

FREEMASONRY AND RELIGION

Basic Principle: Freemasonry does not present itself as a religion nor does it substitute for one. True, freemasons tend to be "religious," but that does not carry necessarily the concept of possessing a separate religion. Freemasonry of course supports Religion, and we do not claim a total indifference toward religion.

Freemasonry requires a belief in God. It stands as a part of our obligation, and we hold it ought to exist for every responsible adult. Nevertheless, we advocate no sectarian faith nor encourage a specific practice. Masonry itself, moreover, does not promise nor provide a specific path to salvation.

Masonic ceremonies include prayers, both traditional and extempore; we reaffirm each individual's dependence on God and often seek divine guidance. We do not, however, have rules, give advice, or demand specific admonitions. In fact, Freemasons may not discuss religion at Masonic meetings. Freemasonry thus remains open to men of any faith.

The Supreme Being: Masons believe in one God and recognize that people employ many different ways to seek and to express the concept.

Masonry uses the appellation "Grand Architect of the Universe" and other nonsectarian titles to address Deity. In this way, persons of different faiths may join together in prayer, concentrating on God himself rather than the differences amongst our preconceptions.

Freemasonry also believes in religious freedom and that the relationship between an individual and his God remains personal, private, and sacred.

Volume of the Sacred Law ("The rule and guide of life"): An open sacred text remains an essential part of every Masonic meeting. This Volume becomes the Holy Bible for Christians, the Holy Qu'ran for Muslims, the Torah for Jews. For Freemasons in general, it simply remains the book held holy by them.

The Oath of Freemasonry: Freemasons indeed swear / affirm obligations on their Volume of the Sacred Law. One's undertaking to follow the principles of Freemasonry, and to keep confidential a Freemason's means of recognition, remain our most solemn covenants.

The much discussed "penalties," judicial remnants from an earlier era, have become purely symbolic and have never been literal. They refer only to the pain any honest man ought to feel at the thought of violating his word to the Fraternity.

Freemasonry Compared with Religion: Freemasonry lacks the basic elements of religion, and the only "secrets" of Freemasonry concern modes of recognition.

In sum, then:

- We have no dogma or theology, no wish or means to enforce religious orthodoxy.
- We offer no sacraments.
- We do not claim to lead one to salvation by works, by secret knowledge, or by any other means.

Without interfering in someone's religious practice, without evangelizing, we expect each member to follow his own faith and to place his Duty to God above all other duties -- including those toward Freemasonry. Quite simply, our moral teachings remain acceptable to all religions.