

Article: DM685

## MASONRY, MY SAVIOR, AND ME: THE PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF DUANE WASHUM

This article first appeared in the Testimony column of the *Christian Research Newsletter*, volume 1, number 4 (1988). For further information go to: <http://www.equip.org>

Throughout my life, I never knew the Masonic Order to be anything but good. Crippled children's hospitals and burn care units are well-known trademarks of the Shriners. Any organization that does the work Masons are known for couldn't possibly be bad, could it?

I didn't know what went on in a Masonic Lodge, but judging by the caliber of the men involved, I figured that it must be something pretty special.

I submitted a petition to the Lodge and was initiated in the Entered Apprentice Degree, passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, and was soon raised to the degree of Master Mason. I felt that I had attained to the finest fraternity in the world.

I was selected by the Worshipful Master of the Lodge to serve as Junior Steward and later honored by serving as Chaplain. My studies in ritual and degree work continued as Junior Warden and then Senior Warden. I finally became Worshipful Master of the largest Lodge in the state of Nevada. I believed myself to be a member of a fraternity that stood for God, country, and family.

But, after five years of total dedication, I withdrew from the Order. It didn't happen overnight.

My first questioning of Freemasonry was in regard to the obligation I took when I was initiated. One is made to swear secrecy to the point that bloody penalties of death are involved. It was explained that this was symbolic and only emphasized that what I had learned was not public information.

My next moment of confusion came when I was Junior Steward. A member was in the habit of talking during lodge meetings. This was disruptive but not a big problem. What was a problem, I thought, was his use of God's name in vain. One evening this terminology was used four or five times in a short period. I later told him that if he used those words in the Lodge room again, I was going to file Masonic charges against him. The reaction of the members who overheard was very confusing. Some approached me and mildly chastised me for the way I had approached him. But it was the reaction of the majority of the members that caught me off guard. They reminded me that he is a Past Master, and a Grand Lodge Officer. He was not wrong in using God's name in vain. Rather, I had affronted a Past Master and a Grand Lodge Officer.

All ritual work in Masonry is committed to memory and repeated verbatim including prayers. At first I did not notice that none of the prayers are in the name of Jesus Christ. "Great Architect of the Universe," "Almighty Father of the Universe," "Judge Supreme," "God," and "Lord," yes, but never in the name of Jesus Christ.

Being Chaplain, saying grace for a meal was my duty. Since there is no specified prayer, the prayer was my own, and I prayed in the name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I was soon told that we never pray in the name of Jesus Christ for it would be offensive to our Jewish members. I then became aware that there is no mention of Jesus Christ in any of the prayers or in the ritual book.

One evening, I asked about the inconsistency involved for the Jewish member in having the Bible resting on our altar. I was informed that it did not necessarily have to be the Bible. It could be the Koran, the Rig

Veda, or even the Book of Mormon. What sacred writing was on the altar would depend upon the religious persuasion of the lodge.

So, it really didn't matter if the Lodge had any Jewish member or not. The important thing was not to pray in the name of Jesus Christ!

A proposed major undertaking that would involve a great deal of money was made into a motion and defeated, much to the dissatisfaction of the Master. Without notice, it was brought up again, this time in a stacked meeting. The motion passed. I made an objection to the Master and told him that what he was doing prostituted the dignity of his office. I found myself "wrong," because the Worshipful Master is always right.

Both of my confrontations began to consume my thoughts. I was morally right, but I was made to feel that I was wrong. By opposing the Worshipful Master I was, in the eyes of some, committing blasphemy!

Despite this, I was able to be elected as the next Worshipful Master. I soon found myself questioning things, including my title. Was I really a Worshipful Master? By whose authority? I never considered myself to be master over anybody, and I certainly wasn't worshipful.

I was in a local Christian bookstore and found a book I was interested in, *The Kingdom of the Cults* by Walter Martin. This was of interest to me because of stories regarding Mormonism and Joseph Smith. He was reported to have been a Mason and to have pirated signs, grips, and Masonic ritual work and incorporated them into the Mormon Temple rituals. But, when I turned to the table of contents, it was like someone hit me with a baseball bat.

Listed was the Rosicrucian Fellowship, a group my brother had been studying. He told me how there had been an organization known as The Great White Brotherhood of Man, and out of this came the Rosicrucians, and out of the Rosicrucians came the Masonic Order. For the first time I was seeing Rosicrucian Fellowship in print and it was in a book about cults.

I remember how, after becoming a Mason, I had mentioned it to a man in my church. He said, "So you joined the Masonic cult." I said to myself, "He doesn't understand." And now it looked like I was to find out who understood and who didn't.

Now there were three words racing through my mind: "Rosicrucianism," "Masonry," and "cult." I turned to the section about Rosicrucians and the reference to Masonry. Rosicrucianism was "by admission a secret society. It flourished in a day when secret societies were in vogue, and 'a century after its origin, Rosicrucianism underwent a recrudescence in connection with Freemasonry, which not only deemed Rosicrucianism genuine, but even borrowed usages and customs from the writings of those who had satirized the fraternity.'"<sup>1</sup>

Every question that had previously troubled me about Masonry came back to me. A cold shiver went through me. I began praying to God for wisdom to know the truth. I placed a phone call to Christian Research Institute, and I told of my concern about Freemasonry. They said they would send me a booklet that might be helpful, *Freemasonry and Christianity* by Alva J. McClain.

That night, I shared my concerns with a Christian friend. He taught me about blood oaths, secular humanism, and other things.

The next two weeks found me in extreme turmoil. I would think about the discussions with my Christian friend but then I would read from my Masonic Bible. Everything I would read seemed beautiful and I could see no wrong in it. My family's Masonic background, the relationships I had with other Masons, and the beauty and dignity of Masonic ritual were all going through my mind. I was beginning to think that maybe my friend, like the man before, just didn't understand.

Finally, I went to my knees and once again asked the Lord to show me the truth. It roared across my mind. "Blood Oath." I recalled my uneasiness with the oath of secrecy, and Jesus' admonition to "make no oath at all" (Matt. 5:34). That week the secretary of Vegas Lodge No. 32 received my letter of

withdrawal. I received a call from a Past Master who asked me why I was withdrawing. I told him I was a Christian, and shared my thoughts with him, including Scriptures from the Bible. He explained to me that I shouldn't believe everything I read in the Bible and that Christianity was a religion that the men in power at the time came up with to keep the common people in line. Then he said, "After all, Duane, our dad, uncle, grand-dad, and great-grand-dad were all Masons" The Past Master extolling the virtues of Freemasonry and attacking my faith in Jesus Christ was my own brother.

My letter of withdrawal was held for over a month, but now there is a paper in my home titled, "Certificate for a Brother Dropped from the Rolls at His Own Request." After Christ endured indescribable pain and suffering for my sins, I could not rationalize staying in the lodge because of the difficulties I would have encountered had I resigned. Besides, to stay in Masonry would mean to deny Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior in my prayers.

I have prayed for forgiveness and know that God has answered my prayers, not because I am worthy, but because of His grace and love, and because Jesus Christ IS my Lord and Savior.

-- Duane Washum

## NOTES

1. Samuel Macauley Jackson, as quoted in Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*. (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1985), p. 509.