

Impostors Among The Workers

*Sir Knight Benjamin F. Hill, Knight Templar Cross of Honor
Grand Commander, Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Virginia 2020*

A passage of Scripture from the Book of Ezra set me to thinking about the vast fraternal system we called *Freemasonry*: its tenants and superstructure of degrees and orders; the various tools for the craftsmen; and the sublime truths and inculcated lessons.

"Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel; then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia."¹

This story of Zerubbabel shows the exclusive character of the Jewish religion, separated as it always had been, by peculiar rites and a more exalted doctrine from that of every surrounding nation, made it impossible for its disciples to permit those who were not of the true and ancient faith to unite with them in any holy or religious work. Hence the builders of the second temple were extremely vigilant in seeing that no "impostors" from among "the adversaries," that is, the Samaritans and the other nations with which the kings of Assyria had peopled Israel, should be allowed to mingle with the workmen. All who came up to this sacred task were bound to afford the evidence that they were *the descendants of those faithful Giblemites who had wrought at the building of the first temple, who at its completion and dedication were received and acknowledged as Most Excellent Masters, at its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar were carried captives into Babylon, and being released by the proclamation of Cyrus, king of Persia, had come up to assist in the glorious task of rebuilding the house of the Lord without the hope of fee or reward.* These, and these alone were permitted to engage in the construction of the edifice.²

¹ Ezra 4: 1-5, NKJV

² *Commentaries on the History, Philosophy, and Symbolism of the Degree of Royal Arch Mason*, Excerpted from pages 91-170 of The Book of the Chapter, Dr. Albert G. Mackey

When it comes to impostors among the workers in the quarries of Freemasonry, I am not talking about anything "Irregular" - "Unrecognized" - "Clandestine". I am speaking about our actions, our vows, our ignorance.

Modern science as demonstrated that all thoughts and emotions which do not build, which are not constructive, generate poison in the system by chemical changes. It has been shown that multitudes of people suffer most of their lives from the poisons of their thoughts and emotions, their jealousies, envies, hatred, and their unkind and uncharitable thoughts. There are many activities that are wrong in this life because they are against God's will and because they will destroy the one who indulges them. Condemning others is a prime example; vicious gossip and slander are others. There are many good reasons why we should not judge others. There is much in our own lives that needs correction.

Life lies within us, not outside. We must constantly remember that in every moment of our life - in public - at work - at pleasure - with our families - even when you are alone - You are a Mason! The perfect points of our entrance, as reflected in the four cardinal virtues of temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice, provide us with a complete guide for truly Masonic action. It behooves each of us to periodically evaluate ourselves against these four standards, to see where we have those rough corners to which the common gavel can profitably be applied.

The two most important events of a man's life occur without his volition of consent; he is born, eventually he dies, and he has nothing to do with either (unless he commits suicide). But all else of importance that occurs to him during his life (acts of God excluded) are to some extent a matter of his choice. He goes to school, takes a job, gets married, engages in politics or the reverse, all of some extent at least of his own desire, intention and action.

It is the same in the lodge. What happens to him there, what he there accomplishes, is because of intention and desire. High on my list of favorite lessons comes from the Past Master's Degree. When the Mason attempts to declare the lodge closed, the Grand Lecturer reminds him that he just took upon himself a solemn obligation not to close the lodge in a haughty manner. We all are reminded that we are too apt to kneel at a sacred Alter and there take upon ourselves solemn obligations to perform certain duties, and then go hence, and even in the presence our brethren demean ourselves as though we had not taken them. That is not as it should be.

We have all knelt at a sacred Alter and took solemn obligations in the various degrees and orders of Freemasonry. The challenge is to elevate yourself from the state of a Rough Ashlar to that of a Perfect Ashlar, to finish that *House Made Without Hands*.

According to Albert Mackey, "there are more Masons who are ignorant of all the principles of freemasonry than there are men of any other class who are chargeable with the like ignorance of their own profession. There is not a watchmaker who does not know something about the elements of horology, nor is there a blacksmith who is altogether unacquainted with the properties of red-hot iron. Ascending to the higher walks of science, we would be much astonished to meet with a lawyer who was ignorant of the elements of jurisprudence, or a physician who had never read a treatise on pathology, or a clergyman who knew nothing whatever of theology. Nevertheless, nothing is more common than to encounter Freemasons who are in utter darkness as to everything that relates to Freemasonry. They are ignorant of its history; they have no comprehension of the esoteric meaning of its symbols or its ceremonies."³

Mackey also believed "the ignorant Freemason is a drone and an encumbrance in the Order. He who does not study the nature, the design, the history and character of the Institution, but from the hour of his initiation neither gives nor receives any ideas that could not be shared by a profane, is of no more advantage to Freemasonry than Freemasonry is to him. The true Freemason seeks light that darkness may be dispelled, and knowledge that ignorance may be removed. The ignorant aspirant, no matter how loudly he may have asked for light, is still a blind grouper in the dark."⁴

The greatest objective of Masonry is the pursuit of Truth and Masonic labors should lead toward Divine Truth. In Symbolic Freemasonry, man is taught allegorical use of the operative craftsman's tools to prepare symbolic stone for that Spiritual Temple. In Capitular and Cryptic Freemasonry, the Master Mason is instructed in the allegorical use of additional operative tools of the craftsman. Finally, in Chivalric Freemasonry, the Companion is instructed in the allegorical use of the weapons used in the discharge of the duties of knighthood whereby the Moral Temple, built and restored in Symbolic, Capitular and Cryptic Freemasonry, can be defended and beautified by the precepts of Christianity. From the Symbolic Lodge we learn the **Master Mason** is the overseer of his work and has been taught many moral lessons and been prepared for the life to come. BUT . . . The *Temple of Life* is not yet complete.

Of all the fraternal organizations that mankind has formulated over the millennia, none are as magnificent as ours. Reflect upon that, Brethren, and at once our hearts are filled with pride. And in no better manner can we emulate the great historical truths and triumphs our Order stands for than in the respect we generate for our beloved fraternity. A Mason's work is never over, so be vigilant in seeing that there are no impostors from among the workers of the quarries of Freemasonry. Walk uprightly before God and man, acting upon the

³ *Reading Masons and Masons Who Do Not Read*, Albert G. Mackey, [The Master Mason](#), 1924

⁴ Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, Albert G. Mackey, 1914

square and on the level and search for wisdom and understanding. "The Mason who reads, however little, will entertain higher views of this vast fraternal system we called *Freemasonry*: its rites, degrees and orders; the various tools for the craftsmen; and the sublime truths and inculcated lessons."⁵

In conclusion, I want to leave you with a poem called *The Closing of a Lodge*.⁶

*With the closing of the Volume and the opening of a door,
Think not this Lodge has ended, think what has gone before.
Remember all those worthy men who as apprentice came,
And who developed love and skill and worked in friendship's name.*

*When you take up the Working Tools too gently put aside,
Think not their work has ended, think how they were applied.
Remember well the lessons taught, to craftsmen tried and true,
Of Masons worthy of the name and aprons white and blue.*

*When your Tracing Boards are covered and the Columns laid at rest,
Think not their teaching ended, think more a message blessed.
Remember the special meaning to Master Masons all,
Of birth and life and learning and waiting for the call.*

*With the sounding of the gavel and as the lights at last go out
Think not your Lodge has ended, dispel all lingering doubt,
Master, Wardens, Brethren, remember as you depart,
That **THIS** Lodge will live forever, in every Masons' heart.*

-- So Mote It Be --



⁵ *Reading Masons and Masons Who Do Not Read*, Albert G. Mackey, *The Master Mason*, 1924

⁶ *The Closing of a Lodge*, RW Bro J.G.W. Kelley, Past Grand Lecturer, Grand Lodge of South Australia and the Northern Territories