

Freemasonry, Politics, and Religion

Understanding the core traditions of the lodge

Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, SJ-USA



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The Rule of Silence: Politics and Religion in the Lodge

I'm here in our grand and glorious Temple room at the House of the Temple in Washington, DC, to tell you about the two things that Freemasons are forbidden to discuss. Welcome to the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry Channel. I'm Maynard Edwards, 32nd Degree KCCH Scottish Rite Freemason, your host here on the channel. Do us a favor: subscribe to the channel right now. Just hit that subscribe button. Also, share the video with a friend so you can pass a little wisdom along. Drop a comment below, especially if you're a Freemason, DeMolay, Job's Daughters, Rainbow, Eastern Star, Grotto, or Shrine—drop it below. And of course, we do want you to like the video and give us a thumbs up.

There's an old saying, and sometimes it's attributed to Mark Twain, and sometimes to Charlie Brown and Snoopy. I think it actually goes back even further than Twain to an 18th-century etiquette book. Basically, the idea is that you should never discuss religion or politics in polite company. To say it another way: if you don't feel like shopping for Christmas presents, then go ahead and bring up religion and politics at Thanksgiving. Religion and politics are things that separate and divide people because everybody has their own beliefs and their own opinions. Those are two things that Freemasons in Lodge don't discuss. But we're going to discuss them right here on the channel today, and why Masons don't talk about them.

We'll start with politics because it's a little easier to get into and a little easier to understand. Politics is something that can divide people. There are left and right, libertarian, Democrat, Republican—all of those things. There was once an Anti-Masonic Party; even the first third party, in fact, was the Anti-Masonic Party. Politics is one of those things that divides people, and in a Masonic lodge, the brotherhood demands that we put those differences aside. No matter what side of the political aisle or what part of the political spectrum you may rest upon, in Freemasonry, we don't discuss it in Lodge.

Now, that doesn't mean that Freemasons can never talk about politics. Obviously, there are many great politicians throughout history and great leaders throughout history who were Freemasons and were open about their political thoughts and ideas. That's okay. But the minute you're in the lodge room, the minute the door is closed, we have a gentleman's agreement to not discuss those things that are going to divide us. So we put all of those things aside and we show up there for the purpose of improving ourselves and finding ways to improve our communities.

Now let's talk about religion and Freemasonry. One of the main questions I get asked here on the channel, on our podcast feeds, in emails, on Facebook, and all kinds of other things is: who is the God of Freemasonry? Or who do Masons worship? Or what's the deal with the Grand Architect of the Universe or Supreme Architect of the Universe? It's a good question, but I want to be very clear about the answer. Freemasonry is not a religion. I'm going to repeat that: Freemasonry is not a religion. The fraternity—which is what it is—does not provide salvation of the soul, grant entrance into heaven, or provide religious instruction of any kind. Freemasonry respects the faith of all men. Here in our Temple room, this is our main altar right behind me.

On it, you will see five books of faith. In the center is a plain old ordinary King James Holy Bible. It does have a Masonic Square and Compasses on it, no doubt, but if you open it up on the inside, it's just a plain old ordinary King James Bible. If you don't believe me, you're welcome to come here. We're open Monday through Thursday for tours during the day. Come on in, crack it open, and you will see it's a plain old ordinary Bible. Also, in the upper right-hand corner, you will see the Quran, which is the holy book of Muslims.

Down here, this is the Pentateuch. The Pentateuch is basically the first five books of the Torah, so it is the five books of Moses; it is a holy book for men who are of the Jewish faith. Then over here we have the Lotus Sutra, which is a holy book for people who are Buddhist. And up there we have the Gita, which is a holy book for people who are Hindu.

When a lodge is open—in other words, when men are in here participating in a meeting—there's only one book on the altar, one book of sacred law. That one book is generally reflective of the majority of the men's religion in the room. So if the room is full of Christians, it's going to be the Holy Bible. But if the room is full of Muslims or Hindus, it could be the Quran, it could be the Gita, it could be the Pentateuch, it could be any of these books.

Like politics, religion is something that can really divide people, so we do not have discussions about religion in Lodge; that is off the table as well. That doesn't mean that we don't pray in Lodge. We pray at the beginning and end of every single Masonic meeting, because to be a man of faith, you should invoke the blessing of God in all great things. When we sit down for our meetings and when we sit down for our meals, we always say our prayers in a Masonic setting. However, when we say our prayers, we use the term "Grand Architect of the Universe" or "Supreme Architect of the Universe." I saw a pastor on a YouTube video recently talking about Freemasonry and saying he was opposed to Masonry because of the use of that term, claiming that Masonry was the religion of deism. That is not accurate. That's not why we use the term.

The reason we use the term "God of All Things," "Grand Architect of the Universe," or "Supreme Architect" is so that we do not show favor to one faith over another. Each of these five different books of faith, each of these five different religions, and indeed every religion you can think of, has a different name for deity. They call God by many, many different names. So by saying our prayers to the generic God of all things or the Grand Architect of the Universe, we're able to share time in Lodge together, not get into big discussions over who's right about the name of God, and still be together and work together as brothers and respect one another's faith.

Freemasonry is not a religion. Freemasonry is not a political party. Freemasonry is a brotherhood. When we enter that lodge room, we leave the discussions of religion and politics at the lodge room door. We go into the lodge to learn to improve ourselves, to learn to be better husbands, fathers, friends, and citizens. We go in to learn how to improve our family life, our community life, and to improve the world around us. We go in to work on charitable endeavors, and we go to have a lot of fun with other good men of faith. Freemasons, tons of them are politicians, have been throughout history, as you know. Freemasons, tons of them are clergymen, but we're all men of faith. We leave those discussions at the lodge room door.

My brothers, I know you're watching. I need you to back me up in the comments below. Give us that thumbs up, and if you haven't, please subscribe to the channel. Masons, I do expect you to drop a comment below and help us out as we navigate through this discussion about religion and politics, and why Freemasons aren't supposed to talk about those things in lodge. I'm Maynard Edwards, 32nd Degree KCCH, Scottish Rite Freemason, your host here on the channel. Thanks for watching, we'll see you soon.

Thanks for watching. If you would like to learn more about Freemasonry, click the link above to visit bea Freemason.org. It will answer all your questions about Freemasonry and help connect you with a lodge in your area. We would love it if you would subscribe to the channel and give us a thumbs up, of course. If you're a Mason, not only do we want you to comment below, but we want you to help us support the Lost Media Archive. For only two dollars a month, you can help us preserve Masonic history in the form of 20th-century media. I'm talking about tapes, records, films, DVDs, VHS—you name it, we've got it in the archive, and the ravages of time are not being kind. For two bucks a month, you can help us preserve all of that, and we're going to give you access to it as we digitize it. Click the link above to learn more.

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