewailed the fact that anti-Masons had labeled us Masons as anti-Christ, and that they had disseminated the disinformation that the Order of DeMolay is "a cult sponsored by us to lure the youth into demonic or satanic activities." Exclaimed he: "What a wasted opportunity for young men who would have been trained or guided properly by the Order had their parents not been so credulous as to 'buy' such a disinformation!"

Our critics and detractors may not be aware of the fact that influential business geniuses, such as Walt Disney, are grateful for and proud of their involvement in DeMolay. Said Walt Disney: "I feel a great sense of obligation and gratitude toward the Order of DeMolay for the important part it played in my life. Its precepts have been invaluable in making decisions, facing dilemmas and crises. DeMolay stands for all that is good for the family and for

our country. I feel privileged to have enjoyed membership in DeMolay." (Quoted by the *Wisconsin Masonic Journal*, March 1999).

It is unfair, then, for our critics and detractors to accuse us as anti-Christ, devil worshippers, occultists, and the like.

Be it known unto them that in *Morals and Dogma*, Ill. Albert Pike writes, "As a lover of

all mankind, laying down His (Jesus') life for the emancipation of His brethren, He should be to all, to Christian, to Jew, and to Mahometan, an object of gratitude and veneration." (p. 308).

III. Pike, in fact, quotes John 15:13 thus: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." (p. 310). Then he states, "The Gospel of Love He (Jesus) sealed with His life." (*Ibid.*)

Earlier in his classic work (p. 134), Pike counsels, "Speak kindly of your erring brother! God pities him; Christ has died for him: Providence waits for him: Heaven's mercy yearns toward him; and Heaven's spirits are ready to welcome him back with joy. Let your voice be in unison with all those powers that God is using for his recovery!"

The teachings of Masonry are taken mainly from the universal teachings of the major religions of the world. Hence, whatever our religious faith may be, we are taught never to forget the solemn injunction in Matthew 7:1-2, namely: "Judge not, lest ye yourselves be judged: for whatsoever judgment ye measure unto others, the same shall in turn be measured unto you." Our critics and detractors, we hope and pray, also abide by this injunction.

Here are other significant statements of III. Pike, which Masons and non-Masons, including those who have given us varied and often contradictory labels, should carefully weigh and seriously consider:

- Those who are invested with the power of judgment should judge the causes of all persons uprightly and impartially, without any personal consideration of the power of the mighty, or the bribe of the rich, or the needs of the poor. ... They must divest themselves of prejudice and preoccupation. They must hear patiently, remember accurately, and weigh carefully the facts... (*MD*, p. 126).

- In our intercourse with others, there are two kinds of injustice: the first, of those who offer an injury; the second, of those who have it in their power to avert an injury from those to whom it is offered, and yet do it not. So,

active injustice may be done in two ways – by force and by fraud – of which force is lion-like, fraud fox-like – both utterly repugnant to social duty, but fraud the more detestable. (*Ibid.*, p.127).

- Every wrong done by one man to another, whether it affects his person, his property, his happiness, or his reputation, is an offense against the law of justice. (*Ibid.*)

- (Masonry) teaches this great and momentous Truth: That wrong and injustice once done cannot be undone; but are eternal in their consequences; once committed, are numbered with the irrevocable Past; that the wrong that is done contains its own retributive penalty as surely and as naturally as the acorn contains the oak. (*Ibid.*)

- Surely, we shall do less wrong and injustice, if the conviction is fixed and embedded in our own souls that everything done is done irrevocably, that even the Omnipotence of God cannot uncommit a deed, cannot make that undone which has been done; that every act of ours must bear its allotted fruit, according to the everlasting laws – must remain forever ineffaceably inscribed on the tablets of Universal Nature. (*Ibid.*, p. 128).

It is futile for our critics and detractors to give us diverse, often conflicting, labels. When, for instance, a Masonic Lodge was established in Kabankalan, Negros Occidental, the Bishop in that place wrote his followers a letter, in which he said in part, "Beware of wolves coming to you in sheep's clothing!" But we have not cried "Wolf!" Instead, we have exerted all-out effort to wear our badge as Masons, the lambskin or white linen apron, in daily life as honorably as we can.

We therefore invite our critics and detractors to a dialogue marked by a mutuality of inner action, by means whereof we will eliminate controversy and, therefore, as MW Raymond E. Wilmarth, PGM, has phrased it, "...please one another and unite in that great design of promoting happiness" -- the happiness of all men as children of one Almighty Parent, whom we call God or Great Architect of the Universe. --
eF.R.eN

FREEMASONRY, CONSPIRACISM AND RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

by Samuel P. Fernandez and Flor R. Nicolas

Introduction

“IT IS CLEAR that there have been adverse reactions continuously, side by side with evidence of the existence of non-operative Masonry, from the 1600s to the present day. Anti-Masonry has been a happy hunting ground repeatedly for journalists with nothing else to write about; but, far more seriously, has been the basis of attacks on Freemasonry by important religious bodies that have felt impelled to adopt this attitude in the belief that people or groups do not need secrets unless they have something to hide. These attacks have been taken to the extremes of persecutions by the Inquisitions of the Church of Rome, and by absolutist monarchies and fascist and communist dictatorships.”

Thus Bro. A.G. Markham states in his paper, titled “Some Problems of English Masonic History,” which he presented in November 1996 to Quatuor Coronati Lodge #2076 under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England.

We can infer from Bro. Markham’s statement that those who oppose us are interrelated. The conspiracists, or those who fear secret conspiracies, have woven theories falsely accusing Freemasonry as one of the groups plotting to destroy democracy, all governments and all religions, particularly Christianity, in order to rule over what is left after this destruction. Such theories, in turn, have served as basis of criticisms and condemnation of Freemasonry from some sectors of the Roman Catholic Church, some mainline Protestant religions and born-again preachers.

Admittedly, we cannot altogether stop

conspiracists from continuing their false accusations against us because they will take any evidence we present in our defense as part of the proof of the deviousness of Freemasonry. Nor can we altogether stop important religious bodies from persisting to criticize and condemn us because they believe they have a monopoly of truth and therefore would be happier if Freemasonry, which champions freedom of religion, did not exist.

But, certainly, there are things we can do to keep those who always oppose us to a small number.

Taking a Closer Look at MW and Ill. Puno’s Address

We should, first of all, take a closer look at the points propounded by MW and Ill. Reynato S. Puno, 33rd degree, PGM and PSGC, in his speech of acceptance of the award of the Grand

Cross. (See *The Cabletow*, March–April 1998, pp. 6-15.) In his speech of acceptance, MW and Ill. Puno offered this wise counsel:

“We should deal with them (renewed attacks against the Craft) with the lesson taught us in our 32nd degree -- with love and with an understanding of the greatest latitude. Masonry holds no contention against any religion, and Masons are apostles of freedom of religion. Indeed, the strength of Masonry lies in its teachings taken mainly from the universal teachings of the major religions of the world. We are also committed to the dispersal of harmony among all men and this objective will elude us if we do not build bridges with our fellowmen, including our critics and detractors.

“Let us not be shackled by the fear that Philippine Masonry will suffer an irreversible setback because of these recycled criticisms. These criticisms are not new. They are premised on age-old misconceptions about Masonry, which arose when organized ignorance ruled the hearts and minds of men. Superstitions and ignorance no longer hold sway over our people. In this age of exploding knowledge, our people can easily discriminate truth and falsehood. The CBCP (Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines) has cleared Masonry from these misconceptions after thorough examination of our philosophy and practices.” (*Ibid.*, p. 14).

(Earlier in his speech MW and Ill. Puno gave an account of how the CBCP came to clear Masonry from the misconceptions about it. With sincere fraternal apology to him, we have taken the liberty to “recycle” his account and use it as Appendix “A” to this article for our readers’ ready, easy reference.)

Doing a Raymond Green, a George Washington

We know, as was said earlier, that not a few individuals and groups would be happier if Freemasonry did not exist. Appar-

ently, such individuals and groups believe they have a monopoly of truth. Instead of just satisfying their narrow worldview, let us, like the Rev. and MW Bro. Raymond Green, Past Grand Master of New South Wales Masons, further our resolve to show the community that we are an organization of excellence, that what we do counts for something, and if those individuals and groups have a problem with our existence, then the problem lies with them, not with us. Let us, moreover, seek more Masonic light, consistently live our Masonry in daily life, and increase the valuable good works we have been doing for years for the benefit of our fellowmen and for God’s greater glory. Our mission is, after all, caring for the values and principles embodied in the Masonic fraternity and caring for our fellow humans, particularly the disadvantaged.

If we really care for the values and principles embodied in our Craft, we will readily do a George Washington. When asked to resign from Masonry, our illustrious Brother George Washington wrote a letter to the Rev. G. W. Snyder, in which he said, “So far as I am acquainted with the principles of Freemasonry, I perceive them to be founded upon benevolence and to be exercised only for the good of mankind. I do not, therefore, upon this ground, withdraw my approbation from it.” He was, indeed, a true Mason because he clung to his conviction, which he saw as the truth or the nearest approximation thereof.

Like him, we must stand tall for the Craft when subjected to anti-Masonic influences or personally harassed by anti-Masons in our respective churches or religious organizations. But we can do so only if and when we are adequately armed with confident knowledge of Masonry. We must remember that, as the late Ill. Albert Pike pointed out, the real value of the Masonic degrees conferred upon us depends upon our capacity to understand them, and upon the amount of study and the degree of reflection we have bestowed upon them. More than anytime, then,

we must seek more light in Masonry.

Emulating Our Masonic Forebears' Example

Let us, furthermore, emulate the example set by the leading members of Logia Solidaridad No. 53, the first all-Filipino Lodge founded in Madrid, Spain, in 1889. Those brethren conducted a series of lectures designed to increase member and public awareness and understanding of the inter-relationship of Freemasonry and religion. (Some of the lectures delivered in that Lodge were reprinted in the March-April 1993 issue of *The Cabletow*.)

One of the leading members of the said Lodge was Ill. Marcelo "Plaridel" H. Del Pilar, the acknowledged Father of Filipino Freemasonry. In one of his lectures, he said in part:

"Masonry...is not a religion, but this does not mean it is impious. On the contrary, it is deeply religious; it acknowledges the existence of the Great Architect of the Universe, but without the arrogance of determining His attributes, or regulating His inscrutable designs, or of disputing His exclusive representation on earth. It is for this reason that Masonry admits to its bosom all men, whatever may be their religious belief.

"In every human intelligence and in the manifestations of every religious conscience, a Mason respects the reflection of divine light without discussing it or desecrating it with disturbing interference.

Masonry could have extended its fraternal grip to the subjects of the Roman Pontiff, but the worldly interests of the Pontificate necessitated the distortion of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, raising instead insurmountable barriers between the sectarian papists and the lovers of humanity. Without this exclusive interest, the Roman Catholic would not find anything incompatible in Masonry, which only asks for liberty, equality and fraternity for every individual of mankind. We leave to each, to his conscience and education, his personal ideas regarding his God and his duties towards Him.

"Thanks to this attitude, our august Order has joined with no religious sect. The wars, the massacres and the stakes that have devastated the world in the name of religion, the blood spilled over different beliefs, and creeds, and different attributes of divinity – all this has never stained the apron of the working Mason but has enhanced the whiteness of its purity, making it a banner of peace to calm the fierce struggles of religious intolerance."

Bro. Tomas Arejola, another leading member of Logia Solidaridad No.53, on his part, eloquently enunciated:

"Liberty, Equality, Fraternity! Here is the motto that defines the aspirations of our illustrious Order; here is summed up the informing principles of Masonry; here is symbolized the Masonic virtues; here is, finally, Masonry itself in all its splendor.

"If there is still any doubt left in your minds regarding the character and intentions of this Fraternity, I must tell you, my dear brethren, that Masonry was not created to destroy religious or profane institutions, or to corrupt consciences, deflecting them from their own conviction. On the contrary, it was founded with the aim of harmonizing all thought and all endeavor towards an ideal of universal welfare, with due respect for the ideals and beliefs of everyone. This, precisely, is the foundation of Masonry's wise and wholesome doctrines. I wish to say clearly that Masonry, far



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from being opposed to (Roman) Catholicism, is in accord with all its maxims for good. It is regretful that its visible head known as the Roman Pontiff, boasting of newly assumed infallibility, has declared that an individual cannot be a Catholic and a Mason at the same time.

"Masonry, like any other institution given to the regeneration of mankind, has had its dark days. Attacked since its birth, it has gone through relentless and bloody persecutions but has continued to live, at times almost forgotten, hidden in the cavern of men's minds, doing good without expecting any recompense. dispensing charity without ostentation, teaching its doctrines to its suppliants secretly, without display of vulgar popularity.

"Time has sanctioned the efficacy of its wise teachings; and there Masonry stands, justly proud of its record and the wonderful results of its work."

Emulating the Example of the Southern Jurisdiction, USA

Let us, additionally, emulate the example set by the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States. When the Baptists in the southern part of the USA launched their attack against the Craft, that Supreme Council printed a special edition of its *Scottish Rite Journal*. Let us take a close look at excerpts of some articles printed in that special edition.

III. Johns and Manly. Both 33rd-degree, Scottish Rite Masons, Ill. John E. Johns, Ph.D., President of Furham University, and Ill. Basil Manly IV, M.D., pointed out that Freemasonry is not a religion, but rather, a fraternity of men who must, first and foremost, believe in a Supreme Being and next in the brotherhood of all men. They added:

"Freemasonry is a religious organization in that it encourages members to support each individual's faith, whether he is a Christian,

Muslim, Hebrew, or any other monotheistic believer. Masonic teachings are based largely on Old and New Testament principles, but also on other religious teachings – all honorable.

"One of the first instructions given to a member being received into a Masonic Lodge is that Freemasonry will not interfere with his religious or political opinions. Freemasonry teaches toleration of others' beliefs. This lesson is one all Baptists would do well to learn. Nothing in Freemasonry is incompatible with a man's religious, civil, or political duties.

"Freemasonry accepts good men into its membership and hopes to make them better. It encourages the individual to think for himself and determine what his own religious faith will be. It teaches the Jew to be a better Jew; the Christian to be a better Christian; and the Muslim to be a better Muslim. The good of an organization is not determined by the number of good men who are members or by the good deeds they do, but how that organization squares with the Scripture. Freemasonry, like the Bible, teaches men to practice Charity above all and to love one another."

MW Egleston. Is Freemasonry satanic, demonic, occultic and therefore anti-Christ? To dispel this age-old misconception, MW Tom Egleston, Past Grand Master of Masons in Iowa, USA, suggested that we must let our friends know that "we have neither horns nor tails nor halos nor wings," and that "we are just their friends and neighbors joined together in a fraternity which tries to help men become better people as it tries to help the world become a better place through its charities. Freemasonry is a support group, so to speak, for men who are trying to practice ethics and morality in a world that does not always encourage those ideals."

III. Sanders. A retired Bishop of the United Methodist Church, long associated with the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, for the Southern Jurisdiction, USA, and a recipient of the Grand Cross, Ill. Charles J. Sanders, 33rd

degree, averred that "Freemasonry is not and has never been a religion, but rather, has always been a friend and an ally to religion." In the following paragraphs he explained that Masonic tenets do not contradict Christian principles:

"In the more than 50 years as a minister and as a Mason, I have not found and do not now find that Freemasonry is incompatible with Christian faith and practice.

"Freemasonry has never asked me to choose between my Lodge and my Church, and it has never usurped the place of God. Never has anyone dared say that I should love Masonry with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my mind. There can be only one ultimate loyalty, and the Living God is the only worthy object of such loyalty... Possibly there are those who have made a god of Masonry. You can make a God of anything – good business, your labor union, your civic club, your Lodge, and even your Church... My Masonic activities have never interfered with my faith. Quite the contrary, my loyalty to the Methodist Church has been strengthened by my Masonic ties. Good Masons are good churchmen."

The foregoing statement of Ill. Sanders is, we believe, sufficient argument against the preposterous claim that "Adhesion to Masonry tends to weaken its members' strong conviction in their own faith, to revitalize all beliefs, and it undermines the deep motivations of their personal and special lives as they slowly lose their Christian faith."

Rev./Dr. Peale. Another outstanding Mason and Methodist minister, the author of the world-renowned book titled *The Power of Positive Thinking*, the Rev./Dr. Norman Peale, likewise said, "A good Mason is made even more faithful to the tenets of his faith by his membership in the Lodge."

He found out from a Grand Master why Masons give so much time to their Fraternity. The Grand Master explained, "I enjoy my involve-

ment because it gives me another dimension of living."

Rev./Dr. Peale later discovered that the same explanation was echoed by the brethren as they met in Lodge rooms throughout the United States and around the world.

The Reverend Doctor declared, "Many of my best friends are good Freemasons and good churchmen as well!" Let's listen to him further:

"In my travels at home and abroad, a goodly number of Freemasons notice my Masonic ring, which I always wear. With much pride they say they are Freemasons, too.

"To me, Freemasonry is one form of dedication to God and service to humanity. I, too, was a Freemason in my heart and so I will remain. I am proud of my involvement. I am proud to walk in fraternal fellowship with my Brethren. Why am I a Freemason? Simply because I am proud to be a man who wants to keep the moral standards of life at high level and leave something behind so others will benefit. Only as I, personally, become better, can I help others to do the same."

Rabbi Ruthman. Let us recall, at this juncture, the following statement of the author of the celebrated *Morals and Dogma*, Ill. Albert Pike:

"Masonry is not a religion. He who makes of it a religious belief falsifies and denaturalizes it. The Brahmin, the Jew, the Mahometan, the Catholic, the Protestant, each professing his peculiar religion, sanctioned by the laws, by time, and by climate, must needs retain it, and cannot have two religions; for the social and sacred laws, adapted to the usages, manners, and prejudices of particular countries, are the work of men... But Masonry teaches, and has preserved in their purity, the cardinal tenets of the old primitive faith, which underlie and are the foundation of all religions... Masonry is the universal morality, which is suitable to the inhabitants of every clime, to the man of every creed. It has taught no doctrine, except those

truths that tend directly to the well-being of man." (*MD*, p. 161).

Rabbi Sidney S. Ruthman, Chaplain of the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Long Beach, California, a member of the Civil Service Commission of the same place, co-author of *Sabbath Eve Service and Hymns*, and a 32nd-degree Scottish Rite Mason with the rank and decoration of Knight Commander of the Court of Honor (KCCH), clarified Ill. Pike's statement by stressing the non-exclusiveness and non-divisiveness of Freemasonry. Said he:

"First, Freemasonry is not exclusive. A Jew, for instance, cannot be a Christian, or a Christian a Jew, without forsaking his religious origin and background. But in Freemasonry anyone can belong if he believes in God and in the immortality of the soul and earns the approval of his fellows. Consider, for example, the usual communication breakfast. Earlier, our Christian Brethren gathered in a church, and our Jewish Brethren in a synagogue. Later, after separate services, we all gather together about a common breaking of bread as Freemasons and as Brothers. This simple fact gives concrete, emphatic focus on the phrase we have so often heard and, perhaps, not fully comprehend: 'The Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God'.

"And by the way of corollary, in addition to not being exclusive, Freemasonry is not divisive. The word *religion* comes from the Latin word *religio*, which means an act of binding together. In spite of this, however, history has dishearteningly far too many instances of religion acting as a divisive force – too many instances of discrimination against man, of persecution, of ultimate blasphemy, of bloodshed because of religion.

"Freemasonry, by contrast, not only does not bar men of various religions, it brings them together in their Masonic activities by which men of all faiths are helped in their hours of distress, of physical affliction, of weakness and loneliness in old age. Though synagogue and church may continue to divide us, the spirit of

our Masonic Brotherhood unites us; and though our prayer books may be many, our prayers as Freemasons are one."

MW Roy. The Pastor of various Baptist Churches in Massachusetts for almost half a century and a Past Grand Master of Masons of that State, MW Thomas S. Roy refuted the accusation that we place all religions on an equality since we say that a man may be obligated on the Scripture of his own religion. He said:

"Freemasonry does not assert and does not teach that one religion is as good as another. We do not say that all religions are equal because we admit men of all religions. We refuse to apply a theological test to a candidate. We apply a religious test only. If we asked him if he believed in Christ, or Buddha, or Allah, that would be a theological test involving a particular interpretation of God. Belief in God is faith; belief about God is theology. We are interested in faith only, not in theology. We do not set ourselves up as judges of the qualitative values of the theological interpretations of God. When Freemasonry accepts a Christian, or a Jew, or a Mohammedan, it does not accept him as such, but as a man, worthy to be received into the Order. We ask him to pledge himself by the highest and holiest loyalty in his life to be true to his vows. To ask him to vow on a book in which he did not believe would be the kind of hypocrisy condemned by the highest teachings of the Christian religion."

James Dunn. The Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee, a religious liberty agency composed of 10 national Baptist bodies, which in turn consist of more than 20 million members, defended Freemasonry thus:

"Missionary stories could be multiplied, but those so focused on the spread of their religion and so dedicated to missions ought to read a little history before opposing Freemasons, who have for so long worked so hard and sacrificed so much for the freedom of all

religions.

"Freemasonry is one of the staunchest allies of all real believers in a free church in a free state.

"How, then, can any religious group ostensibly dedicated to free and moral agency, personal faith, the priesthood of all believers and basic American values challenge the right of the church members to be active Masons and church leaders?

"Could it be that the assaults on Freemasonry are really a smoke screen for those who denigrate the...doctrine of church-state separation?

"Is it possible that some extremists are using the very freedom of expression, the self-same opportunity to open debate, the precise privilege of public challenge won for them in part by Mason heroes, to accuse and abuse those in that great tradition?

"Or, worse, have we fallen upon a day in which a climate of suspicion, distrust and ignorance allows heresy hunts and thinly veiled bigotry to hold sway?

"If 'yes' is the answer to any of the four questions above, it is time for all who love liberty to rise up and say, 'Enough of this silliness!'

"The Scottish Rite Creed reads in part: '...liberty of thought our supreme wish, freedom of conscience our mission'.

"I am not a Mason, yet, but I'm certainly glad Freemasons are around!"

In emulation of the example of the said Supreme Council, our Grand Lodge should compile into one volume the various articles on Freemasonry and Religion printed in various issues of *The Cabletow*, have the compilation printed, and make copies thereof available not only to the brethren but also to non-Masons, including our critics and detractors.

The proposed compilation should, certainly, include the statement on Freemasonry and Religion which the Masonic Information Center (MIC), a branch of the Masonic Service Association (MSA) of North America, prepared in December 1993 and which it revised in September 1998. The MIC's statement, which is quite similar to that which the Board of General Purposes of the United Grand Lodge of England issued on June 12, 1985, may as well be adopted by our Grand Lodge as its official statement on the same subject. The MIC's statement reads as follows:

Basic Principles

Freemasonry is not a religion, nor is it a substitute for religion. It requires of its members belief in God as part of the obligation of every responsible adult, but advocates no sectarian faith or practice. Masonic ceremonies include prayers, both traditional and extempore, to reaffirm each individual's dependence on God and to seek divine guidance. Freemasonry is open to men of any faith, but religion may not be discussed in Masonic meetings.

The Supreme Being

Masons believe that there is one God and that people employ many different ways to seek, and to express what they know of, God. Masonry primarily uses the appellation "Grand Architect of the Universe" and other non-sectarian titles to address Deity. In this way, persons of different faiths may join together in prayer, concentrating on God, rather than differences among themselves. Masonry believes in religious freedom and that the relationship between the individual and God is personal, private, and sacred.

Volume of the Sacred Law

An open Volume of the Sacred Law, "the rule and guide of life," is an essential part of every Masonic meeting. The Volume of the Sacred Law in the Judeo-Christian tradition

is the Bible; to Freemasons of other faiths, it is the book held holy by them.

The Oaths of Freemasonry

The obligations taken by Freemasons are sworn on the Volume of the Sacred Law. They are undertakings to follow the principles of Freemasonry and to keep confidential a Freemason's means of recognition. The much discussed "penalties," judicial remnants from an earlier era, are symbolic, not literal. They refer only to the pain any honest man should feel at the thought of violating his word.

Freemasonry Compared with Religion

Freemasonry lacks the basic elements of religion:

- a. It has no dogma or theology, no wish or means to enforce religious orthodoxy.
- b. It offers no sacraments.
- c. It does not claim to lead to salvation by works, by secret knowledge, or by any other means. The secrets of Freemasonry are concerned with modes of recognition, not with the means of salvation.

Freemasonry Supports Religion

Freemasonry is far from indifferent toward religion. Without interfering in religious practice, it expects each member to follow his own faith and to place his duty to God above all other duties. Its moral teachings are acceptable to all religions.

Waging an Awareness Campaign

Another important project is the waging of an awareness campaign about Freemasonry and religious extremism, including the Catholic Church's current pastoral practice regarding Freemasons, which "...shall be in accord with the declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued on 26 November, 1983, entitled *Quaesitum est* (It has been asked)." This job properly belongs to lecturers at all levels of the Craft. If our leaders

and we do not speak up and know exactly what those who oppose us have said, and exactly what facts can and should be cited to prove to fair-minded people that the allegations against us are untrue, the people may believe that there is truth in what those who oppose us are saying and, therefore, our critics and detractors will grow in number and in strength.

Other Initiatives

Let us, meanwhile, keep open channels of communication with anti-Masonic elements with the end in view to dialoguing with them. In his address before an assembly of Masons in 1975, His Eminence, Julio Cardinal Rosales stressed, among other things, the importance of observing the principles of Ecumenism and conducting dialogues that are marked by a mutuality of inner action. (Cardinal Rosales' address is reprinted in Appendix "B".) Hopefully, through dialogues with anti-Masonic elements, the mist that has long blanketed the beauty of our Craft will soon be dissipated.

Let us also dissipate criticism on our secrecy by continuing to give more visible profile to Freemasonry.

Let us at the same time be active in our respective churches and in the process stand tall for Freemasonry, proudly demonstrating to all and sundry that the flame of Masonic values and principles can brighten our homes, illumine our communities, and light up our world. On the basis of the relative success of the Masonic - Catholic dialogue in the late '60s, our Grand Lodge and/or the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, of the Scottish Rite would do well to adapt to the Philippine context Bro. A.G. Markham's suggestion that professional historians be employed in tracing back early features of Masonic history against general historical background "because a reasoned interpretation of such features may have relevance to its essential meaning."

Bro. Markham adduces that an authoritative sympathetic understanding of Masonic

history may be a useful answer to anti-Masonry.

What functions would the professional general historians have? They would, according to Bro. Markham, (1) interpret, as well as confirm or resolve the interpretation of, fragmentary early Masonic history against general background; and (2) interpret the broad perspectives of early and later Masonic history so as to integrate them as part of general history.

And, what functions would Masonic historians have? They would, according to Bro. Markham once more, (1) furnish, in an accurate, complete and unbiased manner, details of Masonic history to form the basis of the work of non-Masonic historians; and (2) bear in mind that areas of Masonic history that are fragmentary must have explanations based somehow on fact and reason, and that pursuit of truth with strict objectivity does not justify supposed anomalies without attempting sensibly to resolve them by research into background history with the assistance of professional historians.

In the end, Bro. Markham firmly believes, the dialogue between the professional and the Masonic historians will result in a proper recognition of Freemasonry as the remarkable historic institution, beneficial to humanity, which it is. Freemasonry will then have a better image in the eyes of the public because it will have been reasonably accepted by non-Masonic historians of high professional standing.

This is, clearly, a difficult task. But since it may be useful answer to anti-Masonry, our Grand Lodge and/or the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, of the Scottish Rite would do well to undertake it. We have the resources to accomplish it. We have an adequate number of Masonic historians, foremost of whom is our Grand Secretary, MW and III. Reynold S. Fajardo, PGM, GMH, who would work with the professional historians whom our Grand Lodge and/or the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, of the Scottish Rite would employ. We must ex-



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ert all-out effort to keep those who always oppose us to a small number.

Appendix "A": A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MASONIC - CATHOLIC INTERRELATIONSHIP

To demonstrate that Masonry is not against the Catholic Church, to which the majority, including the best, of our members belong, MW William H. Quasha initiated dialogue with the Vatican in 1959 for the purpose of getting the latter to reconsider its condemnation of Freemasonry in the Philippines.

In 1968, he was much gladdened by a UPI report, which said in part, "The Vatican has virtually scrapped an old church law excommunicating Catholics who join the Order of Freemasons...Catholics now are free to join the Masons in the United States, Britain and most other countries of the world. But the European Grand Orient Lodge form of Masonry, established primarily in Italy and France, is still considered anti-Catholic or atheistic..." Hence, in his letter to His Eminence, Agustin Cardinal Bea dated March 13, 1968, MW Quasha wrote, "This action on the part of His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, I sincerely believe will herald an entirely new era of harmony and of ecumenicity amongst those who believe in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of men..."

MW Raymond E. Wilmarth, who used to teach in the UST Graduate School, followed

up MW Quasha's initiative. Besides creating a committee that would coordinate our activities with the Catholic Church, he wrote articles on Catholic-Masonic interrelationship. In one article, he stressed this point: "From where I stand, I cannot find anything in Masonry that would disqualify a Catholic from becoming a member of the Craft. Once a Catholic becomes a Mason, we only ask that, in addition to being a good Mason, he be a better Catholic, so that the world may know he has benefited from his Masonic way of life. If there is anything that prevents a Catholic from being a Mason, it is not in Masonry." (See *The Cabletow*, January-February 1968.)

MW Teodoro Kalaw, Jr., who was an active Catholic lay leader, was able to persuade the Catholic Hierarchy to agree to the setting up of a Masonic-Catholic dialogue. The Catholic panel consisted of experts on religious matters, while the Masonic counterpart was composed of stalwarts of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, such as Ill. Bros. Raymond E. Wilmarth, Conrado Benitez, Teofilo Abejo, and Aurelio Corcuera. Later Ill. Domingo Bascara replaced Ill. Benitez. (*The Cabletow*, March-April 1998, p. 10).

The two panels met once or twice a month, for about two years. In the end, the Catholic panel submitted to the CBCP its conclusion and recommendation, as follows:

"The Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines have in writing given in to all the demands presented by the Catholic panel – that they would not oppose religious instructions

in schools as provided for by law, nor try to separate Catholic members from the religion of their choice, nor teach anything contrary to the official teachings of the Church. In fact, they said they are more than willing to cooperate with the Roman Catholic Church, especially in its social endeavors.

"It is the Catholic panel's belief that Freemasonry as such is compatible with Catholicism. It is only when the leaders interpret it badly that Freemasonry becomes anti-religious and anti-Catholic. Otherwise, it can coexist with the Catholic religion.

"Freemasonry's intrinsic compatibility with Catholicism rests on the following fact: In religious matters, Freemasonry requires three things from its members, namely, belief in God, the immortality of the soul and the moral life. Now, there is certainly nothing wrong in these. The error comes when the leaders twist these to their own purposes, proclaiming them to be the only worthwhile religious truths. In this way, Freemasonry becomes either naturalistic, believing only in those truths that can be known by natural reason, or indifferentist, considering all religions to be equal, as long as they accept the above truths. (See Appendix "C" for the comment of VW Vic Hao Chin on this point.)

"The Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines is not of the Grand Orient type of lodges, lodges that are known for their anti-clericalism. Much of the anti-clericalism the Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines had manifested in the past was, in our opinion, due more to the state of friction that existed between Masonry and the Catholic Church, especially with the excommunication matter, than to any other thing. These lodges are more for fraternal and social purposes.

"Times have altered, people have changed. The Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines want a new era of mutual cooperation. It would be unkind to accuse them of ulterior motives.

ABELARDO L. APORTADERA, JR.

"BILLY"

Assistant Ombudsman

Chief, Preliminary Investigation, Administrative
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"The Catholic panel does believe that a change of the old condemnatory attitude toward the Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines be adopted. It thinks it is good and opportune that the Catholic Hierarchy of the Philippines requests the Vatican for the lifting of excommunication from Filipino Catholic members of the Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines." (*Ibid.*)

The foregoing report of the panel of Catholic experts was referred by the CBCP to the Episcopal Commission of the Doctrine of the Faith, which in turn expressed in writing its conformity with the panel of Catholic experts. Hence, in 1970, the CBCP formally petitioned the Holy See that "all Catholics who in the judgment of their Local Ordinaries are members in good faith of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines be exempt from the provision of Canon 2335 of the Code of Canon Law." (*Ibid.*, p. 14).

In 1974, the Vatican at long last replied that "...the excommunication applies only to the persons who are members of associations that militate against the Church. It is on the basis of this principle that the position of the members of the different groups must be judged in each particular case." (*Ibid.*)

The Masonic-Catholic interrelationships subsequently warmed up, so that Church leaders like Cardinal Rosales graced Masonic gatherings.

In 1983, a new Code of Canon Law was pro-

mulgated. The previous Canon No. 2335, which provided that "those who join Masonic or other sects and conspire against the Church and lawful civil authority are subjected to the major canonical penalty," was deleted and Canon No. 1374 has taken its place. The latter provides that "whoever accepts membership in an association hostile to the Church shall be liable to a just penalty; he who promotes or directs such an association shall be liable to an interdict." (*Ibid.*)

Starting in the same year, however, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has declared that Catholics who join Masonry commit a "serious sin." On the basis of that declaration, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II), which was held in 1991, decreed that "...Bishops and priests will exercise great pastoral prudence and charity in this regard (i.e., canonical penalty), so that with God's grace they may 'Unite all in Christ.'"

From then on, certain sectors of the Catholic Church have waged their off-and-on criticism and attack against the Craft. Abroad, especially in the Southern United States, the criticism has been echoed by some mainline Protestant religions and born-again preachers.

But the fact remains that the CBCP has cleared Filipino Freemasonry from the age-old misconceptions "after two years of microscopic examination of our landmarks, laws, rules and rituals." (*Ibid.*, p. 14). Pronounced MW and Ill. Puno: "There is no reason to change that well-considered judgment." (*Ibid.*) With utmost confidence, the Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines stated, "...Masonry can withstand the strictest of scrutiny of the unbelievers. All that Masonry needs to fight falsehoods is a fair hearing for truth is on our side. Given a fair hearing, Freemasonry will acquit itself from every false charge in any forum..." (*Ibid.*)

Aye, a fair hearing is all we ask. Would that our critics and detractors also observe this precept in Matthew 7:1-2: "Judge not, lest ye yourselves be judged; for whatever judgment ye measure unto others, the same shall in turn be measured unto you." We seek no more...

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It is enough.

Appendix "B": CARDINAL ROSALES' ADDRESS

Perhaps it can be said with truth that my presence with you today constitutes a sort of hallmark in Freemason and Catholic relationship in the Philippines. For who indeed could have imagined in years past that a Cardinal of the Catholic Church would one day be the principal speaker in an important Masonic celebration? As for myself, I never dreamed that someday I would be called upon to render this service to a Masonic gathering such as this. And the Freemasons of old, like those of the beginning of this century, would probably turn in their graves, were they to know that their own brother Masons were the ones responsible for my presence, a high-ranking member of the Church that fulminated against them in the past.

For of course it is true that the Catholic Church had on several occasions denounced Freemasonry, culminating with laws that we find embodied in the Code of Canon Law.

I am not going to discuss here, however, whether the Catholic Church was right in promulgating these laws, laws which I must confess hurt very much the sensibilities of Freemasons. It is against the principles of ecumenism and common sense as well to keep harping on matters that do nothing but hurt the feelings of those we want to dialogue with.

Neither am I so presumptuous as to state that in the conflict and antagonism between the Catholic Church and Freemasonry the latter was always at fault, and the former totally free of blame. Vatican II no less, in its decree on Ecumenism, frankly states that in the scandalous division of the Churches - fault lies not on one Church alone, but at times on both. "In subsequent centuries more widespread disagreements appeared and quite large communities became separated from full communion with the Catholic Church - developments for which, at times, men of both sides were to blame." (Decree on Ecumenism, No. 3)

And the reason for this I believe can be gleaned from the same decree, when it clearly distinguishes between the divine and the human element in the Church. "Although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, her members fail to live by them with all the fervor they should," said Vatican II. (Decree Ecumenism, No. 4). In its divine aspect, the Church may not err, but in the human, abuses and failings do come. Thus, it becomes indeed possible that in the past, abuses cropped up in the Church, which drove the Masonic organization to attack the Catholic Church as a whole, without distinguishing any longer between what was human and what was divine in it.

Interpreted in another way, however, these truths could hold no obstacle for mutual understanding. For in the first place, there really is nothing wrong in believing the existence of God, good moral life, the immortality or the soul, the reward or punishment after death. It is good, nay obligatory, to believe these things. The error lies in the saying that they are the only truths worth believing.

The Masonic panel informed us that the Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines hold these truths with no intention of disparaging the other truths. Freemasonry simply believes that these truths are basic truths of which no religious man can prescind. They are only the beginning, but do not constitute the whole truth of religion. That there are other truths besides, in fact, more important truths that everyone should believe, Freemasonry accepts, leaving, however, to the conscience of each one to say what they are in the concrete, for Freemasonry believes it has no competence on religious matters. Freemasonry is not a religion, nor does it pretend to be one: it bows to the decisions of the Catholic hierarchy in so far as it concerns the religious truths affecting Catholic Masons.

To be morally sure, however, that misunderstanding and conflicts do not crop up again that would destroy the intended rapport Catholicism and Freemasonry are so desirous about, I believe it is best to continue the dialogue between the two bodies. No less than

Vatican II recommended dialogues (cf. Decree of Ecumenism, No. 4). For indeed it is through dialogue that people understand each other better. Through dialogue Freemasonry could not only express with all sincerity its beliefs, but would have too the opportunity to point out whatever grievances it may have against the Church leaders or members. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, could call the attention of its Freemason counterparts to tenets or decisions that in its considered opinion run counter to cherished Catholic beliefs. This dialogue could focus now its attention on the higher degrees, for it seems that the panels concentrated their talks more on the Blue Lodges.

May I end this talk by saying that a future of sincere cordiality exists between us. I am not a prophet, but if I may venture a guess, would say that perhaps in the near future when the new Code of Canon Law shall come out – which for some years now is being pre-

pared in Rome - we will not read in it those provisions which Freemasons find so hurting.

Appendix "C": MASONRY IS NOT RELATIVISTIC NOR INDIVIDUALISTIC

(The Cabletow, Sept.–Oct. '96, p.6)

A leader of some segment of a church in the Philippines claimed, "Masons espouse relativism and individualism where situations are judged according to one's own perceptions."

"To say that Masonry is relativistic and individualistic is wrong," VW Vic Hao Chin, a Masonic leader, retorted. "The reverse is, in fact, true. The ethics of Masonry is founded on the subordination of egotism to two things: the common good and higher spiritual principles. Without these two, Masonry would have very little value, and none of the great men of history would even give weight to Masonry."



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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND FREEMASONRY

by Rev. Fr. Jimmy Tesoro Giron, OFM

When you invited me to share my thoughts on the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church and the Freemasons in the light of today's concept of ecumenism, I decided to wear my traditional Franciscan habit, because I still believe that it bears the true spirit that one should have, when one enters into genuine ecumenical dialogue.

The brown habit is made of brown sack cloth originally worn by those in the lowest social class when St. Francis, the Poverello of Assisi, founded the Franciscan movement to rebuild the church which was falling into ruins because of rampant corruption, scandal and misadministration. This habit is the symbol of total humility and obedience to God's will which your fraternity and my fraternity held dear for centuries. The three knots in my cord carry the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience which makes us true witnesses for the dawn of the earthly universal fraternity and the heavenly fraternal banquet offered by God the Father, for you and us to partake in the eschatological future.

But I say, that there is always the gap between what is and what should be, the gap between the ideal and the real, and I lament the fact that the same habit was also the garb of the lustful Padre Damaso, in the multi-awarded film "Jose Rizal" to satirically portray that the Filipino society is the fruit of an adulterous relationship of the power-hungry friar and a submissive *india*.

Turning the pages of secular history and the history of the universal and the local church may only open fresh wounds which have temporarily healed by time. But, we cannot just ignore the profound lessons which it offers,

much more the veracity of events and historical truths which you and I have learned, to liberate us from the quagmire of ignorance, which might be the cause of fear to enter into dialogue and of intolerance to change, due to unfounded accusations.

In the history of the universal church, the period of enlightenment was not a good news to ecclesial hierarchy who for centuries had enjoyed their role as the sole dispenser of truth and knowledge. New discoveries and inventions, though supported by facts, were considered diabolic when they threatened changes in any of those old doctrines which the church held dear and sacred. The church at that time rested on the model of triumphalism which would never stoop and accept what rationalism and science could offer.

The origins of Freemasonry started with the desire to have liberal exchange of intelligent ideas, a desire of those who quest for truth. But this noble desire was just like a lighted candle in the midst of total darkness to be extinguished by those who enjoy the benefits of darkness and ignorance. It is for this very reason, then, that we find an interplay of the Freemasons' tolerance and the rigidity of the church hierarchy, when we scan the history of dialogue. In the local scene, the

christianization of Las Islas de Filipinas went hand in hand with colonization. Through the "Patronato Real" an agreement was forged that the King of Spain would finance the christianization of the entire archipelago in exchange for the freedom to colonize. With this agreement with the Holy See, the early missionaries sent to our shores were qualified evangelizers, being the recipients of well-financed training and education.

However, the Patronato Real did not last and the change in the Hispanic governance resulted into total abandonment of the missionaries' education and formation. Hence, ill-trained and non-qualified missionaries were sent to continue the task of christianization. This episode produced the typical opportunistic friar who took every advantage to satiate his desires because of the vast powers as a consequence of the unity of the church and the state.

May these historical facts not push us to desert the negotiating table. Rather, may they challenge us to search for other venues where our predecessors did not dare venture. We ask your support for those in the church who braved to go against the tide -- the few who dared speak-up.

In the light of the conciliar and the post-conciliar documents and declarations of Vatican II, may I now share with you the Roman Catholic principle and ecumenism.

1. Vatican II declaration on decree on Ecumenism contained in *Unitatis Redintegratio* tells us that Christ summons the church, in its pilgrim journey, to be in continuous reformation which she basically needs as a human and earthly institution. *Ecclesia Semper Reformanda!*

The first challenge to the church is to be a pilgrim on journey. It should not remain static and permanent. She must be able to read the signs of the times and to update the recent trends and discoveries if she is to address the multi-faceted problems of today and confront the issues that affect the life of man at present.

It is inherent in her nature as human and earthly institution to have the need for transformation to rid herself of error and misguided information.

2. In her declaration *Nostra Aetate*, dated October 28, 1965, dialogue in the spirit of Ecumenism presupposes that each side wishes to know the other and wishes to increase and deepen its knowledge of the other. It constitutes a particular suitable means of favoring a better mutual knowledge and of probing the riches of one's own tradition. Dialogue demands respect for the other as he is; and above all, respect for his faith and religious conviction while it is true that a widespread air of suspicions, inspired by an unfortunate past, is still dominant in this particular area, Church leaders for their part will be able to see to what extent the responsibility is theirs and reduce practical conclusions for the future.

3. Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, Dec. 7, 1965.

The declaration of Vatican Council on man's right to religious freedom is based on the dignity of the person, the demands of which have become more fully known to human reason through centuries of existence. Furthermore, this doctrine of freedom is rooted in divine revelation and for this reason, Christians are bound to respect it all the more conscientiously.

One of the key truths in Catholic teaching, a truth that is contained in the word of God, is that man's response to God by faith ought to be free. Therefore, nobody is to be forced to embrace the faith against his will. It is fully in accordance with the nature of faith that in religious matters every form of coercion should be excluded. Consequently, the principle of religious liberty provides the atmosphere where men, without hindrance, be invited to the faith, embrace it in their own free will and give it practical expression in every sphere of their lives.

4. *Gaudium et Spes*: Church in the Modern World.

There also have a claim on our respect and charity who think and act differently from us in social, political and religious matters. In fact, more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through kindness and love, the more easily will be able to enter into dialogue with them.

Love and courtesy of this kind should not, of course, make us indifferent to truth and goodness. Love, in fact, impels the followers of Christ to proclaim to all men the truth which saves. But we must distinguish between error and the person in error, who never loses his dignity as a person even though he flounders amid false or inadequate religious ideas. God alone is the judge and the searcher of heart. He forbids us to pass judgment on the inner guilt of others.

5. *Unitatis Reintegratio*: Decree on Ecumenism.

In declaration no.2 where we find the kernel of Vatican II as a conciliar document in declaration no. 2 we read:

God's love was revealed in our midst in this: This father sent his only begotten son into the world in order that having become man, he would by his redemptive act give a new birth to the whole human race and gather it together as one. Christ prayed for those who believe...."that they all may be one even as you Father are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me"; vis-à-vis the guiding principle on ecumenism, we confront the experiences in our long process of dialogue. I told you earlier, there is a wide gap between the real and the ideal, between what is and what should be. So much has been said and written. But when a few would join hands and light candles together, the power of darkness can never win.

Last July 6, 1965, I was too young to witness how the church refused the catholic burial of my late father. I had lots of questions that lingered on my mind. Yet, I never

desired vindication nor did I harbor ill-feelings. I had only one strong determination – that someday I will be an agent of change and reformation within the four walls of the very institution that refused my father.

Brothers, the Roman Catholic Church is not a monopoly of intolerance and refusal to transformation. For centuries, modern-day prophets were always sent, one of whom was St. Francis of Assisi. As we close our ranks and join our hands, may I end my sharing with the prayer which is in the heart of every Mason and in every Franciscan.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred – let me sow love

Where there is injury – pardon

Where there is doubt – faith

Where there is despair – hope

Where there is darkness – light

Where there is sadness – joy

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Brothers, I have done my part! May God teach you, yours!

Note: The foregoing is the address delivered by Fr. Giron, Asst. Formator, Franciscan Novitiate, Liliw, Laguna, during the Multi-Orient Convention of Scottish Rite Masons held at the New Golden Star Restaurant in Brgy. San Francisco, San Pablo City, on Aug. 14, 1999.

NEWS... FLASHBACK.. UPDATES

ANCOM 2001: AN UPDATE

The chairman of the Ancom 2001 to be held in Legaspi City is VW William C. Cu, the Grand Master's Deputy for M.D. No. 14.

Other particulars include the following:

Business Center : c/o All Electronics Enterprises
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E-Mail : admin@ancom2001.org

Website : <http://www.ancom2001.org>

EXCOM Headquarters : Robert D. Chua Compound
Camia cor. Dhalia St.,
Imperial Court Subdivision II
4500 Legaspi City

Tel. Nos. : (052)480-5469; 214-3990; 214-3955 (fax)

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Acct No. 0003716156
: China Banking Corporation
Account Name: Mayon Lodge No. 61 or
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Account No. 180-07360-10

For direct deposit payments, mail, fax or e-mail a duplicate copy of the deposit slip with the details of the payee (Name of Registrant, Lodge Name and Number, address, etc.) for the proper acknowledgment of payment and the issuance of an official receipt. Official receipts shall be mailed upon confirmation of payment of the depository banks.

Registration forms are also available at the Grand Lodge, where delegates can register and pay the registration fees to be forwarded to the ANCOM 2001 Secretariat.

Masonic District No. 48, led by VW Orlando Manaluz, recently convened at the Koronadal Masonic Center. Fourteen (14) brethren from Lodge No. 156 participated; 29 from Lodge No. 209; 10 from Lodge No. 225; 10 from Lodge 244; 14 from Lodge No. 278; 9 from Lodge No. 304; and 2 from Lodge No. 149. There was one Brother from Taiwan Lodge No. 1, Grand Lodge of China, who attended the convention.

MASONIC DISTRICT NO. 48 CONVENES AT KORONADAL MASONIC CENTER

WB Joseph S. Chua Ko, WM of Maribulan Lodge, in his lecture, stressed the 5 P's of Lodge Management, "Proper Planning Prevents Poor Performance."

WB Magno Francisco Y. Mateo, Jr., PM of Kaduh Lodge, presented the format of a project proposal: how to do and use it.

VW and III. Gauvain Benzozan later spoke on Parliamentary Rules and Procedures.

Next VW Froilan Tecson acted as moderator

in the discussion-forum on various concerns and issues.

Mr. Mark Andrew Solano of the STI Computer College in Marbel lectured on E-Commerce.

After the noon break, VW Tecson conducted a Masonic Education, with the conferral team of Kaduh Lodge performing the reception of the flag, reception of a Masonic dignitary, reception of a non-Masonic dignitary, positions of officers in square during conferral of the 1st degree, and the bringing of the word from West to East.

At about 3:15 p.m., Dr. Antonio "Bobby" M. Santos, an EENT specialist, was received into the convention hall. He talked on Noise Pollution Awareness.

Communications from the Grand Lodge were then discussed.

Finally, the Lodge was closed in due form.



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LODGES GRANTED CHARTERS

The following Lodges were granted their Charters during the 84th Ancom in Iloilo City: Guillermo E. Bongolan Mem. No. 330, Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya; Palayan City No. 331, Palayan City Nueva Ecija; Las Piñas No. 322, Las Piñas City; Dau No. 333, Mabalacat, Pampanga; and Ang Tipolo No. 334, Antipolo City.

The dispensation issued to Misamis Oriental Lodge U.D. was extended another year.

GLP REQUESTS BRETHREN TO HELP RELIEVE VICTIMS OF MINDANAO CONFLICT

Our Grand Lodge requested the brethren to contribute money or goods to help relieve the victims of the Mindanao conflict, some of whom are brothers in the fraternity.

Said MW Oscar V. Bunyi: "Let us take this opportunity to show our concern for our countrymen caught in the on-going conflict in Mindanao. Let us show our solidarity in this noble undertaking." In response, a significant number of brethren sent their donations to the Grand Lodge through the Masonic Assistance and Information Center (MAIC).

NEW GRAND LODGE E-MAIL ADDRESS ANSWERING MACHINE

The new official Grand Lodge e-mail address is gphils@surfshop.net.ph. To this e-mail address the brethren may direct all communications of general concern to the Grand Lodge.

But they may address queries directed to the office of the Grand Secretary to the Asst. Grand Secretary, micon@surfshop.net.ph.

An answering machine has been installed at 5222232, the direct line of the office of the Grand Secretary. Calls received outside office hours are recorded, to be played the next working day. All messages are to be acknowledged.

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BRO. RESTITUTO BASA, a Life Member of Pangasinan Lodge No. 56 in Dagupan City and its current Chaplain, is a journalist and historian who writes the column "Footnotes on History" in *The People's Digest*, a local weekly newspaper. He published recently a 58-page volume containing biographical sketches of 24 Freemasons from Pangasinan who contributed their respective shares in nation-building.

BRO. BASA PUBLISHES VOLUME ON PANGASINAN MASON NATION BUILDERS

The volume starts with an explication of the nature, mission, origin and metamorphosis of Freemasonry.

The 24 Freemasons featured in the volume are Nicolas M. Alfonso Lallave, Valentin Diaz, Vicente Prado, Antonio Feliciano, Adriano Garces, Daniel Maramba, Teodorico Vidal, Francisco Reinoso, Isabelo Artacho, Pedro Maria Sison, Jr., Manuel V. Moran, Raymundo Camacho, Teodoro Basconillo, Victor Tomelden, Gregorio Gaerlan, Sr., Eusebio V. Sison, Juan G. Rodriguez, Narciso R. Ramos, Mauro O. Baradi, Felix L. Mamenta, Sr., Francisco Q. Duque, Jr., Teofilo P. Guadiz, Sr., Cipiano M. Manaois, Eustaquio P. Nava and Alfonso Lee Sin.

In the Foreword, Bro. Basa writes:

"I am a pilgrim. I am bound for that 'undiscovered country from whose borne no traveler returns.'

"Before I come to the close of my pilgrimage and drop my working tools, I would like to lay down a building block as my share in the building of a progressive province of Pangasinan. Hopefully, those who will pass this way after me would likewise add their share of a building-block on top of what I had laid down. This is an unending process to eternity.

"The building-block I put in place is a collection of the bio-profiles of 24 Freemasons from Pangasinan who passed this way ahead of me. All of them did their share in nation building. Their services to our community and people enriched all our lives.

"I do not have the talent, nor the resources, to build a monument for each of them. My earnest wish is to immortalize their memory to serve as an inspiration to every coming generation.

"May the printed page attain the same objective."

The biographical sketches of Lallave, Diaz, Prado, Maramba, Rodriguez, Baradi, and Lee Sin, as authored by Bro. Basa, were already printed in previous issues of *The Cabletow*. Most probably, in acknowledgment of Bro. Basa's contribution to Philippine history in general and to Philippine Masonic history in particular, we will reprint the bio-profiles of the other Freemasons from Pangasinan who contributed their respective shares to nation-building.

The editorial staff of *The Cabletow* extends its warmest fraternal congratulations to Bro. Restituto Basa, our fellow in the Philippine Lodge of Research. -- eF.R.eN

CONGRATULATIONS

FROM:

**VW MELVYN S. JURISPRUDENCIA
GRAND AUDITOR**

**Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted
Masons of the Philippines**



Grand Master Oscar V. Bunyi with Grand Master Francis E. Larrimore Holliday of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Maryland and other Masonic Dignitaries.

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*Grand Master Oscar V. Bunyi with Filipino-American brethren
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