

Russell Comments on Freemasons

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In our judgment the majority of "secret societies" are merely beneficiary and have no secret schemes antagonistic to the general public welfare, the secret rites and ceremonies being merely "boys' play," occupying the time and attention of persons who have no greater aims than those which pertain to the present life. We note, however, that several Roman Catholic Societies seem to have schemes connected with the use of fire-arms, and are therefore to be classed as malevolent rather than benevolent.

We note also that the Order of Free Masons, if judged by its past history, has some secret object or scheme, more than fraternity and financial aid in time of sickness or death. And, so far as we can judge, there is a certain amount of profane worship or mummerly connected with the rites of this order and some others, which the members do not comprehend, but which, in many cases, serves to satisfy the cravings of the natural mind for worship, and thus hinders it from seeking the worship of God in spirit and in truth—through Christ, the only appointed Mediator and Grand Master.

In proportion as such societies consume valuable time in foolish, senseless rites and ceremonies, and in substituting the worship of their officers, and the use of words and symbols which have no meaning to them, for the worship of God, in his appointed way — through Christ, and according to knowledge and the spirit of a sound mind — in that proportion these societies are grievous evils, regardless of the financial gains or losses connected with membership in them.

The New Creation, pages 580, 581:

This brings before us the whole question of orders, societies, etc., and what privileges the New Creation has in connection with such organizations. Is it right for them to be members of these societies? We answer that while Church associations are purely religious, and labor and beneficial organizations in general are purely secular, there are still other orders which combine the religious and the secular features. As we understand the matter, for instance, the Free Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, etc., perform certain rites and ceremonies of a religious kind. Let it be understood that we are not waging any warfare upon those who hold membership in these various orders, even as we are not waging warfare against the various sectarian religious systems. We place upon one level all of those which have any religious ceremonies, teachings, etc., and consider them all as parts of Babylon, some quarters or wards of which are cleaner, and others less clean, but all, nevertheless, full of confusion, error—contrary to the divine intention, as displayed in the organization of the primitive Church and the instructions, by word and example, given to it by the inspired Founder, and his twelve apostles.

We admonish the New Creation to have nothing whatever to do with any of these semi-religious societies, clubs, orders, churches; but to "Come out from amongst them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." (2 Cor. 6:17) Their things, their worship, their teachings, their

doctrines, are unclean to us, though they may not be unclean to themselves. The eyes of our understanding have been opened, and now to us all things appear in a new light, so that things which we once loved now we hate, and things which we once hated now we love.

What Pastor Russell Said
Question 317:2 (1910)

I am not judging at all, I am merely saying, so far as I can tell. But my understanding is, that all of these are bundles, and each bundle is getting tighter. Some of you know a great deal more about Freemasonry than I do, and I am not here to say anything against it, because I do not know anything to say, and I do not know as I would say it if I did know it. The Lord did not send me to preach against Masonry or Odd Fellowship, nor against Presbyterianism or Methodism. Our opportunity is to tell the truth, to preach the true gospel of Christ, and the Lord says that this message is to have its effects on the different hearts. Now, if you find yourself in any kind of a bundle, you know that is not the program so far as the wheat is concerned. The wheat is to be gathered into the garner; it is not to be put into bundles in the present life. The wheat is to be free. If you find yourself in any kind of a bundle, better get out of the bundle. Trust in the Lord, and be in harmony with Him, and this will take you out of all kinds of bundles and human organizations, I believe.

I should, perhaps, say a cautionary word here to the effect that I would understand this would mean, for instance, that if I were a carpenter I would prefer to be at liberty, but if it were demanded of me that I should join a union before I could have work, and that I must pay so much of my money into that union's coffers, I should join. I should understand that I was making so much of a contribution to the general weal of the carpenters, and I would have no hesitation in the matter, because there is nothing of a religious kind there. There is nothing that would fetter my heart or mind. But if that organization should do anything I could not approve, I would feel perfectly free to withdraw at any time. So I would make that limitation. But, so far as wheat and tares are concerned, I think there are plenty of bundles all around you, and I notice, too, that these different worldly organizations, if we may so call them in contradistinction to church organizations, are also taking the same methods the church people are taking. It used to be very easy to withdraw from one of the churches and you could say, "I will thank you for a letter," and then they would take the letter and never deposit it, but burn it up, if they desired. And so with the Masons; they had a method by which anyone desiring to leave the order could ask for a demit and he would get that without any particular question. I have been informed that now this is changed somewhat. If you are a Presbyterian, and you wish a letter, they say, "To which church do you wish the letter addressed?" You say, "Oh, just make it out anyway." "Oh we do not do that now; we will give you a letter to a certain, particular church and it is to be deposited there—good when deposited there." And so I am informed that our Freemason friends are doing the same thing; they do not give demits now. If you wish to be transferred to another lodge they will transfer you, but they do not give demits now in the same way they formerly did.

A Brother: Brother Russell, I am a Mason and, unfortunately, hold a high position in the order, and I would like to make a little correction on that. A Mason is perfectly free to leave when he feels so disposed. No restraint whatever is placed upon him.

Brother Russell: I told you in the beginning that I did not know about it myself; I was only relating what a brother told me.

Another Brother: I was a Mason in a different jurisdiction from that of the brother. It may be all right in his particular jurisdiction, but it is not the same in other jurisdictions, as I know.

Brother Russell: You will notice that we never have anything to say against any of these. We have not said an unkind word about Freemasonry, and you never read anything unkind that we have ever said about it, and I do not wish to say anything unkind about Presbyterianism, or Methodism. I think that many of the dear friends in these denominations are good people, and I appreciate their characters. What I talk about sometimes is Presbyterian doctrine, and they talk about it, too. And I have read things they have said about Presbyterian doctrines far harder than anything I have ever said. I sometimes quote in the Watch Tower some things Presbyterians say about their own doctrine, and I occasionally quote in the Watch Tower something the Methodists say about their doctrine, because they say it stronger than I should wish to say it.

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