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A Brother's Faith & Tolerance



By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

I was approached recently with a concern that a Brother had about learning or studying a faith not of his own. He was concerned that he was not sure that he could continue with his masonic journey due to this serious issue. The brother was in distress and did not know how to reconcile his faith towards the education he had received on that subject of other faiths.

I considered this a very serious matter and a brother's masonic journey depended on the outcome. I have heard in the past of brothers not agreeing with different volumes of sacred laws laid out for the brothers to see; this was something different as he did not want to hear or see it. Some brothers might have taken this brother's comments as intolerant. Brother Albert Pike says regarding a subject that may be contentious in the 21st degree (Noachite, or Prussian Knight): "reluctant to ascribe to them evil intentions." I think this is a perfect chance to teach and learn for all in the masonic community.

In the New Testament we read in Matthew 22:39b "Love your neighbor as yourself." This is the law of love and should be followed by all mankind, for the law of love is one of the greatest things ever said, that no matter who the other person is or their beliefs, we should love them. We read in Acts 17:28 the Apostle Paul quotes pagan poets to connect with Greek audiences in Athens saying, "For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"

Paul was well versed in many faiths and philosophies: in 1st Corinthians 15:31-32 he says, "I face death every day, yes just as surely as I boast about you in the Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised let us drink for tomorrow we die." We see in both occasions that Paul is using his knowledge not of Judaism or Christianity, but that of other beliefs to speak to whom he might not agree. Paul speaks from a place of familiarity of the beliefs of his audience. This accomplishes different things: it shows respect to those listening and also shows that you have taken the time to weigh both sides of an issue to better understand it and come to the truth of the matter.

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Master Architect, The Twelfth degree



By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

How does one find wisdom? Do you have mastery over your life? In today's busy world, with instant information and entertainment in our cell phones, these questions become more valid in everyday life. The 12th degree, Master Architect, deals with these questions and much more, beginning with our first instructions from morality to philosophy. In the previous degrees of the Scottish Rite we were taught earthly instruction, and now we turn another page in our masonic journey.

Many early scientists believed that the sun rotated around the earth and that the earth was the center of the universe. These beliefs were found throughout the world in the cultures of the Hindus, Romans, and Semites. The same symbolisms are echoed throughout the Scottish Rite degrees, as does the lodge when we complete circuits representing the ancient purification and renewal. The ancient societies did not have instant information always being fed to them. Much of their time was spent looking up the night skies, more especially in the warmer months when it was common to sleep on the roof of your home to stay cool while you slept. This would allow more study and conversation of the stars and their meaning within their lives.

In this degree we are also reminded of the five orders of architecture and how they relate to the Scottish Rite: Tuscan for the first three degrees of masonry, Doric for the Ineffable degrees 4th through 14th, Ionic for the Temple degrees 15th through 16th, Corinthian (or New Law) degrees 17th and 18th, and Composite completing the Scottish Rite degrees with the Chivalric and Philosophical degrees 19th through the 32nd.

How do we incorporate the teachings of this degree into our lives, and the knowledge and wisdom passed down to us through time and memorial? The lessons throughout the 12th degree are the introduction into philosophy, which can be complicated. The degree starts off with the name of the Master Architect, referring to God and the responsibilities he expects out of each one of us. We first are made aware of our human nature which must be overcome by our spiritual nature. The latter is that nature through which we desire to worship God, to be just and upright in our lives, and use the symbols of the order of architecture to remodel this world into a better place. Contrast this to human nature which is that of earthly pleasures and selfish instincts that only focus on personal desires and reflects no qualities of God's nature.

This degree reassures us that at no time are we out of reach of God's gifts, and that all men have in them the power to raise themselves from the depths by relying on their spiritual nature rising over their human nature. In Morals & Dogma,

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Buddhism also calls for tolerance and understanding of other faiths. Venerable K. Sri Dhammananda Maha Thera makes this statement: "The Buddha says that if there are reasonable and rational teachings in other religions, His followers are free to respect such teachings." We should as masons need and want to know how our fellow brothers think and worship. This does not encroach upon your faith; instead, it shows the utmost respect for a fellow mason and fellow man, that you should, out of love, take the time to understand their point of view and what those brothers hold dear.

Some faiths require dietary restrictions (e.g., no meat during Lent, no pork or pork products, requirements to eat unleavened bread and bitter herbs on certain holidays, etc.). Would you as a brother and friend invite over a brother and serve him and his family something that would cause him to violate the most sacred beliefs of his faith? Of course you would not, and that is just one of the reasons to educate yourself in the lessons of the degrees of the Scottish Rite. It is not wrong to read or listen to a system of beliefs as you might find a deeper understanding in your own faith, thereby strengthening your personal faith that you might not have known.

We can reconcile the studies of other faiths as a form of furthering our own faith by learning as Paul did, and other great religious minds of other faiths have done, which is to speak from a point of knowledge and love. Be informed as much as you can, knowledge is crucial to our masonic journeys and through knowledge/light we grow closer to our creator.

"Put off your old self... and be renewed in the spirit of your minds."
Ephesians 4:22-24

"Journey Passport" Program

The Houston Valley is participating in the "Journey Passport" program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport, contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at: acompass@yahoo.com

The Houston Valley Herald Email List

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The Houston Valley Educational Program Master Craftsman Zoom study group. If you are interested in taking classes please email acompass@yahoo.com. Open to any Master Mason in good standing.

The Houston Valley Podcast & YouTube channel

Please like and subscribe to our channel, it helps promote the Scottish Rite and allows us to continue this great work.
<https://www.youtube.com/@HoustonValleyScottishRite>

Check out our latest episode of the Houston Valley Podcast, we interview the Michael R. Poll, a New York Times Bestselling writer and publisher. He is a 50-year Mason and a member of several lodges, including Perfect Union Lodge #1, Etoile Polaire Lodge #1, Cervantes Lodge #5, Germania Lodge #46 (New Orleans, Louisiana), and Hiram-Takoma Lodge #10 (Washington, D.C.). Michael is a noted Masonic author and historian. He has served as a Past President and Founding Fellow of The Masonic Society; a Fellow of the Philaethes Society and the Maine Lodge of Research; a member of the Society of Blue Friars; and a full member of the Texas Lodge of Research. He has contributed papers to Heredom. (cornerstonepublisher.com)



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Albert Pike writes, "Men do not feel the worth of their own souls. They are proud of their mental powers; but the intrinsic, inner, infinite worth of their own minds they do not perceive."

The first step for all Masons should be the acknowledgment of deity, as without God all of our endeavors are in vain. Wisdom starts off with that first step. The next step is recognizing that He has given man instructions to steer away from destruction, as well as how to build better communities, families, and, most importantly, a better soul. Much like the airline instructions, 'In case of emergency first put on your own mask then assist someone else', you cannot be of any help or assistance to anyone if your soul/temple is not built upon a solid foundation via the raising of your spiritual nature above your earthly nature.

Old Tubal Cain by Charles Mackay, 1867

Old Tubal Cain was a man of might
In the days when the Earth was young
By the fierce red light of his furnace bright
The strokes of his hammer rung
And he lifted high his brawny hand
On the iron glowing clear,
Till the sparks rushed out in scarlet showers
And he fashioned the sword and spear.
And he sang Hurra for the handiwork!
Hurra for the spear and sword!
Hurra for the hand that shall wield them well,
For he shall be king and lord!
To Tubal Cain came many a one,
As he wrought by his roaring fire
And each one prayed for a strong steel blade
As the crown of his desire.
And he made them weapons sharp and strong,
Till they shouted loud for glee,
And gave him gifts of pearl and gold,
And spoils of the forest free
And they said, Hurra for Tubal Cain,
Who hath given us strength anew!
Hurra for the smith, hurra for the fire,
And hurra for the metal true!
But a sudden change came o'er his heart
Ere the setting of the sun,
And Tubal Cain was filled with pain for
The Evil he had done
He saw that men, with rage and hate,
Made war upon their kind,
That the land was red with the blood they shed,
In their lust for carnage blind.
And he said, Alas! that ever I made,
Or the skill of mine should plan,
The spear and the sword for men whose joy
Is to slay their fellow-man.
And for many a day old Tubal Cain
Sat brooding o'er his woe
And his hand forebore to smite the ore,
And his furnace smoldered low.
But he rose at last with a cheerful face,
And a bright courageous eye,
And bared his strong right hand for work
While the quick flames mounted high!
And he sang, Hurra for my handicraft!
And the red sparks lit the air
Not alone for the blade was the bright steel made!
And he fashioned the first ploughshare.
And men, taught wisdom from the past,
In friendship joined their hands
Hung the sword in the hall, the spear on the wall,
And ploughed the willing lands
And sang, Hurra for Tubal Cain!
Our staunch good friend is he
And for the ploughshare and the plough
To him our praise shall be
But while oppression lifts its head,
Or a tyrant would be lord
Though we may thank him for the plough
We'll not forget the sword!



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