

THE MAN OF GOD, AND THE PROPHET

Good evening Brethren, on the altar of this Lodge is the Holy Bible. In 1st Kings, chapter 13, there is the story of an old prophet and a Man of God. Neither the prophet nor the man of God are identified to us. This prophet lived in Bethel at the commencement of the reign of Jeroboam I. A single incident in the life of this prophet is accounted to us in this chapter. The prophet desired to entertain, as his guest, a certain Man of God from Judah, who had appeared in Bethel to denounce the royal sanctuary built and dedicated by Jeroboam. The stranger was already departing the city when the prophet overtook him and offered his hospitality. It was refused by the Man of God on the grounds that the word of the Lord had forbidden him to take food in the city. The prophet then falsely declared that he gave his invitation in accordance with a message from God, and the Man of God returned and partook of a meal.

He never reached home again.

News came to Bethel that a lion had slain him a short distance from the city. The old prophet recognised this as God's punishment, he saddled his ass, brought the body back to the city, held lamentation over it, and buried the Man of God in his own grave. By this he showed his sympathy and respect.

The old prophet is really a secondary figure in this narrative, a factor in the fate of the Man of God. The prophet appears more vividly after the death of the Man of God. What is then prominent is the prophet's sympathy for the Man of God, not a sense of guilt or of responsibility for his death.

It plays this way, as it appears to be the writer's view, that the Man of God was himself to blame for his death. The Man of God is punished because of his failure to pay strict obedience to God's command. We are not justified in supposing that he was unavoidably deceived and sinned in ignorance. The false statement of the old prophet is regarded as a temptation, which the Man of God, ought to have cast aside.

He had been a direct recipient of revelation, and the assertions of another were not on the same plane of certainty. Presumably, also, he is regarded as one who might, if he pleased, have ascertained for himself the Divine will, and so was responsible for his own ignorance.

Some questions remain unanswered, What of the false statement of the old prophet? And why is there no mention of Divine retribution for such a deception in God's name? The Man of God should have recognised that it was probable that another had received a message reversing his own, but should have reserved his judgement until the word of God came to him. It was his sin of temptation, not a sin of false statement.

What does this lesson offer the Freemason?

We need first to examine what Freemasonry is, and what Freemasons do.

We know Freemasonry to be characterised as a Fraternal Order, but it is more properly a Society. Like all societies, there are rules and codes

of conduct. Unlike other societies the rules and codes of conduct in Freemasonry are not set to print to easily observe and follow. You are now thinking, David, you are wrong. One need only look to Anderson's Constitutions, the writings of Mackey and many other Masonic scholars, or to the Constitution of our own Grand Lodge to see these and other rules clearly spelled out for us. I answer, yes, but, no. These are indeed rules of conduct for a man in society but they are not limited to the society of Freemasons.

Freemasonry accepts men, with a belief in a Supreme Being, from all societies, each of these men bring with them, these same rules of their society to Freemasonry. It is what Freemasons do, which delineates the difference in the rules from societies to the society of Freemasons.

In our last presentation we saw that Freemasonry, in its real essence, is a system of spiritual development, and shows a way by which our body, soul, and mind may be made a fit temple for our true self. Across the spiritual spectrum man is told he is the embodiment of God. Within him, is the temple of the Supreme Architect of the Universe.

It is the temple to this embodiment, which is to be built by the Freemason. This is what Freemasons do. Hence a Freemason's body, soul, and mind form a vehicle through which his divine Self may be manifested on earth. But this can not be until we have completed the temple, which is the true work of the Freemason.

This great work is to erect and manifest the inner temple in the outer world. We ourselves, if we could only realise it, are the embodiment of the Supreme Architect of the Universe. And, as such, the rules and codes of conduct within our society, doing the work that we do, cannot be so easily delineated. The rules from other societies, that which we all bring to Freemasonry, are practised universally, but do not form that which is distinctive to the society of Freemasons.

So, what is distinctive to the society of Freemasons? I can only answer this for myself. As you can answer this for yourself alone. Although you have joined with many in this society of Freemasons, it is a singular journey that you have embarked upon. It is your Temple to build, with the tools offered by the society of Freemasons.

The use and application of these tools are similar, but not universal. There can be no written rule or code for their use, save one. That one, is its use to build the Temple, the application of the tool, is yours.

The Man of God and the Prophet. Each was given and used the tools of their conviction to the end product, the completion of God's work. One was offered temptation, this was an application of a tool that the Man of God should have recognised as being improper. Though on its surface, it did appear to be right and true. As you know, it was not, and the Man of God paid a heavy price.

Societal rules and the rules of a Freemason can have this same semblance.

The application of the tools used to build the Temple within, the work of a Freemason, can not be compromised nor quantified. This is not an easy journey that you have embarked upon.

But, it is a journey that is easy with the tools offered by the society of Freemasons. Your great task is to identify the conviction of use and application of those tools, to identify the distinctiveness, that is Freemasonry.

Thank you Brethren.

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